LEVER'S WORKS

Frontispiece.

[THE DALTONS]

THE WORKS

OF

CHARLES LEVER.

VOL. VI.

THE DALTONS.
A DAY'S RIDE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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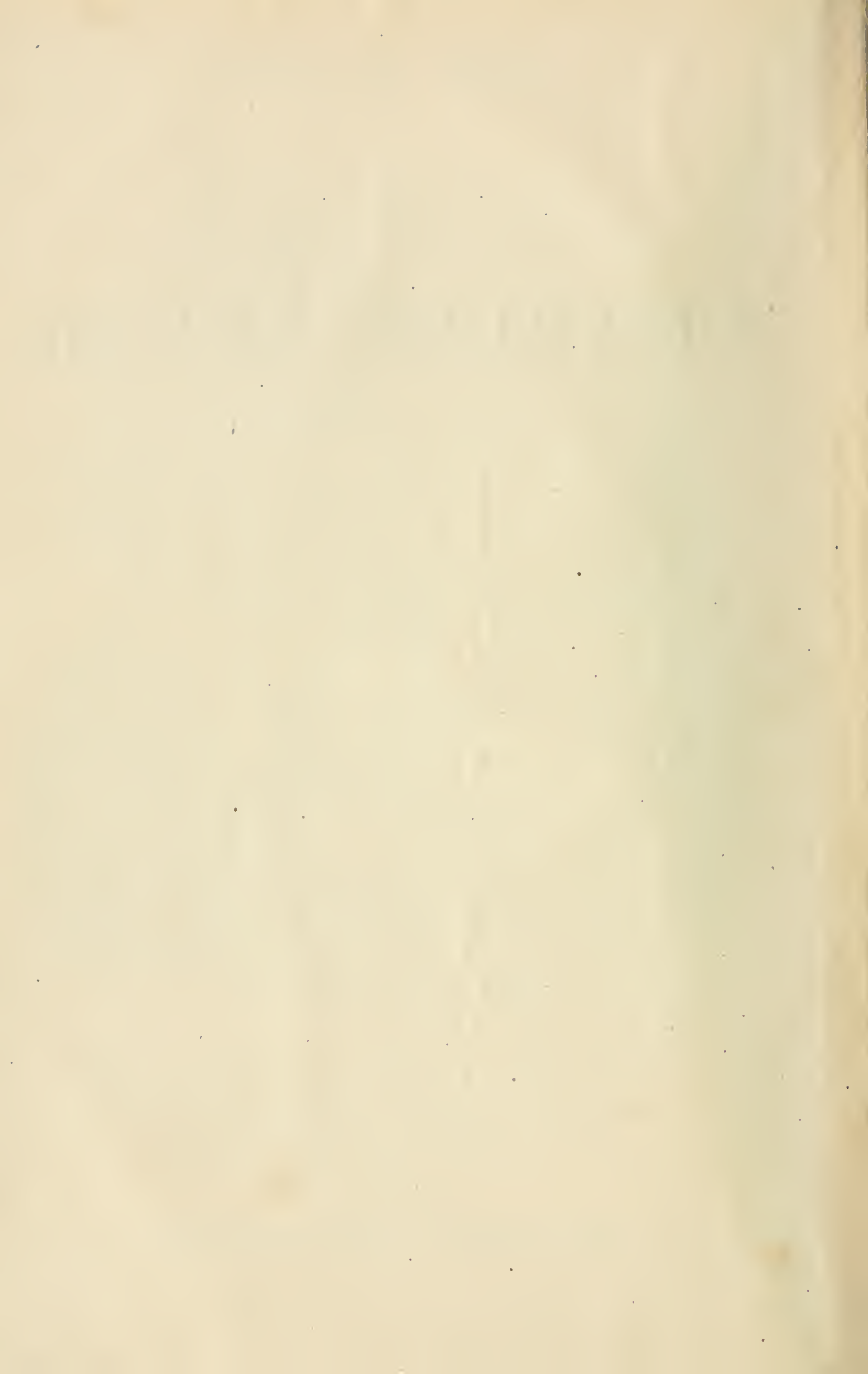

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THE DALTONS;

OR,

THREE ROADS IN LIFE.

PREFACE.

I HAVE already mentioned, in a short notice to a re-edition of this story, how much of it is owing to the personal confessions of an old school-fellow; and now, as I look over it again, and think of the letters of my old friend, I am almost tempted to own that the strongest traits of romantic incident and situation were to be found in the correspondence, and not in the novel.

It was strange enough to find in a foreigner every line and lineament that distinguish the Austrian soldier, actually exaggerated by adoption. The intense admiration for the service, the devoted loyalty to the Kaiser, the rigid respect for rank in all its gradations, the unswerving faith in the destinies of the army, were all his; and while there was not a petty detail of discipline to which he did not attach importance, there ran through his mind a perpetual current of high hopes and great ambitions for the land of his adoption, and an implicit belief that the country of Maria Teresa was destined to be one day at the head of Europe.

To this spirit, practical even to littleness, was joined a name of almost Quixotic exaltation. So that while he could give an undivided attention to the proper folding of a cloak, or the hang of a stirrup, he could stretch his mind to speculations of a time when the great interests of the European continent would move eastward, and Austria become the central point of civilization to the old world.

I am now certain that if I had more closely adhered to my first notion of reproducing my school-fellow just as he was, my tale would have been a gainer; but the same wayward habit to let my characters dictate their own roads beset me here as elsewhere, and I found an almost child-like amusement here in watching the willfulness with which they acted.

Most of us are familiar with those grotesque busts in the Palais Royale, where the features of well-known and eminent men were combined with traits of enormous exaggeration, but yet so artistically harmonizing with the characteristics of the persons, that even the excesses were significant. I tried something of this in the personages of this story; they were all living people, but so associated with unrealities of various kinds, and so purposely distorted, that I had the fullest confidence they could never be recognized.

I am afraid to admit that I was mistaken, though Mrs. Ricketts declared she knew the old woman the sketch depicted, and implied that it was only too flattering. Major Haggerstone recognized himself, and even offered some specimens of his well-known philanthropy to make the portrait more resembling.

Midchekoff saw, and, stranger still, was pleased with, the likeness of himself. In fact, many of his traits were affectations, and he was not annoyed that the world had accepted them as real; while one little incident of generous meaning was a salve to self-love for whose sake he would have pardoned much misrepresentation.

If it were not that the subject would lead me into inordinate length, I should gladly take this opportunity to show how a larger acquaintance with Italy had modified many opinions I expressed of Italians and their struggle for independence. This is not the place for a disquisition; which, besides.

would have little bearing on the story before me.

Like one who, seated on a lofty crag, looks down upon the wide plain beneath, and traces the miles of road he has of late been traveling, so do I now look back upon the long way I have walked in my career as a writer, and mark where the journey was sun-lit and happy, and where the roads were deep, the sky leaden-colored and lowering. Nearly every line of this story was written in good health and spirits. As I think of it, I might call it the happiest part of my life. It was no labor to me to sit at my desk the hour or hour-and-half which sufficed to carry on my story. The incidents I wanted occurred to me without an effort, and the characters amused me—I am afraid to own how much. Certain experiences of my own had taught me how much of actual tragedy is mingled with the genteel comedy of life, and that things of terrific meaning are continually occurring through that well-bred world, whose chief functions might seem pleasure and enjoyment. I tried to adapt this experience to the scenes before me, and to show that amid all the frivolities of fashion there are mingled the passions which exhaust themselves in crime. Although no longer a young man, I had not yet felt one touch of age, nor knew myself other than I was at five-and-twenty; and it was in this conscious buoyancy of temperament, joined to a shrewder knowledge of life, that imparted to me a sense of enjoyment in society for which I have no word but ecstasy. The unceasing business of life went on before me, like a play in which—if occasionally puzzled by the plot—I could always anticipate the denouement by my reading of the actors.

Such a theater was Florence in those old Grand Ducal times—times which, whatever the political shortcomings, were surrounded with a charm of existence words cannot picture. If it were an obligation on me to re-live any portion of my life, I should select this part, even in preference to earlier youth and more hopeful ambition. Neither is the choice or the necessity before me, and I am satisfied to recall the recollection with gratitude, and declare that it was a most happy time and *meminisse juvat*.

The theory of animal heat has established the fact that the individual who has absorbed a certain amount of caloric will be able to resist cold longer and better than he who goes into the air without such provision. May there not be something of the same kind in our moral chemistry, and that a stock of latent happiness will serve to ward off the chill approach of adversity long after exposure to its assault; and that the heart, which has drank freely of bliss, will carry the flame, even after sorrow and suffering have impaired the sense and dulled the enjoyment?

CHARLES LEVER.

TRIESTE, 1872.

CHAPTER I.

BADEN OUT OF SEASON.

A THEATER by daylight—a great historical picture in the process of cleaning—a ballet-dancer of a wet day hastening to rehearsal—the favorite for the Oaks dead-lame in a straw-yard—are scarcely more stripped of their legitimate illusions than is a fashionable watering-place on the approach of winter. The gay shops and stalls of flaunting wares are closed; the promenades, lately kept in trimmest order, are weed-grown and neglected; the "sear and yellow leaves" are fluttering and rustling along the alleys where "Beauty's step was wont to tread." Both music and fountains have ceased to play; the very statues are putting on great overcoats of snow, while the orange-trees file off like a sad funeral procession to hide themselves in dusky sheds till the coming spring.

