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BY

HENRY JAMES BYRON

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.



LONDON

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122 FLEET STREET

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE FIRST FLOOR IN LITTLE GREEN STREET.

OF all the gloomy and grimy houses in Little Green Street, Soho, No. 92 was probably the gloomiest and most grimy. The landlord had evidently given it up as a bad job, and smoke and dirt had apparently marked it for their own. Hard task indeed would it have been for the puzzled plasterer to have discovered *where* to re-point the brick-work, had the proprietor ever been so rash as to talk of such an un-Sohoian extravagance; little need would a painter and grainer have had to scrape away the once green covering of the front-door previous to enveloping it in a coat of the brightest pink,—time and the children

had saved him the trouble, for the sun had shone very hotly upon it, and the Little Green Street juveniles had seized upon the precious blisters as so many prizes, and had picked some off, and scratched away at the rest with their boots and tops and hoops, until the door, as the lady opposite (who made wax-flowers and had artistic notions) very frequently declared, was "a eyesore to the street." The very scraper, a stout and sterling piece of iron-work, made for use and not for show, had succumbed at last to the perpetual balancings of the more reckless amongst the children, and bent over in a manner which was irritating to the person scraping, inasmuch as those who called most frequently at No. 92 were visitors with soles and heels which could scarcely afford to be trifled with. The knob of the door had disappeared (popularly supposed through the agency of a desperate youth of eleven, who was found with twopence-halfpenny in his possession for which he could not account); and though Mrs. Molloy, the tenant of the house, and consequently owner for the time being of the article, had recognised

it in the window of a broker's shop in the next street, that good lady was so completely put out of court by the shopkeeper's threatening an action for defamation of character, that she was content to retire hastily to her home, and, indeed, for the rest of her life never alluded to the knob save in whispers.

We have said the house looked gloomy, but must make an exception so far as the first-floor windows were concerned, for there the evidence of cleanliness and good taste was apparent, not only in the clean, bright panes, but in the neat and cheerful curtains, the whiteness of the blind, and the agreeable oasis in the great desert of surrounding dreariness afforded by a row of little flower-pots in a green stand, and a large brass cage in which a canary chirped and twinkled in the sunlight. The appearance of flies in amber was not more puzzling to the inhabitants of Little Green Street than was the natty first-floor front that divided the dismal ground-floor and basement of No. 92 from the dingy second-pair and attics of that wobegone tenement. The apartments even

of Captain Crane, who played the mandoline at the open window on summer evenings, and selected Soho as his dwelling-place because he said it reminded him so of the Continent,—even Captain Crane's apartments paled in point of actual comfort before the first-floor of No. 92, although the Captain's blinds had decidedly the best of it in the matter of tassels; whilst the lady wax-flower maker and Miss Parkins, who was popularly supposed to be a court milliner, both agreed that the first-floor of No. 92 set a most excellent example to the street; though the wax-flower lady, still viewing matters through the artistic lens, said that it wasn't so much the windows themselves, but that the surrounding dirt and miserableness "threw them out."

The interior of the apartments which constituted the first-floor upon which we have descanted, and into which but few of the Little Green Street denizens had ever been permitted to enter, more than justified the generally-expressed belief in their neatness and comfort. The furniture, which was for the most part of the regular lodging-house

stamp,—hard, angular, and uncompromising,—had been evidently added to by some one with a tasteful eye and a decided propensity to excursions. A comfortable old-fashioned sofa, a downright lover of an easy-chair, an elegant little work-table, and a couple of handsome engravings, completely cast into the shade the six meagre chairs, the rickety Pembroke-table, and the threadbare carpet which were the property of Mrs. Melby, the landlady, and which might have been in the possession of Mrs. Melby's grandmother, so ancient and hideous did they appear beside their modern companions. A little common piano occupied one side of the apartment, and a great pile of music suggested the probability of the owner of the room being professional.

Up and down the little front drawing-room, on an autumn evening some few years ago, there paced an elderly woman, who was evidently impatient at the delay of some one expected in a tea,—for she oscillated between the window and the tea-things, and sniffed and grunted with undisguised annoyance, and looked at the little clock

upon the mantel-piece continually, and refused to be comforted. Not that there was any body present to attempt the task of soothing the agitated feelings of the poor old woman, nor, from the expression of her countenance, would that duty have been a remarkably easy one to perform; for, in sooth, her features were hard and somewhat forbidding; her mouth was pulled down with a chronic pucker; and there was a something about her stiff and undeceptive false brown front that repressed familiarity or sympathy. Her dress was cheap and dingy, her hands were horny with hard work, and her entire appearance spoke of unremitting toil and suffering.

“Dear, dear!” exclaimed the old woman as, for the thirtieth time, she looked out of the window without catching a glimpse of her she waited for.

“Dear, dear! when *will* she come? when will she come?”

Another half-hour passed, and no signs of her mistress,—for she it was Anne Maggs expected; and then she poured some water into the teapot, and sat by with as much show of patience as she

could assume until the tea was supposed to be drawn, when she mixed herself a cup, going to a cupboard for some coarse brown sugar, leaving the white untouched, and taking no milk whatever. Tea without milk, and sweetened with brown sugar, can scarcely be considered an elevating beverage ; but it was not the wretched nature of the meal of which she partook that brought the tears into poor old Anne Maggs's eyes, as she stared blankly before her, looking at nothing, but seeing, oh, so much ! There is scarcely any thing more saddening,—soothing, some may term it—than to sit on a September evening in a solitary room in the heart of this great City, with the sound of life and traffic rattling and buzzing at a distance, alone amidst so many, with the shadows of an autumn night gathering round, and the darkling phantoms of the past crowding the room, and taunting one with bitter memories, and bringing back the recollection of the buried years ; then it is that fragments of long-forgotten tunes, and with them their associations of days and people, flit across the brain, while surrounding sounds shape themselves

to the melody with a strangely incongruous and puzzling jingle, and one mechanically repeats the shout of some passer-by, wedding it to an air which bears with it most sorrowful remembrances, without giving a thought to the grim, sad humour of the combination. An autumn evening in the country saddening! To be all solitary in this great cruel town when the year is fainting after its burning summer glow,—that is the time for hideous thoughts; not dull November, monsieur, with its fog, its link-boys, its close-drawn curtains, and its cheering blaze.

Anne Maggs had known trouble,—she had known little else. Her path had been one of thorns, and care had seldom left her throughout her life's sore journey. Anne Maggs was a poor, plain, disagreeable-looking old woman, in a musty stuff dress and a ridiculous false front; but she had done that which would have ennobled many a grand lady, and she had a heart an empress might have envied her. At the sound of a little tremulous knock at the front-door, Anne Maggs flew down the stairs, and pushing aside the red-haired



maid-of-all-work who was about to open it, admitted a little pale lady, whom she seized, as if to make sure she was safe, and then fairly hugged in delight.

“Oh, missis!” cried Anne, gasping, “oh, missis! I thought you were never coming back; you’re two hours behind your time, and them omblebusses is so reckless, being built heavy themselves, and in consequence careless of others, and you a mere speck, as it were, in a road; but here you are, and no bones broke; and do come up and take off your things, for I have been a worriting myself about you till I was in a state to go to the pleece-station and have a bill struck off.”

And pouring forth a volley of mingled satisfaction and reproof, the old woman half assisted, half carried her mistress up-stairs, where she placed her on the sofa, and then retired to the other side of the room to have another look and see she was safe and sound.

Mrs. Bentley, the owner of the best apartments at No. 92 Little Green Street, and Anne Maggs’s mistress, was rather under the middle

height, slight in figure, with a worn but beautiful face, bright brown hair which was just the least bit in the world sprinkled with gray, calm sad eyes, and a simple, almost childish, manner, which a stranger might at first have considered affectation, but which was natural, and, when found to be so, proved one of her greatest charms. Though time and care had stamped the cruel crow's-feet, and, as we have said, somewhat dimmed the lustre of her pretty hair, it had not robbed her in the least of a youthful grace which she still retained, and which often led people to suppose her very much younger than she was. Indeed, at a distance, in her neatly-made walking attire, and with her light and tripping step, Mrs. Bentley had been frequently described by Little Green Street neighbours as looking "quite a bit of a girl;" and on one occasion, a month or so before the commencement of our story, a short-sighted but polite young man at Shoolbred's had, whilst showing her some cheap muslins, several times addressed her as "Miss," which had quite confused the poor little lady, and had not in any way flattered or con-

alluded her. It is a ticklish thing to talk about a lady's age; but the exigencies of our position compel us to state that she had a son, bordering upon nineteen, with a tutor in the country, and the reader must draw his own conclusions as to the number of summers that had passed over Mrs. Bentley's little head.

To give this boy the education of an English gentleman, Mrs. Bentley had scraped and worked and starved—ay, starved for years. Two-thirds of the expense of his schooling had been defrayed by her father's half-brother, but even with that assistance she had found it a hard task indeed to send her portion of his half-year's bill to Mr. Tomlinson of Parnassus House, and then to the Rev. Arthur Bramble, who "finished" young gentlemen and prepared them for the University upon more moderate terms than most of his brother preceptors, but whose account generally had the effect of curtailing Mrs. Bentley's household expenses for many a week after its arrival at Little Green Street, notwithstanding. Upon the list of Mrs. Bentley's pupils—for she got her living by

teaching music, singing, French, and Italian—were many who wondered to see the little lady arrive in the wet with goloshes, a huge umbrella, and a waterproof cloak, when cabs were only sixpence a mile; but they little knew where that sixpence went—that its destination was the pocket of the Rev. Arthur Brandle; while least of all did the strapping lad at Wanley Vicarage suspect his mother of stinting herself in the actual necessaries of life, that he might mingle with his fellows in after years upon an equal footing, and have a fair start in that glorious struggle where knowledge backs the brain for a place.

To make a fresh supply of tea, to fetch from the cupboard the remains of a knuckle of ham, and to place her mistress to the table at her evening meal, was with Anne Maggs the work but of a very few minutes; and as the fagged look upon Mrs. Bentley's face began to disappear, under the cheering influence of that sublime Chinese plant, the hard features of the warm domestic gradually relaxed into a smile; and when the little teacher asked for her third cup, Anne fairly broke out

into a vigorous "Bless her 'art!" Tea over, the old woman put away the things, and taking up some sewing, sat at a respectful distance from her mistress, who was unusually silent, and appeared to be thinking of scenes and persons far away.

"To-morrow Master Horace returns to us, Anne," at length said Mrs. Bentley, with a slight sigh.

"Ah, and a fine young fellow he must be by this time—almost a man; and his mother so young-looking too!" replied Anne Maggs.

"Young-looking, you old flatterer! why, I'm becoming as gray as possible, and the wrinkles run over my face like the railways in the map." And Mrs. Bentley gave a little laugh, in which there was, perhaps, the slightest tone of sadness.

"Maybe, maybe, but I don't see them," replied Anne, who was in an unusually good-humour at the prospect of shortly seeing Master Horace.

The conversation was here interrupted by the postman, who took a fiendish delight in rapping twice as hard at Mrs. Molloy's knocker as at any other in the street; for it was a loose and unsatis-

factory instrument, and served gymnastic purposes for Mrs. Molloy's children and their friends, to its extreme detriment as a knocker.

“ Bother them postmen ! ” exclaimed Anne Maggs, “ a-knocking as if the house was a-fire ; it's precious few Christmas-boxes as you'd get if I had my way with you.”

Up-stairs came Master Peregrine Molloy, the third hope of his parents, with a piece of bread-and-treacle, with which he was festooning his pinafore, in one hand, and a letter, upon which he had stamped a proof impression of the blackest thumb for its size and age in Soho, in the other ; and having hit the door of Mrs. Bentley's apartment with his elbow, dropped the letter on the landing and flew down-stairs again to a juvenile party which he was entertaining with profuse liberality in the back-kitchen. The letter was for Mrs. Bentley, and as she read the address on the envelope she flushed somewhat, and placed her hand upon her heart ; but the emotion was only momentary, and she broke the seal with a sigh. It was from the Rev. Arthur Brandle, and enclosed

the account for Master Horace's last quarter; but it also contained a letter to that young gentleman's mamma, which she read out to Anne Maggs with faltering accents and frequent pauses.

This was the letter :

“ *Wanley Vicarage, Bucks.*

“ MY DEAR MADAM,—Your son Horace will start (D.V.) from here by the Tally-ho coach to-morrow morning at ten o'clock, and will be with you in the course of the afternoon. You have signified your intention of removing him from here, and as I may not have the pleasure of seeing you for some time, I assume the privilege of a preceptor, and beg to send you the humble opinion I have formed of Horace's capabilities and disposition; an opinion resulting from close and long observation as his tutor and friend.”

“ How kindly put !” here broke in Mrs. Bentley, nevertheless trembling visibly.

“ Humph !” grunted Anne Maggs, who was inclined to consider the letter an impertinence.

“ Two years and a half ago, when your son first

came here, his education was—you will pardon the expression—in a lamentable condition. Not that he was ignorant, for he knew much; you will again pardon me, if I add, *too* much. His mind was like a large, uncared-for garden, in which the weeds of foolish fiction and distracting rubbish, of a light and pernicious nature, were completely choking those noble, classical flowers, which are so requisite, and which I have, to the best of my ability, fostered and increased. Horace's mathematics have been his great stumbling-block, and I should be almost ashamed to say how unsatisfactorily backward he is in that highly necessary branch of knowledge. He has ability—very decided ability—but he is lamentably deficient in application. His principal moral drawback is an absence of any fixed purpose. I have frequently asked him what were his views regarding a profession, but his replies have been so vague, so utterly extravagant and absurd, that I have long ceased to talk to or advise him upon the subject. In money matters he is sadly reckless, and you will forgive my saying that I think you have acted



most injudiciously in leading him to suppose you better off than you are. I write frankly because I think it my duty so to do. Personally I have a great regard for Horace, as indeed I have for all youths placed under my charge; and I shall always be very glad indeed to hear of his welfare. Mrs. Brandle desires her compliments.

“Believe me, my dear Madam,

“Very faithfully yours,

“ARTHUR BRANDLE.

“P.S. I still think I was right about the number of the towels, but we will not dispute over the matter.”

Mrs. Bentley placed the letter on the table, and scarcely dared to look at her domestic, who had grunted frequently during its perusal, and had sewn in a fierce and fiery manner, suggestive of extreme irritation and contempt. To her Master Horace had been a perfect boy from the days when she dandled him in her arms to the hour when he boldly declared his determination to wear “stick-up” collars and try a “pickwick.” He

had kicked her when he was a little boy, but it was his play. He had told her to hold her tongue and not advise her betters when a big boy, but it was his spirit. She would have run all over London to have got him a toy-stage, and she would have sat out the performance of the "Miller and his Men" in pasteboard twenty times an evening, and have joined in the boy's merry shouts when the explosion of Grindoff's mill singed her false front, and the smoke made her cough, and the oil in the footlights ran over her only decent dress, with never-tiring good-humour and patience; for she loved him with a mother's love, and his very faults were virtues in her forgiving eyes.

"Well," said Mrs. Bentley, with a deep-drawn sigh, "there is Mr. Brandle's opinion of my boy, Anne."

"Very odd he didn't find out all that before the notice was given; and as for the towels, he ought to be ashamed of hisself," replied the old woman, with a toss of the head.

"And yet, Anne, Mr. Brandle is a very clever man; a very good man, Anne."

“Clever, I grant you; good, I don’t see it. Them towels will lay heavy on his conscience for many a year; and him a parson too!”

“Oh, you know, Anne, he doesn’t say any thing *against* Horace; only he—he—” and the little mother passed her hand across her brow, and read the letter again, in the dim hope that on a second <sup>1</sup>crusal it might show in a more favourable light for her son.

“It’s rather a hard letter, Anne,” she exclaimed at length, the tears welling up in her large soft eyes. “It’s rather a hard letter. Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy!” she cried, fairly breaking down, and laying her head upon her old servant’s shoulder, and weeping her heart out in her sorrow.

“Bear up, bear up, my dear, good missis,” cried Anne Maggs, as she smoothed the mother’s soft brown hair with her great coarse hand, and hushed her to rest upon her bosom as if she had been a little child, consoling her with tender words, bidding her check her sobbing, and speaking so low, so gently, and so tenderly, that the little

music-mistress at length flung her arms round her servant's neck, and, after giving her a sounding kiss, retired to bed almost cheerful, to dream of Horace and the coming morrow.

## CHAPTER II.

### HIS OWN MASTER.

THE Tally-ho coach drew up at ten o'clock the next morning close to the Rev. Arthur Brandle's door, and, as the coachman couldn't wait while much leave-taking was carried on, Horace Bentley and two companions found themselves seated upon the outside and trundling along the road to town in no time, and their late tutor stood upon his door-step benignly waving an adieu with his large white hand, while the servants crowded to a side-window, and nodded and smiled until the vehicle was fairly out of sight. And now that the curtain had fallen upon the first act of Horace's existence,—now that he realised the fact he was about to commence the world,—a feeling of sadness mingled with the pleasure he experienced in his new liberty; and as the old house where he

had spent nearly three years of his young life vanished from his view, he felt the tear start, and the jocose ditty in which his youthful neighbour indulged jarred somewhat upon his ear and annoyed him. Horace was purely a hobbledehoy, but without the preponderance of knuckle and general awkwardness peculiar to that transition state. With frame well knit, and a preternaturally early effort at a whisker, and with a confident manner beyond his years, he appeared considerably older than his companion, Joseph Pulling, who was really two years his senior, but who, from the combined natural endowments of gingery hair, pale-blue eyes, and a phenomenal allowance of freckles, might have been any age from fifteen to thirty. The third youthful passenger was young Tom Larkins, who was much older than either of his friends, having been rusticated at Oxford, and only just ceased reading with the Rev. Mr. Brandle, who had winked at his numerous peculiarities, amongst which might have been enumerated smoking in his bedroom, driving a tandem, and a habit of pinching any

of the servants he might meet in the passages or on the stairs. But the vicar was of a forgiving spirit, and though he occasionally shook his head at some extraordinarily wild freak of Mr. Larkins, he never remonstrated with him severely; and indeed that high-spirited youth would not have brooked any great interference with his favourite pursuits. Envious people there were who accounted for the rev. gentleman's forbearance by declaring that he had views of a matrimonial nature for his daughter Martha, and that he well knew young Larkins was heir to a pretty property in Essex, where his father was a man of station and influence; but those who know the charitable motives invariably assigned to their neighbours' actions by the denizens of small provincial towns will scarcely consider their inuendoes worthy much attention. Martha Brandle was too tall, too bony, and too unconversational to please Tom Larkins; and indeed, whatever views her father may have had on the subject, there is no doubt that, had the Essex youth proposed, he would have been ignominiously rejected. But

Tom Larkins knew, as he elegantly expressed it, "a trick worth two of that," and limited his attentions in the feminine quarter to acts of the barest civility. Martha had different views and hopes, which centred in a curate of the neighbouring parish; and dire was the indignation of the vicar when that pallid young parson, who had seventy-five pounds a year and no expectations, coolly proposed for the hand of the lean young daughter of the house. They were married eventually, however; and the curate being presented to a living most unexpectedly soon after, the vicar was induced to overlook the rashness of the proceeding, though to his dying day he considered his daughter had completely sacrificed herself. When Tom Larkins heard of the match, he drank the bride's health, and sent her half a dozen handsomely-framed "Sketches in the Hunting-field" for her dining-room, which were placed in a row on the floor in the little room, with the umbrellas and goloshes, by the horrified husband the instant they arrived.

"Now, then, sober-sides," said Thomas Lar-



kins, Esquire, to Horace Bentley, as the coach rolled along the road in the pleasant sunshine of a bright September morning; "now, then, down-in-the-mouth, what's the matter? Sorry to leave old Brandle and his charming daughter, eh?"

"Yes, I *am* sorry to leave them, Larkins," replied Horace, "though I'm not dull on that account. I'm out of spirits because I'm in the clouds about the future,—about what I'm going to do."

"Oh!" said Tom, without the least interest in the tone of the exclamation; and he placed an immense cigar in his mouth, and puffed away unconcernedly. Tom Larkins couldn't understand how any body could be in doubt about the future. His future was all right. There was his paternal roof to fly to in case of need, with his cross-grained old governor, gouty, but generous enough if you got on his weak side, which the artful Tom knew too well how to do; there was a set of chambers awaiting his tenancy in St. James's, where every comfort could be procured for the asking, and to which he did *not* invite his

companions on the coach; his name was up at a good club, and his account at his banker's was sufficient to allow him all reasonable (and a good many unreasonable) pleasures. Tom Larkins was stout (robust he called it, but a tendency to extreme corpulency was the agony of his existence, for he came of a fat family, and well he knew it), healthy, high-spirited, selfish, and sensual; and such folks enjoy life as a rule, to which Mr. Tom didn't care about proving the exception. The blue-eyed, freckly lad who sat beside him, Joseph Pulling, was an unimaginative, good-natured fellow, always mistrusting his own abilities, but generally coming out of the trial victorious, notwithstanding. He and Horace were firm friends, and the prospect of their soon parting was not the least amongst the causes of Horace's depression.

“Come, old boy, rouse up,” cried Joe, in a cheery voice. “There's as good fish in the sea as ever came out. *My* prospects are not the liveliest in the world,—to be perched up in a back office down a lane in the City from ten till six of a day, with a governor as severe as Timour the

Tartar, and all the other clerks hating you because you're going to be one of the firm some day or other."

"You don't mean to tell me," said the aristocratic Larkins, "that it's in human nature to sit on a stool from ten till six?"

"Yes, I do," replied Pulling; "except it's the day before the China mail goes, when it's in human nature to sit till nine or ten."

Mr. Larkins stared at his commercial companion as if he were some strange animal, and wondered what remuneration could possibly be sufficient for so dreadful a feat of endurance.

"Well," broke in Horace Bentley, "before I'd do that I'd chop firewood or break stones."

"Would you?" retorted Pulling, "and why, pray?"

"Why?" rejoined Horace; "because I should be my own master; because I could begin when I liked, rest when I liked, leave off when I liked; because I couldn't endure to have a parcel of fellows around me eager to catch me tripping; because I couldn't stand being ordered to do this

and do that like a servant; because I couldn't be tied by the leg like a convict; because—”

“Because you would rather not work for your living, I expect,” rather techily interposed honest Joe Pulling; “because you've got all sorts of silly notions, old fellow, that can never be realised; because you're a trifle too clever, and fancy, because you can scribble verses and write a sermon for Mr. Brandle that he says is almost good enough to deliver, and because you were a great favourite with all of us, and could do just what you pleased with us, that you'll find it the same out in the world, and that steady-going plodding won't win the race in the end. Remember the fable of the hare and the tortoise; *I* do; and when I go into the governor's office, and get no more holidays than the other clerks, well, I sha'n't grumble—*much*.”

An awkward pause ensued after this tremendous oration, and Horace was evidently annoyed, as all are when we are told disagreeable truths before a third party. It was not in Horace's nature to be sulky, however; and no one could be

angry with Pulling, in whose open face frank good-humour sat enthroned, and whose general appearance—as the autumn wind blew his sandy hair about, whilst he kept on his hat with one great red hand, and held on to the rail with the other, his left leg dangling over the side of the coach, and his freckles developing immensely in the sun—was more calculated to excite laughter than anger; and Horace, his little fit of annoyance past, burst into a loud roar at the ludicrous figure of his youthful mentor, and declared that there was a good deal of truth in his remarks, after all.

And now that the ice was thawed, the two lads chatted on in a friendly way until they reached an inn in Oxford Street, where Horace got together his luggage, shook hands coolly with Larkins and cordially with Pulling, tipped the coachman much more liberally than he had any right to do, and calling a cab, rattled off with the air of a lord to his mother's shabby little lodgings in Soho.

## CHAPTER III.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

MRS. BENTLEY was almost too happy for words that day. She would not let her handsome son out of her sight; and when he went up-stairs to uncord his boxes (which operation he found had been already performed by Anne Maggs), she ran after him as if she couldn't bear to let him be monopolised by any body else even for a moment. She was jealous of Mrs. Molloy, with whom Horace shook hands in rather a condescending manner; and she was downright snappish with the children, who came in and clambered up her darling's legs, and pulled his incipient whisker, and danced over his natty boots with their muddy Bluchers. She had prepared a little dinner, which was a picture; but she could scarcely touch it, so absorbed was she in her son, and so anxious

that he should have enough "wholesome" food; her opinion of all school-diet being that it was scanty, and not sufficiently strengthening for a growing boy. Not that she spoke of her son as a growing boy; for, like all lads of his age, he wished to pass as having achieved the proper height of man, and was wilfully blind to the fact of his coat-sleeves becoming too short, and his waistcoats refusing to come as far down as they did when fresh from the tailor's hands. Indeed, though her son's manliness made her appear older, with a mother's unselfishness she delighted in looking upon him as a man, a protector, a shield, and a support. In this she was sturdily backed up by Anne Maggs, on whose countenance a permanent grin appeared to have settled, and who had not been heard to grunt once since the arrival of her young master. To see the way in which those two women piled the plate of the hungry but mortal lad,—to behold the obtrusive manner in which they heaped the tit-bits of the fowl before him, and smothered his plate with gravy, and filled up his glass with bottled beer

the instant he had drunk the smallest quantity,—to watch these two happy creatures' delight when the sly young rascal praised the potatoes, and said that he hadn't seen one properly boiled since he had left home last,—all this would have been very pleasant to witness; and so thought the lad in whose honour the banquet had been prepared, and who lolled back in his chair, and used his toothpick with quite a middle-aged air, to the evident surprise and admiration of his two companions.

Dinner over, the mother and son sat hand in hand, talking of old times, but avoiding all mention of the future; the lad looking into the kind eyes of his best friend, and reading nothing there but love, unselfish love, but little dreaming of the straits to which she had put herself for him, and knowing nothing of the bitter drudgery of her life, the ceaseless toil and trouble of her daily existence. If he ever gave the fact of his mother's living in so cheap and dingy a locality a thought, he put it down to eccentricity and a natural timidity, which shunned the great, noisy, bustling,



busy thoroughfares of the more showy portions of the town. Besides, he had been but little in London of late years, and Mrs. Bentley had continually talked before him of moving to more elegant apartments; but it was only to blind her boy to the fact that she was living cheaply and miserably for the one great object of her life. On the occasion of the present visit, however, the lad's eyes seemed to be somewhat open to the fact that his mother was living in an out-of-the-way shabby sort of place; and he shuddered as he reflected upon the horror with which he should receive a visit from the brilliant Mr. Tom Larkins in that close little room, with its murky strip of a mantel-piece, and a rug that had been mended in more than one place by the combined efforts of Anne Maggs and Mrs. Molloy. The aristocratic conversation of Mr. Larkins, the elevated notions and ambitious views of that young gentleman, had not been altogether without their effect on Horace Bentley. A certain haughtiness with inferiors, a reserve with strangers, and a contempt for trade, were natural to him; and his companions at Mr.

Brandle's had set him down as rather a swell than otherwise; for indeed he looked a perfect young English gentleman, and his rather authoritative manner sat upon him with a better grace than upon Tom Larkins, though the latter was the son and heir to a landed proprietor, with a town and country house, and a brother-in-law in the Ministry. When, therefore, the candles were lighted and the meagre curtains drawn, and Anne Maggs and his mother seated at their work, Horace began to look at every thing with a severe and critical eye, and to notice not only the holes in the rug, and the narrowness of the afore-mentioned mantel-piece, but to remark with surprise that his mother wore a very common dress, and, now that the first flush of pleasure and excitement had left her face, that she was very thin, and that her eyes were very sunken, and her taper fingers more delicate than they used to be. He noticed that the candles were of different lengths, suggesting their having been burnt singly, from motives of economy; and a pair of his mother's boots, which had been accidentally left under a chair beside him, exhibited

two decided patches, than which, to the lofty mind of this noble youth, nothing more degrading and poverty-stricken could be. All these things and many more did Horace jot down as he sat there apparently dozing, whilst his mother and her old servant stitched away in the sublimest ignorance as to his reflections. Then it was that, for the first time in his life, he began to think seriously upon his present state and future prospects. Then it was that a dim idea of his mother's extreme poverty and self-denial began for the first time to suggest itself to him, and that he read the true tale of that shabby dress, those wasted hands. He could scarcely realise at once that he, the late companion of gentlemen whose fathers held stakes in the country, the careless young fellow "reading with a tutor,"—the very phrase being suggestive of monetary ease and independence,—that he, the spoiled and favoured amongst the select few who had been permitted to receive the direct instruction of a famous senior wrangler,—that he should rudely awake from a dream of comparative comfort, and find all around him but little removed

from actual squalor. A thousand circumstances, which he had scarcely noted at the time, now crowded to his recollection, and convinced him of his mother's wretched means, of his own miserable insignificance. He knew that he inherited nothing from his father, of whom, indeed, his mother never spoke, and whom he did not in the least remember; but he had never seriously reflected upon his prospects or position, and had staved off thoughts of the morrow in the careless thoughtlessness of his nature. He was aroused from his painful reverie by a loud knock at the front-door, and the announcement by Mrs. Molloy of Mr. Phineas Stone.

The person who entered the room (and before whose fearful presence Anne Maggs tremblingly vanished to the realms below) was a tall gaunt man of fifty-eight or thereabouts, with high cheek-bones, an iron-gray head of stubbly hair, an enormous shirt-collar, and a coat buttoned to his throat like a police-inspector. He shook hands coldly with Mrs. Bentley, who coloured and grew very nervous on his entrance; and placing his gloves in his hat, and running his long bony hands through

his hair, stared somewhat severely at the elegant Horace. Mr. Stone had passed a great portion of his life in India, and had returned to England with an unhealthy liver and no digestion worth mentioning. He was the relative whom we have mentioned as paying a large portion of Horace's school-expenses; but as he had been spending most of his time abroad, principally at the German watering-places, he had not set eyes on Mrs. Bentley's son for a considerable period. Horace rose and bowed rather awkwardly; for he had been interrupted abruptly in a train of any thing but pleasant thought, and he felt very like a culprit beneath the cold stern eye of Phineas Stone. That gentleman, however, held out his hand, and shook Horace's with a short sharp grip, which said, as plainly as a shake of the hand *could* say, "No nonsense with *me*, young man. I'm Stone by name and stone by nature."

"So, ma'am, your son has returned to you safe and sound; and I suppose you think him an uncommon fine fellow?" said Mr. Stone, with a grim smile.

The widow replied that she was very happy to have him with her, that he would be a great comfort to her, and one or two other commonplaces which made Horace feel rather uncomfortable, but which had no visible effect on the elderly visitor.

“It’s rather late to call, ma’am,” continued Mr. Stone; “but I’m going abroad in a day or two. They tell me England don’t suit me, ma’am; and as to Pepsine, it’s a swindle. I’m better abroad,—much better; and as my hat covers my family, I can go where I like—hum! I can go where I like.”

And Mr. Phineas Stone looked round defiantly, as if courting a denial; for he had a loud and decisive manner of saying the most trifling things, and was despotic and autocratic to a degree in the smallest and most unimportant matters. Nobody contradicting him, Mr. Stone, after chafing considerably, and running his fingers through his hair and whiskers, apparently in high dudgeon at some secret annoyance, eventually cooled down and asked Horace how old he was.

“You look more,—you look more,” remarked

the visitor sharply, on hearing the lad's age. And then he continued jerkily, "I suppose you know lots of Latin and Greek, and the use of the globes, and all that sort of thing, eh?"

Horace replied, with a smile, that he believed he had not altogether wasted his educational chances, and finished with a delicate compliment to the generosity of his relative, which brought the tears into Mrs. Bentley's eyes, and was not altogether without its effect upon the phlegmatic Phineas himself.

"And what are you going to do now?" asked the visitor, sitting back and staring at the boy as if he expected him to button up his coat and commence a profession on the spot.

"That, sir," replied Horace, "I have not decided on, and should be very glad of your advice, if you would give it me."

This was what Mr. Stone wanted. He liked being asked his opinion, and was very fond of giving gratuitous advice upon all matters. As, however, he had defrayed the greater portion of Horace's educational expenses, and as he was a

near relation, and the only relation who had ever taken any notice of him, it was quite right and proper that he should have a say in so important a matter.