You see as you look around you that nature has been as unreal as art itself; and that all the bright hues of foliage and flower—all the odors that floated from bed and parterre—all the rippling flow of stream and fountain, have been just as artistically devised, and as much "got up," as the transparencies or the Tyrolese singers, the fireworks or the fancy fair, or any other of those ingenious "spectacles" which amuse the grown children of fashion. The few who yet linger seem to have undergone a strange transmutation. The smiling landlord of the "Adler"—we refer particularly to Germany as the very land of watering-places—is a half-sulky, farmer-looking personage, busily engaged in storing up his Indian corn, and his firewood and his forage, against the season of snows. The bland "croupier," on whose impassive countenance no shade of fortune was able to mark even a passing emotion, is now seen higgling with a peasant for a sack of charcoal, in all the eagerness of avarice. The trim maiden, whose golden locks and soft blue eyes made the bouquets she sold seem fairer to look on, is a stout wench, whose uncouth fur cap and wooden shoes

are the very antidotes to romance. All the transformations take the same sad colors. It is a pantomime read backwards.

Such was Baden-Baden in the November of 182—. Some weeks of bad and broken weather had scattered and dispersed all the gay company. The hotels and assembly-rooms were closed for the winter. The ball-room, which so lately was alight with a thousand tapers, was now barricaded like a gaol. The very post-office, around which each morning an eager and pressing crowd used to gather, was shut up—one small aperture alone remaining, as if to show to what a fraction all correspondence had been reduced. The Hotel de Russie was the only house open in the little town; but although the door lay ajar, no busy throng of waiters, no lamps, invited the traveler to believe a hospitable reception might await him within. A very brief glance inside would soon have dispelled any such illusion had it ever existed. The wide staircase, formerly lined with orange-trees and camellias, was stripped of all its bright foliage; the marble statues were removed; the great thermometer, whose crystal decorations had arrested many a passing look, was now encased within a wooden box, as if its tell-tale face might reveal unpleasant truths, if left exposed.

The spacious "Saal," where some eighty guests assembled every day, was denuded of all its furniture, mirrors, and lusters; bronzes and pictures were gone, and nothing remained but a huge earthenware stove, within whose grating a faded nosegay—left there in summer—defied all speculations as to a fire.

In this comfortless chamber three persons now paraded with that quick step and brisk motion that bespeak a walk for warmth and exercise; for, dismal as it was within doors, it was still preferable to the scene without, where a cold incessant rain was falling, that, on the hills around, took the form of snow. The last lingerers at a watering-place, like those who cling on to a wreck, have usually something peculiarly sad in their aspect. Unable, as it were, to brave the waves like strong swimmers, they hold on to the last with some vague hope of escape, and like a shipwrecked crew, drawing closer to each other in adversity than in more prosperous times, they condescend now to acquaintance and even intimacy, where, before, a mere nod of recognition was alone interchanged. Such were the three who now, buttoned up to the chin, and with hands deeply thrust into side-pockets, paced backwards and forwards, sometimes exchanging a few words, but in that broken and discursive fashion that showed that no tie of mutual taste or companionship had bound them together.

The youngest of the party was a small and very slightly made man of about five or six-and-twenty, whose face, voice and figure were almost feminine, and, only for a slight line of black mustache, might have warranted the suspicion of disguise. His lacquered boots and spotless yellow gloves appeared somewhat out of season, as well as the very light textured coat which he wore; but Mr. Albert Jekyl had been accidentally detained at Baden, waiting for that cruel remittance which—whether the sin be that of agent or relative—is ever so slow of coming. That he bore the inconvenience admirably (and without the slightest show of impatience) it is but fair to confess, and whatever chagrin either the detention, the bad weather, or the solitude may have occasioned, no vestige of discontent appeared upon features where a look of practiced courtesy, and a most bland smile, gave the predominant expression. "Who he was," or, in other words, whence he came—of what family—with what fortune, pursuits, or expectations, we are not ashamed to confess our utter ignorance, seeing that it was shared by all those that tarried that season at Baden, with whom, however, he lived on terms of easy and familiar intercourse.

The next to him was a bilious-looking man, somewhat past the middle of life, with that hard and severe cast of features that rather repels than invites intimacy. In figure he was compactly and stoutly built; his step as he walked, and his air as he stood, showed one whose military training had given the whole tone to his character. Certain strong lines about the mouth, and a peculiar puckering of the angles of the eyes, boded a turn for sarcasm, which all his instincts, and they were Scotch ones, could not completely repress. His voice was loud, sharp and ringing; the voice of a man who, when he said a thing, would not brook being asked to repeat it. That Colonel Haggerstone knew how to be sapling as well as oak, was a tradition among those who had served with him; still it is right to add, that his more congenial mood was the imperative, and that which he usually practiced. The accidental lameness of one of his horses had detained him some weeks at Baden—a durance which assuredly appeared to push his temper to its very last entrenchments.

The third representative of forlorn humanity was a very tall, muscular man,

whose jockey-cut green coat and wide-brimmed hat contrasted oddly with a pair of huge white mustaches, that would have done credit to a captain of the Old Guard. On features, originally handsome, time, poverty and dissipation had left many a mark; but still the half droll, half truculent twinkle of his clear grey eyes showed him one whom no turn of fortune could thoroughly subdue, and who, even in the very hardest of his trials, could find heart to indulge his humor—for Peter Dalton was an Irishman; and although many years an absentee, held the dear island and its prejudices as green in his memory as though he had left it but a week before.

Such were the three—who, without one sympathy in common, without a point of contact in character—were now drawn into a chance acquaintance by the mere accident of bad weather. Their conversation—if such it could be called—showed how little progress could be made in intimacy by those whose roads in life lie apart. The bygone season, the company, the play-table and its adventures, were all discussed so often, that nothing remained but the weather. That topic, so inexhaustible to Englishmen, however, offered little variety now, for it had been uniformly bad for some weeks past.

"Where do you propose to pass the winter, sir?" said Haggerstone to Jekyl, after a somewhat lengthy lamentation over the probable condition of all the Alpine passes.

"I've scarcely thought of it yet," simpered out the other, with his habitual smile. "There's no saying where one ought to pitch his tent till the Carnival opens."

"And you, sir?" asked Haggerstone of his companion on the other side.

"Upon my honor, I don't know, then," said Dalton; "but I wouldn't wonder if I stayed here, or hereabouts."

"Here!—why, this is Tobolsk, sir!—you surely couldn't mean to pass a winter here?"

"I once knew a man who did it," interposed Jekyl, blandly. "They cleaned him out at 'the tables;' and so he had nothing for it but to remain. He made rather a good thing of it, too; for it seems these worthy people, however conversant with the great arts of ruin, had never seen the royal game of thimblerig; and Frank Mathews walked into them all, and contrived to keep himself in beetroot and boiled beef by his little talents."

"Wasn't that the fellow who was broke at Kilmagund?" croaked Haggerstone.

"Something happened to him in India; I never well knew what," simpered Jekyl. "Some said he had caught the cholera; others, that he had got into the Company's service."

"By way of a mishap, sir, I suppose," said the Colonel, tartly.

"He wouldn't have minded it in the least. For certain," resumed the other, coolly, "he was a sharp-witted fellow; always ready to take the tone of any society."

The Colonel's cheek grew yellower, and his eyes sparkled with an angrier luster; but he made no rejoinder.

"That's the place to make a fortune, I'm told," said Dalton. "I hear there's not the like of it all the world over."

"Or to spend one," added Haggerstone, curtly.

"Well, and why not?" replied Dalton. "I'm sure it's as pleasant as saving—barring a man's a Scotchman."

"And if he should be, Sir?—and if he were one that now stands before you?" said Haggerstone, drawing himself proudly up, and looking the other sternly in the face.

"No offense—no offense in life. I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Sure, a man can't help where he's going to be born."

"I fancy we'd all have booked ourselves for a cradle in Buckingham Palace," interposed Jekyl, "if the matter were optional."

"Faith! I don't think so," broke in Dalton. "Give me back Corrig-O'Neal, as my grandfather Pearce had it, with the whole barony of Kilmurray-O'Mahon, two packs of hounds, and the first cellar in the county, and to the devil I'd fling all the royal residences ever I seen."

"The sentiment is scarcely a loyal one, Sir," said Haggerstone, "and as one wearing his Majesty's cloth, I beg to take the liberty of reminding you of it."

"Maybe it isn't; and what then?" said Dalton, over whose good-natured countenance a passing cloud of displeasure lowered.

"Simply, Sir, that it shouldn't be uttered in *my* presence," said Haggerstone.

"Phew!" said Dalton, with a long whistle. "Is that what you're at? See, now"—here he turned fully round, so as to face the Colonel—"see, now; I'm the dullest fellow in the world at what is called 'taking a thing up;' but make it clear for me—let me only see what is pleasing to the company, and it isn't Peter Dalton will balk your fancy."

"May I venture to remark," said Jekyl, blandly, "that you are both in error, and

however I may (the cold of the season being considered) envy your warmth, it is after all only so much caloric needlessly expended."

"I wasn't choleric at all," broke in Dalton, mistaking the word, and thus happily, by the hearty laugh his blunder created, bringing the silly altercation to an end.

"Well," said Haggerstone, "since we are all so perfectly agreed in our sentiments, we couldn't do better than dine together, and have a bumper to the King's health."

"I always dine at two, or half-past," simpered Jekyl: "besides, I'm on a regimen, and never drink wine."

"There's nobody likes a bit of conviviality better than myself," said Dalton; "but I've a kind of engagement—a promise I made this morning."

There was an evident confusion in the way these words were uttered, which did not escape either of the others, who exchanged the most significant glances as he spoke.

"What have we here?" cried Jekyl, as he sprang to the window and looked out. "A courier, by all that's muddy! Who could have expected such an apparition at this time?"

"What can bring people here now?" said Haggerstone, as with his glass to his eye he surveyed the little well-fed figure, who, in his tawdry jacket all dashed with gold, and heavy jack-boots, was closely locked in the embraces of the landlord.