“There are various professions,” didactically observed the iron-gray relation; “hum! several professions; but the thing is—hum!—which profession to choose, because we can’t afford any thing further for college, can we, ma’am?” and he glanced furtively at the shabby dress of Mrs. Bentley.

“No; we must choose a profession; we—hum!—must choose a profession;” and Mr. Stone drummed with his fingers on the table, looking at Horace out of the corner of his eye, and waiting for a remark from that young gentleman.

Horace had never seriously thought upon the matter; he had no particular liking or distaste for any calling that was a gentlemanlike one; on this he was very distinct, except perhaps the Church, for which he didn’t feel sufficiently serious.

At this Mr. Stone looked very gray, and Mrs. Bentley threw an alarmed glance at her son; but



Horace was warming with his subject, and continued, that the law was a noble calling, so was physic; that literature was the noblest of all, but that could be combined with any other; that he abominated the notion of an office, and would sooner emigrate than be a Government clerk. And walking up and down the room with a full-grown air as he fluently disclosed his sentiments, he greatly surprised his elderly relative, who sat in wonder and amazement at the boy's eloquence, with his mouth open.

“Well, sir,” at length remarked Mr. Stone, “I should imagine Parliament to be your proper sphere; for such a gift of the gab I never came across,—never. As, however, members of the House of Commons are not paid, it is highly necessary that a profession should be chosen—humph!—a profession should be chosen. As to your not liking the Church, that is your own affair; besides which, it would certainly have entailed further educational expense. The Bar is a noble calling, and your eloquence and assurance would stand you well in need as a barrister. But,

hang it," continued Phineas, speaking more to himself than to Horace, "the gift of the gab is invaluable in whatever profession a man may choose,—nothing like being able to talk; I never could—never." Then reverting to the original topic, and looking somewhat contemptuously at his youthful relative, he continued, "You mentioned literature, sir, I fancy—ha! ha!—and said it could be combined with any other profession; I hope you won't desert the calling you may adopt for what some stupid dolts term 'courting the Muses.' I never knew any good come from scribbling yet, sir."

Horace was all ready with a flowery, argumentative, and indignant reply, but an appealing glance from his mother bid him pause, and with a scarcely-concealed shrug of contempt for Mr. Stone's remarks, he held his tongue and prepared to endure more.

"Now, sir," continued that gentleman, "I have a proposition. I am upon terms of some intimacy with a medical gentleman of the name of Pinto, a man of great skill,—though I must confess my

dyspepsia is too much for him. Happening to meet him yesterday, I mentioned you, and alluded to the difficulties which beset young men without present means and with no expectations—humph!—*no* expectations.” This last remark being given with an approach to actual unctiousness. “Mr. Pinto suggested that the medical profession was perhaps the most feasible, and suggested an arrangement by which you might become articulated to him for a certain sum, to be—for convenience, as we are all poor, ma’am—paid annually. He argued, very justly, that the medical profession was a noble one; and concluded by saying that a doctor could always get his living, even if he went out as a surgeon to an emigrant-ship.”

A somewhat rueful expression spread itself over the features of Mrs. Bentley at this by no means brilliant climax to her relation’s remarks; but still there was no denying that the suggestions were kindly meant; and as for Horace, his imagination was set ablaze at once at the prospect of actually entering a profession, for the

commencement of Mr. Stone's speech had not promised any thing speedily tangible. Nothing, that young gentleman declared, would so delight him as to make one amongst that glorious band of heroes who battled with disease, and fearlessly fought the good fight against the pallid spectre, and so often gained the day. It was what he had always dreamed of (he hadn't, but thought he had when he said it); it was the calling of all others to which his nature and disposition were most suited. As for the Bar, he despised it; for its members were the slaves of chance, and were not the champions of justice, but hireling spouters, who were too glad to take up the cause of the first side which handed them its fee. And if he wrote as a doctor, it should be medical books—books which should be handed down to posterity as happy specimens of a cultivated literary style, combined with a close appreciation and knowledge of the subjects treated. This was something better and nobler than stewing in a Government office every day for a wretched pittance, but quite sufficient honorarium for paring

finger-nails, reading the newspapers, and taking luncheons; which pursuits, he believed, were the most arduous amongst the daily work of these priggish officials. A doctor! why a doctor might make almost any money; and as to the good a doctor might do his fellow-creatures,—the poor people he could attend for nothing, the advice he could give his friends gratis, the countless kindnesses, in fact, he could shower upon the world at large,—all this was untold. Oh, the medical profession, by all means. Medicine for ever! And Mr. Stone might be assured he would never regret assisting his grateful young relative at the outset of his professional career.

The boy's enthusiasm communicated itself to his parent, and grateful tears trembled in Mrs. Bentley's eyes, as she poured forth a mass of incoherent thanks to the kind relative who had hastened to meet her boy so soon, and put him in the right road for gaining an honourable living. Phineas Stone liked being thanked, and the excited manner and tone of genuine gratitude of the lad tickled his vanity immensely. He even conde-

scended to smile, and take a glass of sherry-and-water (dreadful public-house sherry it was, brown and fiery to a degree),—all that he was permitted, he observed, for his medical man allowed him, and his liver led him a sorry existence; and when he rose to depart, he made an appointment for the morrow with Horace, who showed him to the door with many a salaam, and as grateful a heart as any in Soho. So Horace was to be a doctor. And the mother pushed his curling hair from his brow, and kissed him and congratulated him; and Anne Maggs prophesied great things for him; and the intelligence, spreading to the rest of the premises, caused great excitement amongst the Molloy family, and rendered Horace a very fearful character, from that moment, in the eyes of the olive-branches in the lower regions. It had soon been settled, this important step; and Horace's ardour, it must be confessed, cooled down when, during his ponderings in the neat little bedroom the tender care of his mother had made so snug and cosy, he remembered that portion of Phineas's remarks which spoke of the surgeoncy on board an emi-

grant-ship. There was little of the adventurer in Master Horace's disposition, and he turned upon his pillow with a sigh as he thought of the separation from his only friend which his new pursuit would entail, and the pleasure he experienced at the prospect was embittered with this sorrowful reflection.

Mr. Archer Pinto, the surgeon who attended Mr. Stone, resided in a big melancholy house in Bloomsbury, and was a general practitioner in a lucrative way of business. He was a short, stout, bald little person, with a self-satisfied double-chin, a calm bland manner, which refused to be ruffled even in cases of the extremest emergency, a tall wife with a passion for poetry, an only daughter, and two artied pupils. His house was conducted upon principles of the strictest economy, and was managed by Miss Pinto, who had a marvellously aged head upon young shoulders, and an eye to the main chance which was really wonderful to behold in a lady of such tender years. Miss Pinto was master and mistress both; servants trembled

at her nod, artiled pupils basely truckled to her, her father admired her with a certain awe, and her mother was actually afraid of her. Terror paled the face of the family-butcher when a message came to him that Miss Pinto would call round to speak about that too fresh leg of mutton, or the joint of beef in which the bone had sadly predominated; in the most cowardly manner would that burly tradesman vanish into the parlour at the approach of the doctor's daughter, leaving his trembling spouse to apologise, and promise, and humble herself before that awful young lady. In a broken-spirited manner, and with many tears, would Sarah Jane confide to cook the fact that her young mistress "was a lump of suspicion, and said such 'arsh things to her afore them pupils as made her wish 'erself dead afore she'd come to the 'ouse at all;" and as for the weak-eyed young man, Hopkinson, who had never been intended for service, having had views originally of a missionary nature, and possessing an aunt in Devonshire with quite a snug little property,—that poor youth was never himself when, as he described it,



Miss Pinto fixed him with "that eye of hern," and dropped plates, and coloured, and trembled in a manner delightful to the pupils, but very painful for the casual guest to behold. Cook, who never remained long in her place, invariably commenced with a battle-royal for her rights; but Miss Pinto went at the great whale of a woman with her little sword-fish severity and sharpness, and speedily came up-stairs from the scene of strife flushed but triumphant. The physic-boys—there were two—would hide at her approach; and once, when she was kept to her room for a week through influenza, those poor lads said it was as good as a holiday to them, and heard of her convalescence with mutual regrets. Miss Pinto, in fact, was what our transatlantic brethren would term a "caution;" and Miss Pinto was in the drawing-room when Mr. Phineas Stone and his *protégé* were announced.

Her father had told her all about it, and had left the matter in her hands. He was obliged to go out of town to see a patient, and Mr. Stone and she could arrange it, she had no doubt.

Mamma was at home, certainly; but mamma never interfered in these affairs, and there was no necessity to disturb her. The premium was to be four hundred pounds, payable, in order to suit Mr. Stone's convenience, in four annual instalments; a mode of settlement to which she was herself averse, but papa had given his word without consulting her, and papa of course was master in his own house. Mr. Bentley would find them a very agreeable family, and the two resident pupils gentlemanlike and sociable; they kept a plain but wholesome table; and papa's practice was so extensive, that any pupil of his enjoyed peculiar and special advantages. Mr. Bentley would understand, as soon as his articles were signed, that he was an "apprentice," and bound to obey his "master" (this with a light laugh); and they should get on very comfortably together, and be very excellent friends, she had no doubt.

This was the sum of Miss Pinto's speech, which she uttered in a cut-and-dried and parrotty manner, as if she had learnt it from a book, and which amused Horace, until it came to the words

“apprentice” and “master,” at which it must be confessed he coloured and winced. Miss Pinto was not slow to perceive this; for she had glanced at him from the corner of her gray eyes several times during the course of her remarks, and indeed there was something high and mighty in Mr. Bentley’s air that nettled the young lady, and added extra point to the little shaft she let fly at his self-importance.

The bewildered Phineas stared at the eloquent damsel in extreme admiration at her volubility and business tone, and would have agreed to any thing she had proposed in blank amazement, but Mr. Pinto himself unexpectedly entered; and the doctor’s appearance at once diverted the current of his ideas into more selfish and dyspeptic channels. The parchment was produced, the signatures were applied, the first instalment handed over, and Mr. Bentley was an apprentice to Mr. Pinto, and a medical student, or, as his facetious fellow-pupil Bundy termed it, a “sucking saw-bones.”

The phrase “medical student” possesses a

certain charm for many lads. To their imagination it pictures a rollicking youth in large-pattered trousers, a knowing cock of the hat, a case of instruments in his pocket ready for any casualty, a defiant air of gentlemanly vagabondism, a combination of the scientific and the convivial, very alluring and free and pleasant. A halo of hilarity surrounds the medical student in the eyes of those who know nothing about him, and with them the "hall" or "college" is a kind of cliff over which the quondam reveller topples into sudden respectability and soberness. Horace had shared this supposition, and he had looked forward to joining the profession with other and more jovial views than those on which he had descanted so plausibly to Mr. Stone. These blissful prospects, however, began to dissolve from the very moment he placed his foot upon Mr. Pinto's faded drawing-room Brussels, and each sentence of the young lady's speech served to destroy the vision, whilst the climax was reached when the indenture was signed; for, as Mr. Pinto shook his hand, and welcomed him as a member of the

establishment, he felt himself every inch a slave, and a sigh, which was by no means one of relief, escaped his lips. With Mr. Stone it was far different. He had carried his object in a dignified though remarkably rapid manner. He had settled the lad for life, and done his duty to his relation Mrs. Bentley; for she was his relation, and his near relation, notwithstanding all that had passed in earlier days—hum!—in earlier days. Filled with satisfaction at having achieved his desires, he invited Horace to dine with him at a capital tavern in the City, where, for a dyspeptic and bilious person, he flourished as hearty and suicidal a knife and fork as any diner east of Temple Bar that day. The parting between mother and son, though Horace was only going about a mile and a half from her, was a sad one; and Anne Maggs actually howled with disappointment as she helped to place his trunks upon the cab, for she had looked forward to her young master as a permanent institution in Little Green Street, and considered Mr. Stone a monster for separating a mother from her child. Sooth to say, Horace

himself was not so enthusiastically surgical in his views since seeing the Pinto establishment and signing the indenture, and left his sobbing parent, who exhorted him, with many a hug and tender kiss, to think of her continually, and become a great man, with by no means the enthusiasm he exhibited when the subject was broached by Mr. Stone. Upon his arrival at the surgeon's house, the weak-eyed young man laboured with his trunks up-stairs, and Miss Pinto gave him a frigid shake of the hand, which chilled him; whilst Mr. Buncombe, one of the resident pupils, grasped him with the fervour of an old friend, declared he was delighted to make his acquaintance, and was affable and pleasant beyond measure. Mr. Nixon, the other pupil, was very pale and studious and hungry, and kept himself greatly to his room, with his books and his bones and his midnight oil; for he was reading hard for the college, and couldn't waste much of his valuable time upon society. And so Horace settled down into his new line of life, and the first month or two of his probation revealed to him daily sur-

prises which amused him, and gave him by no means elevated notions of his teacher, who, by the way, never taught him any thing, and who got as much work out of him as he possibly could in the daytime, and knocked him up at night to mix up draughts and roll up pills for such of his patients as might require immediate remedies. Mr. Pinto was not one of those genteel medical practitioners who write their prescriptions in a chemist's book, and leave the shopman to handle the unpleasant drugs and concoct the unsavoury mixtures. Mr. Pinto had an eye to profit, and, under the pretence that he always liked his patient's medicines to be prepared beneath his own eye, he had turned a little back-room into a surgery; and here, from morning until night, with the exception of meal-times, did Horace spend his days, surrounded with physic and doctor's paraphernalia, and meeting the Pinto family and the pupils at dinner with the odour of colocynth clinging to his clothes, and imparting a flavour to the tea-table, which was by no means appetising to strangers. A red-headed assistant of Mr. Pin-

to's, Mr. Gasher, who had never passed any examination, but was popularly supposed among the pupils to know much more than his employer, set Horace to his prescriptions in no time, and taught him so much in the course of a week or two that the neophyte was surprised at his own acuteness, and put his hand to the proper bottles on the shelves with all the skill of a compositor at work. Indeed, to this he was considerably helped by Mr. Pinto himself, whose treatment of general cases was rather apt to run in a groove, and he had stock remedies, which were procured chiefly from the wholesale druggist, whilst he ignored the existence of certain more expensive preparations; and this simple mode of arrangement rendered the situation of mixture-maker and pill-compounder very much less laborious than it might have been. In course of time Horace found himself assuming quite a medical air; and upon the next-door neighbour being attacked with spasms in the absence of Messrs. Pinto and Gasher, Horace took upon himself to prescribe, and with a success which surprised himself, and saved Mr. Pinto one



of his most lucrative patients. But, with the flush of this small triumph to warm him to his work, Horace felt by no means an ecstatic worshipper of his profession: indeed, under the circumstances, was it so much to be wondered at? A mile and a half from his mother's lodgings, he was so tied to the surgery that he could scarcely ever get to see her. With no one to direct his studies, or to smooth the actual difficulties of the outset, he blundered over a big volume of *Materia Medica*, and read a great "Practice of Physic," till he fancied he suffered himself from every disease he read about in that awful book, and tossed at night on his pillow worn out and unhappy, and yawned and groaned aloud by day, with no one to sympathise with him,—no one except the weak-eyed young man, who really did seem to pity him, and who took every opportunity of going into the surgery and entertaining him with dismal accounts of his own early life, of his blighted hopes, of the degradation of his family through a drunken father, and other light and amusing matter calculated to cheer up Mr.

Bentley's spirits and break the dull monotony of the winter days.

With a small uncomfortable grate, which smoked when the door was shut, and went out almost the instant it was left to itself, Horace sat in that wretched little back-room, so redolent of rhubarb and other full-flavoured drugs, through the dark and dismal days of December, generally alone, and invariably wretched. He bore up well enough for one who, as we have hinted, had no remarkable strength of mind or powers of endurance—for one who was highly sensitive and, to speak honestly, a little selfish, and who had so suddenly learnt the bitter truth that he was much poorer than he had ever imagined, and must endure the portion of the humble worker for his bread. But the thought that he was to spend two long weary years in that lonesome chamber, and to drudge on until such time as the signed articles stated he was to be permitted to commence his hospital studies (oh, blissful prospect of liberty and life!), often completely bore him down; and he would hang his head over the

scanty fire, and drop scalding tears upon the ashes, in the solitary bitterness of his soul. To say that he envied Buncombe and Nixon, who went out to the hospital in the morning, coming back to dinner, and to freedom for the evening, would be to vastly depreciate the feeling those gentlemen produced in the breast of the unhappy Horace. To hear them dilate on their day's doings—to hear them describe to Pinto the extraordinary case of tetanus which came in yesterday, or detail in a minute and graphic manner, which would have sickened some young ladies, but had no effect on the unimpressionable Miss P., the skill with which Mr. O'Slash had performed some ticklish surgical feat,—irritated him to madness; and he would retire after dinner to his smoky little surgery, with hatred and malice rankling in his bosom, and a growing horror at the drugs and his dry books that would have made his mother fear for the future, had she known the nature of her poor boy's sentiments. There are few nobler folks than the honest, upright doctor; he whose heart is in his profession, who looks upon his calling as

a great and good one, and upon his educated skill as a blessed power to be used with patient care and ever-watchful tenderness; but no more pernicious thing crawls over the face of this fair earth than the small-minded, pettifogging, little medical man, who worms himself into a practice by a million meannesses, and gathers in his yearly income with fingers as uncleanly as his conscience.

With a personal contempt for his supposed instructor, dispirited by the daily drudgery and monotony of his existence, Horace became misanthropical and selfish, and he dragged through the first two years of his apprenticeship with much the same enthusiasm for his work that a galley-slave might feel when chained to his oar, or a convict experience for his compulsory toil. Now and then he would spend a day with his mother, whose careworn face and sad voice would send him back to Bloomsbury more disheartened than ever; and the observant eyes of Anne Maggs saw how the young man was averse to his doctor's life, and that his mother was gradually losing all hope that he would succeed. When he entered at the

hospital—the first fee for which was sent over from Ems by Phineas Stone, with a curt note concluding with a comprehensive growl at all watering-places, and Ems in particular—a new tone was given to his life, and his profession assumed a fresh interest; for he now saw more of the world and less of the Pintos, and the interest which surrounded his daily hospital experience was enhanced by the recollection of the two dark dull years that had gone for ever.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GLENBURNS ARRIVE IN TOWN.

“LORD GLENBURN and his new wife have returned to England, my dear,” observed Pinto to Mrs. Pinto one evening at tea. “I have had a visit from Mr. Ledbitter, his lordship’s confidential servant, this afternoon. Mind, Mr. Marshall, that you are always particularly careful with any medicines going to Portman Square.” This was to the new apprentice, who modestly replied he would do his best.

Yes, the Glenburns had come back and had taken up their residence in the family mansion, and were evidently about to shine with hospitable splendour during the coming season. Under the able direction of Mr. Ledbitter, assisted by Mrs. Gaunt, her ladyship’s housekeeper, the old house had been redecorated, and made very splendid for

the reception of my lord and my lady; servants had been hired, and every thing had been set in working order against the return of the master and mistress from abroad, and their permanent settlement in England. Lord Glenburn was not so wealthy as some of his brother nobles, nor were his estates completely uninvolved, neither had his reputation been of the most spotless; but absence had considerably dulled the recollection of the latter drawback, and society was quite ready to receive the wandering lord upon his return to its forgiving bosom, and more so from the fact of reports from Continental travellers assuring it that the rollicking peer had settled down, had married a handsome showy wife, and intended closing a hitherto shady career as a respectable member of the upper ten thousand. It was marvellous how well his virtues were remembered, and the escapades of his early life merely alluded to as pleasant frolics, or else not alluded to at all. His lordship had been a little wild, a little reckless, and, some elderly cynics added, a little brutal, in his pleasures before he went abroad—not altogether, the

same heartless sneerers remarked, for his amusement or for simple change of scene. Ugly stories of threatening mortgagees, and savage bill-discounters, and even disappointed friends, had circulated at the clubs for some time after Glenburn's Continental move. Messrs. Mordecai met Mr. Colchester (his lordship's attorney) with teeth bared to the gums with grinning rage, and almost shook their fists in that placid lawyer's countenance when he made certain proposals to them, and explained the entangled condition of his employer's affairs. A house-decorator and a jeweller or two were frenzied with savage disappointment when the quiet man of business showed them the utter uselessness of threats and exposure, telling them to be calm, concluding by twisting them round his fingers like so many puny cords. Poor Colchester! he had his work cut out for him; but he never left his patron's business until he had arranged and settled every thing—persuading one and bullying (in a gentle but by no means ineffectual manner) another, flattering and cajoling a third, and promising a fourth, in the event of matters being amicably



settled, future favours, based on the principles of ready money and enormous profit; so that in time things began to look more manageable, and Lord Glenburn led so dull and sober a life abroad, that he had time to discover that the family gout had not forgotten him, and no lack of opportunity for repentance for—to use the mildest term—a mis-spent life. Lord Glenburn, however, was not a man to “give in,” as he would have termed any composition with his conscience; he was a man to “die game,” to revel on to the end and expire with a drinking-song upon his lips, like a bemused swan. The son of a notorious four-bottle debauchee, whose villanies and heartlessness had made him the terror for miles round his house in Bucks, and had earned for him the unenviable name amongst the poor of “The bad Lord Glenburn,” the present nobleman had succeeded, to some extent, in keeping up the family reputation, though his pleasures were less coarse and his peccadilloes less public. Still the county families fought shy of him,—much to his lordship’s gratification,—and there was no very general mourning when he

deserted the home of his fathers for a foreign shore. Those more selfish and less thick-skinned dependents who reaped advantage from his injudicious bounty bewailed his absence, it is true, and would growl together in the alehouse over the deserted look of the old Hall, and deplore the short-sighted folly of its proprietor when his marriage became noised about. Who the new mistress was, where she had come from, what was her family name, nobody knew; no, not even Mr. Ledbitter, Lord Glenburn's man, who had been with him from boyhood, and, with this single exception, was supposed to know the spring of every secret drawer in that complicated cabinet, his lordship's mind.

It was a bad mind to know; but Ledbitter served his master with a blind servility which questioned nothing. A pale, sleek, respectable person, with no particular expression, bald-headed, trim in his attire, noiseless in his movements, always present when required, but never in the way unless needed, skilled in all the duties of the valet, with a certain dignified air of self-importance mingled with a deferential manner to superiors that

pleased and flattered,—Mr. Ledbitter would have been perfection to any master ; but to Lord Glenburn he was simply invaluable, and was the only creature who could manage him in all tempers and at all times. Considering the clock-like regularity of Mr. Ledbitter's existence, and the mechanical precision which characterised the routine of his daily life, it was somewhat surprising that one day he should commit such an indiscretion as to escape from his natural groove and actually fall ill. And very ill indeed Mr. Ledbitter did fall ; so ill that he had to quit his master for some months, and recruit his strength at a favourite watering-place, where, if he liked, he could have entered the very best society, so imposing was his bearing, so majestic his bald head, and so suggestive of pecuniary independence his general appearance on the parade. It was during this severe illness that his master, who he thought could never get on without him,—and very badly, it must be confessed, he *did* get on,—it was during this illness, we say, that Lord Glenburn met a certain lady and made her his wife. When Ledbitter

heard of it, he stared in the blankest amazement, and an expression of annoyance and even of anger passed over his pale face, and a fierce look shot out of those generally expressionless eyes that would have surprised those among his acquaintance who considered him a mild and agreeable gentleman, and one who seemed never to experience any particular emotion. Why Lord Glenburn should have married, he could not divine; why he should have married a nobody, appeared to Ledbitter a matter of profound astonishment. However, he carefully folded his master's letter in his pocket, and started for Portman Square to meet Mrs. Gaunt, the new housekeeper, sent home in advance by Lady Glenburn, there to arrange for the reception of the noble pair, who were expected shortly to arrive in England.

Mrs. Gaunt had heard of Mr. Ledbitter; for indeed Lord Glenburn, who had been suffering since his marriage from the hereditary affection, had continually regretted the absence of his valet, and held him up as a shining contrast to the servant who temporarily attended on him so fre-

quently, that Ledbitter's name had become a perfect bugbear in the eyes of Mrs. Gaunt, and her reception of him was as uncordial as decent courtesy would permit. The chilling manner of the new housekeeper, however, had little effect upon the self-possessed Ledbitter, who moved about the house with a calm authority that carried with it much more importance than Mrs. Gaunt's somewhat loud and dictatorial style of ordering trifles. Mr. Ledbitter seemed to command respect as of right, and he at once assumed his old position in the house; whilst Mrs. Gaunt's boisterous magnificence was unheeded, and her orders were filtered through the Ledbitter sieve, to be passed or retained as might please that placid but powerful vessel. Mrs. Gaunt was not slow to perceive this, and an instinctive hatred sprang up between my lady's confidential servant and my lord's own man, which augured by no means pleasantly for the domestic peace of the household.

“If ever I saw a woman with a bad unscrupulous countenance, that's the female!” said Ledbitter to himself the first time they had an argument.

“That man’s a fiend in human form, or my name’s not Jane Gaunt!” hissed the housekeeper through her teeth, as she went to her own room with her point uncarried.

Back came the noble pair in due time, his lordship techy and dissatisfied with every thing but his valet, with whom he shook hands almost heartily; her ladyship surveying all with a calm gratification, kissing Mrs. Gaunt with a fervour which surprised the domestics, impressing them, as she passed to her room, as being a tall showy lady, with a profusion of glossy black hair, very white teeth, and an air which one susceptible footman described as “queen-like,” and another—a sarcastic creature from a *very* great family—as “’aughty, but with a more commercial air than the reel thing.”

And so Lord Glenburn slept once more in the home of his fathers, with the pleasant consciousness that he once again could face the world with a handsome wife upon his arm, and take his lawful place amongst his peers.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE STRANGE CUSTOMER.

THE world—that is, a portion of it—welcomed back the prodigal with open arms. Some were too young to know much of Glenburn's early days; others didn't choose to recall disagreeable reminiscences; and many cared nothing about character, so long as there was blood and position, and a grand establishment and display. To do Glenburn justice, he in nowise truckled to the leaders of *ton*, and rather pooh-poohed any pretence to fashionable position, sneering at it so as to smooth away the unpleasantness of the slights he anticipated for his wife and himself. Her ladyship, however, by no means shared these sentiments, and it was with secret delight that she found herself engulfed in the giddy Maelstrom of aristocratic revelry; and she certainly took up her position in the noble ranks, to which she was

a stranger, with a tact and talent that surprised her husband. Naturally excitable and enthusiastic, she toned down those ebullient qualities to the proper level; and really, with her fine figure, her white throat and arms, her rich black hair and bright full eyes, she moved about the drawing-rooms of her new acquaintance with something very like the air of a duchess. She was greatly admired, especially by the men, with whom she was evidently rather more at ease than those of her own sex, though a very palpable scar on the left cheek somewhat marred her beauty, and suggested an awkward accident or ugly blow in early life. It is wonderful how women fashion themselves to any sphere they may be called upon to adorn, and how naturally they appear to glide into the fresh groove placed ready for them by the hand of fortune, and fill their new-found station as though they had been born to it. How different it is with men! How awkward and shambling, how loutish and glum, looks the "young man" who calls on Sunday evening for Sarah, housemaid! how miserable he seems in his



stiff new clothes, his creaking boots and shiny hat! and how different, how dapper, neat, and comfortable appears Sarah, in a dress altogether too smart for her station, tightly-fitting gloves, boots with military heels like her mistress, and a bonnet that might have come from the Burlington Arcade! How ill-matched the pair look as they hurry down the street to be out of sight and enjoy themselves! And doesn't a thought strike the looker-on that something very like a lady might soon be made of that trim and highly-ribboned servant-lass, but that no gust of good-fortune could blow the innate vulgarism from the loutish lover, who hates his holiday attire, and longs to be back again into his corduroys with the familiar pockets and the glistening knees? Throughout society it is the same. Women settle down calmly and with perfect self-possession, though the party is four times the size they had expected to find it; whilst the men, who are out of their element, hang about like hobbledehoys, and get into the way, and have doors opened suddenly against their heads, and cover themselves with confusion,

and come to grief in a hundred ways. No one could have told that Lady Glenburn had been born in a far lower sphere; that his lordship's proposal had surprised her even more than Ledbitter; that she had, previous to her arrival in Portman Square, never entered a drawing-room of superior calibre to Camden Town; and that a few months back a bow from a real live lord would have sent her into hysterics of delight. Nobody of course asked her husband impertinent questions, though she was pretty freely canvassed by her female acquaintance, and, considering every thing, came out of the ordeal remarkably well; and it was generally set down that she was the daughter of some foreign-watering-place-haunting half-pay captain or retired doctor, or something commonplace and respectable of that class. Little Joe Dapper, who affected to know every thing and every body, gave out that he had heard her father had been under Government; and this somewhat vague statement was deemed satisfactory, and people left off troubling their heads about what she had been, contented with knowing what she

was, and confessing that she was a decidedly fine woman, with her wits about her.

Mr. Ledbitter, however, was by no means satisfied. To him a mystery was every thing. He knew so many of his master's secrets, that the silence his lordship maintained on this great subject rankled in his bosom and enraged him. Whether he really liked his master or hated him, we shall presently let the reader know; but for the time being it is sufficient for him to learn that wherever Lady Glenburn went she was followed by the watchful eyes of her husband's valet, who was in his turn watched by Mrs. Gaunt, the housekeeper her ladyship had brought with her, and in whose society in her own rooms she passed much of her time. Mrs. Gaunt was a tall woman—as tall as her mistress, and as stately—with heavy eyebrows and a settled frown, a determined mouth, and large masculine limbs. She was not the kind of person to offend, and well Ledbitter knew it. As we have stated, the valet and the housekeeper were unfriendly from the first; but Ledbitter now strove by all means in his power to smooth away

the unpleasant impression his manners and authority had evidently produced. With this intention he treated Mrs. Gaunt with the greatest possible respect upon all occasions, and strove, by many artful little contrivances, to win her regard. Mrs. Gaunt accepted all his politenesses with a grim courtesy; but if Ledbitter imagined those eagle eyes didn't pierce through his disguise, he was considerably mistaken. Mr. Ledbitter was a clever man, but Mrs. Gaunt was housekeeper and my lady's confidential servant; and most of us know the powers possessed by the favourite of the mistress of the house. If Mrs. Gaunt desired any additional comforts in her already snug room, they were immediately ordered by my lady. If any luckless servant fell under Mrs. Gaunt's displeasure, she went that moment, and an appeal to her ladyship simply resulted in a ratification of the housekeeper's orders. An unfortunate young footman, engaged at Ledbitter's recommendation, and in whom that gentleman took some interest, knowing his friends, and promising to use his influence to advance him, was packed off in the most sudden

manner, under his patron's very nose, for some very trifling misdemeanour; and when Mr. Ledbitter remonstrated, he was ordered to mind his own business by the housekeeper in such a peremptory manner, that the colour rose to the very summit of his bald head, and a highly dangerous expression glanced from his indignant eyes. When Mrs. Gaunt wished to go out, she did so without asking permission; when she spoke to her mistress, it was in a familiar if not superior tone; and, in short, Mrs. Gaunt was the real mistress of the mansion, and an arbitrary and despotic one she was. It was in vain that Mr. Ledbitter dropped hints to his lordship, and blandly suggested that Mrs. Gaunt was somewhat unpopular below-stairs. Lord Glenburn was as close as wax and as cautious as a fox upon the subject, and told his valet that she was much respected by her ladyship; that she was thoroughly experienced; that she had seen better days, and never thought to be dependent on others; that, personally, he liked her; that the servants dreading her was all the better, as it would keep them to their work; and that,

finally, if Ledbitter objected to her, he had better avoid her: but, for his part, he advised him not to offend her, for she was a devil of a malignant temper, and frightened him out of his own lordly wits when she knitted those bushy brows, and shut those tight thin lips like a vice. This was scant comfort for the valet, who had fondly hoped to rule the domestic roast in the halls of a master whose vilest and most degrading secrets he shared; whose name, had he chosen to bruit about all he knew, would have been struck from the visiting-list of every decent family who knew him; and whose outstretched hand would have been spurned by every honest man who might possess the doubtful honour of his acquaintance. Once he fancied that Mrs. Gaunt's ill-concealed dislike might have its effect upon my ladyship, and procure his dismissal from Glenburn's service; but the thought vanished almost as soon as suggested, for it was too absurd; thirty vicious years had bound the couple together by bonds that, at all events, the master could never afford to unloose; and a cruel smile of conscious power played over the features

of that most respectable servant as he reflected upon the security of his position, Mrs. Gaunt's malevolence and ill-will notwithstanding.