Jekyl at once issued forth to learn the news, and, although not fully three minutes absent, returned to his companions with a full account of the expected arrivals.

"It's that rich banker, Sir Stafford Onslow, with his family. They were on their way to Italy, and made a mess of it somehow in the Black Forest—they got swept away by a torrent, or crushed by an avalanche, or something of the kind, and Sir Stafford was seized with the gout, and so they've put back, glad even to make such a port as Baden."

"If it's the gout's the matter with him," said Dalton, "I've the finest receipt in the world. Take a pint of spirits—poteen if you can get it—beat up two eggs and a pat of butter in it; throw in a clove of garlic and a few scrapings of horseradish, let it simmer over the fire for a minute or two, stir it with a sprig of rosemary to give it a flavor, and then drink it off."

"Gracious heaven! what a dose!" exclaimed Jekyl, in horror.

"Well, then, I never knew it fail. My father took it for forty years, and there wasn't a haler man in the country. If it wasn't that he gave up the horseradish, for he didn't like the taste of it, he'd, maybe, be alive at this hour."

"The cure was rather slow of operation," said Haggerstone, with a sneer.

"'Twas only the more like all remedies for Irish grievances, then," observed Dalton, and his face grew a shade graver as he spoke.

"Who was it this Onslow married?" said the Colonel, turning to Jekyl.

"One of the Headworths, I think."

"Ay, to be sure; Lady Hester. She was a handsome woman when I saw her first, but she fell off sadly, and indeed, if she had not, she'd scarcely have condescended to an alliance with a man in trade, even though he were Sir Gilbert Stafford."

"Sir Gilbert Stafford!" repeated Dalton.

"Yes, Sir; and now Sir Gilbert Stafford Onslow. He took the name from that estate in Warwickshire. Skepton Park, I believe they call it."

"By my conscience, I wish that was the only thing he took," ejaculated Dalton, with a degree of fervor that astonished the others, "for he took an elegant estate that belonged by right to my wife. Maybe you have heard tell of Corrig-O'Neal?"

Haggerstone shook his head, while with his elbow he nudged his companion, to intimate his total disbelief in the whole narrative.

"Surely you must have heard of the murder of Arthur Godfrey, of Corrig-O'Neal; wasn't the whole world ringing with it?"

Another negative sign answered this appeal.

"Well, well, that beats all ever I heard! but so it is, sorrow bit they care in England if we all murdered each other! Arthur Godfrey, as I was saying, was my wife's brother—there were just the two of them—Arthur and Jane—she was my wife."

"Ah! here they come!" exclaimed Jekyl, not sorry for the event which so opportunely interrupted Dalton's unpromising history. And now a heavy traveling carriage, loaded with imperials and beset with boxes, was dragged up to the door by six smoking horses. The courier and the landlord were immediately in attendance, and after a brief delay the steps were lowered, and a short, stout man, with a very red face, and a very yellow wig, descended, and assisted a lady to alight. She was a tall woman, whose figure and carriage were characterized by an air of fashion. After her came a younger lady; and lastly—mov-

ing with great difficulty, and showing by his worn looks and enfeebled frame the sufferings he had endured—came a very thin, mild-looking man of about sixty. Leaning upon the arm of the courier at one side, and of his stout companion, whom he called Doctor, at the other, he slowly followed the ladies into the house. They had scarcely disappeared, when a calèche, drawn by three horses at a sharp gallop, drew up, and a young fellow sprang out, whose easy gestures and active movements showed that all the enjoyments of wealth, and all the blandishments of fashion, had not undermined the elastic vigor of body which young Englishmen owe to the practice of field sports.

"This place quite deserted, I suppose," cried he, addressing the landlord. "No one here?"

"No one, sir. All gone," was the reply.

Haggerstone's head shook with a movement of impatience as he heard this remark, disparaging, as it was, to his own importance; but he said nothing, and resumed his walk as before.

"Our Irish friend is gone away, I perceive," said Jekyl, as he looked around in vain for Dalton. "Do you believe all that story of the estate he told us?"

"Not a syllable of it, Sir. I never yet met an Irishman—and it has been my lot to know some scores of them—who had not been cheated out of a magnificent property, and was not related to half the peerage to boot. Now, I take it that our highly-connected friend is rather out at elbows!" And he laughed his own peculiar hard laugh, as though the mere fancy of another man's poverty was something inconceivably pleasant and amusing.

"Dinner, Sir," said the waiter, entering and addressing the Colonel.

"Glad of it," cried he; "it's the only way to kill time in this cursed place;" and so saying, and without the ceremony of a good-bye to his companion, the Colonel bustled out of the room with a step intended to represent extreme youth and activity. "That gentleman dines at two?" asked he of the waiter, as he followed him up the stairs.

"He has not dined at all, Sir, for some days back," said the waiter. "A cup of coffee in the morning, and a biscuit, are all that he takes."

The Colonel made an impressive gesture by turning out the lining of his pocket.

"Yes, Sir," replied the other, significantly; "very much that way, I believe." And with that he uncovered the soup, and the Colonel arranged his napkin and prepared to dine.

CHAPTER II.

AN HUMBLE INTERIOR.

When Dalton parted from his companions at the "Russie," it was to proceed by many an intricate and narrow passage to a remote part of the upper town, where close to the garden wall of the Ducal Palace stood, and still stands, a little solitary two-storied house, framed in wood, and the partitions displaying some very faded traces of fresco painting. Here was the well-known shop of a toy-maker; and although now closely barred and shuttered, in summer many a gay and merry troop of children devoured with eager eyes the treasures of Hans Roëckle.

Entering a dark and narrow passage beside the shop, Dalton ascended the little creaking stairs which led to the second story. The landing-place was covered with fire-wood, great branches of newly-hewn beech and oak, in the midst of which stood a youth, hatchet in hand, busily engaged in chopping and splitting the heavy masses around him. The flush of exercise upon his cheek suited well the character of a figure which, clothed only in shirt and trousers, presented a perfect picture of youthful strength and symmetry.

"Tired, Frank?" asked the old man, as he came up.

"Tired, father! not a bit of it! I only wish I had as much more to split for you, since the winter will be a cold one."

"Come in and sit down, boy, now," said the father, with a slight tremor as he spoke. "We cannot have many more opportunities of talking together. To-morrow is the twenty-eighth of November."

"Yes; and I must be in Vienna by the fourth, so uncle Stephen writes."

"You must not call him uncle, Frank, he forbids it himself; besides, he is my uncle, and not yours. My father and he were brothers, but never saw each other after fifteen years of age, when the Count—that's what we always called him—entered the Austrian service, so that we are all strangers to each other."

"His letter doesn't show any lively desire for a closer intimacy," said the boy, laughing. "A droll composition it is, spelling and all."

"He left Ireland when he was a child, and lucky he was to do so," sighed Dalton, heavily; "I wish I had done the same."

The chamber into which they entered was, although scrupulously clean and neat, marked by every sign of poverty. The furniture was scanty and of the humblest kind.

The table linen such as used by the peasantry, while the great jug of water that stood on the board seemed the very climax of narrow fortune in a land where the very poorest are wine-drinkers.

A small knapsack with a light traveling cap on it, and a staff beside it, seemed to attract Dalton's eyes as he sat down. "It is but a poor equipment, that yonder, Frank," said he at last, with a forced smile.

"The easier carried," replied the lad, gaily.

"Very true," sighed the other. "You must make the journey on foot."

"And why not, father? Of what use all this good blood, of which I have been told so often and so much, if it will not enable a man to compete with the low-born peasant? And see how well this knapsack sits," cried he, as he threw it on his shoulder. "I doubt if the Emperor's pack will be as pleasant to carry."

"So long as you haven't to carry a heavy heart, boy," said Dalton, with deep emotion, "I believe no load is too much."

"If it were not for leaving you and the girls, I never could be happier, never more full of hope, father. Why should not *I* win my way upward as Count Stephen has done? Loyalty and courage are not the birthright of only one of our name!"

"Bad luck was all the birthright ever I inherited," said the old man, passionately; "bad luck in everything I touched through life! Where others grew rich, I became a beggar; where *they* found happiness, *I* met misery and ruin! But it's not of this I ought to be thinking now," cried he, changing his tone. "Let us see, where are the girls?" And so saying, he entered a little kitchen which adjoined the room, and where, engaged in the task of preparing the dinner, was a girl, who, though several years older, bore a striking resemblance to the boy. Over features that must once have been the very type of buoyant gaiety, years of sorrow and suffering had left their deep traces, and the dark circles around the eyes betrayed how deeply she had known affliction. Ellen Dalton's figure was faulty for want of height in proportion to her size, but had another and more grievous defect in a lameness, which made her walk with the greatest difficulty. This was the consequence of an accident when riding, a horse having fallen upon her and fractured the hip-bone. It was said, too, that she had been engaged to be married at the time, but that her lover, shocked by the disfigurement, had broken off the match, and thus made this calamity the sorrow of a life long.

"Where's Kate?" said the father, as he cast a glance around the chamber.

Ellen drew near, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Not in this dreadful weather; surely, Ellen, you didn't let her go out in such a night as this."

"Hush!" murmured she, "Frank will hear you; and remember, father, it is his last night with us."

"Couldn't old Andy have found the place?" asked Dalton; and, as he spoke, he turned his eyes to a corner of the kitchen, where a little old man sat in a straw chair peeling turnips, while he croned a ditty to himself in a low sing-song tone; his thin, wizened features, browned by years and smoke, his small scratch wig, and the remains of an old scarlet hunting-coat that he wore, giving him the strongest resemblance to one of the monkeys one sees in a street exhibition.