A very grand party indeed the Glenburns gave in the early portion of the season, at which every body was said to be present, though a goodly collection of people who were *not* every body were content to stand outside in the square and watch the nobility and gentry arrive, and pass remarks of a critical and occasionally sarcastic nature on the toilettes of the fashionables who were fortunate enough to be invited. Members of both Houses came and went; a foreign Minister or two, very affable and gorgeous; grand, solemn army swells; literary and artistic lions; the ambassadors from the Popolorum Islands in the South Sea, with their interpreter; Cabinet Ministers; a R—l D—ke; and, in fact, a selection from the *Court Guide* sufficient to gladden the heart of a much greater lady than Lady Glenburn. It was when this brilliant assemblage was at its height that Mr. Ledbitter, who had found his lordship rather techy and cantankerous when under the hands of

his faithful valet, and Mrs. Gaunt (who had passed him on the stairs with a severe smile) settling heavily on his spirits, thought he would vary the monotony of his existence by taking a turn in the square, and, if need be, by having a quiet cigar and chat with Mr. Bobus, mine host of the Mauleverer Head in the Mews, who was a retired valet himself, and had lived in some good families, though the tavern associations of later years had somewhat dimmed the fashionable lustre of his early life. With this object in view, Mr. Led-bitter strolled out amongst the crowd, by whom he was generally taken for a noble lord in the Government and cheered vociferously, and, turning into the Mews, bent his steps with gingerly caution to the abode of the afore-mentioned Bobus. It was a great night for the Mauleverer Head—as indeed it was every other night or so in the season—for the tap of that hostelry was of the best, and no better judges of porter or mild ale exist than those proud and noble creatures in plush and powder who add so much to the comfort of our aristocracy. Round three sides of the square the car-



riages thronged, and the crowd culminated in the Mews, where a knot of coachmen and footmen—splendid fellows, with gorgeous liveries and lofty bearing—hung about the door of the Mauleverer Head, chatting like ordinary mortals,—*very* ordinary mortals, in fact,—and tossing in a condescending manner for beer and spirits, cheering to the heart of Mr. Bobus, but by no means conducive to the safety of the masters and mistresses they were to convey home. Mr. Ledbitter surveyed these caparisoned lackeys with a lofty and supercilious air; for he had never worn livery, and heartily despised the honest dependents who did. So he elbowed his way in a haughty manner up the steps of the Mauleverer Head, and pushed into the parlour with an air of dignified authority.

“Good evening, Bobus,” said Mr. Ledbitter to that worthy, who was seated in his shirt-sleeves, and with a long pipe, amidst an admiring group of richly-liveried servants.

“Sir,” replied Bobus respectfully, “I hope I see you. Pray be seated; we’re reyther full this evening, but allus a corner for you, sir, and glad

to see you: your 'ealth, sir!" And the host sipped his brandy-and-water with a nod which the visitor graciously acknowledged.

There was to the keen observer something uncomfortable and nervous in the hurried manner in which Bobus addressed Mr. Ledbitter, and in the anxious glance he threw at two prominent customers whose conversation the entrance of the valet had evidently interrupted. But those magnificent creatures were too absorbed in their pipes and self-importance to perceive the frightened and significant glances of their host.

"Oh, in course," observed a gentleman in blue, evidently continuing the thread of his remarks; "oh, in course; we ain't born yesterday; we've cut our eye-teeth, I *do* hope; and a feller's character don't change 'cos he's been abroad for ever so long;" and the blue gentleman shook his head wisely, and refilled his pipe with the air of a sociable Solon.

Mr. Ledbitter pricked up his ears at this remark, and quite crushed Bobus's hopes that the smoke might drive him out by bringing forth a

large cigar and lighting it with a spill from the chimney-piece.

“ Well,” responded the other leading figure, a younger and more jaunty person than the previous speaker,—“ well, I don’t suppose Glenburn is worse than his neighbours; and, for my part, I don’t seem to care about your pious ’ouses.”

The blue gentleman took his pipe from his mouth, and looking lashes at his opposite neighbour, replied solemnly, “ What you seem to care about, John Jenkinson, which you are young and foolish, is very little consequence to any body; but I must say, as a fam’ly man, as your morals is low, sir—low!” and the blue coachman puffed with an air of outraged decorum.

“ Which also,” put in a forensic footman, “ his argyments is altogether out; for ’aving lived a many year in a family as strict as strict can be, with cold dinner on Sundays and missionary meetings in the droring-room, I can safely say as the living was better than where I now ’ang out, which is with a lively Markis and a noted bong veevong into the barging.”

The agony expressed in Bobus's face as the above remarks issued from the lips of some of his best customers amused Ledbitter immensely, and a sardonic smile passed over his respectable countenance, and lapsed into a significant wink at the host, who was relieved by the valet's equanimity, but evidently afraid of further observations on the subject. With the view of changing the conversation, then, the master of the Mauleverer Head dashed, in an abrupt and reckless manner, into foreign politics, expressed a very strong opinion upon the timidity of the British Government, and felt comparatively comfortable, when a demonstrative groom in the background came forward and bearded the lion in his den. A more Conservative lackey than this last speaker never languished at the door of the Carlton, or devoured the leaders in the *'Erald* before going to do battle at his club. He denounced Bobus as a Radical of the worst type; he quoted Shakespeare amidst general cheers (Ledbitter very prominent); he shook his fist at Whiggism generally, and pointed the finger of scorn at Bobus in particular, and wound up with

a peroration which produced great applause, and brought Bobus on to his legs in a second. As to being a Radical, Bobus flung back the imputation. *Him* go in for universal suffrage, and have his barman voting against his landlord, maybe; him wish for a parcel of ragamuffins to get into power, and order about respectable people; him attempt to shake the foundations of Church and State, and upset the 'ole framework of society, indeed! (Hear, hear.) No; he didn't admire the spirit of the age. ("Hear, hear," and a sly look at his brandy-and-water from Ledbitter.) He thought there was a good deal too much edication a-going on, and people were a-getting too clever by half, with their mechanics' institutes and such places. Why couldn't the mechanic go to his favourite tavern, and enjoy his pipe, and, if he might be permitted the expression, the social glass? No, he wasn't a Radical, nothink of the sort, and he begged to remark afore sitting down, "gentlemen all."

The parliamentary turn matters had taken comforted Bobus, but by no means satisfied Led-

bitter. The valet, who enjoyed a joke in a quiet way, and was never so happy as when he could be doing any thing underhand and in secret, struck into the argument, and led the subject round with genuine skill to Lord Glenburn, much to the indignation of Bobus, who, not knowing his man, imagined something would be said which would assuredly rob him of one of his most respectable customers; "a gentleman," as he afterwards described Ledbitter to his wife, "as gave, my dear, quite a port-wine flavour, as it were, to the parlour."

Now that] the game was once again put up, the entire field blazed away at it, and Bobus sat back, and gave up all interference. Lord Glenburn was a blackleg, a cheat, little better than a convict. Hadn't he fled the country, and wasn't that the same thing as being sent from the country? Very well, then. Suppose he had come into property; lived abroad until the statute (statute the speaker called it) of limitations barred the creditors' claims; suppose he had married, and become respectable, and got a lot of noble fami-

lies to visit him,—did that wipe out the recollection of what he had been? Certainly not. His reputation would last with his life, and a pretty reputation it was! Hadn't they heard, when Glenburn's probable return had been talked of at dinner, a generally expressed opinion as to his moral and social character? Hadn't second-rate visitors who came in cabs,—barristers and such-like,—shrugged their shoulders and sneered at him? And hadn't shy turf-transactions been more than hinted at by those whose experiences were not of yesterday? And, in fact, hadn't Glenburn's name been universally received with contumely?

Ledbitter sat with one leg over the other, sipping his brandy-and-water, and slowly smoking his cigar during this vituperative volley, with evident enjoyment. Now and then, as some more than ordinarily strong charge was brought against his master, Ledbitter would cast a knowing glance at Bobus, who had now given it up as a bad job, and sat with his eyes half closed, patient but perspiring. Sometimes the valet would smile, appa-

rently at the enormity of what he heard, but in reality at his own knowledge of how greatly the company underrated the villany of his lordship. Virtuously indignant, of a truth, were those bepowdered customers at the Mauleverer Head. The feeble opposition of the two whose remarks we recorded at the commencement of the chapter only served to inflame the moral indignation of the mass. The room was now very thick with smoke, and the conversation had become general; the shyer servants, stimulated with refreshment, joining in the grand Glenburn hunt. On the chance mention of her ladyship, however, the native politeness of the Briton asserted itself, and she was spoken of with extreme respect and generally with admiration. Bobus, delighted at the abusive tack being abandoned, burst into vehement praise of her beauty and high bearing. She was a very noble-looking lady, which was more than could be said of some noble parties' wives (this with a sarcastic sweep of the entire assemblage except Ledbitter, who was favoured with a knowing nod); ay, even the best blood going.



She was a fine figure, she had a handsome face, dressed like an empress, and her eye was lovely. The company applauded the gallant Bobus, and that worthy creature toasted his visitors with convivial condescension. But the conversation had lost all interest for Ledbitter, and he stretched his legs, and threw away the end of his cigar, and looked at his most substantial and respectable gold watch, and showed other symptoms of a home-seeking nature. It was just as he was about to reach down his hat from the brass rail on which it reclined that a tall footman remarked sneeringly that a pink scar under my lady's left eye was not an addition to her beauty, and almost immediately came an exclamation from the corner of the room farthest from the door, which arrested Ledbitter's movement, and sent a thrill of surprise through the assemblage. The exclamation was vehement, and by no means polite. The liveried brethren stared through the smoke into the corner from which it proceeded, and there beheld a most unprepossessing-looking person, of whose presence they had not been previously

aware. He was a man past middle age, with a bloated, brutal face, deeply sunken eyes, saddened with drink, and his grayish hair was cropped close to his bull-head, giving him the air of a fighting-man with a strong dash of the burglar. Round his neck he wore a brown comforter, and his clothes were coarse and muddy. He had been half asleep, with his head resting on his hand, during the early portion of the conversation; but he had partially revived as the tones of the speakers became excited, and he sat listening with a drunken leer upon his face, whilst he drew figures on the table before him with a black and beery forefinger.

“Who’s that speaking of a gal with a red scar under her left eye? What sort of a scar is it? Can’t you speak, none of you?” shouted the crop-eared customer, surveying the company generally with a savage defiance.

Mr. Ledbitter was the only person present who did not express surprise and disgust at the sudden appearance and fierce manner of the stranger.

“The scar on <sup>r</sup>Lady Glenburn’s face is a very

peculiar mark," said the valet quietly. "A very peculiar mark, of a triangular shape, and—"

"What!" half-shrieked the other; "a three-cornered scar? Don't lie, now! and don't tell me she's a high white forehead, and long black hair, and tall and grand-looking. Don't tell me that; if the devil himself told me that, I wouldn't believe it."

"Perhaps not," replied Ledbitter, with a half smile; "we are not any of us in the habit of crediting remarks from that quarter. But I certainly must say your description, as far as it goes, is correct; her ladyship certainly has a high white forehead, and also a profusion of black hair; and she is tall, and decidedly grand-looking; whilst"—he added with a shrug—"there is no denying she has a three-cornered scar under the left eye."

The man rose and staggered, and passing his grimy hand over his brow, appeared to screw his eyes to a steady stare at Ledbitter; but the drink he had taken was too much for him, and he sank again upon his seat. He was evidently half

stupefied with liquor; and as such a low creature was by no means fitting company for the highly genteel footmen who were honouring the Mauleverer Head with their presence, most of them speedily found excuses for going, and Bobus went up to the unwelcome visitor and sternly commanded him to quit the premises. But the stranger was now fast relapsing into a maudlin phase of inebriety, and he commenced sobbing and mumbling in an incoherently hysterical manner, very unpleasant to listen to, but to which Mr. Ledbitter did listen very attentively nevertheless.

“An ungrateful gal! an ungrateful, bad, cruel gal!” he whimpered through his sobs and moans. “She’s no heart, never had; nor her mother,—no heart and no pity! Why didn’t I dash her brains out while I was about it? not merely mark her for life. Why didn’t I spoil her precious doll-face out and out? And, oh, poor gal, poor gal! did I raise my fist to you? I’ve deserved it all, deserved it all.”

And then he burst into a wild fit of crying, and lay with his head upon his arm resting on the table.

Bobus was not a bad-hearted Boniface, and the sight of this brawny fellow crying and wailing like a child melted his heart with pity, and he went back to his seat determined to wait patiently until such time as his customer should recover himself and retire. To this charitable determination he was considerably assisted by his waiter, who informed him in whispers that the weeping party had been there all the afternoon, had imbibed a good deal of Bobus's liquor, and had paid on the nail in an ostentatious manner for all he had ordered. A customer was a customer when all was said and done, and perfect sobriety would scarcely tend towards enriching the tavern-keeper; besides, the thin-skinned footmen, who spent little enough at the best of times, had departed; and as to Mr. Led-bitter, he appeared quite interested in the unhappy gentleman, and seemed to listen to his broken remarks with almost anxious attention. A strange man was Mr. Ledbitter, thought honest Bobus, who, beyond the legitimate trickery of his business, scarcely knew what deception and cunning

meant; a very strange man, to seem so much taken up with what appeared to Bobus as nothing better than a drunken tramp. Little did the publican guess what was passing through the valet's mind as that astute creature listened with the profoundest astonishment to the strange disjointed sentences proceeding from the tremulous lips of the semi-stupefied stranger. Led-bitter bent his head, and even put his hand to his ear, in his evident desire to catch every remark. Once or twice it was easy to see the sudden flush which would overspread his generally colourless countenance; and once he actually dabbed his forehead with his silk pocket-handkerchief, so surprised and overcome did he appear at what he heard. Indeed, the cool and collected valet, who, as a rule, prided himself upon the skill with which he could conceal his emotion, broke all bounds in this instance, and muttered, "By Jove!" and other exclamations, sufficiently loudly to attract the attention even of the unsuspecting Bobus.

"What's the matter, sir?" asked that worthy,

when a more than ordinarily marked exclamation escaped his surprised patron.

“Ha, ha!” replied the valet with a forced laugh; “a strange fellow this; he’s muttering the oddest things to himself. Kindly touch the bell for me,—thank you. A glass of brandy at once, John, if you please.”

And what was Bobus’s surprise at seeing the abstemious Ledbitter seize and swallow a small glass of raw spirit; a thing he had never known him do before, as he remarked to the valet, at the same time expressing a hope that he was not ill.

“A slight attack of indigestion, Bobus, nothing more. There, I’m better,” replied Ledbitter, and he became once more absorbed in the man with the short hair and the brown comforter.

The fellow became calmer by degrees, and apologised, with a surly attempt at civility, for having talked at random.

“Talked at random, eh?” thought Lord Glenburn’s man; “random or not random, I don’t lose sight of you, my fine fellow;” and the valet

assured him that no offence had been taken, and even went so far as to offer the fellow a cigar. The stranger stared in some surprise at the imperturbable countenance of the valet, and putting out his great rough hand, grasped the cigar, and lighted it, Ledbitter handing him a spill with a bow, which the other acknowledged with a nod and a "Thankee, mate." The rough customer, growing more sober every minute, began, by extreme taciturnity, to make amends for his previous injudicious talk; and he sat in sulky silence pulling at his cigar, and only replied to the observations of his companion by an occasional grunt of acquiescence. Fresh company had by this time entered and departed; and Bobus, finding Ledbitter's society dull, turned his attention to the other customers, and left the valet and his new acquaintance to themselves. It was wonderful how the clever servant drew out his companion upon every subject save the one particular one, upon which he was dying to hear more. At the first timid approach to it, the man looked up at his gentlemanly friend, and, with a half smile, play-



fully placed an oblong finger to his own by no means classical nose, accompanying the action with a knowing wink, the panomimical combination suggesting a decided objection to any impetuosity upon the subject.

"Oh," said Ledbetter, shrugging his shoulders, "I don't care to know the secrets of great people; only, as I am Lord Glenburn's confidential valet—I may almost say secretary—I—Wink's the matter?"

This question was indicated by Ledbetter's noting the sudden and extraordinary change which came over the other's countenance at his remarks.

The man's face turned deathly pale, and, with a look of extreme terror, he seized Ledbetter's arm, and hoarsely whispered in his ear, "Mum, tell me—tell me—I didn't say nothing strange—nothing against any one—nothing criminal like, when I was blabbing just now, half-stupid with drink—tell me!"

And he grasped the valet's arm with the grip of a vice; but he trembled so that his bloodless lips could scarcely fashion the words they uttered.

“No, no, nothing—nothing at all, only some incoherent rubbish that nobody listened to,” replied Ledbitter; and, with a great sigh of relief, the other sank back in his seat, sobered, but with a scared, wild look still upon him, and his broad chest heaving with some strong emotion.

It is a very remarkable fact that when this great, rough, navigator-looking fellow rose to go home, Mr. Ledbitter—the respectable, the neat, the almost patrician-like Mr. Ledbitter—volunteered to walk part of the way with him, and, on seeing him stagger, actually offered him his arm and assisted him on his way. It was late when the valet returned that morning; and as he caught from the stairs a passing glimpse of Lady Glenburn, gorgeous in her ball-dress, flushed with pride and happiness, and surrounded by an obsequious court of great admirers, a grim smile played round his treacherous lip,—a smile that it was as well for her ladyship’s peace of mind she did not see.

The same hour which saw Ledbitter’s return

to his master's house witnessed Horace Bentley's return to *his* master's. Horace had been at a supper-party, and had toasted the host—a newly-fledged surgeon—in encomiastic terms, had sung songs with rollicking choruses, and had kept it up till the chimes of the small hours and an ominous headache told him it was time to seek the shelter of Mr. Pinto's roof. As he entered his bedroom his eye fell upon a note from his mother, evidently written in haste and during strong agitation. He tore open the envelope, and read the following :

“DARLING HORACE,—I have been twice to you this evening; but you were out, and no one could tell me where. I leave London to-night. Something has happened which I cannot now explain to you; but I must go away—I cannot breathe another day here. Good-by, and God bless you!

“Ever, dearest boy,

“Your fond, affectionate mother,

“E. BENTLEY.”

The bright morning sun found Horace still sitting, pale and haggard, at the foot of his bed, his brain in a whirl, and his bloodshot eyes staring blankly at his mother's letter.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A VERY TENDER PASSION.

THE first thing in the morning found Horace hurrying towards Little Green Street, with a view to obtaining some clue to the mystery of his mother's disappearance. Soho is rather a lazy neighbourhood, being given to late hours; and the Molloy's were no exception to the rule. Alice Molloy, the eldest daughter, was washing the steps, however (before, as she imagined, any of her neighbours were up to see her do so), and from that communicative young lady he heard that the family were at breakfast; so he went in, and beheld the group at their morning meal. It was not a pleasant sight: childhood, though innocent, is, very early in the morning, and after abortive ablutionary attempts, not so pleasant a sight as when it toddles in spick and span, shining as to cheek, and

oleaginous as to hair, after dinner, later in the day. Mrs. Molloy was gifted with a strong substratum of slovenliness, to commence with; and having a large family, and lodgers, and a husband who had been supposed to be in a decline any time these thirty years, and a house which "would *not* look neat, whatever you done to it," she did not show to advantage when taken unawares. Horace bounced into the room before she had time to take Master Augustus's elbow out of the brown sugar, to snatch the butter from the premature clutch of Miss Amelia, or to "show the comb" to the second boy, who had apparently come to his breakfast in a limited allowance of clothing. Horace was too anxious to notice much of this; and he at once stopped Mrs. Molloy's apologies, and asked where his mother had gone; whether Anne Maggs was with her; what was the cause of her leaving; did Mrs. Bentley say any thing, give any reason; and a volley of similar inquiries.

"Well, Mister Orris," said Mrs. Molloy, with a hurried attempt to smoothe her hair with her

apron, which was a complete failure,—“well, sir, if you hadn't ha' come, all that's just what I should ha' come to ast *you*. Of all the strange things as ever happened in this house,—and a many strange things *has* happened in it, as, indeed, what house in London has they not; but me having let apartments for so many year, has seen things occur, sir, as you would scarcely believe, as you're standing there. What with parties coming sudden, and quite taking you back in the matter of reference by paying two weeks' rent in advance, and then turning out at the eleventh hour to be refugees, with infernal machines under the bed; and then handsome fellows bringing young wives, and going abroad and never coming back; and forringors under a cloud, a-sneaking out with the sugar-tongs, and then swearing till they're black in the face as they never come up with the tea-things; and parties taking the second-floor with children as contaminates other children, and uses such language as the very postman hears it and cries shame,—oh, Mister Orris, it's little as you can guess the

troubles a mother like me has with lodgings, and a husband as is really a mere tommyton in a house, poor fellow! though it's not his fault; for I knew what it would be when he joined them Dromedaries at the Oakley Arms; and—yes, sir, I'm a-coming to your mar: poor dear! there she come home all in a tremble, in a cab,—a thing I never knew her to do,—and her face as white as that plate, and a frightened sort of way with her which threw poor Mrs. Maggs into almost as great a state as your mar. And then she said as she was going away, that I should hear from her; and she offered to pay me the trifle she owed me; but I said, 'No,' I said, and I drew myself up, for I was not desirous as money should be mentioned under the circumstarnces; and I said, 'No,' I said, 'mum; the trifle between us is not worth a-speaking about. You seem flustered, ma'am?' And indeed she did, and got worse and worse, until by a tremenjous effort she seemed to conquer her feelings, like; and me and Mrs. Maggs packed up her boxes; and your mar started off in a cab, I don't know where, no more than the



child unborn. But that *you*, Mister Orris, don't know nothing of it—well, it raily do surprise me.”

Mrs. Molloy, like many of her class, could have continued for any given time. She paused now, not for lack of breath, but because her watchful eye detected certain depredations by the children, the result of their mamma's attention being temporarily devoted to another object. She slapped Miss Amelia, and shook Master Augustus until his teeth rattled again, and asked Horace if he would take a cup of tea. “For, indeed,” she added, “you don't look altogether in the best of 'ealth yourself; but I suppose it's study.”

“Well, Mrs. Molloy,” said Horace, after rejecting the proffered cup of tea with an ill-concealed shudder, “I don't know what to do.”

“That's precisely what I says to Molloy myself last night,” rejoined Mrs. M. “‘Molloy,’ I says, ‘I don't know what to do.’ Molloy, along of having been late at his Dromedaries, couldn't give no advice except hiccups.”

“Then, sir,” continued the landlady, “there's the furniture. I suppose your mar'll have her

furniture sent wherever she's gone ; and I was a-thinking, if you'd no objection, if I was to let the rooms furnished until such time as—”

“ Certainly not, ma'am,” replied Horace, with a sudden outburst. “ You will be kind enough to let no one but the servant into those rooms. I will pay for the apartments during my mother's absence, which, I have no doubt, is only temporary.”

And Horace glared very fiercely at the injudicious Amelia, who saluted his observations with an ill-timed grin.

“ Oh, very well, Mister Orris,” said Mrs. Molloy, lofty in her turn ; “ I didn't mean any think to vex you ; only as to your mar coming back, she said positively as nothing would induce her to return to London again ; that she didn't care where she went, so long as it was far away. And certainly I thought, as she was not rich, and—”

“ The state of my mother's pecuniary affairs is a matter, Mrs. Molloy, on which you must be profoundly ignorant,” replied Horace, with a very grand air indeed. “ I believe you have never had occasion to ask twice for your money ; and if there

is any thing owing to tradesmen or other people, have the kindness to tell me what it is, and I will discharge their claims immediately ;” and he rattled three-and-sixpence in his pocket with the magnificence of a millionaire.

The mention of Mrs. Bentley’s pecuniary punctuality was a homethrust the landlady could not resist ; and dismal forebodings that a like lodger would possibly never occupy the first-floor floated across her mind, and tears, which were not altogether unselfish, rose to her eyes.

“ Yes, Mr. Orris, right you are,” whimpered Mrs. Molloy, “ right you are, when you say as Mrs. Bentley always paid like a lady, even when first she come ; and she and Mrs. Maggs didn’t eat together in a day as much as would make a meal for my son ’Arry. She never run in debt a penny ; and when she got on, she was downright generous, in a kind of way, though she never wasted an ounce of meat, or throw away a thing, or have the least enjoyment. Many a time has me and Molloy talked of taking up a slice of something nice of a Sunday, with our respectful duty ;

but we've been afraid, for she was so proud like in her way. And Mrs. Maggs told us as she was a-saving and a-scraping for her son, which is you, sir; and proud you ought to be of such a mother."

Mrs. Molloy meant well, but she maddened Horace. With his innate pride was mingled so much self-conceit, that it was a difficult matter to get on with him without offending him continually. So he received the praises of his parent with a very ill grace; and, with a severe caution to the mistress of the house to be careful of his mother's furniture, and keep "those children" out of the rooms, he strode up the kitchen-stairs, and, slamming the front-door after him, departed.

"As 'aughty and as stuck-up a young fellow he's grown as ever you came across, Molloy," said Mrs. M. to the partner of her bosom, as he appeared unshaven and sulky at the breakfast-table, with his regular "Dromedary" headache, and the chronic cough in tremendous force. "'Aughty and overbearing; and mark my words, that young gent won't come to no great good."

And so the week passed over without a line;

but on the eighth or ninth day after Mrs. Bentley's quitting London, a letter came from her, dated from a little unknown village in Cornwall; and though it by no means made matters clear, it was full of affection and good advice, and concluded with a postscript which, as is not unfrequently the case with women, contained the gist of the letter. It told Horace that failing health and a sudden fright, the effects of which might be permanent, had induced her to leave London, and that, by Anne Maggs's advice, she had started off on the spur of the moment, knowing that the least delay would have unnerved her and shaken her resolution. She scarcely referred to her means of living, but said that she had written to Mr. Stone explaining matters, and fully trusted in his assisting her. Altogether the letter was very vague and unsatisfactory; but Horace now knew of his mother's safety; and as any further anxiety about the affair would not in any way mend matters, he folded up the letter with a shrug, and determined not to bother himself about it. The separation from his mother would, a year before, have been a

bitter pang to him; but during that year many changes had taken place in the sentiments of Mr. Pinto's senior pupil.

Miss Pinto, though hitherto supposed by her family and friends to have been of an unsusceptible nature, had recently given Horace grounds for great alarm by exhibiting in her manner towards him an approach to tenderness of a most unwelcome nature. He was a handsome young man, with a haughty air and a bold look that women liked. His manner to Mr. Pinto was more that of an equal in years and experience than a pupil, and the native snobbishness of the little surgeon grovelled before the superior air of the self-important Horace. He had won Mrs. Pinto's heart by writing verses in her album and talking about her favourite authors with an air of sham enthusiasm which sat very well upon the brilliant youth, and he certainly displayed in his own compositions (to which, during the two years of probation, he had devoted far more attention than to Mr. Pinto's) a lively fancy, and a fluency which occasionally

surprised himself. He had also been delighted by seeing some of his lucubrations in print; and though Pinto would sneer at his poetry behind his pupil's back, Mrs. Pinto, and eventually the daughter, gratified him by frequent praise and admiration. He held his tongue about the manifold effusions which remorseless editors "returned with thanks" or "respectfully declined," contenting himself with strong though inward growls at the stupidity or favouritism exhibited by those autocrats; but he delighted in displaying his published scribblings, and gave himself such a literary air amongst his brother-students at the hospital, that he was unanimously elected president of the Abernethy Club, —a society of youthful *savans*, who read essays and drank grog and indulged in science and short pipes over a tobacconist's shop in the immediate neighbourhood. Here he greatly distinguished himself, not so much by the soundness of his arguments as the boldness of the theories he started, and the "'ercles vein" into which he soared whenever he got upon his legs. His essays savoured considerably more of Parnassus than the apothe-

cary's shop; and though his talents were very generally acknowledged, he was universally voted as too great a swell for physic. This was possibly why Miss Pinto cast a loving eye upon him; for she had grown a little weary of the one subject in which the circle round the family-table indulged *ad nauseam*, and her young heart yearned for the sympathy of a soul above medicine; and such a soul had Horace Bentley, who despised the drugs, and who lost no opportunity of ridiculing the petty trickery of the profession.

“A good many pupils your papa has had in his time, Miss Pinto,” observed Horace, as he paced up and down the parlour one evening.

“Oh, ever so many,” replied the young lady. “The first we had was Perkins, and then Fletcher, and then Blundell, and then—oh, yes, *ever* so many!” and Miss Pinto looked hard at Horace, and sighed.

“What are you sighing for?” asked Horace, with a comically disturbed expression.

“*I* don't know,” replied the damsel, with a toss of the foot; “only I'm sick of life.”



“Sick of life! and so young!” exclaimed the student.

Miss Pinto shot a sudden side-glance at him—a quick but searching look; but the student was imperturbable.

“And why sick of life with the world before you?” continued the gentleman.

“And what of that, Mr. Bentley? what of that, Horace?”

There was no reason why she should not call him Horace; but he winced at the word considerably.

“It is a pleasure to pour one’s sorrows into somebody’s ears,” she continued, “especially when that somebody is sympathetic and kind and friendly, as you have always been. And I don’t know why; for I know, when first you came, I treated you like all the other pupils, until I found how different you were to them—oh, how different!” And Miss Pinto looked upwards with a seraphic gaze at the ceiling.

Horace had never been made love to, and he scarcely knew whether to respond or leave the

room. He was certainly flattered, but he was also decidedly frightened; for there was about the amiability of Miss Pinto much that suggested the playfulness of the panther.

He walked up and down the room without continuing the conversation, and longing for an excuse for leaving, but prevented from doing so by a strange indescribable something which charmed yet terrified him.

“You were not angry with my calling you Horace, Mr. Bentley?” timidly observed Miss P., after a long and very awkward pause.

“Angry!” replied Horace; “of course not. I—a—I wish you would always call me Horace; it’s more friendly.”

“Still, you never call me Priscilla; and yet we have known each other a long time.”

The idea of calling Miss Pinto Priscilla! The privilege appeared to carry with it a positive importance.

“Call you Priscilla, Miss Pinto!” he rejoined. “What would your papa say?”

“Papa, indeed!” sneered the lady, with a short scornful laugh.

The curl of the lip and the expression of contempt with which this last remark was accompanied greatly charmed Horace, who utterly despised the doctor, and was delighted to find his sentiments were shared by Priscilla. Indeed, the perpetual bickerings between that young lady and her father had recently resulted in a grand battle royal, and Mr. Pinto had used very strong language to his daughter, which was in the highest degree ungrateful; for she had been for years the mainstay of the establishment, and, with the one drawback of temper, as dutiful a daughter as any in Bloomsbury. Then it was that Horace began to feel a certain pity for harshly-treated Miss Pinto; and when the sympathies of very young men are enlisted in the cause of a suffering damsel, and the suffering damsel in question gratefully accepts the consolation, and smiles her thanks through her tears, the case of the very young man stands considerable risk of becoming desperate. Now, it was really a touching sight upon the evening in question, when poor Priscilla—after another pause, more awkward if possible than the

former one—suddenly burst into a violent fit of crying, and sobbed away into her handkerchief as if her heart would break. Horace looked very foolish, as men always do when women cry and you don't know what for; and he stammered out some words of consolation, and flushed and palpitated, and thought he had never seen Priscilla's hair look as pretty or her hands so white before. And as he grew emboldened, he strung his consolatory sentences together with more coherency; and he was rewarded by observing Miss Pinto become gradually calmer. And she held out her hand to him with a grateful smile, and said she was a stupid creature; but she was in low spirits, for every body was against her.

It was a very white hand and very soft, and it returned Horace's grasp with a decided pressure; and he found himself addressing her in a low tone, and calling her Priscilla, before he was aware of what he was doing. The result was, that two minutes' tears completely dissolved the old formality between them; and a casual intruder might have taken them for brother and

sister, only that brothers and sisters don't sit hand in hand; and we must admit that Horace held Miss Pinto's little white paw very much longer than he need have done.