"Poor Andy!" cried Ellen, "he'd have lost his way twenty times before he got to the bridge."

"Faith, then, he must be greatly altered," said Dalton, "for I've seen him track a fox for twenty miles of ground, when not a dog of the pack could come on the trace. Eh, Andy!" cried he, aloud, and stooping down so as to be heard by the old man, "do you remember the cover at Corralin?"

"Don't ask him, father," said Ellen, eagerly; "he cannot sleep for the whole night after his old memories have been awakened."

The spell, however, had begun to work; and the old man, letting fall both knife and turnip, placed his hands on his knees, and in a weak reedy treble began a strange, monotonous kind of air, as if to remind himself of the words, which, after a minute or two, he remembered thus:

"There was old Tom Whaley,
And Anthony Baillie,
And Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glynn;
And Father Clare,
On his big brown mare,
That mornin' at Corralin!"

"Well done, Andy! well done!" exclaimed Dalton. "You're as fresh as a four-year-old."

"Iss!" said Andy, and went on with his song:

"And Miles O'Shea,
On his cropped tail bay
Was soon seen ridin' in.
He was vexed and crossed
At the light hoar frost,
That mornin' at Corralin."

"Go, on, Andy, go on, my boy!" ex-

claimed Dalton, in a rapture at the words that reminded him of many a day in the field and many a night's hard carouse. "What comes next?"

"Ay!" cried Andy.

> "Says he, 'when the wind
> Laves no scent behind,
> To keep the dogs out's a sin;
> I'll be d—d if I stay,
> To lose my day
> This mornin' at Corralin.'

"But ye see he was out in his recknin'!" cried Andy; "for, as if

> "To give him the lie
> There rose a cry
> As the hounds came yelpin' in,
> And from every throat
> There swelled one note
> That mornin' at Corralin."

A fit of coughing, brought on by a vigorous attempt to imitate the cry of a pack, here closed Andy's minstrelsy; and Ellen, who seemed to have anticipated some such catastrophe, now induced her father to return to the sitting-room, while she proceeded to use those principles of domestic medicine—clapping on the back and cold water—usually deemed of efficacy in like cases.

"There now, no more singing, but take up your knife and do what I bade you," said she, affecting an air of rebuke; while the old man, whose perceptions did not rise above those of a spaniel, hung down his head in silence. At the same moment the outer door of the kitchen opened, and Kate Dalton entered. Taller and several years younger than her sister, she was in the full pride of that beauty of which blue eyes and dark hair are the chief characteristics, and is deemed by many as peculiarly Irish. Delicately fair, and with features regular as a Grecian model, there was a look of brilliant, almost of haughty, defiance about her, to which her gait and carriage seemed to contribute; nor could the humble character of her dress, where strictest poverty declared itself, disguise the sentiment.

"How soon you're back, dearest," said Ellen, as she took off the dripping cloak from her sister's shoulders.

"And only think, Ellen, I was obliged to go to Lichtenthal, where little Hans spends all his evenings in the winter season, at the 'Hahn!' And just fancy his gallantry! He would see me home, and would hold up the umbrella, too, over my head, although it kept his own arm at full stretch; while, by the pace we walked, I did as much for his legs. It is very ungrateful to laugh at him, for he said a hundred pretty things to me—about my courage to venture out in such weather—about my accent as I spoke German—and lastly, in praise of my skill as a sculptor. Only fancy, Ellen, what a humiliation for me to confess that all these pretty devices were yours, and not mine; and that my craft went no further than seeking for the material which your genius was to fashion."

"Genius, Kate!" exclaimed Ellen, laughing. "Has master Hans been giving you a lesson in flattery? but tell me of your success—which has he taken?"

"All—everything!" cried Kate; "for although at the beginning the little fellow would select one figure and then change it for another, it was easy to see that he could not bring himself to part with any of them; now, sitting down in rapture before the 'Traveling Student,'— now, gazing delightedly at the 'Charcoal-Burners,'—but all his warmest enthusiasm bursting forth as I produced the 'Forest Maiden at the Well.' He did, indeed, think the 'Pedlar' too handsome, but he found no such fault with the Maiden; and here, dearest—here are the proceeds, for I told him that we must have ducats in shining gold for Frank's new crimson purse; and here they are;" and she held up a purse of gay colors, through whose meshes the bright metal glittered.

"Poor Hans!" said Ellen, feelingly. "It is seldom that so humble an artist meets so generous a patron."

"He's coming to-night," said Kate, as she smoothed down the braids of her glossy hair before a little glass—"he's coming to say good-bye to Frank."

"He is so fond of Frank."

"And of Frank's sister, Nelly; nay, no blushing, dearest; for myself, I am free to own admiration never comes amiss even when offered by as humble a creature as the Dwarf, Hans Roëckle."

"For shame, Kate, for shame. It is this idle vanity that stifles honest pride, as rank weeds destroy the soil for wholesome plants to live in."

"It is very well for you, Nelly, to talk of pride, but poor things like myself are fain to content themselves with the baser metal, and even put up with vanity! There, now, no sermons, no seriousness; I'll listen to nothing to day that savors of sadness, and, as I hear Pa and Frank laughing, I'll be of the party."

The glance of affection and admiration which Ellen bestowed upon her sister was not unmixed with an expression of painful

anxiety; and the sigh that escaped her told with what tender interest she watched over her.

The little dinner, prepared with more than usual care, at length appeared and the family sat around the humble board with a sense of happiness dashed by one only reflection—that on the morrow Frank's place would be vacant.

Still each exerted himself to overcome the sadness of that thought, or even to dally with it, as one suggestive of pleasure; and when Ellen placed unexpectedly a great flask of Margräer before them to drink the young soldier's health, the zest and merriment rose to the highest. Nor was old Andy forgotten in the general joy. A large bumper of wine was put before him and the door of the sitting-room left open, as if to let him participate in the merry noises that prevailed there. How naturally, and instinctively, too, their hopes gave color to all they said, as they told each other that the occasion was a happy one; that dear Frank would soon be an officer, and of course distinguished by the favor of some one high in power; and lastly they dwelt with such complacency on the affectionate regard and influence of "Count Stephen" as certain to secure the youth's advancement! They had often heard of the Count's great military fame, and the esteem in which he was held by the Court of Vienna; and now they speculated on the delight it would afford the old warrior—who had never been married himself—to have one like Frank, to assist by his patronage, and promote by his influence, and with such enthusiasm did they discuss the point, that at last they actually persuaded themselves that Frank's entering the service was a species of devotion to his relative's interest, by affording him an object worthy of his regard and affection.

While Ellen loved to dwell upon the great advantages of one who should be like a father to the boy, aiding him by wise counsel, and guiding him in every difficulty, Kate preferred to fancy the Count introducing Frank into all the brilliant society of the splendid capital, presenting him to those whose acquaintance was distinction, and at once launching him into the world of fashion and enjoyment. The promptitude with which he acceded to their father's application on Frank's behalf was constantly referred to as the evidence of his affectionate feeling for the family; and if his one solitary letter was of the very briefest and driest of all epistolary essays, they accounted for this—very naturally—by the length of time which had elapsed since he had either spoken or written his native language.

In the midst of these self-gratulations and pleasant fancies the door opened, and Hans Roëckle appeared, covered from head to foot by a light hoar frost, that made him look like the figure with which an ingenious confectioner sometimes decorates a cake. The Dwarf stood staring at the signs of a conviviality so new and unexpected.

"Is this Christmas time, or Holy Monday, or the Three Kings' festival, or what is it, that I see you all feasting?" cried Hans, shaking the snow off his hat, and proceeding to remove a cloak which he had draped over his shoulder in most artistic folds.

"We were drinking Frank's health, Master Hans," said Dalton, "before he leaves us. Come over and pledge him too, and wish him all success, and that he may live to be a good and valued soldier of the Emperor."

Hans had by this time taken off his cloak, which, by mounting on a chair, he contrived to hang up, and now approached the table with great solemnity, a pair of immense boots of Russian leather, that reached to his hips, giving him a peculiarly cumbrous and heavy gait; but these, as well as a long vest of rabbit skins that buttoned close to the neck, made his invariable costume in the winter.

"I drink," said the Dwarf, as, filling a bumper, he turned to each of the company severally—"I drink to the venerable father and the fair maidens, and the promising youth of this good family, and I wish them every blessing good Christians ought to ask for; but as for killing and slaying, for burning villages and laying waste cities, I've no sympathy with these."

"But you are speaking of barbarous times, Master Hans," said Kate, whose cheek mantled into scarlet as she spoke, "when to be strong was to be cruel, and when ill-disciplined hordes tyrannized over good citizens."

"I am talking of soldiers, such as the world has ever seen them," cried Hans, passionately; but of whose military experiences, it is but fair to say, his own little toy-shop supplied all the source. "What are they," cried he, "but toys that never last, whether he who plays with them be child or Kaiser—always getting smashed, heads knocked off here, arms and legs astray there; ay, and strangest of all, thought most of when most disabled: and then at last packed up in a box or a barrack, it matters not which, to be forgotten

and seen no more? Hadst thou thought of something useful, boy—some good craft, a Jager with a corkscrew inside of him, a tailor that turns into a pair of snuffers, a Dutch lady that makes a pincushion—these are toys people don't weary of—but a soldier! to stand ever thus" — and Hans shouldered the fire-shovel, and stood "at the present "—"to wheel about so—walk ten steps here—ten back there—never so much as a glance at the pretty girl who is passing close beside you." Here he gave a look of such indescribable tenderness towards Kate, that the whole party burst into a fit of laughter. "They would have drawn me for the conscription," said Hans, proudly, "but I was the only son of a widow, and they could not."