"Been crying, eh?" broke out the doctor, as he entered the parlour and fell on to his dinner, which had been kept for him, for he had been detained with a patient. "Been crying, eh?" Do you good, and soften that confounded bad temper of yours."

"Pa, you're downright brutal to me, you are," replied Priscilla, with a side-glance at Horace, who was bursting with indignation at Pinto's ill-timed bearishness.

"Yes, sir," exclaimed the impetuous pupil; "yes, sir, I do think that Priscilla—Miss Pinto—has great cause of complaint; it's very hard for a young lady who does so much for every body, when her own father turns against her."

"I tell you what, sir: I think you're an insolent puppy; and I'll thank you not to interfere in matters that don't concern you," rejoined the doctor, with fury in his purple countenance. An

appealing glance from the injured heroine stopped Horace's indignant reply; and he left the apartment with a withering look for the doctor, and one for the young lady which was sufficiently expressive to carry with it comfort and consolation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THIRTY-FIVE YEARS BACK.

AND now we must ask the reader to go back with us to a period thirty-five years anterior to the date of our last chapter,—back to the days when Gideon Munro farmed some two hundred acres of as intractable land as ever disappointed the hopes of the agriculturist. Candlish Farmhouse was snug enough, embowered in a nest of fir-trees, picturesque, and old-fashioned; but the land that went with it was unremunerative property, and Gideon Munro found it bitter hard to make both ends meet. A cold stern man was Munro, generally unpopular from his austere manner and by no means hospitable nature. He had been a widower for many years, and evil report had settled that his wife had died from a broken heart, the result of perpetual neglect and

unkindness from her husband. There was little foundation for this belief, for nothing was known of Munro's antecedents. He had taken the farm on the failure of the last tenant, who had struggled, and starved, and pinched, and drunk himself into bankruptcy and consumption, as more than one of his predecessors had done before him. And Gideon Munro certainly achieved wonders, considering the ungrateful nature of the property. Nobody, however, knew where he came from, and Gideon was not the sort of person to force family matters upon his acquaintance. He was a *brusque* "three-cornered" kind of man, with a determined mouth and a settled frown; and his manners, though scarcely rude, were chilling and repellent. At the farmers' ordinary on market-days he was invariably looked upon as a wet blanket; and when he rose to depart, a sigh of relief would escape from more than one overcharged agrarian bosom. He was a stanch Churchman, and never missed sitting in his pew, with his cold eye fixed on the clergyman, and he gave the responses in a loud, hard manner, like an automaton. He was



not a liberal master, but he paid to the day. In the worst year of his tenancy, when every thing went wrong, Gideon Munro asked for no time from his landlord or any one else, but rattled to the agent's door in his creaking old gig, and pulled out his greasy notes without a murmur. Not that in managing his farm he indulged in any new-fangled fancies, or exhibited any desire to go out of the beaten track. Agriculture had not commenced in those days to take the gigantic strides it has done of late years; and the appearance of a steam threshing-machine would have sent a village into convulsions. But had Science attempted to talk to Gideon Munro, he would have sneered at her; for those who saw most of him boldly stated that he believed in nothing, notwithstanding his two visits to the parish-church each Sunday. He set about his work in a mechanical and uncompromising manner; and it was the general remark that Munro and his farmer's men did more in a short time than any of the neighbouring folks. Early and late he was at his labour; taking no pleasure; seldom going down

into the little town of Deddington, save on market-days; reading nothing but the county paper, and that at rare intervals and for a very short time; paying his way in an honest, straightforward manner; seeking to harm no one, keeping his tongue quiet, and interfering in nobody's business save his own,—and yet with all this shunned by nearly all who came across him, and earning no kind and friendly word from a single soul. He had a son, who was something between a copying-clerk and a messenger, in a big town far away; and a little adopted daughter, who was the one bright ray of sunshine in his dismal home. Lily Munro—for she bore his name, though she was no relation—had been left by her widowed mother, an old friend of the late Mrs. Munro, whilst she went to London upon business. By a coach-accident the poor woman lost her life; and as no friends came forward to take the child, the Munros found themselves burdened with an addition to their family circle. Lily was a mere child when her new-found mother died; and her winning ways and playful prattle had so charmed her

chilling foster-father, that he seemed now to take pleasure in no society save hers; and in proportion to his boundless affection for the little girl, Gideon Munro became more cold and hard in his manner to the outer world. It seemed, indeed, as if he could think of nothing but his delicate little fair-haired Lily. Nothing was too good for her, for in his eyes she was the acme of childish perfection. He could never bear to be without her; even when he went about his farming business, he would always have Lily holding on by his coat-skirts, or clasping his strong large hand. In his gig on market-days she would very frequently appear; and the surest way to win a smile from the flinty-faced farmer was to praise the blue eyes and glossy hair of his little charge. As she grew up, he taught her all he could, and then engaged a governess from Deddington; for he set his face against girl-schools, and wouldn't hear of the Misses Minks's Academy for Young Ladies at any price. Lily was to be a lady, but she was to be educated under his own eye; no one else was to interfere. And indeed no one else did,

for the little Lily gave herself such airs of importance, that the neighbours would smile at her manner in derision, and ill-conditioned children would pull faces at her over the pew-backs in church, and greatly incense the young lady, who would sneer in quite an old-fashioned and full-grown manner very amusing to witness. This was all lost upon Gideon, who considered his adopted child perfection, and who never put a pound into the Deddington Bank without a satisfactory feeling that he was adding to the tiny fortune of the little girl. When his great raw-boned son came home for a holiday (at the rarest intervals), and strove to make himself agreeable to the little mistress of the house, Gideon would look on with a strange contemptuous smile at the awkward attempts of his boorish boy, but mapped out in his own mind a pleasant future for the pair nevertheless. In imagination he saw John married to Lily, though it still seemed to him a shame that such a fairy should become a farmer's wife; and perhaps he saw himself in the chimney-corner, with little grandchildren about his knee; and

he thought of the temptations of the world, and breathed a sigh of relief to think that Lily, shut up in the farmhouse like the maidens in the grim castles of old, was beyond the reach of errant knights and ill-intentioned marauders. Though Lily had no opportunity for practice, it was evident that in her disposition there was the foundation of a flirt. Young John she led a fearful life during the first holiday he enjoyed,—if enjoyment be the word to apply to a brief season of mingled affection and snubbing; and on his next visit, when he was big and broken-voiced, and given to blushing, Lily was so demure and on her dignity, that Gideon trembled for the consequences, and begged her in beseeching terms to treat her brother more amiably. The reply of the damsel was characteristic in the extreme :

“ Oh,” she said, with a little toss of her fair ringlets, “ if he’s my *brother*, it’s a different matter.”

And from that moment poor John was called “ brother” much more frequently than he liked; for he had arrived at that age when, as the Lau-

reate expresses it, "a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love;" but it is not love of a fraternal nature by any means—indeed, sisters about this time are generally treated with supreme contempt, the lads of the family wondering how on earth fellows can admire them. Still, a kind of engagement seemed to be tacitly recognised; and Gideon spoke of Lily to inquiring neighbours as booked,—thereby, as he supposed, putting her beyond the aim of the admiring youth of the surrounding district.

Had Gideon Munro not been blinded by his overwhelming love for Lily, he would have seen in a thousand trifling acts the evidence of a wilful, capricious disposition. But he loved her so absorbingly, so intensely, that he saw nothing but a pretty blue-eyed girl who was perfection. He shut himself almost completely from the rest of the world, and devoted every moment of his leisure to Lily. She read to him the county paper, dwelling with evident gusto on the doings of the aristocracy, in whose movements it was plain she took the greatest interest; she droned

out with childish monotony old standard stories and historical tales; but these, as she grew older, were cashiered as dull and bygone, and made way for more modern fiction, which was not in Gideon's style, but which he hadn't the heart to stop, for it evidently delighted Lily. He noticed that those novels which dealt with noble names and great people pleased her most, and it was, he imagined, an evidence of that refined taste which is innate in the bosom of the truly gentle. A stirring tale of domestic trials she would toss aside; but any volume which blossomed in every page with Montmorencis and Cavendishes and Delameres would be devoured with greedy intensity, and the dukes and marquises and noble lords and ladies would be descanted upon the next morning at breakfast-time with an enthusiasm that was at least genuine, and which highly amused the sober farmer. Had Gideon Munro viewed that girl aright, he would have seen her chafe under the cold, dull routine of her solitary life; he would have noticed the ill-concealed contempt with which she listened to his farm-news, to the unexciting description of

the dinner at Deddington, to the denunciations of the incendiary who had fired Farmer Willoughby's stacks. He would have seen how she flushed up when Sir Philip Lurcher of Mudriff and his family were alluded to, and when he said "there would be a power of grand London folks at Mudriff that week, and there wouldn't be room in the family-pew for all of 'em, if what he heard was true, though those fine town-people didn't trouble church much, he fancied."

Mudriff, a fine old mansion near to Munro's farm, was full of grand company, not the least noticeable amongst whom was Lord Glenburn, who in those days had not come into his title, but was known to the world as the Honourable Thomas George Adolphus Gripner, and to his more intimate acquaintances as Treacherous Tom. Some College freak in which he had rather dishonourably let a friend come in for all the disgrace had stamped him with the unpleasant title,—one, however, he seemed very little ashamed of, and which his companions applied to him continually with no fear for the consequences. The Honour-



able Tom was young ; but he had begun life very early, and having the brilliant example before him of a bad father, who had incited him from his most youthful days to acts of lawlessness and vice, he was prepared for a glorious career, and determined to carry the family name through life unstained by any pusillanimous wavering and repentance, and in utter defiance of decorum. It speaks ill for the good sense of society when one is obliged to admit that the Honourable Tom's reputation was his strong point. But so it was ; he was looked upon as a gay young fellow, who would have his fling, like his father before him ; and though the maternal eye watched him very carefully, the maternal sense of self-respect seldom stepped in to prevent his contaminating with his presence the young, the good, and the pure.

We live in better times now ; and though Vice may drive its brougham in the parks, and flaunt it unblushingly with the noblest and the proudest, the Honourable Tom Gripners of to-day find themselves more frequently cut than courted. When this young patrician caught sight of Lily's face at

church, he stared with undisguised admiration. Lily, who had experienced the greatest difficulty in keeping her eyes off the Lurchers' pew, felt that he was staring at her; and the colour mounted to her face, and her heart palpitated violently, and she scarcely knew whether to be pleased or alarmed.

Gideon had engaged a new maid to attend to Miss Lily; for that capricious damsel could not bear the red-elbowed, noisy Deborah, who had been time out of mind Gideon's general servant, but who certainly had a violent manner of flopping down plates and dishes, and a habit of joining in the conversation, which even Gideon had silently objected to for some years. So poor plain Deborah was sent about her business, and pretty Jane Glossop—a smart servant, who had been in London—was engaged in her place. Jane knew one or two of the servants at Sir Philip Lurcher's; and be sure the reputation of the handsome young visitor lost nothing on its way to the ear of Lily. He was the most audacious and daring and reckless and extravagant and handsome young gentle-

man in the world; no lady could resist him; he was a Don Juan, a gay Lothario, a lady-killer on the most extensive scale; revelling in riches, heir to a great title and estates, yet as affable to his inferiors as if they had been his equals; and, in short, he was perfection to the maid-servant mind. Lily and Jane Glossop talked at all opportunities of the Honourable Tom; and the subject never wearied them. The young aristocrat, on his side, had not been idle. He had pumped his man Midgely about Lily's station and surroundings; and the character he received of Gideon Munro was not one to encourage him in the idea that his presence would be welcome at the farm. But fortune favours the bold; and it so happened that one morning young Gripner, being tired of the slow society of Mudriff, and feeling his hand somewhat too shaky for shooting,—for he had been up rather late, and though a mere lad, he could drink with the best-seasoned toppers,—had strolled out through the park-gates, and was enjoying a cigar on the Deddington Road, as Gideon Munro came driving past in his high-wheeled, shaky old chaise. The

extreme looseness of one of the wheels had escaped the eye of the farmer, and a sudden bump over a large stone sent the whole affair to the ground. Gideon fell heavily; and the old horse, after rattling on a few yards, pulled up with the remainder of the disjointed vehicle. The Honourable Tom flung his cigar into the hedge, and hastened to the assistance of Gideon, who seemed badly hurt, and who could scarcely crawl to the lodge. The young gentleman was all attention; he sent his own man for the doctor, and superintended the conveyance of Munro to his home with never-ceasing watchfulness and care, bidding him cheer up the while in a friendly manner that surprised the farmer, who groaned out occasional thanks with a rough air of gratitude and civility. Gideon's fall had been a bad one, and he was ill for a long time. During this period the Honourable Tom haunted the farm.

We have spoken of Lily's love of admiration, of her innate coquettishness; and we have said that the heir to the Glenburn barony was selfish, wilful, and vicious. No need to dwell upon dark

details; no need to recapitulate the old bad story. The noble youth tempted her away from her home, from the father who was more than a father to her; and the day that brought Gideon the intelligence that he was now in a fair way to recover, also brought him the news of his adopted child's departure. That with this bitter blow he should still have lived was a matter of wonder to all who saw him. His mad ravings made the listeners shudder; and the fit, having passed, left him a weakened, shrunk, and broken-hearted man, so aged, so changed, that he was scarcely recognisable as the once stern and upright Gideon Munro, who had lifted the little Lily on to the seat at church, and gently smoothed her golden hair as she turned over the big pages of his Prayer-Book. He would see scarcely any body, and he seldom spoke. Had not his son John returned, and with the assistance of an intelligent farm-servant taken the management of affairs, every thing would have been left at a standstill.

More than a year passed away in this sad and thriftless style. The winter time came round; and

one night, as Gideon sat staring at the fire, Jane Glossop came into the kitchen, with her eyes red from crying, and trembling terribly. She had learnt the news of her late mistress's death abroad; and she broke it to Gideon with a genuine pathos that was very touching, in a homely manner that made the narration more heartrending to that poor old man. As the tale of gradual neglect and finally desertion reached its climax, a terrible look shot from the glistening eyes of Gideon Munro, and he grasped his son's hand like a vice. He nodded at Jane, who guessed that he wished to be left alone with John; and she went from the room, to sob in real grief in Lily's little chamber. John had loved Lily well, and had noticed the many weak points of her character with alarm. But he was a strange young man, and her departure, though it had struck him deeply, had not produced the visible effect that it had on the heartbroken Gideon. When he thought of it—and he thought of it much—a tightening of the lips and a strange evil look in the eye would have been all that was apparent to the casual observer. But there was a dogged

hatred at his heart for the man who had robbed him of his intended wife ; and he would sit by his father of an evening, aiming short fierce little blows at the crackling log, morosely weaving his small schemes of revenge, for which he was content to wait until such time as he could glut his vengeance in his own fashion.

By the dying embers on that December night the pallid John Munro swore an oath, dictated by his father ; an oath that he would devote his life to one object—revenge upon the seducer, the murderer, of Lily ; that he would strike the nobleman a deadly blow, one that should cover him with a shame that would blight and utterly destroy him ; that he would leave no plan untried, no stone unturned, for this one object ; that the blow should come at a time when the world was smiling on the villain, when any disgrace would bring destruction with it, and when the joy of the preceding moments should add an extra pang to the crushing agony of the terrible exposure.

In the autumn of that year the Honourable Tom Gripner engaged as body-servant a remark-

ably smart young man, who called himself Led-bitter, but who had previously been known by the name of Munro. The Honourable Tom was not aware of that fact, never having seen him at Candlish Farm.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### HER LADYSHIP'S FIRST REBUFF.

“LEDBITTER,” said Lord Glenburn to his valet one evening,—“Ledbitter, how is it you have contrived to vex her ladyship?”

“Really, my lord,” replied the valet, “I can’t say. I have scarcely exchanged a dozen sentences with her ladyship in my life, and those have simply related to commonplace matters. I have invariably treated her ladyship with due respect; and I am not generally in the habit of making enemies.”

“Enemies!” laughed his lordship scornfully. “You don’t suppose Lady Glenburn is your enemy, man; that is too absurd;” and Lord Glenburn tied his white neckerchief with ingenious rapidity, and surveyed his features in the glass, displaying his white teeth, and smoothing his eyebrows with an air of extreme self-complacency.

“I am not aware, my lord, that I have ever said any thing downstairs that can have reached her ladyship’s ear — any thing disparaging, I mean,” observed Ledbitter reflectively.

“No, of course not,” rejoined his master, with a sharp suspicious side-glance; “of course not. Why, you know nothing.”

“No, my lord, certainly not; I know nothing whatever disparaging—of her ladyship;” and Ledbitter’s pause before “of her ladyship,” though the slightest imaginable, was not without its significance.

“Confound it, sir,” said Glenburn; “of course you don’t; her ladyship’s unknown to you, quite unknown.”

“Yes, my lord,” replied Ledbitter; “her ladyship is unknown to me, along with the rest of the world;” and he folded up a waistcoat with extreme care.

It was Ledbitter’s peculiarity that he could be exceedingly insolent in the politest manner. In a war of words his master was no match for him. Each knew this, and disagreements were rare be-

tween them. But women upset every thing. Glenburn was nettled at a rude innuendo affecting his wife, though he would have passed over any quantity of sneers levelled at himself.

“And whose business, I should like to know, is it who and what my wife was before I married her? Do you suppose I care for the opinion of the world? You know I despise it. But mark my words, Ledbitter: the man who pokes his nose into my family concerns must expect to have it pulled. My hand doesn't shake too much for a saw-handle; and if you ever hear of a word being spoken against your mistress, so much as a whisper against her fair fame, or even a sneer at the doubtfulness of her antecedents, tell me, and I'll thank you.”

Glenburn ground his teeth as he said this, and concluded his dressing in a fierce and jerky manner, flinging about the combs and brushes and toilet ornaments, and cursing every thing.

“I'm sure, my lord,” blandly remarked the valet, as he moved about the room with noiseless step, picking up and putting away the scattered

garments, and handing his master every thing required with a dexterity and calmness that would have been a study for most servants,—“I’m sure, my lord, I have never heard but one sentiment—admiration, the greatest admiration, for Lady Glenburn. Servants to a certain extent perpetuate their master’s opinion; the drawing-room sentiment is generally the servants’-hall sentiment; and wherever I go, I hear nothing but complimentary remarks upon the grace and beauty of her ladyship.”

“Yes,” smilingly replied Glenburn, breaking through all social barriers,—“yes, she’s a deuced fine woman, isn’t she?”

“Your lordship always had excellent taste in such matters,” remarked the valet with a smirk; “and whatever her ladyship’s family—”

“Don’t allude to her ladyship’s family; that’s my affair. You know a good deal, my friend; but who my lady was you will never know, so never allude to the subject; or if you do, Ledbitter, in spite of every thing, I—I—shall—”

“Yes, my lord,” quietly interposed the valet, with an evil half-smile about his lip.

“Why, I—I shall take it as d—d ungrateful, meddling, and disgraceful of you,” replied the peer; and he burst out of the room in a passion.

Mr. Ledbitter set about putting the room to rights, indulging in a low humming whistle the while, and mentally resolving by no means to profit by his master's caution. On the contrary, the evident irritation exhibited by Lord Glenburn upon the subject simply served to whet the curiosity of the valet, who felt his own position secure notwithstanding Lady Glenburn's dislike to him, and Mrs. Gaunt's very evident animosity. As his lordship went down to dinner, the valet went out for his evening walk. He had never been in the habit of going out at this hour; but for the last fortnight he had sallied forth regularly at the same time ever since the memorable night at the Mauleverer Head. Cook said she believed a lady was in the case; but Mr. Ledbitter replied, with the air of a *preux chevalier*, that were he suscep-

tible, he should not require to seek the society of ladies away from the particular house in which he had the honour and happiness to reside. Where could Mr. Ledbitter go every evening, then?

“He is plotting against me, I’m sure of it,” said Mrs. Gaunt to Lady Glenburn, who was having her hair tortured by a French lady’s-maid, preparatory to heading her husband’s table at a grand dinner-party.

Mrs. Gaunt was admitted to her mistress’s presence at all times, and was sometimes closeted with her for the hour together. She was sitting now in the queenly presence, much to the annoyance of Fifine, who hated the grim housekeeper, but who, from her extreme ignorance of the English language, and indeed of every thing save hair-dressing, was not felt to be an incumbrance when the mistress and her confidential servant were conversing.

“He is plotting against me, that Ledbitter, I’ll take my affidavit,” said the housekeeper, shaking her head, and making a vice of her

large mouth. "I'm sure he hates me, for he's so civil. I didn't suspect him as long as he gave himself airs and pooh-poohed me; but since he's been so precious polite, I know he's a motive."

"Well, I can't help thinking you give yourself needless alarm," replied her ladyship. "Besides, suppose he does hate you, what does it signify? But I'll soon settle the matter; he shall leave. I'll speak to Lord Glenburn about it this evening."

"Lord Glenburn won't part with him, you'll see. Lord Glenburn's afraid of him. I haven't watched the pair for nothing. They're as thick as thieves."

Mrs. Gaunt's simile was not refined, but it may be said to have met the case. This her ladyship discovered shortly; for when she sailed down into the drawing-room, she found her husband pacing the floor, with an angry cloud upon his brow, which, however, gradually vanished as he viewed the elegant figure and richly-tasteful toilette of his handsome wife.

She advanced with both hands, radiant and blooming, looking even younger than she really was, and with a pleasant consciousness of her own beauty that was very charming to behold. Glenburn loved this woman more than he had ever loved woman yet. There was a simplicity about her which she still retained, though the artificiality of the life she was leading would have destroyed it in most people,—a simplicity which was delightful, especially in the eyes of men, though many ladies sneered at it, and said it was assumed. At all events, it was very welcome to Glenburn, who had passed his existence amongst any thing but simple people, and who had grown weary of the forced smartness, the strained repartee, and the flashy attempts at wit indulged in by the ladies who had formed the female society at the foreign watering-places where he had for some years spent his life. He told his wife that her simplicity was one of her greatest charms, and she was sensible enough to cultivate this attractive feature in her character. There were few things Glenburn would not have done, few trials



he would not have gladly undergone, to make this handsome lady his wife. The fact that she would make a handsome *vis à vis* at his dinner-table; that when she went through the lobby of the Opera the longing dandies would make audible notes of admiration; that when she drove round the Park at his side the great world would stare with envy at him,—this had little to do with the motive prompting him to share with her his title. The motive was love,—love more genuine, and with a nearer approach to purity and honour, than had ever caused his heart to throb, or kept him awake in the night. Every previous passion of his life sunk into mean and pitiful insignificance in comparison with this one. He married her; and as he heard her praises buzzed about on all sides,—her simple, winning manners, her beauty, her taste, her condescension,—he experienced a thrill he had perhaps never known before; and he sighed bitterly when he remembered he was no longer young, and gazed at the dark deceptive gloss of his large whiskers in the glass with a rueful expression highly touching.

“My dearest Kate,” said his lordship, holding her at arms’ length, “you look more beautiful than ever. As I look at you, I feel there is scarcely any thing in the world I could refuse you.”

“Ah, indeed! Then I have a favour to ask of you, and you must grant it; I say you must!” And her ladyship shook an alabaster finger at her husband, with a playful assumption of power.

“Come, then, make your request; we are good-tempered, and rapt in admiration, and our favourite sultana may command us,” replied Lord Glenburn, sinking back into a couch.

“Then,” said his wife, with a timid droop of the eyes,—“then oblige me by sending away Mr. Ledbitter.”

Lord Glenburn’s brow grew suddenly dark, and her ladyship’s colour fled from her cheeks at the sight. When Glenburn had this bad look upon him, his appearance completely changed; and the countenance which a minute ago might have passed muster as good-looking,—even handsome,—would now have formed a fitting model

for the face of a fiend. He had of late almost lost this look, which had at one time been habitual with him; for a long course of selfish gratification, and continued absence of heavy annoyances, had chased the evil cloud from his brow. But a sudden and strong vexation brought it back again in all its old deformity; and well might her ladyship shrink from her husband when he strode towards her, his hands clenched, and his eyes glowing with uncontrolled rage:

“Lady Glenburn,” he said, in slow, measured accents,—“Lady Glenburn, so long as you continue beneath my roof, you will please to cease all mention of Mr. Ledbitter. You and Mrs. Gaunt have, for some absurd cause or other, taken a dislike to my valet. Learn from me, madam, that your likes or dislikes in that quarter are immaterial; and also distinctly understand that Mr. Ledbitter was in my confidence before you were born, and those who offend my valet insult me.”

The visitors at Portman Square that evening remarked on leaving that Lady Glenburn hadn't

seemed herself at all; and as for Glenburn, he was evidently relapsing into his old ill-humour and devotion to the bottle.

“I will never mention the fellow’s name to him again; I thought I should have died from fright when he glowered at me, and spoke so deliberately and so dreadfully,” said her ladyship, as Mrs. Gaunt sat with her whilst she took off her fine dress and jewels that night.

“Ah,” said the iron housekeeper, “he won’t talk like that to *me*; and if it’s war to the knife, woe betide that pale-faced valet, with his false smile and his velvet tread, for I’ll carry my object yet.” And Mrs. Gaunt, with her strong long limbs, looked as if she could have carried any thing.

“You leave Mrs. Gaunt alone, Ledbitter,” said Glenburn, in thick accents, to the valet (who had returned some time from that mysterious walk out), “and she’ll leave you alone. ’Tall events, her ladyship don’t bear you any an—an—mosty.”

Mr. Ledbitter smiled.

## CHAPTER IX.

### IN WHICH HORACE ACTS VERY RASHLY.

MISS PINTO, having hooked her fish, was not the kind of angler to let it go. Horace found himself her lover in no time. It was to be kept from "Pa," of course; but Mrs. Pinto, who was charmed at having any thing to do that was romantic, looked down upon the pair with a benign expression, and maintained such a distant manner to Horace in the presence of her husband, that it was perfectly extraordinary even that obtuse person didn't suspect something. But he didn't. Priscilla's conduct underwent so marvellous a change, her face became so permanently radiant, her voice lost so much of its normal harshness, that the doctor was content to take matters as he found them; and, as it always did and always will take two to quarrel, Mr. Pinto

found his home pleasanter than it had been for some time. The stuck-up senior pupil, too, became more amenable, and didn't contradict his master upon abstruse points forgotten for many years by the doctor, but still fresh in his own lecture-crammed brain; nor did he indulge in unseemly satire, or stimulate the other pupil to open rebellion; or, in short, commit any of the acts of insubordination which had rendered him detestable in the eyes of Mr. Pinto. No; every thing was changed: he was chatty, agreeable, deferential; listened to the dull old anecdotes of the doctor's youthful escapades; told him that the leading physician at the hospital had inquired very kindly after him, and observed that a cleverer man had never passed the college than dear old Archer: and the result was, that the family circle became quite pleasant, and Horace found himself getting fonder of Priscilla and less anxious about his mother every day.

Mr. Mortimer Jenkins consequently came down upon them like a bombshell.

Mr. Mortimer Jenkins was a young doctor

from the Pottery districts, with a spare thousand or two, and a strong distaste for the class of patients peculiar to his native county. Mr. M. J. longed for a London practice, and had advertised in a medical journal for one. The advertisement caught Pinto's eye; and as he had scraped together a fair sum, and was becoming rather tired of his business, he was induced to reply; and thus the bombshell. Mr. Jenkins saw the practice, and didn't care much about it; he also saw Priscilla, and became enamoured. He came to tea on Monday, he dropped in to dinner on Tuesday, treated Mrs. and Miss Pinto to the play on Wednesday, paid a long visit on Thursday, returned home on Friday, and from his distant surgery in Staffordshire sent up a proposal of marriage for Priscilla, making his purchase of the practice contingent upon her acceptance of his hand, upon Saturday. Miss Pinto had gone to the play under protest. Horace growled as she passed him on her way to the dusky old brougham, and she threw an appealing glance at him which would have touched a Stoic. She was the slave of circumstances; be-

sides, she had never seen Macready. Be sure Horace was in the theatre as well, and that he watched Mr. Jenkins much more than Macbeth. When the Staffordshire surgeon pointed out the characters to Priscilla in the bill (generally incorrectly), Horace could have seized a seat and flung it at him; and when the heartless damsel smiled and listened attentively to his explanations or critical remarks, the enraged student bit his nails, and ground his heel against the flooring, with the maddening feeling of a first jealousy. Poor Jenkins was perfectly unconscious of the pair of gleaming eyes that shot their fiery glances at him from the slips. He was a well-meaning, inoffensive, freckly young man, with very pale-blue eyes, and was what people call "very clever in his profession,"—which, nine times out of ten, is a gentle way of admitting he is a noodle out of it; a simple-minded, honest fellow, who had treated silly old Mrs. Pinto and her daughter from the purest motives of good-nature. The play at last was over,—it was interminable, thought Horace,—and the trio left the theatre and returned to Bloomsbury.



*Macbeth* was not a favourite play of Mrs. Pinto's; there was no "sentiment" in it. *Romeo and Juliet* was her pet, and she didn't care who knew it. Mrs. Pinto, like very many exceedingly commonplace people, ventured the most ordinary opinions with a noble reckless disregard of the consequences, and may be said to have expressed all her little wishy-washy sentiments in italics. Priscilla didn't care much for the play; for the sanguinary tone of the drama was unpleasantly suggestive of the shop. As for Jenkins, he confined his criticisms to the surgical aspect of the case, and to remarking, *en passant*, that the pink gash on Banquo's throat was of too superficial a nature to prove fatal, and strongly objected to the death of Macbeth, which, he declared, was brought about by a thrust which was, under the circumstances, really anatomically impossible. Horace found them discussing these appetising details over a snug little hot supper, at which banquet he sat down very much like the proverbial skeleton, and watched his Priscilla with a morbid gloom. That matter-of-fact young lady was very hungry, and

was by no means inclined to lose her supper. So she threw a loving look at Horace (who received it scornfully), and took another mutton-cutlet. On the Thursday—thanks to a dreadful scene with Horace—Priscilla received the visit of Mr. Jenkins coldly. Mrs. Pinto threw out hints for the *Lady of Lyons*, but they were not taken; and the Staffordshire practitioner took his leave, heavy and sick at heart, his sudden passion greatly augmented by the distant behaviour of its object. On Saturday came the proposal; and Pinto sent for his daughter.

“Well, Priscilla, by Jove, you know, eh? odd, very odd, ain’t it?” stammered the surgeon, scarcely knowing how to begin.

“I don’t see that it’s so very odd,” replied Priscilla.

“You’ve had a letter, as well as me, eh?” asked the parent.

“Oh, yes; I’ve had a declaration, as they call it,” replied Priscilla, with a half-scornful laugh.

“Well,” observed Pinto, “it’s remarkably sudden; but I like people to make up their minds

soon. The shilly-shallying system's out of date. Hit the nail on the head—that's my motto. He's made a capital bid for the practice—a ca-pi-tal bid."

Priscilla delighted in the whole business. She had always sneered at her mother's sentimental proclivities; and this piece of romance was something so new to her, that she greatly enjoyed the misery of her situation. She had always pooh-pooed such nonsense; and here she was a heroine in spite of herself. Here was the workaday, commonplace Bloomsbury atmosphere suddenly redolent of love and doubt and jealousy and despair. She revelled in her new position, and made the most of her heartrending situation. And Horace had gone to the hospital pale and unshaven, and without tasting breakfast. Delicious!

"Well, what do you think of him, Prissy?" asked the surgeon. "What do you think of him? A good-looking chap, *I* call him; well-to-do too, and genteel, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, he's good-looking enough," replied Priscilla, "for those who don't object to sandy

whiskers, and freckles, and goggle-eyes with no colour in them, and a wide, silly, grinning mouth, and knock-knees, and a general appearance of provincialism and stupidity.”

It was evident Miss Pinto was in one of her sarcastic moods ; but her papa was in a temper not to be trifled with ; so he frowned darkly, and said :

“ Priscilla Pinto, I’ve been a kind father to you ; failing health is the sole cause,” he continued, mentally quoting the advertisement he had intended putting in the paper,—“ yes, failing health is the sole cause of my wishing to retire from practice. Here is a chance I shall never get again—a great chance ; and you won’t be so un-dutiful, so ungrateful, so cruel, as to throw any obstacle in the way ?”

And the mean little surgeon whimpered, and played with his fingers in an imbecile and purposeless manner.

“ I am not throwing any obstacle in the way, papa,” replied Priscilla. “ You don’t expect me to marry a man I have seen three times, I pre-

sume? As to purchasing the practice, that is your and his affair; you would scarcely expect me to throw my heart into the bargain, along with the fixtures and the drugs."

"Hang it, miss!" burst out Pinto, "none of your clever speeches; for they won't do with me, I can tell you. I'll have obedience, implicit obedience. You haven't got a penny in the world but what I choose to give you; and you haven't got" (this with a cruel sneer) "*another lover*; so take the best chance that offers: you won't get another, perhaps. Strike the iron whilst it's hot; marry this very gentlemanly young man; and—and accept a father's blessing."

Mr. Pinto hadn't known how to finish this sentence; but he couldn't have pitched upon an unluckier one.

"A father's blessing, eh?" said Priscilla, with a flush of genuine anger; "and why should I care so much for a father's blessing? You talk of gratitude! It is you who should exhibit gratitude to me, not I to you. I have kept your house together for years; I have worked, and toiled, and

slaved, and scraped, and managed; and now you expect me to finish my grovelling career by marrying a nonentity I despise. No, papa; I will *not* marry this country surgeon, with his broad provincial dialect and his great shoes and his stubbly hair. Though I may not have *another lover*, I will remain an old maid to my dying day rather than go with the pestles and mortars and spatulas and bottles of musty old medicines.”

Priscilla was in earnest now, and she looked quite handsome as she stood there erect and with flashing eyes,—a contrast, indeed, to her poor insignificant parent, on whose countenance, however, a spiteful and angry expression was beginning to settle.

“Nice conduct to a parent,” at length observed the doctor, white with rage,—“nice conduct. I’ll tell you what, miss,”—and he bent down and peered into her face with gleaming eyes,—“I tell you what, miss: you *shall* marry the man I approve of; you *shall*,—d’ye hear me?”

A smile of contempt curled the lips of his daughter, as she replied quietly:

“I am of age, and my own mistress, and I shall *not* marry this person.”

Pinto lost all command over himself; his eyes burnt like living coals, and the veins in his forehead swelled like little ropes as he clasped his daughter by the arm and shook her. He was a powerful, thick-set man, and Priscilla trembled in his grasp. But she was firm in her resolve, and mentally rejoiced that Horace was not within; for had that excitable youth been present, the parental dignity would assuredly have received a severe shock. When Pinto was tired of shaking his daughter, he flung her from him, and stood, with his coat-tails under his arms, watching the effect of his violence.

Poor Priscilla staggered back into a chair, with a flushed and angry face, more defiant than ever. Pinto panted, for he was of a bull-necked build,—fat and scant of breath. Priscilla’s lips were firmly set, and the surgeon-apothecary felt he had thrown away his anger and his violence without producing the desired impression. So now he begged his child’s pardon, and declared

he had but one object in life,—her happiness. He whimpered and sobbed, and spoke of his gray hairs and his child's ingratitude, and went the whole stereotyped round of stock phrases peculiar to the "heavy father." He whined about his failing health, the increasing dimness of his sight, the toiling, struggling life he had led, the *otium cum dignitate* which should reward the affectionate husband and father after a career of honest labour.

At length he paused, for upon the stony countenance of Priscilla there appeared no trace of emotion; her heart was with Horace, and she paid no attention to her father, who, with his handkerchief in his hand, was sawing the air like an orator, and piling high the parental agony. He paused, but she made him no reply. She stared at him with her pale eyes, but uttered never a word; and after waiting a moment or two for her to speak, the surgeon growled a deep and angry curse, and left her.

Horace returned, and found his lady-love with red eyelids, and was with difficulty prevented from



going at once to Pinto, and defying him to his face. With the aid of her lover's literary ability, Priscilla sat down and wrote such a refusal to poor Jenkins as had, perhaps, never been penned by lady since love-making came into fashion. It was alternately scornful and cuttingly polite; much stress was laid upon the extreme honour the surgeon had conferred upon her by the offer of his hand, and a stinging comparison was drawn between the miseries of a London life compared to the delights of existence in the Potteries. A classical quotation closed the epistle, which Horace read to Mrs. Pinto with "appropriate action," and which that well-meaning but somewhat shallow dame pronounced wonderful, but really rather hard upon a worthy young man, who had been very polite and pleasant.

Mr. Pinto had no suspicion of what was going on. He would as soon have imagined his pupil in love with the Sphinx as Priscilla. So one day when he was seated in his dining-room making out the list of his patients, he was considerably astonished at the appearance of Horace and his

daughter: the former a little pale, and, if truth must be spoken, a trifle tremulous; but the latter flushed, erect, and defiant.

“Papa,” said Priscilla, in a cold clear voice,—  
“papa, Horace and myself have just been married. Here is the certificate.”

The surgeon turned deathly pale, and sat back in his chair with a scared look that was really alarming. He then gazed blankly at his daughter and her husband; but his lips refused to shape a word, and he passed his hand across his brow, and stared, but could say nothing.

“Papa, we love each other,” continued Priscilla, speaking hurriedly, and with a trace of tenderness in the altered tone of her voice, for her father’s looks frightened her. “Horace knew you would never consent, and so we married without it; but you will forgive us, and Horace will work very hard and get a capital practice with you to back him and recommend him; and then we can all live together, and I won’t annoy you with sharp answers and ill tempers, as I know I often have done; and Horace is a gentleman, and Mr.

Jenkins wasn't; and you have often said you wished I would get married, and now" (with a great gulp) "I've done it."

There was the ring of genuine feeling in Priscilla's voice as she hurriedly poured forth her excuses; but the countenance of the father was still unmoved, and he showed no sign that he heard her as he still stared vacantly at her face with a blank and bewildered look.

"I have no particular prospects, sir," said Horace, coming to the rescue rather ungracefully, and for the first time trembling before the man he so heartily despised. "I have to fight my way, but I can do it; I am devoted to Priscilla; you couldn't expect to monopolise her for ever, you know,"—this with a faint and melancholy effort at a smile,—“and you'd have laughed at me if I'd asked your permission; so make the best of a bad bargain, Mr. Pinto,—father-in-law,—and say you forgive us, and—”

Horace was almost drifting into the children's climax of “we won't do so any more;” for he was paying little attention to what he was saying, but

spoke almost at random, so alarmed was he at the strange wild look upon his father-in-law's face. Mr. Pinto did not reply, but continued to pass his hand across his forehead, and he seemed hardly to be aware that Horace had ceased speaking. At length Priscilla threw her arms round his neck, and looking close into his face, asked him with a sob to forgive her, and sunk her head upon his shoulder and wept piteously. The surgeon rose and disengaged himself from her embrace, and buttoned up his coat, and stood as he was accustomed to do when he wished to let a patient see that the interview was over. Priscilla knew the attitude, and a strange fear well-nigh overcame her; and a dismal foreboding chilled her rash young husband's heart; for there was something in the manner of the deceived parent that rendered him almost dignified, a calmness that presaged more than any ebullition of rage.

“Well, Mrs. Bentley,” said the surgeon, “you have made your bed; so you must lie. I will not trust myself to say what my opinion of your husband's conduct is. He has chosen to marry

a penniless woman clandestinely ; that is his affair. You must expect nothing from me ; for, as I stand here, I declare to you solemnly you shall never have a shilling of my money. You must leave my house this very day, and never enter it again. Don't say a word. I am going my Bloomsbury round, and shall be gone about three hours. Don't let me find you here when I return."

The surgeon had spoken these cruel words in a monotonous, low voice, without looking at his daughter ; and having finished his speech, he took up his hat and gloves and went out straight to his brougham.

Priscilla did not faint or go into hysterics. She drew herself up to her full height, and with a bright look turned to her husband, and seizing both his hands, said, " Horace dear, we will try to live without him."

Horace, however, was not so heroic in his bearing ; he blamed himself for his rashness, for his selfish want of consideration, and for his folly

in dragging Priscilla from a sphere of comfort into one of poverty.

Poor Mrs. Pinto, who had been listening in the passage, and had scuttered off into the surgery at the conclusion of her husband's speech, was brought out of that odoriferous apartment more dead than alive, and completely unnerved her son-in-law, who did not shine by any means in this emergency. Priscilla left her mamma lamenting in the dining-room, and, with the aid of a housemaid, had her trunks packed in no time, and was ready to quit the domestic roof before Mrs. Pinto had properly come round. That good lady was for a general abasement at the feet of the stern father, and pictured Pinto as a modern Coriolanus breaking down before the passionate entreaties of his family. But this Mrs. Bentley wouldn't hear of; and indeed Horace, who would have been glad enough to have made any sacrifice to obtain the father's forgiveness, remembered the cold, hard, cruel look of the little doctor, and prepared for departure with a heavy heart. With stream-

ing eyes and many sobs Mrs. Pinto promised to see the unhappy couple continually ; and she fell back swooning into the arms of the servant as the bride and bridegroom started in a musty four-wheeled cab, to spend their honeymoon in the blissful region of Little Green Street, Soho.

## CHAPTER X.

### THINGS LOOK BAD FOR THE BENTLEYS.

MRS. MOLLOY'S surprise at the arrival of the happy couple expressed itself in the usual verbose and redundant fashion of that lady. Not that she was really so delighted as she appeared. Mrs. Molloy had a theory about lodgers. Single gentlemen who dined out were the best, in giving the least trouble, and as being oblivious as to scraps; maiden ladies, or widows, came next in point of desirability; and lowest in the scale stood married couples, for the wives had a habit of prying and interfering in a manner highly objectionable to the landlady mind.

This was perhaps not so generally the case with young married people, billing and cooing being antagonistic to strict economy; but there was something in the sharp features and equally sharp



manner of Mrs. Bentley junior which told Mrs. Molloy that she was not a young married woman to be trifled with. Far above the specimens we have quoted, of course stood that sublime lodger who paid his rent regularly and never came at all. Such a one had Horace been since the abrupt departure of his mother. To do Mrs. Molloy justice, she had kept the apartment in a moderately-neat and cleanly condition; and though the windows were rather dirty, and there were traces of rust upon the fire-irons, there was nothing particular for Priscilla to find fault with: and she looked about with a determination to be down upon any evidence of neglect, as Mrs. Molloy observed, to her infinite disgust. Priscilla's temper had been ruffled, and Horace had not spoken two words during the drive from Bloomsbury to Soho, but had sat gloomily gazing through the window, wrapped in apparently very dismal reflections, and exhibited no inclination to take advantage of the situation, and bestow any endearments upon his new wife.

It is true the streets were crowded, and the cab

frequently brought to a standstill by a block ; but still, argued Mrs. Horace to herself, he might have squeezed her hand and said something affectionate. Horace was thinking of his mother. It was strange that she had scarcely ever entered his mind for months ; but now, at the time of his first trouble, his first great difficulty, his mother monopolised his thoughts, and he would have given worlds to have had her at his side to advise him in that gentle, loving voice of hers. What would she say when she heard of his marriage ? She would not upbraid him, of that he was certain ; she was too kind and too devoted to him to think harshly of any thing he chose to do. Would she like his wife ? Why not ? Priscilla was well informed, as times went ; handsome, amiable (with those she liked), and devoted to him. Was he overwhelmingly attached to her himself ? Was he what the world called over head and ears in love with her ? Did she seem to him to be immeasurably above all women he had ever seen, ever read about, ever dreamt of ? If she had jilted him, and married the Pottery practitioner, would he have gone mad, or

committed suicide, or turned misanthrope; or would he have got over it in time, and married a girlish creature with bright blue eyes and flowing yellow hair, and have learnt to laugh at the love of his student days? These irritating thoughts *would* arise; and as he sat absorbed with his own uncomfortable reflections, Priscilla, on her part, had ample opportunity for considering the great change in her position.

The most methodical people in the world are frequently the least to be depended upon in emergencies when method should assist matters. Priscilla would no more have thought of going out for an hour without having previously mapped out in her own mind the route she should take, and the business she should transact, than would a postman think of going his rounds at random. Every act almost of her past life had been accomplished according to a previous mental arrangement; she had been a piece of domestic clockwork, the most methodical practical damsel in the parish. But the master passion upsets most things, and it had completely capsized the systematic thoughtfulness of

Priscilla. Love and temper combined to obliterate her sense of the propriety of looking before she leapt. Her home was miserable to her; it had never been a very happy one; she had always been in a false position; and Horace's affection was the first ray of sunshine on her life's most dismal path. She had refused to think of the future with an obstinacy which increased with every fresh slight and angry speech from her father. She would look at Horace's handsome face and stalwart young form, and determined that dark fears for the future should not rob her of him. A slight reactionary feeling came upon her during the cab-ride to Soho. She scarcely knew where she was going; she had never been to Mrs. Molloy's. The marriage had been brought to a very sudden settlement by a more than ordinarily savage outbreak on Mr. Pinto's part, and the future lay before her like a desert, in which her husband's love was the one green spot.

Horace thought, as he looked round his mother's apartment, that he had never seen it appear so mean, and he mentally resolved that his stay in

Soho should be as limited as possible. Priscilla bustled about, and her rather shrill voice resounded through the little house, and struck terror to the hearts of the young Molloyes, a copious supply of whom were always on hand.

Priscilla settled into her new sphere in no time. She was an admirable housekeeper; and she and her husband appeared to live upon an almost nominal sum. Her mother had made her a present of the trifling purse she had been able to make up during her marriage, and with the money Horace had received for the forthcoming term of lectures, they possessed sufficient to carry on with for the present. Horace was one of those sanguine people who never think of the morrow until it comes, and he had that fatal belief in the certainty of something turning up which prevents so many men from shouldering a spade and vigorously turning it up for themselves. "Sufficient unto the day" was his favourite quotation; and so long as he saw a canvas bag of sovereigns lying snugly in the corner of his wife's dressing-case, he boldly ignored the possibility of future poverty. Besides,

he only wanted another year or so's lectures to fit him for examination; and once "passed," there was a wide field for him, and, as he argued, with a triumphant appeal to Mrs. Molloy (who was never asked her opinion except when Horace was certain it would be given in his favour), was it not a received and acknowledged fact that bachelor doctors stood no chance in comparison with married medical men?—a sentiment which Mrs. Molloy—as the mother of nine—endorsed most emphatically.

All this was very well whilst the sovereigns lasted; but the most careful housekeeper must make an occasional call upon her husband's pocket; and the little canvas bag began to grow lighter; and those highly necessary articles, coats and trousers, and dresses and bonnets—which had never entered into Horace's calculations—made a dreadful inroad upon the Bentley capital. For the first time since his marriage Horace thought on this grave matter; and as he reflected on his position, his brow became gloomy, and he felt how rashly he had acted in marrying in haste.

He had not been to Mr. Pinto's house since his marriage, and was not without considerable misgivings as to the result of an interview with his father-in-law; but he set out to pay him a visit, trusting that he might have come round since the absence of his daughter. Mrs. Pinto had called once or twice upon them in a hurried, nervous fashion, as if she was afraid that her husband might bounce in suddenly upon her, and take her back to Bloomsbury like a culprit; but these visits were so depressing, and left poor Priscilla so low-spirited, that Horace was within an ace of telling his mother-in-law to have her cry outside in the street before she came in, and not let the entire neighbourhood know the marriage was against the father's wish by coming in such a surreptitious and furtive manner. But, as Priscilla said "mamma was all they had to look to," he contented himself by keeping out of the room, or humming unconcernedly at the window, in order to put the folks opposite off the scent. It was perfectly true Mrs. Pinto *was* all they had to look to; and as Horace watched her, with her

faded, irresponsible manner, and her reservoir of tears always ready, he sighed to think of the firm build and healthy constitution of the stern doctor, who came of a family noted for longevity, and who never had an ache or a pain from one year's end to the other. When Priscilla hinted to her mamma the uncertainty of the future, or showed her the vacuous condition of the canvas bag, the surgeon's wife only cried, and said, "What *is* to be done? what *is* to be done?" in a helpless way, with her pale eyes wandering about the room, as if mutely appealing to space to help her to a satisfactory reply. So Horace buttoned up his coat and started to the parental roof, with an inward conviction that his visit would be received with discourtesy, to say the least; but he pocketed his pride when he thought of the necessity of doing something, and resolved that nothing should induce him to forget the respect due to his wife's father, and prepared to apologise and promise any thing in reason, provided the stern surgeon would revoke his obstinate vow.

Mr. Pinto was coming out of his house as



Horace came up to the door. He bowed coldly to his son-in-law, and stood waiting to hear his business.

“I have come, sir,” stammered Horace, “with a message from Priscilla.”

The surgeon bowed again, and walked into the front room, Horace following him.

Horace cleared his throat and endeavoured to master his emotion, for the surgeon stood with his head bent slightly, but he never asked his son-in-law to sit down, neither did his manner exhibit any proof that his daughter’s absence had softened his resentment.

“Priscilla sent her kind love, sir” (a very slight sneer on the surgeon’s lip at this), “and I have come to say that as my apprenticeship will be at an end in a year—”

“It is now, Mr. Bentley,” replied the surgeon quickly. “The last instalment of the money has not been paid, *will* not be paid. I have received a letter from Mr. Stone. His opinion of your conduct in clandestinely wedding the daughter of the man beneath whose roof you lived is the same

as mine, and he has washed his hands of you. He refuses to pay the rest of the money, and deeply regrets that he ever paid any at all. That being the case, I have nothing further to do but to hand you your indenture; had the money been paid, you would have had a claim upon me for rather more than a year's board and lodging; the money not being paid, of course you are no longer my pupil, nor have you any right in my house. I believe you have received a sum of money to pay for your lectures, which sum I presume you will return. I have no doubt your mother can ill spare her contribution towards it, and Mr. Stone, though in easy circumstances, cannot afford to waste his money on those who so ill requite his bounty,—his charity."

Horace felt the blood tingle to the roots of his hair; and that bitter feeling, which every man experiences when he has humbled himself for a second time and been a second time repulsed, sickened him at heart, and he could have cursed his own stupidity for imagining for a moment that there could have been one sentiment of pity or

forgiveness in the bosom of the soulless, sordid little imposter who stood before him.

By a violent effort (for which he gave himself full credit afterwards) he restrained himself, and simply made some commonplace reply, expressive of perfect indifference to Mr. Stone's determination. Mr. Pinto then said that the indenture should be left out for him ; and Horace bowed and left the house.

It was about as miserable a tea that evening in Mrs. Molloy's first floor as had ever been partaken of in Soho. Horace, in order to school himself to poverty and shortcomings, made a parade of eating half his usual quantity of bread and butter—though he made up for it at supper, it must be confessed ; and Priscilla sat mending away at forty-finger power, occasionally sighing, but more frequently indulging in denunciations of “ Pa.”

The letter that came from Mrs. Bentley was, as Horace expected it would be, a most kind and loving one ; containing much good advice, and many messages to her daughter-in-law. Priscilla

had a good cry over it, and Horace's eyes were suspiciously red after his first perusal. The thrifty bride, indeed, went so far as to propose that Horace and she should go and live with his mamma, clubbing their scanty means, and proving the possibility of the old "enough for one is enough for two" principle; and adding, that living in some parts of the country came to scarcely any thing,—a fact for which Priscilla could by no means vouch, for her provincial experience had been confined to occasional visits to second-rate watering-places, where she had passed her time in one continual battle with the landlady of the lodgings. This, however, Horace wouldn't hear of; and he boldly stated his determination to stick to London, as the only place where a man had a chance, and where genius was sure to be recognised. It had been settled long ago that Horace *had* genius, and he was the last person in the world to disbelieve any thing in his own favour. Not that it was very easy to state what he had ever done to deserve the reputation; but there are some people in this world who seem to assume a character for certain qualities

as of right, and nobody thinks of disputing their claim. There certainly had been a flashy smartness in the "papers" which Horace had read at his Essay and Discussion Society, over the tobaccoist's; but his audience was not a highly critical one, and a very little wit went a great way with those youthful medicos. The privileged few who were let into the secret of the authorship of certain rhymes and short sketches, which appeared at long intervals in the pages of a periodical edited with by no means rigid scrupulosity, were loud in their praises; but they were mostly of the class which believes in any thing printed; and though Horace saw his own faults, he was very sharp and indignant if they were pointed out to him by another. The want of application, to which Mr. Brandle had referred in his letter to Mrs. Bentley on his pupil's departure from Wanley Vicarage, was very evident in the multifarious compositions which Horace commenced, only to throw aside as some new fancy seized him. He had begun a tragedy, of the severest order, and at the middle of the second act had thrown it down in favour of a

farce. He would have done great things with an essay on the genius of John Hunter, had he not suddenly become enamoured of the Muse, and rushed at a tangent into a poem on the French revolution; an epic doomed in its turn to be superseded by a novel of life and character, of which he dashed off half a chapter very spiritedly, and then feeling confused about his plot, put it in the fire, and commenced a comedy. He entertained a wild notion of making a fortune with his pen, and gave up all views of being a doctor. Now it seems a hard thing, that a fairly educated young gentleman, of good address and considerable talent, should find himself utterly unable to obtain, unaided by "a friend at court," enough to board and lodge and clothe himself respectably. But so it was with Horace. What could he do, hampered with a wife? Horace had done her a trifling wrong, compared with the dire injury she had done him by accepting him and marrying him without the prospect of a penny from any one. Thus argued Horace to himself; and it did not by any means tend to improve his temper, or add any

extra touch of amiability to his manner towards his wife. They grew poorer and poorer too, and things began to look very desperate indeed. Horace was beginning to lose his self-respect, and from never thinking of the morrow (he was always in extremes), took to talking of nothing else all day, in the most dismal way; so that really the atmosphere of the first floor at Mrs. Molloy's was about as depressing as could well be conceived; and how it was no grand, gloomy, Manfred-like piece of poetic misery ever came from the pen of Priscilla's husband about this time, passes the comprehension of the present chronicler. Of course, too, it happened that the Molloy's had a crowd of their own troubles, at the same dismal season. The Molloy's were perfect specimens of that cockney type of small householder, remarkable for an annual increase of children and difficulties. Bailiffs and babies seemed to be their perpetual portion. Poor Mrs. Molloy was a wonderful manager; but the appetites of growing children are dreadful things to encounter; and a quartern loaf, though a big thing to look at, will only go a certain dis-

tance, after all. What with the lodgings, and what with the washing, and 'Liza's wages at Mrs. Parnum's, and Sarah Jane's little bit of dress-making, and father's occasional presents from his brother abroad, and a good fat hamper every three months from uncle John the farmer and grazier in Gloucestershire, Mrs. Molloy managed to scrape on somehow, but it was hard work for her to contrive; and if the wolf wasn't actually at the door, he was a very little way indeed round the corner. Something was always hovering over the house. Either they couldn't make up the water-rate, or the greengrocer threatened the county court, or father had run up a score at the public-house, and slaving Mrs. Molloy had to take the money from the rent, and how to face the landlord next quarter, she—poor creature—didn't know. This steady, honest, overworked woman might have married a well-to-do shopkeeper, or her cousin the head clerk in a wholesale house, and have lived in comfort; but she had preferred the thriftless, ne'er-do-well Molloy; and she had never murmured at her lot, but drudged on for years for that selfish, thankless



churl and her annually increasing family, and had done her duty with a smile upon her honest face; and even at the hardest times, with a humble thankfulness at her heart, for the health and strength with which Heaven had endowed her. There are many such heroines in this great city; heroines we never hear of; heroines with coarse red hands, and in cotton gowns, who toil on patiently to the end,—struggling, much-enduring women, with the courage of martyrs.

There is a freemasonry in poverty, and by certain signs and tokens Mrs. Molloy soon discovered the impecuniosity of her first-floor lodgers. To say that a slight feeling of gratified revenge, for the haughty manner of the handsome Horace, did not at times suggest itself to her, would be to ignore the existence of a universal female attribute, which even the kindest-hearted women are possessed of. But the gratification was of the slightest, and lasted but a moment; the honest bosom of the worthy creature warmed towards the young couple, and, with the genuine delicacy of a true woman, she treated them with much more attention and

consideration, now that she felt her prospects of rent to be vague; whilst those trifling scraps and pickings, which in all lodgings fall to the share of the small fry of the family, were as carefully guarded by Mrs. Molloy's maternal eye, as if they were of untold value and importance. Horace's position would have been a trying one for a man of the firmest principle, and accustomed to look difficulties steadily in the face. This he had never done; and, indeed, it was not in his nature, nor could he school his mind to a calm view of the future. He was always in extremes. He had no notion of earning a bare subsistence by steady industry; and when it was suggested to him by Mrs. Pinto (who occasionally had faint gleams of common-sense), that he should try to get into an office where he could earn a trifling weekly sum for the present, he received the notion with dignified contempt, and won his wife over to his view of it, by picturing her loneliness in the long dismal days, whilst he was away from her wasting his manly bloom in a dingy office with commonplace red-handed, hungry clerks, who would despise him

for his gentlemanly appearance and ignorance of arithmetic.

It was this young man's peculiarity, that he could, at the first blush, win over any body to his side by a humorous and picturesque power of putting things in a ridiculous light.

This talent for word-photography he would bring to his aid in all arguments; and he generally gained a temporary triumph by a species of verbal pyrotechny which dazzled and confused the opposing speaker, but the effect of which was seldom lasting. On quitting the society of the smart youth, sober-minded people found considerable difficulty in extracting the one grain of real sense from the enormous bushel of chaff with which they had been overwhelmed; and this gift of flashy eloquence, though it surprised many, seldom gained its possessor any friends, and succeeded generally in convincing nobody but Horace himself. After a tremendous and bewildering effort of this kind, Priscilla would sit dumfounded at the specious show of argument in which her husband indulged; and it was not until the excitement he had produced

had somewhat subsided, that her matter-of-fact mind came to the rescue, and she remembered that the purse was almost empty, and that every thing going out, and nothing coming in, must inevitably result, sooner or later, in a most unpleasant condition of starvation. It was a disagreeable word even to whisper to oneself, but there was no getting over it, and Priscilla made no attempt to do so, but looked it firmly in the face, and made up her mind to consult Mrs. Molloy. This was of course unknown to Horace, who would have been dreadfully angry had he heard of it. Mrs. Molloy, however, could advise nothing, and only said she would not trouble them for the rent at present; indeed, she added, with a tender consideration, she would rather receive it quarterly if that would suit Mrs. Bentley. Unless gifted with some special talent in an eminent degree, it is wonderfully difficult for a married woman of gentle culture to add in any way to her husband's means by the exercise of her industry. She may let lodgings, but that necessitates having a house; and dress-making and tuition are about the only callings which can be

carried on at home. Horace would never have consented to his wife taking in sewing; and as to teaching, he pooh-poohed the notion, wilfully ignoring the recollection of his mother having brought him up with the produce of her years of hard teaching. But his mother—as he justly argued for once—was accomplished, a clever pianiste, and possessed of a thorough knowledge of French and Italian. Now, Priscilla's playing was distinguished more for a masculine and defiant touch than any skilfulness of execution, and her theoretic knowledge of music was very dim indeed; whilst her French had been cruelly nipped in the bud by Mr. Pinto, who thought it would lead to novels and nonsense, and who, priding himself on his John Bullism, struck out the fee to the "Resident Parisian" after the second quarter, thereby saving his pounds and his principles. Consequently it was very evident that Mrs. Bentley junior's sphere of instruction would have to be limited to children of the tenderest years; and Horace (with that inimitable and dangerous power of his) drew such a picture of Priscilla surrounded by the smallest

children in Soho, with spelling-books, halfpenny slates, and a cane, that she burst into tears at her own incompetency, and wept fit to break her heart.

The twopenny pride, which was one of Horace's bitterest inward enemies, had all along prompted him to turn away and look from the only prospect which was open to him. He might have gone as a day assistant to a surgeon; for he knew much of his profession, and the fact of his having studied it for so long, and attended so extensive a course of hospital lectures, would have, no doubt, recommended him to many. Added to which he was a gentleman in manner and appearance; and an imposing exterior is invaluable to a doctor, as he had frequently found in his short experience, for the poorer patients were wont to tremble beneath his searching eye, and to view his whiskers with an evident awe. But the "clever fellow Bentley," the smart man who was destined to surprise the fogey faction of the profession, and who was to start a literary medical journal on a new principle, combining light readable semi-satirical essays with the

more solid pudding provided by the hospital cases,—a kind of chirurgical charivari, which was to open a field for those soaring scribblers who scorned succumbing to the conditions imposed by existing publications (the Editor of the *Lancet* never *would* insert Horace's contributions),—was he, the idol of a "set" to dwindle down into an uncertificated assistant to a surgeon-apothecary? Never! The only way to preserve his dignity was to quit the profession for ever; and he stamped his foot upon the carpet at this climax to his reflections, as if he had the entire College of Surgeons beneath his heel. It was illustrative of the superficiality of his nature, that during his long student-life he had made no firm friend amongst his brother pupils, and much to his gratification no one amongst his acquaintance took the trouble to seek him out, now that he had left the hospital. Tracing back his list of companions from his school-days, his mental finger paused at the almost-forgotten name of Joe Pulling. Since Pulling and Horace had parted at the inn in Oxford Street, on the day they both left Mr. Brandle's for good, the cheery

freckled face of his old companion had seldom risen to the memory of Horace. There used to be something so genial and hearty about dear old Joe, that Horace felt assured he would be the best person he knew to put him in the way of doing something until (always this reservation) fortune gave him an opportunity of dazzling the world with a sudden outburst of genius. So the young husband took his hat and set out to the City to see his old friend Joseph Pulling, whose father was a wholesale something or other, but he didn't know exactly what, but knew it was something in which people made a great deal of money, with ledgers and invoices, and bills of lading and other mercantile materials, the importance of which was sadly undervalued by the aristocratic Horace, who was at that moment possessed of about seven pounds fourteen shillings capital.



## CHAPTER XI.

### LEDBITTER LAYS A LITTLE OF THE TRAIN.

MRS. GAUNT'S knowledge of human nature was by no means profound, else she would have rested satisfied with the failure of Lady Glenburn's anti-Ledbitter movement, and have devoted her attention to matters which more nearly concerned herself. But the housekeeper was a restless, fidgety, obstinate, self-willed woman, and she despised her mistress for her pusillanimity, and told her so; not using the expression we have done to denote her opinion, but a shorter, more decided, but less agreeable word. For Mrs. Gaunt, though she had, according to Lord Glenburn, seen better days, was not a woman of much cultivation; and when she lost her temper,—a frequent occurrence with her, by the way,—she was accustomed to launch forth into such very strong language, that Led-

bitter, hearing it one day in the distance, chuckled considerably for so stolid a person, and listened to catch more with much eagerness. The failure of her mistress in inducing his lordship to cashier his man rankled in the Gaunt bosom, and made her almost unbearable in those regions where she held undisputed sway. The proudest footman in the house felt the effects of Mrs. Gaunt's ruffled temper; the noblest and most solemn of those great creatures, a man who possessed the dignity of a dozen dukes, before whose stalwart form smaller mortals trembled in their insignificance, —even Pilkington, who seemed to have been born in powder, and to have been measured for the front door at Glenburn's, where he would stand at times like a triumph of the sculptor's art, stern, stately, and motionless,—*Pilkington* was pulled up quite short by the housekeeper, and on her retirement was left stammering. There was no matronly reserve about Mrs. Gaunt when she spoke her mind. Her mind was a very strong one, and when it found expression in words, they were of a correspondingly vigorous character. Poor Pil-

kington was equally surprised and disgusted at the housekeeper denominating him "a chuckle-headed ape;" which, being overheard by a sarcastic page, produced much misery in the servants' hall for the outraged footman in question, and led to his eventually "resigning," and seeking an establishment where, as he expressed it, the "housekeeper was not a fiendish."

It was in vain that the domestics appealed to Mr. Ledbitter. He was in his lordship's confidence; his lordship listened to every thing Ledbitter said, and was well known to take his valet's advice upon all matters. Why, then, would not Mr. Ledbitter, like a kind creature as he was, just lay the complaint before his master, and say a good word for his fellow-servants, who were being fluttered like Volscians in their magnificent dove-cot by that most relentless eagle Mrs. Gaunt. No; Mr. Ledbitter thanked them; not if he knew it. He was very sorry for the discomforts they suffered; but he might remind them that the world was wide, and there were more houses where footmen were kept than the particular do-

micile in which they served. At all events *he* should not interfere. He might suffer himself, but it should be in silence. He might think Mrs. Gaunt an angel upon earth, or something else not so seraphic, but he kept his opinions to himself, and advised those who wished to stay to do the like. So the Gaunt incubus settled heavily on the domestic department, and there was much melancholy and furtive interchange of *sotto voce* invective amongst the oppressed dwellers below stairs. This highly pleasant person did not confine her vituperative powers to the meaner portion of the establishment however, but indulged in much secret animadversion, when in her mistress's boudoir, touching the timidity of her ladyship in not again reverting to the Ledbitter topic. But Lady Glenburn had experienced one proof that the latent lion in her husband's nature only slumbered, and she shuddered as she thought of the danger of again arousing him.