"And are you never grieved to think what glorious opportunities of distinction have been thus lost to you?" said Kate, who, notwithstanding Ellen's imploring looks, could not resist the temptation of amusing herself with the Dwarf's vanity.

"I have never suffered that thought to weigh upon me," cried Hans, with the most unsuspecting simplicity. "It is true, I might have risen to rank and honors; but how would they have suited *me*, or I *them?* Or how should I have made those dearest to me sharers in a fortune so unbecoming to us all? Think of poor Hans's old mother, if her son were to ask her blessing with a coat all glittering with stars and crosses; and then think of her as I have seen her, when I go, as I do every year, to visit her in the Bregentzer Wald, when she comes out to meet me with our whole village, proud of her son, and yet not ashamed of herself. That is glory—that is distinction enough for Hans Roëckle."

The earnestness of his voice, and the honest manliness of his sentiments, were more than enough to cover the venial errors of a vanity that was all simplicity. It is true that Hans saw the world only through the medium of his own calling, and that not a very exalted one; but still there went through all the narrowness of his views a tone of kindliness—a hearty spirit of benevolence, that made his simplicity at times rise into something almost akin to wisdom. He had known the Daltons as his tenants, and soon perceived that they were not like those rich English, from whom his countrymen derive such abundant gains. He saw them arrive at a season when all others were taking their departure, and detected in all their efforts at economy, not alone that they were poor, but, sadder still, that they were of those who seem never to accustom themselves to the privations of narrow fortune; for, while some submit in patience to their humble lot, with others, life is one long and hard-fought struggle, wherein health, hope, and temper are expended in vain. That the Daltons maintained a distance and reserve towards others of like fortune did, indeed, puzzle honest Hans—perhaps it displeased him, too—for he thought it might be pride; but then their treatment of himself disarmed that suspicion, for they not only received him ever cordially, but with every sign of real affection—and what was he to expect such? Nor were these the only traits that fascinated him; for all the rugged shell, the kernel was a heart as tender, as warm, and as full of generous emotions, as ever beat within an ampler breast. The two sisters, in Hans's eyes, were alike beautiful; each had some grace or charm that he had never met with before, nor could he ever satisfy himself whether his fancy was more taken by Kate's wit, or by Ellen's gentleness.

If anything were needed to complete the measure of his admiration, their skill in carving those wooden figures, which he sold, would have been sufficient. These were in his eyes—nor was he a mean connoisseur—high efforts of genius; and Hans saw in them a poetry and a truthfulness to nature that such productions rarely, if ever, possess. To sell such things as mere toys, he regarded as little short of a sacrilege, while even to part with them at all cost him a pang like that the gold-worker of Florence experienced, when he saw some treasure of Benvenuto's chisel leave his possession. Not, indeed, that honest Hans had to struggle against that criminal passion which prompted the jeweler, even by deeds of assassination, to repossess himself of the coveted objects; nay, on the contrary, he felt a kindness and a degree of interest towards those in whose keeping they were, as if some secret sympathy united them to each other.

Is it any wonder if poor Hans forgot himself in such pleasant company and sat a full hour and a half longer than he ought? To him the little intervals of silence that were occasionally suffered to intervene, were but moments of dreamy and delicious reverie, wherein his fancy wandered away in a thousand pleasant paths; and when at last the watchman—for, remember, good reader, they were in that primitive Germany where customs change not too abruptly—announced two o'clock, little Hans did not vouchsafe a grateful response to the quaint old rhyme that was chanted beneath the window.

"That little chap would sit to the day of judgment, and never ask to wet his lips," said Dalton, as Frank accompanied the Dwarf downstairs to the street door.

"I believe he not only forgot the hour, but where he was, and everything else," said Kate.

"And poor Frank! who should have been in bed some hours ago!" sighed Nelly.

"Gone at last, girls!" exclaimed Frank, as he entered, laughing. "If it hadn't been a gust of wind that caught him at the door, and carried him clean away, our leave-taking might have lasted till morning. Poor fellow! he had so many cautions to give me—such mountains of good counsel; and see, here is a holy medal he made me accept. He told me the 'Swedes' would never harm me so long as I wore it. He still fancies that we are in the Thirty Years' War."

In a hearty laugh over Hans Roeckle's political knowledge, they wished each other an affectionate good night, and separated. Frank was to have his breakfast by daybreak, and each sister affected to leave the care of that meal to the other, secretly resolving to be up and stirring first.

Save old Andy, there was not one disposed to sleep that night. All were too full of their own cares. Even Dalton himself, blunted as were his feelings by a long life of suffering, his mind was tortured by anxieties; and one sad question arose again and again before him, without an answer ever occurring: "What is to become of the girls when I am gone? Without a home, they will soon be without a protector!" The bright fancies, the hopeful visions in which the evening had been passed, made the revulsion to these gloomy thoughts the darker. He lay with his hands pressed upon his face, while the hot tears gushed from eyes that never before knew weeping.

At moments he half resolved not to let Frank depart, but an instant's thought showed him how futile would be the change. It would be but leaving him to share the poverty—to depend upon the scanty pittance already too little for themselves. "Would Count Stephen befriend the poor girls?" he asked himself over and over; and in his difficulty he turned to the strange epistle in which the old general announced Frank's appointment as a cadet.

The paper, the square folding, the straight, stiff letters, well suited a style which plainly proclaimed how many years his English had lain at rest. The note ran thus:

"Graben-Wien, Octobre 9, 18—.

"Worthy Sir and Nephew:—Your kindly greeting, but long-time-on-the-road-coming letter is in my hands. It is to me pleasure that I announce the appointment of your son as a cadet in the seventh battalion of the Carl-Franz Infanterie. So with, let him in all speed of time report himself here at Wien, before the War's Minister, bringing his Taufschein—baptism's sign— as proof of Individualism.

"I am yours, well to command, and much loving kinsman,

"Graf Dalton von Auersberg,
"Lieut.-General and
"Feldzeugmeister, K. K. A.

"To the high and well-born, the
Freiherr v. Dalton, in Baden-Baden."

CHAPTER III.

THE FOREST ROAD.

This dry epistle Dalton read and reread, trying, if not to discover some touch of kindliness or interest, to detect, at least, some clue to its writer's nature; but to no use, its quaint formalism baffled all speculation, and he gave up the pursuit in despair. That "the Count" was his father's only brother, and a "Dalton," were the only grains of comfort he could extract from his meditations; but he had lived long enough in the world to know how little binding were the ties of kindred when once slackened by years and distance. The Count might, therefore, regard them in the light of intruders, and feel the very reverse of pleasure at the revival of a relationship which had slept for more than half a century. Dalton's pride—or what he thought his pride—revolted against this thought; for, although this same pride would not have withheld him from asking a favor of the Count, it would have assumed a most indignant attitude if refused, or even grudgingly accorded.

When the thought first occurred to him of applying to his uncle in Frank's behalf, he never hesitated about the propriety of addressing a request to one with whom he had never interchanged a line in all his life; and now he was quite ready to take offense, if all the warmth of blood-relationship should not fill the heart of him who had been an exile from home and family since his earliest boyhood.

An easy, indolent selfishness had been the spirit of Dalton's whole life. He liked to keep a good house, and to see company

about him; and this obtained for him the reputation of hospitality. He disliked unpopularity, and dreaded the "bad word" of the people; and hence he suffered his tenantry to fall into arrears and his estate into ruin. A vain rivalry with wealthier neighbors prevented retrenchment when his means were lessened. The unthinking selfishness of his nature was apparent even in his marriage, since it was in obedience to an old pledge extracted years before that Miss Godfrey accepted him, and parted in anger with her brother, who had ever loved her with the warmest affection. Mr. Godfrey never forgave his sister; and at his death, the mysterious circumstances of which were never cleared up, his estate passed to a distant relative, the rich Sir Gilbert Stafford.

Dalton, who long cherished the hope of a reconciliation, saw all prospect vanish when his wife died, which she did, it was said, of a broken heart. His debts were already considerable, and all the resources of borrowing and mortgage had been long since exhausted; nothing was then left for him but an arrangement with his creditors, which, giving him a pittance scarcely above the very closest poverty, enabled him to drag out life in the cheap places of the Continent; and thus, for nigh twenty years, had he wandered about from Dieppe to Ostend, to Bruges, to Dusseldorf, to Coblentz, and so on, among the small Ducal cities, till, with still failing fortune, he was fain to seek a residence for the winter in Baden, where house-rent, at least, would be almost saved to him.

The same apathy that had brought on his ruin enabled him to bear it. Nothing has such a mock resemblance to wisdom as utter heartlessness; with all the seeming of true philosophy, it assumes a port and bearing above the trials of the world; holds on "the even tenor of its way," undeterred by the reverses which overwhelm others, and even meets the sternest frowns of fortune with the bland smile of equanimity.

In this way Dalton had deceived many who had known him in better days, and who now saw him, even in his adversity, with the same careless, good-natured look as when he took the field with his own hounds, or passed round the claret at his own table. Even his own children were sharers in this delusion, and heard him with wondering admiration, as he told of the life he used to lead, and the style he once kept up at Mount Dalton. These were his favorite topics; and, as he grew older, he seemed to find a kind of consolation in contrasting all the hard rubs of present adversity with his once splendor.

Upon Ellen Dalton, who had known and could still remember her mother, these recitals produced an impression of profound grief, associated as they were with the sufferings of a sick-bed and the closing sorrows of a life; while, in the others, they served to keep up a species of pride of birth, and an assumption of superiority to others of like fortune, which their father gloried in, representing, as he used to say, "the old spirit of the Daltons."

As for Kate, she felt it a compensation for present poverty to know that they were of gentle blood, and that if fortune, at some distant future, would deal kindly by them, to think that they should not obtrude themselves like upstarts on the world, but resume, as it were, the place that was long their own.