After the first plunge into the sea of squabbling, when once the loving couple discover that, notwithstanding the absorbing nature of

their affection, they can still find time to disagree, it is strange how often they playfully contradict each other for the mere pleasure apparently of getting up a mimic dispute. In the early coaxing days of wedded life, when caressing and speechless looks of love are supposed to belong, as matters of course, to that saccharine season, a trifling attempt at a tiff comes as a stolen treat, a forbidden delight, and is enjoyed accordingly. But this pleasure palls; and time and the tax-gatherers soon rob the domestic quarrel of the romance which surrounded it when it was a tender dispute, unimportant and experimental. When newly-married couples are past a certain age, this same squabbling is a perilous pleasure to indulge in; and so Lady Glenburn found it; for as ill luck would have it, Glenburn's gout gave him a strong reminder of its existence, and the sharp pangs of the hereditary plague by no means improved his temper. A new annoyance too had lately arisen to torment him. He had been greatly proud of his wife's beauty and fascinating manners. When

he was confined to his room he had ample leisure to reflect on any thing he liked ; and as he made a rule of never reading, and didn't care to think much of the past, his thoughts concentrated upon her ladyship, and the marked manner in which men gathered round her in public, and how much at her ease she appeared with them ; heavy-whiskered soldiers, sharp sarcastic legal guns, simpering titled inanities, and in fact the genus *homo* generally. No one, except those very dear friends who look so carefully after other people's reputations that they are apt to entirely neglect their own, could have found fault with Lady Glenburn's manner in public. She spoke rather loudly perhaps, but so did very many high ladies of Glenburn's acquaintance ; she said silly things with a laugh that showed her teeth, but what teeth they were ! and how many women of fashion did Glenburn know who said silly things and laughed loudly without possessing a tooth that didn't trace its origin to the tusk of the rhinoceros ? Her ladyship wore a heightened colour after a glass or so of wine at dinner ; but that was nothing

so unusual, and dyspepsia was the demon of the age. She loved waltzing, and boldly declared she could dance till she dropped, with a good partner; but she was young, and the exercise was known to be healthy. Still, as Glenburn sat up in his room with a swollen foot, and nothing to employ his mind, argue as he would, he chafed and fretted greatly, for there was one stern truth ever present, the hard fact of the disparity between the ages of himself and his wife. Lady Glenburn, though a fine showy impressive woman, was in years little more than a girl; whilst he was growing whiter as to whisker every day, and the crow's feet round the sunken eyes seemed to have increased every time he looked at the glass. When alone in the morning in his room, before Ledbitter had applied the marvellous dye, and arranged the scanty hair, so as to look twice its real quantity, and touched up the battered nobleman in a dozen wonderful ways unknown to the world, Glenburn seemed a sallow, evil-eyed elderly man. His form was still erect; and had he boldly ventured

forth, despising the assistance of art, he would have looked a striking figure of a handsome though sinister person, past the prime of life, but still an imposing-looking nobleman enough. As it was, the very means he adopted to take in observers defeated themselves, for his artificial get-up induced people to think that he was much older and more shaky than he really was. Her ladyship required none of the trickery of the toilet to render her fit for public inspection. She could bear the gaze of guests at the breakfast-table unflinchingly, conscious of the genuineness of the colour on her countenance; her large eyes flashing without the incentive of excitement, and her glossy black hair courting the glances of the tell-tale sun. Glenburn's faith in woman was not profound. He argued from his own experiences, and it must be confessed he had seen much to favour his adverse opinion. From his earliest days he had looked upon a woman's love as a fanciful excuse for the poet's ravings, a theme on which to hang an opera; but not a thing to be believed in by commonplace mortals, who were



content to credit what they saw and nothing else. A married *roué* is said to make the most jealous of husbands. So it certainly was with Glenburn, who, without any cause, chafed up in his room as he heard her ladyship's light laugh as she passed the door, and he caught a glimpse of his gray hair in the looking-glass.

Without any cause—of course, without any actual reason for feeling jealous, and with no suspicion of the attentions of any visitor. Still Mr. Ledbitter was such a wonderful adept in the art of saying a very little, meaning very much, that he had—perhaps unwittingly—given his master considerable annoyance by trifling remarks which no other person living would have noticed. Lord Glenburn was always unable to get on without his valet; but when suffering from gout, Ledbitter was as necessary to him as the air he breathed; for he broke down very piteously when “the fit was on him,” and he would turn in an almost fawning spirit of friendship to the sharer of his wicked secrets, his faithful companion through so many heartless years.

During these prostrating attacks the valet would move about the room with the slightest symptom of a smile upon his generally demure face; and as Glenburn groaned aloud at the pangs of his arch-enemy, Ledbitter would look down upon his master with his large eyes beaming with a strange expression by no means suggestive of condolence. Still he would listen very eagerly to hear the doctor's opinion, and would question him with much earnestness on his way out as to the possibility of a serious termination to the disorder; and on being assured that the attack was only temporary, and nothing need be apprehended, he would sigh with a genuine feeling of relief, which the physician thought did honour to him, but which was perhaps not prompted by motives of mere affection.

Of course, Mr. Ledbitter wished his master to live, for many reasons. Had Glenburn died comfortably in his bed, and been followed to the grave by a beautiful widow, really mourning the loss of her late husband; had he left his affairs moderately disentangled, and with his name regilt from

the respectable halo which had surrounded his latter days,—Ledbitter would have broken his heart in bitter rage and disappointment. For he never for an instant forgot the vow of his youth; the recollection of his stern father's dying command, and of his own early blighted love, had not faded ever so slightly from his memory. In the busy day, when surrounded by the buzz and hum of the idle world of fashion—taking its idleness, oh, so laboriously!—in the deathly stillness of the night, would the features of his lost Lily be ever present to his view; and close to his breast, unknown to any one but himself, he wore a small locket containing her portrait, limned with no great skill, but a striking likeness of the little girl he had loved in his uncouth fashion with his whole heart and soul.

A commonplace and vulgar vengeance was altogether repugnant to the valet's feelings; and indeed the oath imposed upon him by his parent had forbidden such a rough-and-ready sort of revenge. A blow for a blow in a fair fight was correct enough; but when a man has laid his

plans with deep thought and cunning, and has at last entrapped his victim by strategy and craft, the avenger should remember this, and should take a lesson of his enemy, and work on beneath the surface for years if need be, and select an opportunity for a final blow, when a kind of *éclat* will be given to the climax, by the sudden and terrible nature of the retribution.

Thus argued Ledbitter. A hundred times could he have struck his master down without fear of the consequences. In their travels opportunities had arisen over and over again; but the valet scorned to avail himself of them; and no man was safer from the clutch of his enemy than was Lord Glenburn when the razor played around his chin in the skilful grasp of the nimble-fingered Ledbitter. His manner, too, had ever been such as to allay any suspicion, supposing any doubts of his servant to have existed in the master's mind. Always respectful before the world, when closeted with the *roué* lord the valet had taken an interest in his trickeries and amours which delighted Glenburn, who was not without a certain pride which

prevented his confiding his shameful secrets to any of his own rank, but who had gradually got to look upon his valet as a sort of second conscience; for Ledbitter was so painfully respectable that he seemed like a living embodiment of the whole code of morality, and it was quite a comfort to have so demure a person to confide in.

The absence of reproach on Ledbitter's part lent an almost reputable air to some of Glenburn's villanies; for it was part of the valet's scheme that his master should enjoy life after his own sensual fashion; and once or twice when Glenburn had been ill, and had admitted with fear and trembling that he dreaded death, and implored the doctors to use all their skill to keep away the grisly phantom, Ledbitter would whisper to himself, "This is well;" and he would watch the return of strength to the frame of the cowardly peer with very genuine satisfaction.

He had, upon first hearing of his master's marriage, given way to much invective, and trembled somewhat for the safety of his scheme; but of late he had become not only reconciled to the

improved social condition of Glenburn, but had planned out a new line of conduct entirely, and experienced much inward satisfaction at the present state of things. But on one matter the valet was not positive. He was anxious to know if his master was jealous of his handsome wife. Once assured of this, he possessed the means of continually irritating his lordship in his own quiet way; for though he waited with philosophic patience for the culmination of his revengeful plans, he was not insensible to the pleasure of inflicting annoyance at will upon the nobleman who paid him his wages. Gout having attacked Glenburn a day or so before a party at Portman Square, he had been unavoidably absent from the festivities, and had growled away the evening in his own room.

“I wish the people would go, confound them!” he exclaimed, as the music again struck-up down stairs.

Ledbitter was moving about the room quietly arranging it; for his master had flung things a good deal about, and the bump of order was strongly developed in the Ledbitter cranium.

“Bah!” ejaculated Glenburn, as some more than usually loud strain reached his ears. “Too many parties altogether.” This was said to himself, but it did not escape the ears of the valet.

“The young expect pleasure, my lord,” he said in a voice ten times more than ordinarily irritating from the soothing tone assumed.

“I don’t want any parties,” grunted Glenburn.

The self-evident reply would have been that his lordship was not young; but Ledbitter, it is needless to say, did not make that remark.

“Your lordship seems to have lost all taste for society.”

Ledbitter had been told to chat with his master and amuse him. He had read him all the news he thought Glenburn would care about, and it was really a hard matter to find subjects for conversation, which might possibly account for the generally judicious valet touching on a ticklish topic.

“I never cared for so-called ‘society;’ you know that. I hate parties, and the people I meet at parties. The men of the present day are a contemptible set of prigs, with their haw-haw man-

ners and calm insolence. How on earth Lady Glenburn can get on with them, *I* can't understand."

"The novelty of such society, my lord, perhaps may have charms for her ladyship."

Glenburn turned towards his servant angrily at this, but almost immediately recovered his comparative equanimity.

"Her ladyship *does* get on with them, there's no doubt about it," continued Ledbitter, in a half-musing manner.

His lordship moved his leg and shifted his position, and seemed uneasy, but did not reply.

"A curious case that of Mrs. Mount Edgington, my lord; we servants often hear the ins and outs of these matters."

"Yes," thought the peer; "but you'll never know the ins and outs of the one matter you have so long desired to become thoroughly acquainted with, my man."

"What's the Mount Edgington business, then?" Glenburn asked this without the least tone of interest in his voice.



“Oh, my lord, the old story—the old story.”

The valet was putting away some of his noble master's clothes with extreme care, and his manner exhibited no greater a desire to descant upon the subject mentioned than did Glenburn's to hear more about it. They were both acting, and acting remarkably well. Glenburn had a faint suspicion of what Ledbitter's “old story” meant from previous report, but still, though he knew its recital would annoy him, he was anxious to hear his valet's account of and opinion of the scandal.

“What do you mean by the ‘old story,’ Ledbitter?” said the peer in an almost pleasant voice.

“Well, my lord, a bit of a girl marrying an elderly man; and the bit of a girl getting tired of her husband and his old-fashioned punctilio, and all that sort of thing; and regretting the match, and running off with a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty. That's what I call the old story.—What uncommonly bad dye that last has turned out! your lordship's whiskers might never have been touched.”

Despite Glenburn's previous assumption of indifference, his face at this moment was a study for a painter, so heavy and black a look came over his features, so deep and angry a flush rose to his brow. Ledbitter looked another way almost before he had completed the sentence, but he knew the look that was on his lordship's face; instinct told him it was there, and he felt that indescribable satisfaction an orator experiences when he knows his delicate sarcasm has galled the opposition, though no cheer follow it—no visible evidence of the effect be apparent.

“Mount Edgington was a fool!” he exclaimed presently.

“For marrying the young lady, my lord?”

“No; for not keeping his eye upon her when he *had* married her—for letting a parcel of jackanapes come buzzing round her. He should have looked after his wife better, the idiot!”

Another pause, his lordship apparently unable to overlook the wilful blindness of Mount Edgington, for he gave vent to continual ejaculations

expressive of disgust and contempt for that gentleman.

“Her ladyship looks lovelier than ever to-night, my lord,” said the valet, as he desisted from his previous labour and took from a table the medicine his master had been ordered; “doesn’t look above nineteen, so people say.”

“Who are the ‘people’? If I hear of any of the servants making remarks about Lady Glenburn, I’ll order Mrs. Gaunt to pack them off on the instant.”

“Folks will talk, my lord, and I hear remarks from other people’s servants besides ours.”

“Well, don’t bother me with their observations. Her ladyship may look nineteen or ninety, it’s no business of any body’s. There’s colchicum in that, I know—detestable weakening stuff. I thought homœopathy and common-sense had done away with those powerful remedies.”

“Oh, my lord, your constitution, considering the life you have led and your years, is a strong one, and will stand violent remedies.”

There was something remarkably unpleasant

in the phrase "your years," and Glenburn winced at it. He took the medicine, however, without further remark.

"My lady has not been up this evening, my lord?"

"No; she prefers the society of—"

"Captain Atherton, my lord."

Glenburn forgot his gout in a moment, and wheeling his chair round suddenly faced his valet and fiercely demanded what he meant.

Ledbitter had meant nothing; but his lordship having paused, the valet had finished the sentence as he imagined it had been intended to conclude.

"Come, man, you don't drop hints for nothing. Tell me what you mean? if you don't, I'll—I'll—" and Glenburn looked about helplessly but savagely too.

"Dear, dear!" said the valet regretfully; "what a fool I am, to be sure! and your lordship expressly ordered to keep quiet and not excite yourself. Of course I meant nothing; dear me, dear me! only to think now that I should be so indiscreet as to say such a thing!"

“Look ye here, Ledbitter; I’m in no mood for half-confidences or beating about the bush; I’m infernally enraged, and I’ll stand no nonsense; I’ll know what you mean by coupling Captain Atherton’s name with my wife’s. I’ll know it from your lips, or I’ll ring and have her ladyship up here—I will, Ledbitter!—and confront you, if you won’t speak now.”

The purple veins swelled like ropes in his lordship’s forehead, and he clenched his fingers as he spoke, and rose to grasp the bell. Ledbitter shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyes to the ceiling, and made a deprecatory movement with his hand, and seemed greatly shocked at the consequences of his indiscretion. What was there, he argued in a bland tone, and with an unruffled countenance,—what was there in the idle and silly chit-chat of the world? Young ladies went home from parties and confided the nonsensical results of their evening’s observation to their babbling waiting-maids, who told another mischief-loving Abigail, who told a third; and so it got about, the snowball increasing as it rolled. How was it ha t the would-be soothing style of Mr. Ledbitter

had an entirely opposite effect upon his master? The composing draught, if it doesn't induce repose, generally rouses the patient to increased irritability or delirium. So it was with the potion Mr. Ledbitter apparently intended to allay Glenburn's excitement; it simply increased the nobleman's rage and threw him into a fit of uncontrollable anger. Ledbitter looked perhaps a trifle paler as his master stormed; but in his inmost heart he felt a keen satisfaction, for he knew that the first instalment of his long-standing debt was approaching payment.

Glenburn was the kind of man to feel the pangs of jealousy very keenly. He was intensely vain, and in his own way excessively proud. He had heard nothing but praise of his wife since his marriage, and the mere suspicion of evil report galled him to the quick. Lady Glenburn had become more frivolous in her tastes of late. At first she had been evidently dazzled and delighted with her splendid surroundings, and took to her title as a child does to its new toy. But all this had long worn off with continual contact with the great world, and her ladyship now took her pleasure

in the calmest and most natural manner, and amongst other fashionable improvements she adopted the aristocratic custom of paying very little attention to her husband. On the present occasion her neglect savoured of actual unkindness; for she had been enjoying herself among the guests downstairs without a thought for the nobleman who had given her a position and title, and who was chafing in his room from the combined effects of gout and jealousy.

“I’ll speak to her to-morrow—I’ll speak to her to-morrow,” said Glenburn as he wiped his brow with his handkerchief, after a lengthened display of vehemence.

As Mr. Ledbitter opened the door to give some direction downstairs, he fancied he caught a glimpse of a dress he knew by sight. The wearer of the dress was hurrying off, evidently to avoid being seen.

“Dear me!” said the valet to himself; “a respectable person like Mrs. Gaunt listen at doors! I really should never have thought such a thing of her.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE "GOOD FELLOW."

IT is a very uncomfortable feeling, that of being without money, thought Horace Bentley, as he pushed his way through the crowd of home-returning clerks, for whom the Little-Green-Street genius felt a very strong inward contempt, though their firm-looking boots and stout broad-cloth struck envy to his heart. It is a dismal thing for a young man who prides himself on his personal appearance, when the tell-tale crack starts in the carefully polished "Oxonian," and the hat, brushed and examined every morning with such scrupulous attention, exhibits a poverty as to nap and a brownness as to hue, suggestive of a lengthened season of hard wear, of scorching sun, and drenching shower. Then, how agonising the discovery of the frayed edge of the trou-



sers, which, had they not exhibited an abnormal fulness at the knee, might have lasted ever so long with a little skilful management and gentle treatment. The shininess of the coat-cuff, too, carries with it a bitter pang to the proud wearer; and the noblest nature has been known to succumb beneath the shaming influence of a buttonless waistcoat. Horace had fallen into good hands as regarded mending, when he married Priscilla. She was one of those people who seem to be born with a needle in their hands. She was a sempstress at soul, and no kind of sewing came amiss to her. She had the most wonderful eye for "cutting-out," and she had made her own dresses from a very tender age. There was a theory, broached originally by a bold student, named Darcy (who was supposed to have been refused by the daughter of the house), and subscribed to by the more contemptuous of Pinto's pupils, that Priscilla made her own bonnets; but we are not in a position to state whether this was true or not. However, she contrived to dress, and to dress very neatly too, upon about a

third of what most young ladies of her position in Bloomsbury were in the habit of being allowed for self-decoration. As to Pinto, he was kept dapper and shiny in the most marvellous manner by his nimble-fingered daughter, and he scarcely ever troubled the tailor; for Priscilla would mend, and alter, and re-bind, and re-button, and patch artfully, and touch up generally with such dexterity, that Pinto would go out in his brougham with a new gloss on him; and what with a great deal of eye-glass, and bald head, and shirt-front, he would look, as old ladies often remarked, "quite aristocratic." Horace, who was always sarcastic, had described his deceptive appearance as an "imposing presence;" but by those who didn't scrutinise too closely, Priscilla's papa had always been considered a very well-dressed man. Mrs. Pinto's toilet had been allowed to take care of itself a good deal, for that poor lady aimed at an air of eccentric dowdyism, and was supposed to dress after the portrait of a favourite authoress, who, in the frontispiece to her works, looked very much as if she

had been aroused by cries of fire in the middle of the night, and had seized upon that eligible opportunity for having her likeness taken. Poor Horace's clothes had been tinkered and touched up with great skill, for Priscilla evidently believed in the old adage that it was never too late to mend; but as he paced the crowded streets, and elbowed the dapper City clerks who were getting their guinea a week and doing well on it, he certainly felt an inward contempt for those talents he knew that he possessed, but which were leading him to nothing, and only prompting him to despise those honest hard workers who were content to trudge on and pay their way respectably.

The office in which Joe Pulling had declared, some years back, he was destined to pass the day on a high stool, was up a side street where there were wagons, and bales, and barrels, and cranes, and a close smell of tar and straw, and men at counting-house windows with pens behind their ears, sitting before great dull-looking volumes, all figures, but amidst all the commonplace bustle of business, a silent evidence of prosperity, and money-

making, and contentment. Horace was in, to him, an unknown region; he knew nothing of bales of goods, of invoices, of bills of lading; and it would have sorely puzzled him to give a correct definition of a "drysalter." But there was something in the genius of the place which commanded his respect; and when at last he discovered the establishment of his old schoolfellow, it was by no means with any feeling of contempt that he mounted the steps and knocked at the counting-house door. Mr. Joseph was in another room engaged with a gentleman, and would Horace send in his name. In an instant Joe came dashing out of the room, almost upsetting a pale little clerk on his probation, who was perched like a monkey on a high stool, and was making frightful blots and errors with a tremendous steel pen.

"What, Bentley!"

"Why, Joe!"

And the two old friends shook hands as if they were determined on dislocation at the very least. How strangely delightful it is to meet in after life an old loved schoolfellow, of whom we have lost

sight since adverse currents parted us on the broad rushing river of life ! When the heart has grown a trifle callous from contact with the world ; when selfish surroundings have somewhat deadened the warm friendly impulses to which we once were prone ; when we have learnt to commence any acquaintanceship with suspicion, and take for granted nothing friendly that we cannot account for in some mean way ; when we have learnt to sneer and to be cynical, and to affect a contempt for most things, and despise and try to hide the tears which rise, spite of our efforts, when we see a touching play or read a tale of sorrow ;—then comes the greeting of a dear old school-friend, like a glowing sun upon the icy heart, thawing the cold hard covering, and letting free once more the bright and leaping waters. Horace had grown old in a little time ; but the honest, friendly grasp of his schoolfellow brought tears of delight into his eyes ; and he saw Joe as he had last beheld him—short-coated, shining and freckly, laughing gaily on the coach, whilst the autumn breeze blew about his sandy hair. No very great change had taken

place in the outward appearance of Mr. Pulling junior. With the exception of an enormous pair of whiskers, which met under his chin, and premature symptoms of baldness, Joe Pulling was much the same as ever, and in his laughing look and cheery voice he was the same "Old Joe" of the Rev. Mr. Brandle's establishment.

"Come in," said Pulling; "there's nobody with me but Charley Tindal; you won't mind him. He's a good fellow; one of those clever chaps who never do any good for themselves, you know."

Horace blushed deeply at the description of Mr. Tindal, for he felt it applied exactly to his own case; but the counting-house of Pulling Brothers was not particularly light, so Joe didn't see the effect of his remark.

Mr. Charley Tindal was sitting with his feet upon the edge of his friend's desk, and exhibited no appearance of being awed by the business-like and methodical atmosphere of the surrounding region. He was evidently not in the mercantile line himself, for there was a half-rakish look about

the lopsided position of his hat, and an amount of knobiness in the blackthorn stick he held in his hand, altogether incompatible with commercial pursuits. He was not a bad-looking person, but there was an air of indescribable impudence about him, which, combined with a free and familiar manner on the shortest acquaintance, rather staggered you, producing a doubt as to whether he should be cordially received upon his own terms, or incontinently kicked. He was one of those people who get a universal reputation for being "a good fellow." Every body spoke of him as a man who was his own enemy, capable of doing great things; one who frittered away his talents; a man who might do much if he'd only stick to something; and toned down the true reading of his character in twenty other charitable stock phrases. But every body agreed he was a "good fellow." Oh, yes, there was no denying Charley's shortcomings; but after all he was a good fellow. These same good fellows are the springs of more mischief than the world gives them blame for, possessing, as they do, the means of doing much

ill in a very pleasant way, but with a no less pernicious effect, for all that. They generally have open countenances and a pleasant ringing laugh; they call you "my boy" and "old chap" the first time they meet you; they have a knack of clapping you on the back and poking you in the ribs; they have always a stock of anecdote on hand for any emergency, and possess a marvellous power of picking up the latest conundrums. They are invariably waiting for a remittance which never comes, and generally have an obnoxious relative who will stand between the good fellows and vast property. Expectations have been the bane of these good fellows' lives, and they have carefully avoided the antidotes—perseverance and hard work; they have aristocratic yearnings, but can make themselves agreeable if chance brings them into the society of the humbler classes; and they can sing jolly songs to catchy tunes, and with loud rollicking choruses; and their healths are generally drunk at the end of the evening with musical honours, for the very strangers in the public-house parlour have discovered they are "jolly good fel-



lows." They borrow unblushingly, and assume your garments in your absence with much condescension; and when you decline any participation in a "bit of paper," or refuse further loans for a fortnight, or desire a speedy return of your dress-coat (which comes home suspiciously creased, and smelling horribly of tobacco), the "good fellow" discovers you are no longer the congenial companion you were wont to be, and you lose sight of him, and do not, on the whole, perhaps, so much regret him. Later on in life you very probably come across the remnant of the good fellow, the shadow of his former self, with his laugh and old gay manner much deteriorated from dismal associations and drink, and possibly starvation, but his sponging and borrowing propensities in stronger force than ever, as you soon discover to your cost; for he tells you a piteous story of illness and bad luck, and you give him what you can, and shudder as he declares upon his honour he will return it as soon as he gets the money he has been daily expecting any time these twenty years. Joseph Pulling's visitor was a good fellow

of this stamp, and he greeted Horace with a familiar "How are you? glad to know you! if you're one of Joe's friends, you're a good sort, *I'm* certain."

"Come, Charley, none of that," said Joe, colouring slightly; "Bentley and I have not met for years—not since we were with a tutor together in Berks. We may have both changed considerably since then."

"Dear me!" replied Mr. Tindal, bringing his feet to the ground and staring hard at Horace; "not met since you were at school? Good gracious! quite an affecting meeting; Pylades and Orestes, Damon and Pythias, Beaumont and Fletcher, and all that sort of thing; why you ought to fall into each other's arms with a hysterical guggle, and a wink at the prompter to light the blue fire. Now I daresay you've got lots to say to each other, so I'll leave you. I can sit out there till you've done, and make faces at the new clerk; it will amuse him and be practice for me—say the word!"

And Mr. Tindal stood on one leg in the stock

attitude expressive of an intention to fly, but Horace begged him not to go upon his account. So the volatile visitor sat down again. Then what a world of chat had the two friends for each other; and how they talked over old times, and asked after old schoolfellows, and roared at reminiscences of Larkins and his grand airs, and Brandle's pretentious manner, and poor Martha's meek little husband, with his demure looks and his deep design on the vicar's daughter!

"Here I am, you see," laughed Joe, "as I always told you I should be, tied to the desk. Having my month or so in the summer, you know, and snatching a mouthful of fresh air sometimes from Saturday to Monday; but always to be found here in the week-days, a pillar of this great commercial metropolis! hem!"

"A pillar!" chimed in Mr. Tindal; "a buttress, my boy; a regular buttress!"

There was nothing particularly humorous in the remark, but Charley Tindal laughed a good deal at it himself, and as he had a very infectious laugh indeed, the two friends joined in with him;

and Horace felt bound to punch Joe, and Joe hit back at Horace; and the wagon-drivers in the streets nodded up at the open window to each other, as much as to say, "They're having a nice game in there, them clerks."

"Ha! ha! ha!" continued Tindal long after the others; "I like a laugh; it does me good. I'll back myself against any professional claqueur. Bingham always begs me to go on the first night of his farces, for he says my laugh's as good as fifty. A good roar at the right time completely saved the *Gentleman in the Tight Boots* at the Olympic. It was going very flatly, and I couldn't do any thing for it, till Miss Melinda Smith called her guardian a 'meartless honster' instead of a heartless monster—by mistake of course. Now for it, I said; and I set up such a shout, that the whole house took it up and shrieked till the fall of the curtain, when we had the author on, and the piece ran eighty nights."

"And what are *you* doing?" asked Joe of Horace at the conclusion of Tindal's anecdote.

Horace coloured and stammered, and scarcely knew what to reply.

"If you've taken to the pawnbrokering line, out with it; we can bear it," interposed Tindal.

"If I had, I've no doubt I should have met *you* before," replied Horace.

"Good! had me there," exclaimed Tindal; and as for Joe, he enjoyed his friend's reply so heartily, that the tears rolled down his face so copiously that the delicate Tindal expressed a fear that they would "wash away the freckles."

Horace touched slightly upon the medical phase of his life, and after treating his quarrel with Pinto and his loss of Mr. Stone's friendship very cavalierly, surprised Pulling with the announcement of his marriage. Charley Tindal, though he was a superficial, racketsy fellow, possessed marvellous powers of observation. In the matter of shabby clothes, or any thing that told a tale of hard-upishness, he was a very Argus. He possessed an eye for a patch which would have been a treasure to an old-clothes-man, and the deepest "reviver" never deceived him. He had

“reckoned up” Horace Bentley about two minutes after his entrance; and the more grandiloquently that highly genteel youth talked, the more convinced was Tindal that the conjectures he had formed were correct. Like most “good fellows” Tindal had no delicacy, and so he cut abruptly into the conversation by asking Horace how he intended to get his living. There is about some impertinencies a boldness which robs them of their irritating quality, and in Tindal’s question there was something so comically rude that Horace laughed at it, and replied :

“Ah, that’s the thing! In fact, I had come to consult you, Joe, about the matter.”

Mr. Charles Tindal indulged in a low whistle, which meant much. “That’s the way,” he thought, “we always begin; we commence by talking of consulting about the matter, and conclude by borrowing half-a-sovereign.”

“You have given up your old silly notions of literature, I suppose,” said Joe, a little gravely.

“Yes,” chimed in Tindal; “if not, and you wish to see a brilliant example of a successful

author, behold him!" and he placed out his arms at full length, but, speedily remembering the uncertain condition of the sewing of the sleeves, drew them in again.

"Are you an author?" asked Horace, with a trifling suspicion of contempt in the tone of his voice.

"Well, I've done a little in that way; my name is not altogether unknown to fame, I believe. Ask Joe."

Joe, who was anxious to make the most of his injudicious friend, and hoped that Horace might attribute Tindal's rudeness to an eccentricity of genius, gave a glowing account of the productions of the modest Charles.

Together with the reputation of a good fellow, the vivacious Tindal had achieved some sort of quasi-literary credit of a cheap order. Nobody could say what he had written, or adapted, or translated, or filched; but he certainly had his name attached, by some mysterious means, to one or two trifles, and was supposed by his friends to possess some "influence with the press." This

vague reputation had been a good thing for Mr. Charles Tindal; but very bad for many highly respectable people, whose acquaintanceship he was accustomed to boast of, generally calling them by their Christian names, and speaking of world-known writers in a tone of familiarity, which had upon more than one occasion left simple-minded strangers in doubt as to whether he mightn't be himself a great author, picking up character, or possibly the editor of the *Times*. He was one of those pests who, lacking the patient skill to labour in the lower ranks of the profession, aspired, though devoid of ability, to a sort of flash-in-the-pan popularity, upon the strength of a slight acquaintance with the French language and two or three of the less scrupulous theatrical managers.

Certainly he was not Horace's notion of an author, which, it must be confessed, was rather of the conventional order, and pictured a long-haired, loose-collared genius, with an eye in a never-ceasing "fine frenzy." But the respect for any body who ever came into actual contact with printer's ink and proof-sheets, which most



unfledged writers feel, induced him to treat Tindal less familiarly, and to listen to his remarks with much awe.

Tindal, on his part, had taken a tremendous fancy to Horace, who was very well educated, evidently had a lively fancy, and, according to Pulling's account, "could write like lightning" about any thing.

So Mr. Tindal was very friendly with him indeed, and pressed Horace to show him some of his compositions; and Horace, with many blushes, and trembling a little, produced from a side-pocket some trifling verses which had been printed, and a batch of scribblings, which he declared were there quite by accident, though something told Joe Pulling that they had been intended for his private ear; and Joe experienced something like a feeling of relief when Charley Tindal pocketed them, more especially as he caught sight of a portion of a play evidently in blank verse and surfeited with soliloquy.

And Charley Tindal carefully stowed away the parcel, and promised Horace he would come and

give him his honest opinion of them (his *honest* opinion, Heaven save the mark!); and Horace shook hands with his old schoolfellow, and gave up all thoughts of "office drudgery" once more, and walked home with a light step, and dreamt that night that he was a great man who could not permit his wife to associate with Mrs. Pulling upon any account.

## CHAPTER XIII.

HORACE MEETS A "FASCINATING" WOMAN.

THE adage, "You may know a man by the company he keeps," was never more thoroughly verified than in the case of Mr. Charles Tindal. He was the centre of a thriftless clique, who lived nobody knew how, but probably on their wits, to judge from their poverty-stricken appearance. A loafing idle crew, with the cant phrases of art upon their lips, but with little real respect for any thing ennobling, and no particular tastes beyond tobacco and alcohol. In Mr. Tindal's dismal lodging would these worthies meet and rail at fortune. Here was a would-be poet who lacked nothing but skill and industry; there was a painter who confined his studies to the bars of public-houses, and who scarcely ever touched a brush from one year's end to the other, and still wondered that his

elbows should come through his coat, and that he should never have any money in his pocket except such as came from a pitying relative in the country. But these fellows considered they were monstrously ill-used, and inveighed bitterly against luck, which smiled so partially on certain people, whilst certain other people languished and pined in back attics and never got a chance. Then how these witless ignoramuses pulled to pieces the reputations of their more industrious and successful fellow-labourers! with what rapidity would they demolish a reputation which its possessor had built up by years of patient toil, of unwearied exertion! Watkins an essayist indeed! Popkins a poet! look at the chances they'd had; if they hadn't had the "chances," where would they have been? So argued these stringent critics, who preferred borrowing from the unwary to cudgelling their own poor brains.

Charley Tindal was tacitly admitted to be the master among this motley crew. He certainly beat them all at borrowing, which he had really elevated to a science, and which he practised with

so much success, that his friends envied him the possession of the mysterious power. As his social shortcomings were tolerably well known, Charley Tindal was generally avoided by the great mass of working authors and artists; and as the drone is invariably expelled from the hive of that type of true labour, the bee, so was this vagabond turned out of the society of those who valued their self-respect, and no man who cared for his own reputation chose to be seen about with the notorious Mr. Tindal. It was an unlucky thing for Horace that his first introduction to what Tindal chose to call "literary society" should have been under the wing of so evil a bird. So ravenous a bird, too, might be said of him; for Tindal's only object in taking up Horace was the ulterior one of feeding on that prolific and untiring youth; though the quondam medical student considered it to be a lucky thought which had taken him to Joe Pulling's counting-house, there to meet the genial Tindal, who was to make his fortune; for the very next day after the interview in the City, the lively Tindal appeared in Little Green Street,

Soho, and, on finding Horace was in, jauntily entered the apartment and grasped him warmly by the hand.

“I tell you what it is, you’ve got the makings of a first-rate writer in you; those things convince me you’ll make a name in no time,” said Tindal, placing the bundle of scribblings on the table and taking a chair. What could Horace do but ask him to stop to dinner after this? though when he did so, and Tindal very readily accepted the invitation, an expression passed over Priscilla’s features which promised rather badly for the banquet. But Horace wouldn’t hear of his going away, and he sternly commanded Mrs. Molloy to procure half a leg of mutton (O cheerless, tasteless, unnatural joint! what visions of rapacious landladies and uncomfortable lodgings, with hard horse-hair sofas, and half-cold gravy dotted with tepid dabs of dripping, and wretched servant-maids with grimy hands and black caps, does its mere mention not arouse!) to mark his sense of the service his visitor had rendered him by giving him confidence in his own powers. Horace, like many

egotistical and self-opiniated people, imagined himself to be the most timid and self-depreciatory of literary tyros. He was actually bursting with self-conceit, and fancied all the while that he thought nothing of his own compositions. Still, when Priscilla suggested some trifling alteration in one of his sentences, he flushed so considerably, and was evidently so dreadfully annoyed, that she was quite uncomfortable, and was much relieved when he put down the manuscript, which he shortly did and in great dudgeon. But, as he thought to himself, Priscilla was only a woman, and what was her opinion worth? Of course he didn't object to her praising any thing he wrote—that was quite proper; but it was too absurd that he should be criticised by a bit of a girl. Here was Mr. Charles Tindal now full of unalloyed praise, and he was a regular literary man. So Horace piled the pleasant visitor's plate, and talked very fast, and ate very little himself, for he felt strangely delighted at the prospect which was opening before him. This prospect was a weekly periodical, which Tindal and a few friends had

often thought of starting, and which would, he was sure, be most delighted to receive the assistance of Bentley's fresh young pen. Horace was in ecstasies, and was with difficulty persuaded from leaving the dinner-table to commence an article on the spot. However, as the "few friends" had never possessed sufficient capital to start the paper on their own hook, and had not been able singly or collectively to induce any enterprising printer or publisher to take the risk, the matter was no nearer completion than when first the idea was broached.

"An idea," said Tindal, dallying over his cheese,—“an idea, Bentley, which would prove an e-normous success if properly carried out. I fancy satire is your forte, isn't it?”

Of course it was; if he had asked Horace if anthropology had been his forte, that excited youth would have replied in the affirmative.

“Political and social satire, dealt out with an unsparing hand, is the thing; pitch into popular people, that's the style!”

Social satire Horace felt himself quite equal



to; as to politics, he knew that a Whig wasn't a Tory, and that was about the extent of his political knowledge; but he had no objection, he declared, to have a shy at the Government, and was prepared, at the shortest notice, to show up its foreign policy, or write a slasher on the state of things at the Home-office. In fact, there was nothing too abstruse for this modest youth to tackle; and although he winced at the personal nature of the composition to which Tindal suggested his devoting his abilities, he was prepared to forego his sensitiveness;—and, indeed, the state of his finances forbade any very great scruples in the matter.

Mr. Tatlow, the small printer, who was at last induced to take up the periodical and bring it before the public, was an enterprising person, who was supposed by his typographical brethren never to have succeeded with any thing. Mentioning his name in connexion with any small literary undertaking was tantamount to announcing the certainty of its speedy collapse; and when it was reported in scribbling coteries that the new satirical journal—*The Catch 'em Alive Oh*—was one of

Tatlow's ventures, there was much dismal head-shaking and melancholy shoulder-shrugging, and universal were the prognostications of a short career.

"I'll give it four numbers," said Smith.

"Three," said Jones.

"A couple," chimed in the saturnine Brown.

"Don't believe it'll ever have a second number," was the cheerful prophecy of Robinson.

But *The Catch 'em Alive Oh* had a second number and a third; and chiefly in consequence of the grossest personality and abuse on the part of the general staff, who woke up to work stimulated by the congenial nature of their task, and several really smart and clever articles by Horace, the periodical almost paid its expenses, and Tatlow started a chaise for Mrs. Tatlow on the strength of a weekly loss of only three pounds. It was fine practice for Horace, and procured him a certain reputation, though he felt heartily ashamed of his own boldness, and blushed many a time as he rounded a stinging sentence upon the shameful conduct of some respected public functionary, or

poured the most withering invective upon the honoured head of some worthy statesman. It must be advanced in his favour that he was seldom much in earnest, and played with the dangerous toy as a child plays with gunpowder or a box of lucifers. His principal attraction in Mr. Tatlow's eyes was his marvellous fecundity. He never tired or stopped to rest, and would cover reams of paper whilst the remainder of the staff were stimulating their brains with artificial inspiration and with no particular results. *The Catch 'em Alive Oh* began at last to be talked about, and people asked who was the author of certain rhymed articles which were remarkably happy; and the end of the matter was, that a very respectable-looking gentleman called upon Horace one day and offered him an engagement on a superior periodical, with a better salary. Horace's first flush of literary excitement had toned down considerably since his professional *début*, and the continual grumbling of Mr. Tatlow, who thought it most injudicious to appear satisfied with any thing, had somewhat put him out of conceit with his work. The staff too did not improve

upon closer acquaintance, and was given to calling in Little Green Street at unholy hours, and expressing desires for cold meat and pickles, and other delicacies, much to the indignation of Priscilla. Indeed, that young wife's opinion of the literary profession was by no means an elevated one; and Mrs. Pinto, happening to call one morning when Mr. Charley Tindal was present, received such a shock to her romantic notions of her son-in-law's craft, that Horace smuggled him off with rapidity, greatly to the annoyance of Tindal, who had come for the day. The interview between Tatlow and Horace, when the latter told him of his new engagement, and the necessity of an immediate termination of the present one, was alternately stormy and lachrymose. Tatlow commenced by raving at the ingratitude of authors; then appealed tearfully to his contributor's better nature; again relapsed into the tempestuous phase; and, finally, shed real tears at Horace's demands for a pecuniary settlement. The split in the camp was fatal to *The Catch 'em Alive Oh*, which dragged on a miserable existence

for a few weeks, and eventually went to swell the mighty list of literary failures which had preceded it. The more liberal treatment Horace received from the respectable proprietor, who had tempted him from the demoralising slough of despond into which he might have settled for life, enabled the young couple to make a better show in the world, and Mrs. Molloy soon found her first-floor lodger more "stuck-up" than ever. If misfortunes seldom come singly, it is no less fact that slices of luck frequently follow each other in rapid succession. Horace had written a sort of farcical skit on a subject of universal temporary interest, and had sent it to the manager of the Criterion Theatre. As the piece was very short, very legibly written, and possessed a catchy title, the magnificent person who ruled over the Criterion condescended to look into it; and finding that there was a good part for Giggley the popular comedian, and that it could be played without a new scene being painted, actually so far forgot his dignity as to drop a short note to Horace, appointing a meeting, sending the farce to be copied meanwhile to

avert the possibility of the notion being seized on by the Elysium, which was the opposition house, the manager of which the Criterion director declared to be "capable of any thing." Horace was thrown into a state of the wildest excitement on receiving the managerial missive, and it is needless to add was at the theatre to the minute on the following day. Horace had never been behind the scenes, and he had the ordinary notion of that deceptive region, imagining it to be a world of delights into which it was a glorious privilege to be admitted. He was rather shocked, then, at the appearance of the stage-entrance, which did not look as if it led to a home of perpetual pleasures, but had a dingy, even dirty appearance, and disclosed a swing door which creaked inharmoniously as he pushed it, and swung-to as he passed it with a determined slam, as much as to say, "You have no business here, and you *shan't* come in." The manners of the porter, too, were much of the same kind. Stage-door keepers evidently think, with the French criminal law, that a man is guilty

until he is proved innocent; for until they have learnt that you really speak truth when you say you have an appointment with the manager, they look upon you in the most searching and suspicious manner (if they condescend to look upon you at all), and throw every verbal obstacle in your path to the managerial goal. Great government dons can be seen easily enough; but the theatrical manager sits in his chair of state like a porcupine, and none can approach him. Brave men there are who have been known to push past all opposition and boldly burst into the presence with success; but these instances have been very rare, and the ordinary road to the room where sits the swayer of the dramatic destiny is one beset with many difficulties, and is a hard one indeed for the tyro to travel. Horace was about to give up the matter in despair, when at last a grimy slipshod attendant, who had been half asleep in the corner, roused himself sufficiently to say that "if the gent would wait, perhaps Mr. Girdlestone might see him, as he *said* he had a 'pointment; and the lean and slippered attendant shuf-

fled off into the dim recesses of the theatre. Whilst waiting in the hall many popular favourites passed in and out, receiving their newspapers and letters from the rack in the porter's niche as they entered. A pink note here and there containing admiring rhapsodies; letters begging for autographs or orders; great fat provincial papers with a column and three-quarters of the most fulsome commendation of Mr. Barrington Fitzjones's Hamlet, which, according to the country critic, eclipsed the recollection of Macready, who was too hard; of So-and-so, who was too old; of somebody else, who lacked grace, and so on; and which, if once witnessed by a metropolitan public, would inevitably &c. &c. Professional jealousy and managerial selfishness had combined to confine Fitzjones's Shakesperian efforts to the provinces; but that suffering genius took care to let his acquaintance see that there were other places where his exertions were recognised, and the provincial press (when commendatory) found his advent produce a considerable increase in the circulation of the local organ. The stage-porter's



manner towards "the profession" was cordial and even playful; but he was still stern to Horace, and there is no doubt that he would have been dogged to a duke. His soul was in his calling; and a contemptuous smile would come over his features when friends, who shared the vulgar opinion of the *coulisses*, said they supposed that lots of grand folks hung about behind the scenes, and he would give vent to his sentiments regarding the impossibility of strangers passing his post in terms of the most forcible description. At length the shuffling messenger came back with a smile upon his face, and desired Horace to follow him upstairs. There was a strong smell of gas and old clothes behind the scenes, which was something like the attractive odour in the front of the theatre, but without the orange-peel. Horace felt in another world, rather a gloomy and dingy one perhaps, but with a certain attraction to imaginative temperaments, and possessing a peculiar fascination which no amount of disappointment and failure can dispel. Picturesque writers are in the habit of making graphic capital

out of the strong and melancholy contrast which the comic actor or the lissom pantomimist presents in his dismal home, with his increasing family and many cares, to the false felicity of the hour during which he struts and frets it upon the mimic stage; but it is a question whether much of this is warranted, for the stimulating and exciting profession of the player does not render him peculiarly susceptible to the depressing influences of misfortune; and when Paul Pry becomes Mr. John Smith, his domestic sorrow is not heightened by the fact that he has been convulsing an audience for the last two hours. It is doubtless a sad necessity that the comedian should have to turn out of his sick home to redden his nose and make a crowd of people laugh; but the clerk who leaves his daughter at death's door and the bailiff's man in the kitchen, to go to his day's drudgery at his employer's desk, has no particular advantage over the actor that we can see. There has been a little too much of this tinsel sentimentality; there are no people who enjoy life more, or who retain their mental and physical faculties

longer, than those "abstract and brief chronicles of the times" who arouse our sympathy or provoke our merriment between the hours of seven and twelve P.M.

Mr. Girdlestone the manager was a rather portly gentleman, with a partially bald head, a round cheery face, and a pleasant though slightly patronising manner. He was the sort of man who called you "my boy" directly after you had been introduced to him; and he would cut down an author's terms, or return an unrepresentable drama, in the most agreeable way imaginable. When Horace was ushered into the room Mr. Girdlestone was seated at a desk writing, and with a slight nod and "How do?" and a push to a chair towards his visitor, the manager became again absorbed in his letter-writing. A scene of confusion worse confounded did that little room present. The sanctum in which sat the great arbiter of the dramatic fate of so many aspirants, whose short note would send a thrill to the breast of the recipient, and would be preserved for the owner's life as a valuable possession,—the mana-

ger's retreat was the most slovenly apartment Horace had ever seen. How on earth Mr. Girdlestone could ever find the letter, the manuscript, or the memorandum he wanted, appeared a mystery. The desk at which he sat was so piled with papers, that it seemed as if another envelope would topple every thing over. On the walls, covered with the dust of years, hung portraits of popular people: some long since gathered to their fathers; others grown out of all resemblance to their jaunty likenesses, taken in days bygone, with collars high up in the neck, and sleeves which showed off the symmetry of the arms. Here was a great batch of play-bills on a hook; there an old cabinet, which it would have been delightful to have ransacked, containing as it did a dramatic *omnium gatherum* of years; letters from dead-and-gone celebrities, great favourites in their day, and now—in, oh, such a little time—forgotten by the fickle public; engagements long since concluded; agreements fulfilled this many a season; account and note-books; telling of profits and loss,—how Signor Saladini failed in the

dreadfullest manner on the first night, but stuck out for his season's salary and got it; how little Miss Miniver made her first appearance in *Muffs and Maidens*, and, taking the town by storm, brought showers of gold to the treasury; and a little further on, how the conceited minx insisted upon her salary being trebled for the following year, and on refusal transferred her services to the Elysium, where she failed;—an old scratch-wig, which had belonged to a bosom-friend of the manager's, an actor who had commenced life with him, and who had gone to America and died; piles of old letters that should have been destroyed long ago; parchments about the lease of the theatre; and a crowd of miscellaneous trifles, heaped together regardless of any thing like method. In the corner of the room stood a gun, a whip, and a fishing-rod, for Mr. Girdlestone had a taste for field-sports; and about the chairs and floor lay papers and parcels in dusty confusion. At length the manager, having finished his note, rose, and stood up with his hands in his pockets and his back to the fire-place; and thus the great man spoke:

“ Well, now about this farce of yours ?”

Horace bowed.

“ What’s your notion now, eh ?”

Horace did not exactly know what the manager meant, so he said :

“ I beg your pardon ; I don’t quite exactly—”

“ The figure, you know—the figure !” said the manager, poising himself on his toes, and coming down again on his heels once or twice a little impatiently. “ Hang it, my boy, the price !” he exclaimed ; for Horace had only coloured, without replying. “ The price, you know ; name the sum, and let’s have an idea of your notions. You call the piece a trifle, you know, and so you must make the price a trifle. Ha ! ha !”

Horace hummed and hahed, and scarcely knew what to reply.

“ It’s only a temporary thing, you know ; can’t ever be revived. I get these things sent in by shoals, and many of the authors would pay me to produce ’em. Recollect that, my boy, and don’t open your mouth too wide.”

Scarcely daring to look at Mr. Girdlestone as

he did it, Horace mentioned a moderate sum, and the manager closed with him immediately, telling him he must come and read it the day after to the company. Read it to the company! Sit surrounded by those wonderful beings who had so often enchanted him, and read those ridiculous jokes in cold blood! Horace begged to be excused; he said he was a bad reader; that the piece really didn't *want* reading, it was so extravagant; that he had an appointment in the morning; that—that he would give any thing *not* to read it. But the manager was inexorable.

"Always read your piece, my boy; it gives the people *your* notions of the characters. Eleven o'clock sharp; good-by. Give you a cheque to-morrow."

Horace found himself bowed out into the passage before he knew whether he was on his head or his heels; and after a good deal of stumbling in the dark, and twice walking into dressing-rooms, he groped his way to the stage-door, and bowing politely to a pleasant-looking gentleman with a very blue chin, who moved aside to let him

pass, walked out into the daylight a "free and accepted" dramatist.

Horace slept fitfully that night, and was up betimes in the morning, pacing the room nervously, looking perpetually at his watch, and groaning inwardly at the coming ordeal. There must surely be some unaccountable charm about writing for the stage, or the young beginner would inevitably break down and rush from the scene of bitter recrimination and general discontent, and devote himself to other pursuits, rather than suffer so much mortal agony as he who would win dramatic fame must almost invariably go through. Who but he who has endured it can tell of the slights, the sneers, the petty jealousies, the trivial spites, the almost childish vanities, which are incidental to the development of the dramatic bantling? When the dramatist's literary labours are accomplished, his real work begins. He must alter this, expunge that, crowd the incidents of three scenes into one, and introduce ten minutes' talk in front of a hastily-painted "interior" to allow the carpenters time to arrange a grand



closing scene ; or he must give several of the good things which fell to the lot of Mr. Jones to Mr. Brown, regardless of the nature of the character ; or he must make his morning an evening in order to show off Miss Robinson in a ball-dress, Miss Robinson's shoulders being her strong point, and her power in the theatre being despotic. The motto over the entrance to Hades, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here," should be inscribed over every stage-door ; and thrice happy is he who passes through the fiery ordeal of rehearsals unscathed, who does not find himself snubbed or insulted, or who does not find himself snubbing or insulting somebody else. The firmest friendships, nay the strongest affections, are no guards against the spirit of self which is predominant in the performing breast during "business ;" lovers scowl and snarl and snap, husband and wife growl fiercely, and tell each other to mind their own affairs ; whilst bosom friends on the other side of the stage-door drop the familiar Christian name, and are as freezingly polite as seconds at a duel or opposition candidates on the hustings. The

next stage of the theatrical fever through which the hapless provider of the libretto has to pass is short but severe. What can equal the first night, what approach the concentrated agony of those feverish two hours, which frequently leave the patient prostrate? The hurried nervous meal devoured after a long wearying day's rehearsing, with nothing ready, and every body anxious and snappish; the rush down to the theatre in a cab, flushed and dyspeptic; the sickly feeling as the music commences; and the despairing misery when the curtain does not rise at the conclusion of the overture, but there is a fearful pause, and a sharp hiss pierces the painful silence, and the poor author mentally resolves that if he survives this night he will certainly accept that trifling berth in the colonies, and drop his pen for ever. Then the delicious reaction which comes with the first laugh or burst of applause, and the long sigh of real relief when the curtain descends upon the first act amidst some enthusiasm, and injudicious friends look up and nod approvingly instead of applauding, as they were asked to go to do, of course,

and not sit with their hands before them like boobies; and so the two hours pass away, the "founder of the feast" alternately blessing his stars and cursing his fate, now laughing immoderately with the rest of the house, presently hiding his head as some sibilant sounds reach his ear, eventually rushing from the house in shame and confusion, or staying to receive the plaudits of a gratified public, as the case may be. Then the long lingering sensitive state which follows, when friends advise this or that, and critics point out the weak places, and strangers in 'bus or boat, unconscious of the playwright's presence, speak of his brainwork as fearful trash, and wonder, for their part, what the drama is coming to. What is there to reward him for all this? Not a permanent popularity, for after a spasmodic season of success his work, unless it be one of lofty genius, is frequently thrown aside and forgotten; not the payment he receives, for that is seldom sufficient to adequately compensate him for the toil and anxiety he has gone through from the day he dashed down upon the foolscap 'Act I. Scene 1'

to the hour when the fiat of the public pronounced his production a success. What is it, then, which induces the dramatist to go on piling up the list of his pieces and working away for his fickle friends the playgoers? Why, it is a nameless charm, an unaccountable attraction, which is felt but cannot be described, that lends to his labour an excitement no other style of composition possesses, and which renders him impervious to annoyances which, in any other calling, would make his life a burden and a misery.

At the appointed hour Horace arrived at the theatre, and the slippered messenger led him through a labyrinth of scenery on to the stage, where stood the stage-manager, a very gruff gentleman, who nodded a little superciliously Horace thought, and led the way to the greenroom. The greenroom (which was not green, Horace noticed with surprise) was a dismal apartment with dirty windows and some theatrical portraits on the walls; some of them being striking likenesses of ambitious ballet-girls, or "gentlemen of the chorus," who having been permitted on their benefit-nights

to assume characters of a superior calibre to those which ordinarily fell to their lot, had taken the earliest opportunity of having their pictures taken and presenting them "to the management and company," with their autographs affixed boldly to the margin. There was a rickety table with a bottle of water and glass; and Horace was told to sit there and commence. There were not many characters in the farce; and three gentlemen and one lady formed the audience. Had they been members of a jury sitting on a case of suicide, they could not have looked more miserable. Giggley, the comic actor, who had only to speak a word at the wing to send the house into convulsions, whose peculiar mannerism was the making of imitative youths at mild little suburban parties, —Giggley was evidently out of temper. The prospect of new study and late hours annoyed the comedian, for he had recently taken a house in the remote regions of Hampstead, and being of a domestic turn he preferred retiring to the bosom of his family to what he called "playing the people out." So Giggley scowled at Horace, and made

up his mind that unless he had at least three-fourths of the farce to himself and could see a situation for a song, he would not deign to say any thing civil to any body. Mr. Montrose, the walking-gentleman, yawned a good deal, and seemed much absorbed in his boots; and the third gentleman, having been out late overnight, went to sleep in an open and straightforward manner under the very nose of the author. Horace took up his manuscript with a trembling hand, when Mr. Slagg, the stage-manager, suddenly burst forth with, "George, where's Miss Mellington?"

George the call-boy trembled beneath the glance of his chief, but could not reply.

"Was she called to the reading, sir?" fiercely asked the dreadful Slagg.

"Yes, sir," was George's tremulous reply.

"Then, by gad, why isn't she here?"

And the stage-manager slapped the table, and took a huge pinch of snuff, and glowered at Horace as if it was his fault.

"It's not the first time Miss Mellington's kept

every body waiting," continued Slagg; "she's always doing it. By gad, the airs that girl gives herself are dis-gusting. In *my* time actresses attended to their profession, and came at the time they were called; but now, by gad—"

Slagg suddenly ceased, for Miss Mellington had entered the room. Miss Julia Mellington, the tremendous favourite of favourites at the Criterion Theatre, was a rather pretty woman, a little over the middle height, with no feature in her face worth mentioning, but a quaint fascinating air of jaunty impudence, and a profusion of golden locks, which she was in the habit of letting down about her shoulders on the slightest pretext; and a leg and arm which were universally acknowledged to be perfection. She had had very little education but that which she had picked up in her progress through the world; but she was a shrewd sharp girl; and if she did not know much, she was fully aware of the value of judicious silence; and when she couldn't talk upon any particular subject, she had the good sense to hold her tongue. Women were in the habit of speaking of her as bold; but

they were dreadfully anxious for the name of her dressmaker, and confessed that she had taste and did wonders with herself considering how plain she was; but men went mad about her, and pronounced her perfect, and—best matter of all in manager Girdlestone's eyes—went to see her. In fact, she was worth her salary six times over; and, despite Slagg's remarks, it would have been more than his place was worth to speak authoritatively and in dictatorial tones to Miss Mellington. She came into the greenroom with her archest smile and her profoundest curtsy. They seemed to be directed at Horace, though there was a comprehensive glance round the room; and the young author bowed with a burning face, for Miss Julia Mellington had always appeared to him as a creature to be mentioned with awe, and approached upon bended knees. He had known medical students who had taken to evil courses, and had acquired premature and untimely red noses on account of the cold disdain with which their amorous effusions (left at the stage-door) had been received by Miss Mellington; he had heard of her



as a bright particular star, whom the nobility generally were desirous of raising to the peerage, but who, in consideration of an aged mother, refused to listen to the voices of the charmers, and preferred the two-pair back of private independence to the gilded pomp of aristocratic splendour.

"Miss Mellington," observed the stage-manager sternly, but with a certain awe of the actress's collected manner and rustling rich silk dress, "we have been waiting a quarter of an hour for you."

"I am sure," replied Miss Mellington in a sweet voice, "I am *very* sorry; but my omnibus broke down, and I can't afford to drive my brougham at present."

This with a side-look at Miss Pimlico, the pretty nonentity in the corner, who, by some marvellous process of economy and management, contrived to drive a very smart carriage on a very small salary.

"What self-denial!" thought Horace; "how good of the dear girl to ride in a dusty vulgar

omnibus to and from the scene of her brilliant triumphs!" and he felt as if he could have levelled the surly stage-manager with his mother earth. With a faltering voice he read out the title of his farce, and then commenced the scene. Horace had not expected the professional performer to laugh as much as the public, for he knew that it was a matter of business to the actor; but he had hoped for an occasional smile, and possibly one or two real laughs. But even supposing the company to have had a desire to do the agreeable, the awful presence of the stern Slagg would have been sufficient to quell any attempt at merriment. There he sat, with his eyes half closed, only thinking of how this was to be brought on or that taken off; whether Giggley's soliloquy wasn't too long, and if Miss Pimlico could contrive to wear two dresses, which she always stipulated for before undertaking any part. Giggley's countenance assumed an almost ferocious look, at the very commencement of the reading; and the combined wit of Shakespeare, Sidney Smith, and Sheridan wouldn't have moved a muscle of his rigid coun-

tenance. Once or twice when turning over a page, poor Horace, who had grown dreadfully hot and rather despairing, threw a piteous glance at the great comedian; but Giggley always returned it with an indignant look, which would have been highly comical had it not been very terrible indeed. Montrose seemed amused; but it was with his somnolent neighbour, whose slumbers the walking-gentleman disturbed at intervals by digs in the ribs, treads on the toes, and other delicate attentions. As for poor Miss Pimlico, she had not a second idea, every body said; and so she was straightforward enough to be very much entertained at the farce, and to laugh furtively in her pocket-handkerchief, and looked defiant when Mr. Slagg scowled at her. When Horace wrote that trifle, he imagined it was very short and sparkling; but when he read it out in the Criterion greenroom, it seemed to him to be endless, and its jokes fell dull and heavy on his ear. They must in fact have been poor, he argued afterwards, or surely such intelligent beings as those around him would have laughed. He little knew

the various causes which operated against the desired effect. The great Giggley's part commenced with a long and very laughable soliloquy; but Giggley's powers of study were defective, and he had a known liking for action and bustle, preferring a profusion of plates to break to any quantity of witty lines to deliver. He was never so well pleased as when he had to fling furniture out of window; and a promise that he should have three handboxes to smash and a tray of tea-things to drop had been known to reconcile him to a very inferior part, and induce him to play on until close upon midnight. So that the long soliloquy, unbroken by any of the destructive "business," which was his hobby, bored the comedian immensely; and when he found he had to dress himself in female attire—a mine of merriment he had well-nigh worked out—his scowls became fiercer and his determination not to smile more marked than ever. Miss Julia Mellington was unmirthfully disposed too, but from other causes. She would have liked to change her dress to the male garments, for she was more at home as a

man than a female; but the author had not provided her a character in which such a thing was possible, and it seemed to her that the comedian had been studied in the matter much more than other persons, though Miss Pimlico's part appeared quite as good as hers; and as for herself, she didn't care which she played; and so on. Montrose could hardly be expected to laugh much; playing as he did a gentleman in two other pieces, the additional expense to which the new farce would put him in the matter of clothes was quite sufficient to damp his merriment. So the farce came to an end; and Horace, flushed and parched, threw a piteous look around the room, and sighed from sheer relief.

"Here are the parts; and Mr. Girdlestone says the piece must be done on Monday," said Slagg.

"Monday fortnight, he means," growled Giggley, as he took his part, with a sneer.

"Monday, Mr. Giggley, by gad, sir!" replied the stage-manager.

"Is this all the part?" said Miss Mellington

with a sweet smile, hastily looking over the leaves of the manuscript handed to her.

“That’s all, miss,” said the copyist, a feeble youth with weak eyes, who was generally supposed to pass twenty hours out of the twenty-four with a pen in his hand.

“Oh!” remarked Julia, with a catch of the breath.

“Well,” said Montrose, skimming his part, “*I shall find no difficulty in being ready by Monday; I could go on for it in ten minutes for that matter.*”

This was a deep and sarcastic dig at the shortness of the part. It was quite uncalled for; but as every body was saying something disagreeable, the walking-gentleman imagined his dignity might suffer if he didn’t also have a cut in. Miss Pimlico was the only one who received her part without being unpleasant; but then she was such a fool.

“Eleven to-morrow, ladies and gentlemen,” growled Slagg.

“Couldn’t you make it ten?” asked Giggley, the sarcastic Giggley.

"Eleven!" said Miss Mellington; "oh, dear, Mr. Slagg, I've a world of things to do to-morrow; *do* make it twelve;" and she threw an appealing glance at Horace, who flushed crimson as he felt her large full eyes fixed upon him.

"Settle it with Mr. Girdlestone, then," said Slagg; "perhaps he'll alter it for *you*."

"Then we'll say twelve," replied Miss Mellington, with a radiant smile all round; and so it was fixed; for Miss Julia could twist the manager—as indeed she could every body else—round her little finger, for she was a most fascinating creature, and would put her pretty little hands together, and pucker up her mouth and look so piteously into the manager's face, that he hadn't the heart to refuse her any thing she wished. She was quite an autocrat, in a small way; and even Slagg, that ferocious martinet, never stopped to argue with her, but would bounce away with a "By gad, that girl's too much tongue by half!" and leave her mistress of the field.

One by one the performers strolled from the room; and Horace, bowing rather stiffly to Slagg,

for he had taken a great dislike to that pompous idiot, and much of the awe of the world behind the scenes had worn away, walked out of the greenroom on to the stage. There he found Miss Mellington, who had evidently been waiting for him, and who beckoned him towards her in a half-commanding, half-timid, and wholly charming manner, which was very arch and delightful, and strongly reminded Horace of her delicious stage-effects which had so often roused him to loud expressions of admiration.

“Oh, Mr. Bentley, don't be angry with me. Now, say you won't be angry with me, or I won't ask the favour.” This said with a combined diffidence and boldness very fascinating. Horace stammered out some ridiculous compliment; and Miss Mellington made a deprecatory movement with a neatly-gloved little hand, and then produced a song which she had brought with her, and asked if she might sing it in the piece.

“There's a capital situation where Mr. Giggley's changing to the woman, you know, and all my scene with Miss Pimlico might come out.”



Horace felt all the pride of a parent in his production, and the suggestion seemed like a request that a limb should be lopped off the precious bantling. This thin-skinned sort of feeling wears away in time, and the dramatic writer is frequently the first to suggest the elimination of those portions of his piece which appear vague or unnecessary; but at the outset of his career he cannot part with a single word without undergoing the bitterest pang. Self-conceit has much to do with this, and there is nothing like the six-penny gallery for taking all that sort of thing out of a man. No doubt there was considerable selfishness in Miss Mellington's request; but the public liked to hear one of her captivating little ballads; and as she said, in a very low voice and with a suspicious look round, "Pimlico was the dearest girl in the world, but she could *not* speak lines and that was the fact," Horace reluctantly promised that Miss Mellington should sing the song; for how could he refuse such eyes? and she gave him her hand and a gentle squeeze of gratitude, and went away quite happy.