In Frank, the evil had taken a deeper root. Taught from his earliest infancy to believe himself the heir of an ancient house, pride of birth and station instilled into his mind by old Andy the huntsman, the only dependent, whom, with characteristic wisdom, they had carried with them from Ireland, he never ceased to ponder on the subject, and wonder within himself if he should live to have "his own" again.

Such a hold had this passion taken of him that, even as a child, he would wander away for days long into lonely and unfrequented spots, thinking over the stories he had heard, and trying to conjure up before his eyes some resemblance to that ancient house and venerable domain which had been so long in his family. It was no part of his teaching to know by what spendthrift and reckless waste, by what a long career of folly, extravagance and dissipation, the fortune of his family had been wrecked; or, rather, many vague and shadowy suspicions had been left to fester in his mind of wrongs and injuries done them; of severe laws imposed by English ignorance or cruelty; of injustice, on this hand—heartless indifference of friends, on the other; the unrelenting anger of his uncle Godfrey filling up the measure of their calamities. Frank Dalton's education went very little further than this; but, bad as it was, its effect was blunted by the natural frankness and generosity of his character, its worst fruits being an over-estimate of himself and his pretensions—errors which the world has always the watchful kindness to correct in those who wear threadbare coats and patched boots.

He was warmly and devotedly attached to his father and sisters, and whatever bit-

terness found its way into his heart was from seeing them enduring the many trials of poverty.

All his enthusiasm for the service in which he was about to enter was, therefore, barely sufficient to overcome the sorrow of parting with those, whom alone of all the world he loved. And when the moment drew nigh for his departure, he forgot the bright illusions by which he had so often fed his hopes, and could only think of the grief of separation.

His candle had burned down nearly to the socket, when he arose and looked at his watch. It was all dark as midnight without, although nigh six o'clock. He opened the window, and a thin snowdrift came slanting in, borne on a cutting north wind. He closed it hastily, and shuddered as he thought of the long and lonely march before him. All was silent in the house as he dressed himself and prepared for the road. With noiseless step he drew near his father's door, and listened. Everything was still. He could not bring himself to disturb him, so he passed on to the room where his sisters slept. The door lay ajar, and a candle was burning on the table. Frank entered on tiptoe, and drew near the bed, but it was empty, and had not been lain in. As he turned round, he beheld Kate asleep in a chair, dressed as he had last seen her. She had never lain down, and the prayer-book, which had dropped from her hand, told how her last waking moments were passed.

He kissed her twice; but even the hot tears that fell from his eyes upon her cheek did not break her slumber. He looked about him for some token to leave, that might tell he had been there, but there was nothing, and, with a low sigh, he stole from the room.

As he passed out into the kitchen, Ellen was there. She had already prepared his breakfast, and was spreading the table when he entered.

"How good of you—how kind, Ellen!" said he, as he passed his arm around her neck.

"Hush, Frank, they are both sleeping. Poor papa never closed his eyes till half an hour ago, and Kate was fairly overcome ere she yielded."

"You will say that I kissed them, Nelly; kissed them twice," said he, in a low, broken voice, "and that I couldn't bear to awake them. Leave-taking is so sorrowful! Oh, Ellen, if I knew that you were all happy—that there were no hardships before you when I'm away!"

"And why should we not, Frank?" said she, firmly. "There is no dishonor in this poverty, so long as there are no straits to make it seem other than it is. Let us rather pray for the spirit that may befit any lot we are thrown in, than for a fortune to which we might be unsuited."

"Would you forget who we are, Ellen?" said he, half reproachfully.

"I would remember it, Frank, in a temper less of pride than humility."

"I do not see much of the family spirit in all this," rejoined he, almost angrily.

"The family spirit!" echoed she, feelingly. "What has it ever done for us save injury? Has it suggested a high-bearing courage against the ills of narrow fortune? Has it told us how to bear poverty with dignity, or taught us one single lesson of patience and submission? Or has it, on the contrary, been ever present to whisper the changes in our condition—how altered our lot—making us ashamed of that companionship which our station rendered possible for us, and leaving us in the isolation of friendlessness for the sake of—I blush to abuse the word—our pride? Oh, Frank—my dear, dear brother—take it not ill of me, that in our last moments together, perhaps for years, I speak what may jar upon your ears to hear; but remember that I am much older—that I have seen far more of the world, at least, of its sorrows and cares, than you have. I have, indeed, known affliction in many ways, but have never found a poorer comforter in its troubles than what we call our pride!"

"You would have me forget I am a Dalton, then?" said the boy, in a tone of sorrowful meaning.

"Never! when the recollection could prompt a generous or a noble action, a manly ambition, or a high-hearted thought; but the name will have no spell in it if used to instil an imperious, discontented spirit—a regretful contrast of what we are with what we might have been, or what in a worldly sense is more destructive still, a false reliance on the distinction of a family to which we have contributed nothing."

"You do not know, Nelly dearest, of what a comfort you have robbed me," said Frank, sorrowfully.

"Do not say so, my dearest brother," cried she, passing her arm around him; "a deception, a mere illusion, is unworthy of that name. Look above the gratification of mere vanity, and you will become steeled against the many wounds self-love is sure to receive in intercourse with the world. I cannot tell how, or with what associates you are about to live, but I feel certain that

in every station a man of truth and honor will make himself respected. Be such, dearest Frank. If family pride — if the name of Dalton have value in your eyes, remember that upon you it rests to assert its right to distinction. If, as I would fondly hope, your heart dwells here with us, bethink you what joy—what holy gratitude you will diffuse around our humble hearth—to know that our brother is a good man."

It was some moments ere either could speak again. Emotions, very different ones, perhaps, filled their hearts, and each was too deeply moved for words. Frank's eyes were full of tears, and his cheek quivering, as he threw his knapsack on his shoulder.

"You will write from Innspruck, Frank; but how many days will it take ere you reach that city?"

"Twelve or fourteen at least, if I go on foot. There, Nelly, do not help me, dearest; I shall not have you to-morrow to fasten these straps."

"This is not to be forgotten, Frank: it's Kate's present. How sorry she will be not to have given it with her own hands!" And so saying, she gave him the purse her sister had worked.

"But there is gold in it," said the boy, growing pale with emotion.

"Very little, Frank, dearest," replied she, smiling. "A cadet must always have gold in his purse, so little Hans tells us; and you know how wise he is in all these matters."

"And is it from a home like this that I am to take gold away?" cried he, passionately.

"Nay, Frank, you must not persuade us that we are so very poor. I will not consent to any sense of martyrdom, I promise you." It was not without difficulty she could overcome his scruples; nor, perhaps, had she succeeded at all, if his thoughts had not been diverted into another channel by a light tapping at the door. It was Hans Roëckle come to awake him.

Again and again the brother and sister embraced: and in a very agony of tears Frank tore himself away, and hastened down the stairs. The next moment the heavy house door banged loudly, and he was gone.

Oh, the loneliness of mind in which he threaded his way through the dark and narrow streets, where the snow already lay deeply! With what sinking of the heart he turned to look for the last time at the window where the light — the only one to be seen—still glimmered! How little could all the promptings of hope suffice against the sad and dark reality that he was leaving all he loved, and all who loved him, to adventure upon a world where all was bleak and friendless!

But not all his dark forebodings could equal hers from whom he had just parted. Loving her brother with an affection more like that of mother than sister, she had often thought over the traits of his character, where, with many a noble gift, the evil seeds of wrong teaching had left, like tall weeds among flowers, the baneful errors of inordinate self-esteem and pride. Ignorant of the career on which he was about to enter, Ellen could but speculate vaguely how such a character would be esteemed, and whether his native frankness and generosity would cover over, or make appear as foibles, these graver faults. Their own narrow fortunes, the many straits and privations of poverty, with all their cruel wounds to honest pride, and all their sore trials of temper, she could bear up against with an undaunted courage. She had learned her lesson in the only school wherein it is taught, and daily habit had instilled its own powers of endurance; but, for Frank, her ambition hoped a higher and brighter destiny, and now, in her solitude, and with a swelling heart, she knelt down and prayed for him. And, oh! if the utterings of such devotion never rise to heaven or meet acceptance there, they at least bring balm to the spirit of him who syllables them, building up a hope whose foundations are above the casualties of humanity, and giving a courage that mere self-reliance never gave.

Little Hans not only came to awaken Frank, but to give him companionship for some miles of his way—a thoughtful kindness, for which the youth's deep preoccupation seemed to offer but a poor return. Indeed, Frank scarcely knew that he was not traveling in utter solitude, and all the skillful devices of the worthy dwarf to turn the channel of his thoughts were fruitless. Had there been sufficient light to have surveyed the equipment of his companion, it is more than probable that the sight would have done more to produce this diversion of gloom than any arguments which could have been used. Master Roëckle, whose mind was a perfect storehouse of German horrors, earthly and unearthly, and who imagined that a great majority of the human population of the globe were either bandits or witches, had surrounded himself with a whole museum of amulets and charms of various kinds. In his cap he wore the tail of a black squirrel, as a safeguard against the "Forest Imp;" a large dried toad hung around his neck, like an order, to protect him from the evil eye; a

duck's foot was fastened to the tassel of his boot, as a talisman against drowning; while strings of medals, coins, precious stones, blessed beads, and dried insects, hung round and about him in every direction. Of all the portions of his equipment, however, what seemed the most absurd was a huge pole-axe of the fifteenth century, and which he carried as a defense against mere mortal foes, but which, from its weight and size, appeared far more likely to lay its bearer low than inflict injury upon others. It had been originally stored up in the Rust Kammer, at Prague, and was said to be the identical weapon with which Conrad slew the giant at Leutmeritz—a fact which warranted Hans in expending two hunded florins in purchasing it; as, to use his own emphatic words, "it was not every day one knew where to find the weapon to bring down a giant."

As Hans, encumbered by his various adjuncts, trotted along beside his stalwart companion, he soon discovered that all his conversational ability—to exert which cost him so dearly—was utterly unattended to; he fell into a moody silence, and thus they journeyed for miles of way without interchanging a word. At last they came in sight of the little village to Hernitz Kretschen, whence by a by-road Frank was to reach the regular line that leads through the Höhlen Thal to the Lake of Constance, and where they were to part.

"I feel as though I could almost go all the way with you," said Hans, as they stopped to gaze upon the little valley where lay the village, and beyond which stretched a deep forest of dark pine-trees traversed by a single road.

"Nay, Hans," said Frank, smiling, as for the first time he beheld the strange figure beside him, "you must go back to your pleasant little village and live happily, to do many a kindness to others, as you have done to me to-day."

"I would like to take service with the Empress myself," said Hans, "if it were for some good and great cause, like the defense of the Church against the Turks, or the extermination of the race of dragons that infest the Lower Danube."

"But you forget, Hans, it is an Emperor rules over Austria now," said Frank, preferring to offer a correction to the less startling of his hallucinations.

"No, no, Master Frank, they have not deposed the good Maria Teresa—they would never do that. I saw her picture over the doorway of the Burgermeister the last time I went to visit my mother in the Bregentzer Wald and by the same token her crown and scepter were just newly gilt— a thing they would not have done if she were not on the throne."

"What if she were dead, and her son too?" said Frank; but his words were scarce uttered when he regretted to have said them, so striking was the change that came over the dwarf's features.

"If that were indeed true, Heaven have mercy on us!" exclaimed he, piously. "Old Frederick will have but little pity for good Catholics! But no, Master Frank, this cannot be. The last time I received soldiers from Neuremberg they wore the same uniforms as ever, and the 'Moriamur pro Rege nostro, M. T.' was in gold letters on every banner as before."

Frank was in no humor to disturb so innocent and so pleasing a delusion, and he gave no further opposition, and now they both descended the path which led to the little inn of the village. Here Hans insisted on performing the part of host, and soon the table was covered with brown bread and hard eggs, and those great massive sausages which Germans love, together with various flasks of Margräfler and other "Badisch" wines.

"Who knows," said Hans, as he pledged his guest by ringing his wineglass against the other's, "if, when we meet again, thou wouldst sit down at the table with such as me!"

"How so, Hanserl?" asked the boy in astonishment.

"I mean, Master Franz, that you may become a Colonel, or perhaps a General, with mayhap the 'St. Joseph' at your bottonhole, or the 'Maria Teresa' around your neck; and if so, how could you take your place at the board with the poor toymaker?"

"I'm not ashamed to do so now," said Frank, haughtily; "and the Emperor cannot make me more a gentleman than my birth has done. Were I to be ashamed of those who befriended me, I should both disgrace my rank and my name together."

"These are good words, albeit too proud ones," said Hans, thoughtfully. "As a guide through life, pride will do well enough when the roads are good and your equipage costly; but when you come upon mountain-paths and stony tracts, with many a wild torrent to cross, and many a dark glen to traverse, humility—even a child's humility—will give better teaching."

"I have no right to be other than humble!" said the boy; but the flashing brightness of his eyes, and the heightened color of his cheek, seemed to contradict his words.

For a while the conversation flagged, or was maintained in short and broken sentences, when at length Frank said:

"You will often go to see them, Hanserl, won't you? You'll sit with them, too, of an evening? for they will feel lonely now; and my father will like to tell you his stories about home, as he calls it still."

"That will I," said Hans; "they are the happiest hours of my life when I sit beside that hearth."

Frank drew his hand across his eyes, and his lips quivered as he tried to speak.

"You'll be kind to poor Ellen, too; she is so timid, Hans. You cannot believe how anxious she is, lest her little carvings should be thought unworthy of praise."

"They are gems! they are treasures of art!" cried Hans, enthusiastically.

"And my sweet Kate!" cried the boy, as his eyes ran over, while a throng of emotions seemed to stop his utterance.

"She is so beautiful!" exclaimed Hans, fervently. "Except the Blessed Maria at the Holy Cross, I never beheld such loveliness. There is the *Angelus* ringing; let us pray a blessing on them;" and they both knelt down in deep devotion. Frank's lips never moved, but with swelling heart and clasped hands he remained fixed as a statue; while Hanserl in some quaint old rhyme uttered his devotions.

"And yonder is the dog-star, bright and splendid," said Hans, as he arose. "There never was a happier omen for the beginning of a journey. You'll be lucky, boy; there is the earnest of good fortune. That same star was shining along the path as I entered Baden, eighteen years ago; and see what a lucky life has mine been!"

Frank could not but smile at the poor dwarf's appreciation of his fortune; but Hanserl's features wore a look that betokened a happy and contented nature.

"And yours has been a lucky life, Hanserl?" said he, half in question.

"Lucky? ay, that has it. I was a poor boy, barefooted and hungry in my native forest—deformed, and stunted, too—a thing to pity—too weak to work, and with none to teach me, and yet even I was not forgotten by Him who made the world so fair and beautiful; but in my heart was planted a desire to be something—to do something, that others might benefit by. The children used to mock me as I passed along the road, but a voice whispered within me, 'Be of courage, Hanserl, they will bless thee yet—they will greet thee with many a merry laugh and joyous cry, and call thee their own kind Hanserl;' and so have I lived to see it! My name is far and wide over Germany. Little boys and girls know and speak of me amongst the first words they syllable; and from the palace to the Bauer's hut, Hans Roëckle has his friends; and who knows, that when this poor clay is mingled with the earth, but that my spirit will hover around the Christmas-tree when glad voices call upon me! I often think it will be so."

Frank's eyes glistened as he gazed upon the dwarf, who spoke with a degree of emotion and feeling very different from his wont.

"So you see, Master Franz," said he, smiling, "there are ambitions of every hue, and this of mine you may deem of the very faintest, but it is enough for me. Had I been a great painter or a poet, I would have reveled in the thought that my genius adorned the walls of many a noble palace, and that my verses kindled emotions in many a heart that felt like my own; but as one whom nature has not gifted—poor, ignoble, and unlettered—am I not lucky to have found a little world of joyous hearts and merry voices, who care for me and speak of me?—ay, and who would give me a higher place in their esteem than to Jean Paul, or Goethe himself?"

The friends had but time to pledge each other in a parting-glass, when the stage drove up by which Hans was to return to Baden. A few hurried words, half cheering, half sorrowful—a close embrace—one long and lingering squeeze of the hand—

"Farewell, kind Hanserl!"—

"God guide thee, Franz!"—and they parted.

Frank stood in the little "Platz," where the crowd yet lingered, watching the retiring "Post," uncertain which way to turn him. He dreaded to find himself all alone, and yet he shrank from new companionship. The newly-risen moon and the calm air invited him to pursue his road; so he set out once more, the very exercise being a relief against his sad thoughts.

Few words are more easily spoken than "he went to seek his fortune;" and what a whole world lies within the narrow compass. A world of high-hearted hopes and doubting fear—of noble ambition to be won, and glorious paths to be trod, mingled with tender thoughts of home and those who made it such. What sustaining courage must be his who dares this course and braves that terrible conflict—the toughest that ever man fought—between his own bright coloring of life and the stern reality of the world. How many hopes has he to abandon—how many illusions to give up. How often is his faith to be falsified and

his trustfulness betrayed; and, worst of all, what a fatal change do these trials impress upon himself—how different is he from what he had been.

Young and untried as Frank Dalton was in life, he was not altogether unprepared for the vicissitudes that awaited him; his sister Nelly's teachings had done much to temper the over-buoyant spirit of his nature, and make him feel that he must draw upon that same courage to sustain the present, rather than to gild the future.

His heart was sorrowful, too, at leaving a home where unitedly they had, perhaps, borne up better against poverty. He felt—for his own heart revealed it—how much can be endured in companionship, and how the burden of misfortune—like every other load—is light when many bear it. Now, thinking of these things, now, fancying the kind of life that might lie before him, he marched along. Then he wondered whether the Count would resemble his father. The Daltons were remarkable for strong traits of family likeness, not alone in feature, but in character—and what a comfort Frank felt in fancying that the old general would be a thorough Dalton in frankness and kindliness of nature, easy in disposition, with all the careless freedom of his own father! How he should love him, as one of themselves.

It is a well-known fact that certain families are remarkable above others for the importance that they attach to the ties of kindred, making the boast of relationship always superior to the claims of self-formed friendships. This is perhaps more peculiarly the case among those who live little in the world, and whose daily sayings and doings are chiefly confined to the narrow circle of home. But yet it is singular how long this prejudice—for perhaps it deserves no better name—can stand the conflict of actual life. The Daltons were a special instance of what we mean. Certain characteristics of look and feature distinguished them all, and they all agreed in maintaining the claim of relationship as the strongest bond of union; and it was strange into how many minor channels this stream meandered. Every old ruin, every monument, every fragment of armor, or ancient volume associated with their name, assumed a kind of religious value in their eyes, and the word Dalton was a talisman to exalt the veriest trifle into the rank of relic. From his earliest infancy Frank had been taught these lessons. They were the traditions of the parlor and the kitchen, and by the mere force of repetition became a part of his very nature. Corrig-O'Neal was the theme of every story. The ancient house of the family, and which, although by time's changes it had fallen into the hands of the Godfreys—from whom his mother came—was yet regarded with all the feelings of ancient pride. Over and over again was he told of the once princely state that his ancestors held there—the troops of retainers—the mounted followers that ever accompanied them. The old house itself was exalted to the rank of a palace, and its wide-spreading but neglected grounds spoken of like the park of royalty.