“ You don't mind my cutting this long speech ? ” asked Giggley, whom Horace met in the passage on his way out. It was the soliloquy, the capital introductory speech, which he had written three times over before he could get it not only as he liked himself, but as he thought Giggley would like it. He had read it aloud to imaginary audiences in Giggley's inimitable manner, and with Giggley's peculiar voice ; and had fancied he heard the roars of the people at the various points.

But Giggley asked that it might be cut in a manner which plainly showed that if the author did not abbreviate it, the actor would ; so Horace groaned a sad assent, and the remorseless pencil ran down the entire page, disposing of a whole army of jokes in its cruel career. Sick at heart the young author strolled towards his home, the beautiful eyes and winning manner of Miss Melington still haunting him ; haunting him as he passed the crowds of uninteresting folks upon his way ; haunting him as he sat in his room, with Priscilla a little more sharp and pointed and

angular than ever, sewing mechanically at the window, the sunshine showing up her shabbiness, and the traces of a recent encounter with Mrs. Molloy very evident in her touchy manner and her tightened lips.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### IN THE HOUSEKEEPER'S ROOM.

LORD GLENBURN'S gout continued very annoying, and his temper did not improve in consequence. As the master's surliness increased, the bland manner of the valet assumed even a milder form, and nothing appeared capable of ruffling the imperturbable Ledbitter. At length the fit assumed a more serious aspect, and Glenburn had to keep his bed, giving his servant great uneasiness, and making a demand upon his services very eagerly acceded to; for the valet was in terrible alarm when Dr. Danby looked grave, and drew out a great moon-faced watch, and spoke in a corner to Pinto, who was very humble in his manner to the great physician, and listened to his words of wisdom with great deference and attention.

Pinto was the family doctor,—originally introduced by Ledbitter, whom he had attended for

trifling ailments; but his attentions had been chiefly directed to the lower regions, where he had looked after the health of the servants for a small annual sum, which, however, paid him very well; for to see his shabby old brougham drawn up at the peer's door was sufficient to convince many of his patients that he must be a clever man; and his constant mention of Lord Glenburn and his charming wife served to show how wide was the extent of his practice; embracing, as it did, the extremes of the aristocratic invalid and the smallest of sickly shopmen. Not that her ladyship ever permitted Pinto to approach her. Mrs. Gaunt, who took the most violent dislike to at least four out of every five persons she came across, had at once settled that Pinto was not the medical man for her mistress; and as for herself, she had a great drug-chest, almost as big as a portmanteau, and several "Domestic Medicines," and despised all doctors as a rule. Her ladyship, too, had the best of health, and never required advice; so Pinto's descriptions of the charming mistress of the Glenburn establishment were all

drawn from his own imagination, for he had never beheld the lady but once; and as for Mrs. Gaunt, he would not have attempted to doctor her for a finger-ache. For once, in his ignorance of that good lady's disposition and general behaviour, he had, on meeting her on the stairs, injudiciously mentioned the fact of her complexion not looking as clear as it might have done, supplementing the remark by a suggestion that he should send her something from his surgery. Mrs. Gaunt drew herself up, and bringing her bushy eyebrows together until they formed one unbroken hirsute line, told Mr. Pinto that if he ever dared to make a remark to her again about her personal appearance, she should order him to be shown out; and then passed by him with a sweep of her heavy skirts, and a contemptuous glance down his dumpy figure, from his bald head to his boots. Pinto ever after would sneak up the stairs rapidly, on having ascertained that the dreadful housekeeper was not about, and would cut his interviews with the domestics exceedingly short. He had spoken of the housekeeper's be-

haviour to Ledbitter, but had received no sympathy from that quarter; Ledbitter agreeing with the lady, that it was a most injudicious remark for Pinto to have made, and exhibited an ignorance of human nature which was surprising in so clever a gentleman.

When Mrs. Gaunt reached her own room, after hearing a portion of the conversation between Glenburn and his valet, she paced its narrow limits as the tiger treads its den, with quick impatient steps, and with an expression on her hard visage which showed how overwhelming was the rage in her breast. Mrs. Gaunt *had* been listening. Eavesdropping had been an old weakness of hers; and in the course of her life she had innumerable times verified the truth of the saying, that listeners seldom hear any good of themselves. Upon the present occasion what she had heard confirmed her belief in Ledbitter's ill-will, and she read the valet's design upon his master's domestic peace at a glance. For some object of his own, it was evident Ledbitter wished to produce an estrangement between Lord and

Lady Glenburn. Why he should wish so to do, the housekeeper knew not, neither did she care to know; it was sufficient for her that it was so; and she ground her large teeth in the bitterest anger, and pushed back her grizzled hair from her temples, and walked rapidly up and down the room, her chest heaving with emotion, and her large hands clenched. Yet how was she to speak? She had no proof. She had heard the conversation by listening at the door, and she could not confess to that. It was lucky for Led-bitter that he was not in her way, for she looked as if she could have torn him limb from limb,—that dreadful woman, with her masculine stride and long sinewy arms. She belonged to the coarsest order of viragos, and could not settle down until she had wearied her legs with walking up and down, and tired out her tongue with invective. “A mean pitiful villain,” she exclaimed, as she strode the room; “a poor contemptible scoundrel, with his smug face and his sneaking hypocritical smile, his dainty white linen and his spruce clothes. Ah, how I hate him!



how I hate him ! If I had him here, I would as soon stab him with this knife as I would wring the neck of a pigeon,—a grimacing, false wretch !”

And so on, up and down her den, like a wild-beast, until she fell on to a chair fairly exhausted. Lædbitter was not sorry that she had heard something of the interesting dialogue between his master and himself. He did not regret that she had caught a glimmer of the game he was playing. His position was so secure that the fact of the enemy seeing something of his tactics rather lent an additional interest to the battle. He was pleased to think that Mrs. Gaunt should see his power over his master, and that she should learn how futile it was to attempt any tricks with his lordship's confidential servant. He didn't care a fig for her anger now ; and as to her ladyship, it was all the same whether she liked or disliked him, for her power paled before his, and he mentally snapped his finger at the pair of them. The double part which Mrs. Gaunt would be forced for the future to play—for she could surely never admit that she had listened at the door—would

be most amusing; possibly she might assume a more agreeable manner, in order to throw him off the scent, or— But Ledbitter didn't take the trouble to conjecture further, contented to take matters as they might come, much pleased though with the result of his labours so far. But Mrs. Gaunt, though a deep designing woman, was apt to be dreadfully rash when her fury was roused; and she frequently performed such neck-or-nothing acts of intemperate violence, that she was no match for the cool and collected Ledbitter, with his pleasant smile and gentle manner.

For the first time since her marriage Lady Glenburn had trembled for her position. She was a thoughtless woman, devoid of brains, not bad-hearted by any means, but a beautiful puppet, of which Mrs. Gaunt pulled the strings; and pulled them with no great gentleness or discretion. For a battered gentleman not so young as he had been, Glenburn was considered to possess a good life. His constitution was an iron one, or it could never have stood the treatment it had received at the hands of its possessor. Gout had

certainly marked him for its victim, but that was all; and somehow people don't think much of gout; there is nothing of the poetry of poorlines about it. A man looks so absurd with his foot in flannel, and a roar upon his lips when anybody comes within a yard of the afflicted member. Any thing on the lungs, a fever, a fractured or dislocated limb,—these arouse sympathy; but gout is always associated with cross-grained guardians in comedies, and wealthy old squires who take too much port; and it is so eminent and respectable that it appears quite a complaint to be proud of. So Lady Glenburn had never apprehended any thing serious when her lord had an attack of the family disorder; and her neglect was unintentional, and resulted rather from thoughtlessness than any desire to slight her husband. Not that she loved him, of course; that was out of the question. She entertained a feeling of gratitude which was as strong as her nature permitted, for the man who had shared his title with her and given her wealth and position. But that was all. Had Glenburn been half his age

and possessed of every virtue, his wife would not have been the woman to appreciate them; and had she known the extent of his vices, it would not have made any material difference in her feeling towards him. She had been brought up with a view to occupying a much lower sphere, and she was really exceedingly obliged to Lord Glenburn for marrying her. But though she was an apathetic soulless woman, she possessed all her sex's love of show and glitter and excitement; and when Dr. Danby told her with a grave face that her husband was seriously ill, she felt very much alarmed, and regretted not having been with him more frequently in his dull room.

Her ladyship was seated alone, yawning over a novel she could not understand, when suddenly the housekeeper burst in upon her. It was easy to see that Mrs. Gaunt was enraged, for she took no pains to conceal her passion, but slammed to the door and shook her fist at her mistress. Lady Glenburn looked up in some alarm, for the housekeeper when thoroughly angry was something fearful to behold, and had a dreadful habit of

speaking at the top of her strong harsh voice, regardless of listeners, until she broke down for lack of breath.

“This comes of your brainless goings-on, your fondness for parties and fal-lal nonsense, this does; this comes of your never going to see your husband, and leaving him entirely to the tender mercies of Mr. Ledbitter.”

It was rather an insolent way to address a mistress, but there was no sign of indignation on Lady Glenburn's face; the only expression—if expression it could be called—her countenance exhibited at the attack was one of blank amazement.

“What is the matter?” she inquired.

“What is the matter! Mischief's the matter; every thing's the matter! Glenburn's annoyed with you, and rightly too. You must give that Atherton his dismissal. Don't stare with your eyes wide open like a silly doll; I tell you Ledbitter's plotting mischief against both of us; he's setting Glenburn against you, and he'll have you separated if you don't mind your manners. It serves you right, well right.”

The housekeeper paced up and down the room frowning and beating her hands together in her rage.

“You suspect this man of more power than he possesses. He can have no object in wishing to breed any quarrel,” said her ladyship.

“How do you know?” replied Mrs. Gaunt, turning round on her mistress very sharply; “how do you know what motives he may have? what interests he may wish to serve? what petty vengeance he may aim at? He has been in his master’s confidence for years; he knows six times as much about him as you can ever hope to learn; and what do you or I know of his reasons? He hates me as I hate him, for he saw I suspected him from the first; and he’ll carry his point if we don’t prevent him.”

The housekeeper sat in a chair with her head in her hands, reflecting.

“Lord Glenburn loves me, and—”

“Loves you!” said Mrs. Gaunt, looking up suddenly; “loves you! Ha, ha! child, you are as simple as the merest idiot! Yes, he loves you

in his way, after his fashion; and you make him a showy wife, and set-off his rooms, and look well when you are dressed for the evening; and he likes to hear your silly babble, which he used to call so simple, and natural, and unartificial, and all that. But such love as his, girl, is the merest silver wash, and it'll come off like the stuff on a copper candlestick. Love! it's self-conceit, that's what it is; once wound *that*, and you may bid good-by to Portman Square."

"Well, I don't know what to do," half-sobbed her ladyship, who really did not.

"I'll have him out of the house!" said the housekeeper, bringing her great hand down upon the toilet-table with a thump which made its many ornaments rattle again; "I'll have him out of the house, under his master's very nose. As it's war, there's no use in mincing matters. I'll discharge him, and Glenburn won't dare to say *me* nay, I know; if he does, we'll declare we'll leave him, expose him, tell the world who we are. No half-measures, girl; we must stop short at nothing. He may pension-off his valet,—for, after all, there

must be money at the bottom of the affair,—but Ledbitter shall go; Jane Gaunt's said it, mind; at all risks, at all hazards, he shall go, he shall go!"

Mrs. Gaunt was not one of those people who said things in the heat of passion which she did not mean. She was a most self-willed obstinate woman, who, having once determined upon doing any thing, even of the maddest description, could not be deterred by any reasoning or advice from carrying out her object. When once she had declared Jane Gaunt would do a thing, it was a certainty that Jane Gaunt would do it. She seldom failed to perform what she said she would ordinarily; but upon extraordinary and special occasions, when she had used the words "Jane Gaunt," nothing could prevent her. So Lady Glenburn well knew, and she felt how useless it would have been to attempt any argument or persuasion. She turned very pale and trembled, and felt faint for the first time in her life, when the housekeeper spoke of a separation, and she thought of its attendant misery and disgrace; but she was



the merest doll in the hands of Mrs. Gaunt, and she could only look at her imploringly with those big black eyes which had taken Glenburn prisoner at Baden.

“Go to Lord Glenburn’s room, and tell Mr. Ledbitter that I wish to speak to him.”

This to a servant, who paused a moment before going, with an uncertain look at the housekeeper, who was seated in an arm-chair in her own apartment.

“Please, ma’am, Dr. Danby said ——”

“Do as I bid you!” replied Mrs. Gaunt, with an impatient stamp.

The servant left the room, and shortly returned.

“Mr. Ledbitter’s compliments, and he will be down almost directly.”

Mrs. Gaunt turned a little pale, or perhaps it would be more correct to say she became a trifle less red, for her face was generally florid, and during strong agitation was apt to present an almost purplish appearance. Though the violence of her anger had somewhat abated, she was still

far from calm; the big waves had subsided, but the sea was frothing and bubbling and unsettled. She never possessed the power of mastering her emotion, and she knew it, and felt that Ledbitter in that had greatly the advantage over her. But she did her best, and sat still upon the chair, tapping her foot upon the floor impatiently, her hand pressed to where her heart might once have been, for, strong and determined as she was, she experienced, the first time for years, the slightest symptom of a flutter in that region.

Presently a soft tap was heard at the door. It was just the kind of gentle unobtrusive knock to be expected from Ledbitter. Mrs. Gaunt cleared her throat, and called out "Come in!" in a loud tone.

Mr. Ledbitter came in. He bowed gravely to Mrs. Gaunt, who scarcely acknowledged the salute.

"Sit down, Mr. Ledbitter," she said, pointing to a chair close by him.

Mr. Ledbitter sat down unconcernedly, and

stifled a rising yawn with an air of consummate indifference.

“His lordship has dropped into a gentle slumber, and will no doubt awake considerably refreshed,” said the valet; “else I could not have left him, even to obey the commands of Mrs. Gaunt.”

Ledbitter said this in a tone which left the hearer in doubt whether it was a compliment or a sneer. Mrs. Gaunt began to chafe again, and she showed it. The valet cooled even more than ever: he might have been frozen to his seat, he sat so cold and still.

“Mr. Ledbitter,” at length blurted out Mrs. Gaunt, “I—a—have sent for you to speak my mind!”

The valet bowed slightly.

“You are in your master’s confidence; you are his right-hand man. He thinks as you think, and you can twist him round your finger. Don’t shake your head, man. I’ve got eyes, and I can use ’em. I’ve not watched you both for nothing. I see it all. You’ve known him long; you know

all about his career, and there isn't a single evil deed he's done,—and he's done a-many; don't tell *me!*—that you're not aware of—mayhap have assisted him in. He's afraid of you: he's under your thumb; that's what he is!"

The housekeeper drew back to see the effect of her speech. Ledbitter showed no signs of interest or emotion: he sat with his respectable head slightly bent, but there was no symptom of excitement in his placid countenance.

"From the first moment her ladyship and me came to this house, you took a dislike to us. For goodness' sake, don't look like that. You *did!* You didn't like my lady from the first; and you hated me!"

"What possible cause could I——"

"Oh, I don't know. Perhaps we interfered with your schemes, whatever they were. Perhaps you didn't admire your master's choice; and certainly you didn't know who she was, and that annoyed you. However, you began to bounce with me; but you soon found that wouldn't do with Jane Gaunt. Then you turned polite. No-

thing was too civil for you to say when you met me about the house; you looked as if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth whenever I saw you. Then I mistrusted you. I didn't care so long as you were rude; but I couldn't bear your being polite and carneying, for I could see through it; and I was right. You've set Lord Glenburn against his wife; you have! I know it. You think you'll get rid of us; you presume on your power with your master; but you've got a foe that won't yield to such as you. You've put Jane Gaunt's blood up; and she'll win, you'll see, Mr. Ledbitter."

The housekeeper had half risen from her seat, as she became more and more excited. The valet's face was a little paler, and his mouth appeared rather more rigid than was usual with him; but he still sat with his head slightly bent and his eyes drooping.

"Now, how cowardly and base a thing it is," continued Mrs. Gaunt, "to tell lies behind a mistress's back, to try and foment a quarrel between a happy couple! What man, who really

was a man, would descend to so mean, so low a trick? What master, but a despicable and contemptible one, would listen for a moment to such a farrago of falsehood and wickedness? Bah! you're suited to each other: like master, like man—like master, like man!”

A temporary flush overspread the valet's countenance. He could bear to be called a villain; but there was a peculiar sting concealed in the comparison of himself with Glenburn. Mrs. Gaunt could not have said any thing more severe; and she saw the angry colour which came for a moment to Ledbitter's cheek. After a short pause, the valet spoke in a low voice:

“Did you merely send for me to insult me, Mrs. Gaunt, and to speak malignantly of the master who pays you your wages? If so, I think I may as well retire;” and he made a slight movement towards the door.

“Stay, sir; I haven't done. That is not *all* I have sent for you for. It is but too plain that the same roof cannot shelter us both. Your mas-

ter values you, or fears you, or something; at all events, he would never part with you willingly. I have known my mistress from a child, and will never leave her. You must go, and at once. Don't smile, Ledbitter. I say you must, and shall! I will go to your master, and invent some reason for your absence; and in time I will break the news to him, and so arrange that he shall not miss your presence. He may storm: he will, I know; but I can bear that. I am mistress here, and I discharge you; now, upon the spot; at once! Don't dare to disobey me; don't dare it, man! Any money you want, you shall have; but you shall go. Jane Gaunt swears it, and she'll keep her oath!"

The woman had risen as she spoke; and, as she waved her long arms at her enemy, with her form erect, and her hair pushed back from her big hard-featured face, her chest heaving, and her eyes flashing with rage, she might have stood as a model to a Fuseli for any one of the Furies.

Ledbitter looked at her almost admiringly,

and replied in a voice which betrayed something like a tremble :

“ Whilst his lordship lives, Mrs. Gaunt, I will never quit him.”

“ You will, man ; this day—this day !”

“ No, madam ; no.”

“ Beware ! you are making a madwoman of me. I can’t endure this. I shall forget where I am, or what I am doing. Don’t dare to cross my path when my blood’s once up. As sure as my name’s Jane Gaunt——”

“ Ha, ha !” said the valet, rising suddenly, and facing her with his defiant finger pointing at her, and a wild look of triumph in his eyes ; “ as sure as your name’s Jane Gaunt, indeed ! say, rather, as sure as your name’s Jane Lyon !”

The housekeeper gave a start as if she had been shot, and with a fearful shriek, which rang through the house, fell as white as a corpse upon the floor.

“ What was that confounded scream I heard



just now?" asked the peer, whom the shriek had awakened from a light slumber.

"Only one of the servants in hysterics, my lord," was the calm reply of the unruffled Led-bitter, as he gently smoothed his master's pillow.

## CHAPTER XV.

### MR. LEDBITTER'S WALK.

MRS. GAUNT was not in the habit of fainting. She had never been known to go into hysterics, and looked upon smelling-salts with contempt. Her opinion of ladies who "felt the warm weather," and who took refuge in fanning and foolery, was by no means flattering; her notion in the summer being that you should "perspire and look pleasant over it." If by chance she came across a passage in a novel which spoke of a sensitive heroine giving way to her feelings in the conventional fainting fashion, the unemotional house-keeper would fling aside the book with many expressions of contempt for those who wrote, and those who read, such rubbish. But Mrs. Gaunt's time came in due season; and when she *did* faint, it was in downright earnest, and her coming-to was tardy and distressing to witness. So thought

Felicia Penrose, an upper-servant whom Mrs. Gaunt had been in the habit of treating less harshly than the other domestics of the house, and who flew to assist the housekeeper and apply the necessary restoratives to that lady. Almost directly Mrs. Gaunt became herself again; but there was a frightened look in her generally bold eyes, and a tremor pervading her strong frame, which surprised Felicia, who was accustomed to class all attacks of this nature under the comprehensive title of "fits." According to Felicia's experience, bed was the proper place for those who recovered from fits; but she would have been indeed a brave upper-servant who would have dared to suggest bed to Mrs. Gaunt. The housekeeper, after shuddering and throwing an alarmed glance over her shoulder, shook herself, and with a big sigh of relief became once more a very fair imitation, to a casual observer, of the Mrs. Gaunt of an hour back, though to sharp-eyed damsels, such as Felicia, the change was evident.

Felicia Penrose was a beady-eyed, black-haired housemaid with a tight waist and a trim figure,

who had some time previously cast an eye of favour upon the genteel body-servant of her noble master. In Felicia's eyes gentility was every thing; she was the ultra-conservative of the kitchen, a below-stairs Tory of the truest blue, and upon the low radical levelling spirit of "some folks"—by which vague allusion it was well known to the whole establishment she pointed at the cook, a most independent person—she looked down with contempt and scorn. She was one of those unhappy servants who have the misfortune to come of a family of "great respectability," who thought itself disgraced by her entering service, and so on; consequently, by a judicious consideration of the feelings of her relatives in menial matters, combined with considerable incompetency when it came to the higher domestic duties, Felicia contrived to pass her time agreeably enough, devoting much of it to caps, and maintaining a genteel whiteness of the hand which was highly becoming. A somewhat deep and designing young woman was Felicia; but not sufficiently so to ensnare the heart of Mr. Ledbitter, who was

always scrupulously polite; on occasion even tender; but never committed himself by a promise or any remark convertible into the semblance of one. Matrimonially considered, Lord Glenburn's valet was a highly desirable person. He was well off, of course. There was no proof that he possessed money; but it was generally believed by the Glenburn household that Mr. Ledbitter had put-by a goodly sum, which he had augmented by judicious investments. He was not at all the kind of man to retire and take a public-house, thought his acquaintance—that would be too common a sphere of action for him; he might possibly go in for a large railway hotel, or do something extensive with refreshment contracts. But whatever he might do, it was very certain he would do it well; and Felicia Penrose pictured to herself a future of genteel comfort, when one evening the placid valet was more than ordinarily bland and attentive. Sharp as Felicia undoubtedly was, she was nevertheless very obtuse upon one point,—she was perfectly blind to the pumping process she invariably underwent when

in company with the agreeable valet. Being of a somewhat talkative nature, Miss Penrose only required the slightest indication of the conversational road for her to start off at a smart trot, which the occasional spur, in the shape of an exclamation, would sharpen into a downright gallop. Without at all intending it, Felicia found herself revealing to the valet all her own notions regarding her mistress and her mistress's constant companion, Mrs. Gaunt. It was with no desire to tattle or make mischief that Felicia talked very fast, and hazarded conjectures upon the mysterious friendship above stairs. She would, after a gossip with Ledbitter, run over in her own mind the many silly things she had contrived to cram into ten minutes' talk, and feel herself flush to the roots of her jet-black hair as she reflected upon the possibility of Ledbitter retailing the facts to a third party. Her misgivings would vanish though when she looked into the stolid countenance of her companion. It was the last face in the world to belong to a babbler; and, after all, he had not appeared peculiarly interested at her

recital, though he had led her on somehow to tell things too. In fact, the self-possessed servant was a puzzle to Felicia Penrose, and after every gossip with him she would mentally resolve to hold her tongue in future. But as such self-denial necessitated a finish to those pleasant interviews with the valet which Felicia chose to consider as "stolen," and which she invested with a romantic interest of little less than Romeo-and-Juliet-like intensity, she concluded by giving herself up to the unlimited pumping powers of her middle-aged admirer.

One fatal evening, however—and Felicia remembered bitterly afterwards that it was the very one on which the last link of her own suspicions had been added to the long chain of apparent trifles—the golden bubble burst, and Miss Penrose's vision vanished into air. She had been tender in her tone, and more than confiding; for the evening was calm, and Ledbitter had dropped hints of half-price to the play, and the atmosphere was redolent of happiness. Suddenly Mr. Ledbitter's manner changed; conscience seemed to

have struck him in an abrupt and unexpected fashion. Remorse arose to his mind, and virtuous horror was stamped upon his brow. He lectured Felicia on the evils of a tattling tongue, and gravely shook his imposing head, and seemed to endure much pain at the thoughts of his companion's conduct. He spoke in an injured tone, and upbraided Felicia, with a quiet severity which was very heartrending, with making him the recipient of silly trifling secrets which meant nothing, but which, if breathed about, might prove very annoying to Lord and Lady Glenburn; and he worked up the climax to his rebuke with feeling, and strode with much stateliness from the room, ignoring the half-price question, and leaving Felicia oscillating between a wish to cry and a desire to tear his eyes out. She decided in favour of tears, crying in a fierce way, and rubbing her eyes in a sharp enraged manner, as ill-tempered nurses do those of naughty children. Then she gave vent to her indignation, and determined to instruct one of her many respectable relatives, who was an attorney, to commence a



breach-of-promise action at once against the deceiving wretch. Cooling down eventually, Felicia reflected that there never had been a promise; and that, divested of those little tender hints and artful amatory touches which go so far with the fair objects of the monster's attentions, and so little a way with a cold-blooded jury, her case was not a strong one; and, though a wish for vengeance rankled in the Penrose bosom, the Penrose intellect was alive to the futility of the law in such a matter. Hand-pressings and lover's looks and sighs, that express so much at the time they are heaved, come out miserably as evidence. One short letter of a definite nature, albeit love is spelt with a *u*, and the writer with praiseworthy modesty puts down a small *i* whenever he speaks of himself, will go much further in the stony-hearted law-courts than all the cruel wounds that reckless Cockney-sportsman Cupid is accountable for. Sighing and dying may do much; but they don't bring damages. So Felicia Penrose did not consult her highly-respectable distant relative; but hated Ledbitter in her heart, and wondered

how she could have thought for an instant of a man old enough to be her father.

The acute attack of rage and mortification had subsided, and Felicia had entered the chronic stage of unseen but no less deadly hatred towards the man who had treated her so unfeelingly about the time of Mrs. Gaunt's sudden illness. The first thing the housekeeper said when she recovered her animation was "Shut the door!" She did not object to the attentions of Felicia; but not for worlds would she be seen by the other servants in such a condition. Felicia *had* shut the door; an act of forethought which was not lost upon the housekeeper. Miss Penrose had not entered the room without having previously caught a glimpse of the rapidly retreating form of Mr. Ledbitter. There could be but one view to be taken of the matter. In the female mind there never *is* but one view to be taken of such interviews. Ledbitter had evidently been proposing marriage to the housekeeper, and the unexpected declaration of his respectable passion had been, as a matter of course, too much for her.

"Ha," thought the dark-eyed damsel to her-

self, as she looked upon the prostrate form of the housekeeper, "if I only had a letter or something substantial of the kind, I'd wait till the marriage, and then make him pay for his perfidy."

It was the work of a very few moments with Mrs. Gaunt to re-arrange her iron-gray hair, put her cap straight, and collect her scattered senses. In as short a time as it would have taken a practised fainter to sigh, look round, draw a long breath, and say "I'm better now," Mrs. Gaunt was apparently as firm upon her feet as ever; and though pale and evidently trembling, she walked up and down the room as steadily as ever, and bade Felicia leave her, and hold her tongue about it to the servants, in her natural voice.

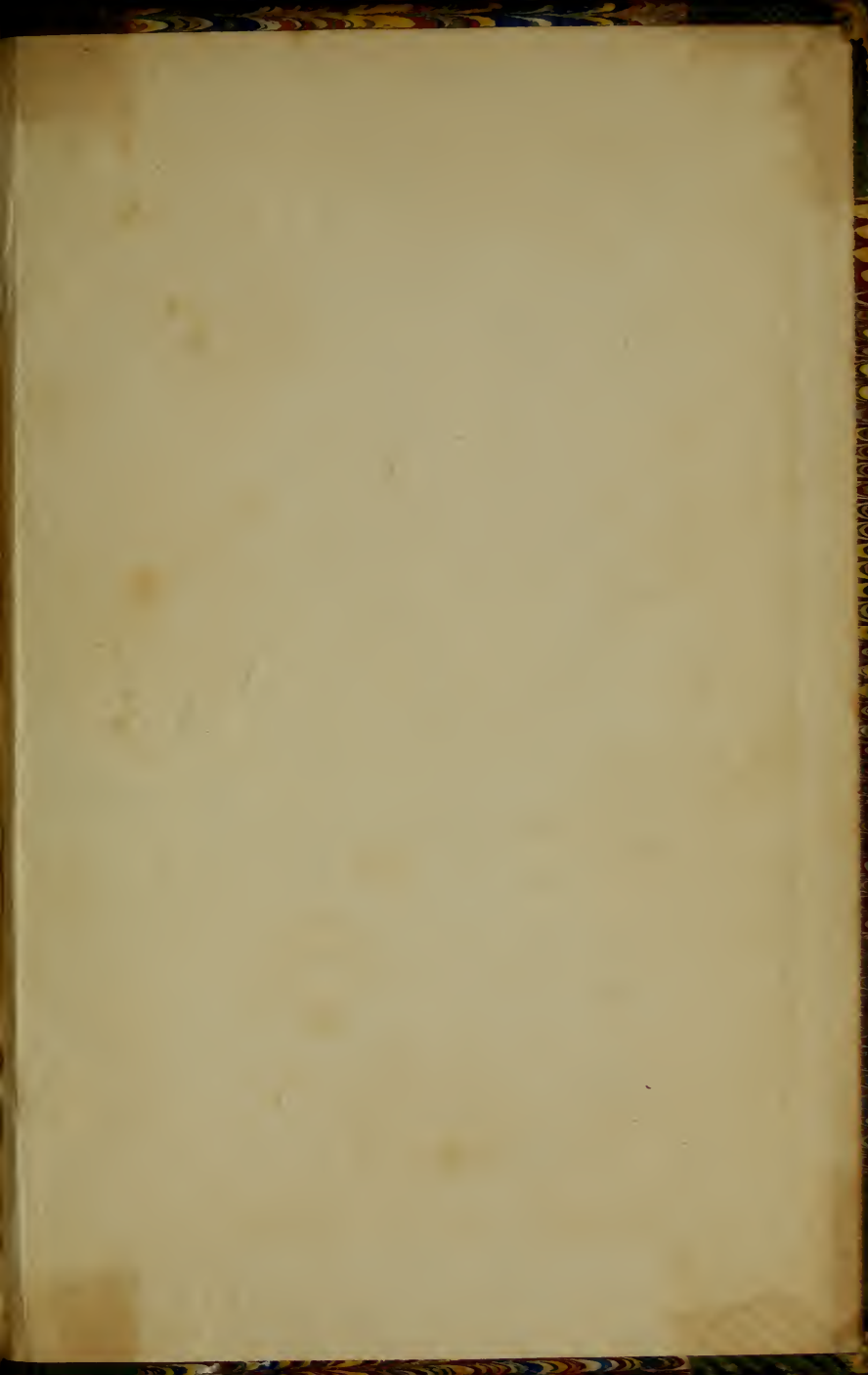
Later in the day the housekeeper sent for Felicia, and at once dispelled the girl's notions that there was any tender sentiment regarding Ledbitter in the breast of Mrs. Gaunt. Their opinions tallying, the valet received much hearty abuse in his absence; and if his ears did not tingle that afternoon, it was no fault of the indignant couple in the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Gaunt liked Felicia in her grim way, and treated her

very differently from the other domestics, much to their annoyance and greatly to the discomfort of poor Felicia, who, being unpopular from the first on account of her superior antecedents and grand airs, now found herself completely tabooed and treated with extreme contumely. But Felicia returned scorn for scorn, and with interest; dining with her nose elevated in the air, and smiling with contemptuous pity at the general bad grammar of the Glenburn household. The interview between Mrs. Gaunt and Felicia was not a very long one, for the housekeeper had a knack of coming very soon to the point; and as the tendency of her instructions was inimical to Ledbitter, Miss Penrose's perceptive faculties were more than ordinarily acute.

As the valet strolled out to take his accustomed turn that evening, a young woman, closely veiled, might be seen following him at a respectful distance. The veil was not a very thick one, and twinkling through it might be seen a pair of rather restless and wonderfully sparkling black eyes.







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