To see this old house of his fathers, to behold with his own eyes the seat of their once greatness, became the passion of the boy's heart. Never did the Bedouin of the Desert long after Mecca with more heart-straining desire. To such a pitch had this passion gained on him, that, unable any longer to resist an impulse that neither left his thoughts by day nor his dreams by night, he fled from his school at Bruges, and when only ten years old made his way to Ostend, and, under pretense of seeking a return to his family, persuaded the skipper of a trading vessel to give him passage to Limerick. It would take us too far from our road—already a long one—were we to follow his wanderings and tell of all the difficulties that beset the little fellow on his lonely journey. Enough that we say, he did at last reach the goal of his hopes; and, after a journey of eight long days, find himself at the ancient gate of Corrig-O'Neal.

At first the disappointment was dreadful. The proud mansion, of whose glorious splendor his imagination had created an Oriental palace, was an antiquated brick edifice, in front of which ran a long terrace, once adorned with statues, but of which the pedestals alone remained. A few hedges of yew, with here and there the fragments of a marble figure or fountain, showed that the old French château taste had once prevailed there; and of this a quaint straight avenue of lime-trees, reaching directly from the door to the river, also bore evidence. The tone of sadness and desertion was on everything; many of the lower windows were walled up; the great door itself was fastened and barricaded in such a way as to show it had been long disused. Not a creature was to be seen stirring about the place, and save that at night the flickering light of a candle might be descried from a small casement that looked upon the garden, the house might have been deemed uninhabited. Perhaps something in the mysterious desolation of the scene had its influence over the boy's mind; but as hour by hour he lingered in those silent woods,

and lay in the deep grass, watching the cloud shadows as they stole along, he grew fondly attached to the place; now losing himself in some reverie of the long past, now following out some half-remembered narrative of his mother's childhood, when she herself dwelt there.

All his little resources of pocket-money expended—his clothes, save such as he wore, sold—he could scarcely tear himself from a scene that filled every avenue of his heart. The time, however, came when a ship, about to sail for the Scheldt, gave him the opportunity of returning home; and now this was to be his last day at Corrig-O'Neal.

And what a day of conflicting thought was it—now half resolved to approach the house, and ask to see his uncle, and now repelled by remembering all his unkindness to his father—then, marveling whether some change might not have taken place in the old man's mind, and whether in his lonely desolation he might not wish once more to see his kindred near him.

He knew not what to do, and evening found him still undecided, and sitting on a little rising spot, from which the view extended over the garden at the back of the house, and whence he had often watched the solitary light that marked the old man's vigils.

Wearied by long watching and thought, he fell asleep; and when he awoke, the light was gone—the light which hitherto had always burned till daybreak! and from the darkness it must now be far from that hour. While Frank wondered what this might mean, he was startled by hearing footsteps near him—at least so they sounded—on the gravel-walk of the garden, and, in a few minutes after, the grating sound of a key, and the opening of a small door which led out into the wood. He now perceived that a man was standing at the foot of the knoll, who seemed irresolute and undecided; for he twice returned to the door, once introduced the key, and again withdrew it, as if with a changed purpose. Suddenly he appeared to have made up his mind, for, stooping down, he began to dig with the greatest energy, stopping at intervals to listen, and again continuing his work when satisfied that he was unobserved.

The hour—the scene itself—the evident secrecy of the man, almost paralyzed the boy with terror; nor was it till long after the turf was replaced, dry leaves and dead branches were strewn over the spot, and the man himself gone, that Frank gained courage to move away. This he did, at first cautiously and timidly, and then with a speed that soon carried him far away from the spot. The following day he was at sea; and if at first the strange scene never left his thoughts, with time the impression faded away, till at length it assumed the indistinctness of a vision, or of some picture created by mere imagination.

When he did return home, he never revealed, except to Nelly, where he had been, and the object for which he went; but, even to her, from some strange love of mystery, he told nothing of the last night's experience: this was a secret, which he hoarded like a miser's treasure, and loved to think that he only knew of. The stirring events of a schoolboy's life, at first, and subsequently the changeful scenes of opening manhood, gradually effaced the impression of what he had seen, or merely left it to all the indistinctness of a dream.

And thus are thoughts often sealed up in the memory for years—unnoticed and unknown—till, after a long interval, they are all called forth, and become the very pivots on which turns our destiny.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONSLOWS.

The little town of Baden was thrown into a state of considerable excitement by the unexpected arrival we have chronicled in a preceding chapter, and the host of "the Russie" reduced to the most uncommon straits to restore the effective of a staff, now brought down to the closest economy of retrenchment. Cooks, waiters, and housemaids were sought after in every quarter, while emissaries were despatched right and left to replenish the larder and provide for the wants of the mighty "Englander." Nor was all the bustle and commotion limited to within the hotel, but extended throughout the village itself, where many a rustic pony, laid up in ordinary for the winter, was again trimmed, and curried, and shod, to be paraded before the windows with a scarlet saddle-cloth and a worsted tassel to the bridle, in all the seductive attraction of a palfrey. Even flower-girls made their appearance again with a few frost-nipped buds and leaves; while a bassoon and a triangle, voting themselves a band, gave horrid signs of their means of persecution.

Meanwhile were the fortunate individuals, for whose benefit these exertions were evoked, in the most blissful ignorance of all the interest they were awakening,

From the first moment of their arrival none had ever seen them. Waited upon by their own servants, scarcely heard, not even appearing at the windows, they were unconsciously ministering to a mystery that now engaged every tongue and ear around them. As, however, nothing of secrecy had any share in their proceedings, we have no scruple in invading the presence and introducing the reader to the company.

Sir Stafford Onslow was an immensely rich London banker, who in his capacity of borough member had voted steadily with the Whigs for some five-and-twenty years; supporting them by all the influence of his wealth and family, and who now came abroad, in a pet of sulk with his party, on being refused the peerage. By nature generous, kind-hearted, and affectionate, the constant pressure of a more ambitious wife had involved him in a career to which neither his tastes nor habits suited him. The fortune which he would have dispensed with dignity and munificence, he was eternally taught to believe should be the stepping-stone to something higher in rank. All his influence in the City, of which he was justly proud, he was told, was a mere vulgar ambition in comparison with that a coronet would bestow on him, and in fact, having believed himself the leading man of a great section in society, he was led to look upon his position with discontent, and fancy that his just claims were disregarded and denied. Lady Hester Onslow, who, having once been a beauty and the admired belle of Royalty itself, had accepted the banker in a moment of pique, and never forgave him afterwards the unhappy preference.

Belonging to a very ancient but poor family, few were surprised at her accepting a husband some thirty-odd years her senior; and it is probable that she would fully have recognized the prudence of her choice, if, by the death of a distant relative in India, which occurred a few months after her marriage, she had not acquired a very large fortune. This sudden accession of wealth coming, as she herself said, "too late," embittered every hour of her after-life.

Had she been wealthy but a few months back, she had married the man she loved, or whom she thought she loved, the heartless, handsome, well-mannered Lord Norwood, a penniless viscount, ruined before he came of age, and with no other means of support than the faculties which knavery had sharpened into talent.

Miss Onslow and her brother, both the children of a former marriage, were strikingly like their father, not alone in feature, but in the traits of his frank and generous character. They were devotedly attached to him; not the less, perhaps, from the circumstances of a marriage to which they were strongly opposed, and whose results they now saw in many a passage of discord and disagreement.

George and Sydney Onslow were both dark-complexioned and black-eyed, and had many traits of Spanish origin in appearance, their mother having been from that country. Lady Hester was a blonde, and affected to think that the Southern tint was but an approximation to the negro. Nor was she less critical on their manners, whose joyous freedom she pronounced essentially vulgar. Such, in a few words, were the discordant elements which fate had bound up as a family, and who now, by the sudden illness of Sir Stafford, were driven to seek refuge in the deserted town of Baden. Nor can we omit another who, although not tied to the rest by kindred, had been long a member of the circle. This was Dr. Grounsell, an old college friend of Sir Stafford's, and who, having lost every shilling of his fortune by a speculation, had taken up his home at the banker's many years previous to his second marriage. Lady Hester's dislike to him amounted to actual hatred. She detested him for the influence he possessed over her husband—for the sturdiness of a character that resisted every blandishment—for a quaintness that certainly verged upon vulgarity, and, most of all, for the open and undisguised manner he always declared against every scheme for the attainment of a title.

As Sir Stafford's physician, the only one in whom he had confidence, the doctor was enabled to stand his ground against attacks which must have conquered him; and by dint of long resistance and a certain obstinacy of character, he had grown to take pleasure in an opposition which, to a man of more refinement and feeling, must have proved intolerable; and although decidedly attached to Sir Stafford and his children, it is probable that he was still more bound to them by hate to "my lady" than by all his affection for themselves.

Grounsell detested the Continent, yet he followed them abroad, resolved never to give up an inch of ground uncontested; and although assailed by a thousand slights and petty insults, he stood stoutly up against them all, defying every effort of fine ladyism, French cookery, homœopathy, puppyism, and the water-cure, to dislodge him from his position. There

was very possibly more of dogged malice in all this than amiability or attachment to his friends; but it is due to the doctor to say that he was no hypocrite, and would never have blinked the acknowledgment if fairly confronted with the charge.

Although, if it had not been for my lady's resentful notice of the ministerial neglect, the whole family would have been snugly domesticated in their beautiful villa beside the Thames at Richmond, she artfully contrived to throw the whole weight of every annoyance they experienced upon every one's shoulders rather than her own; and as she certainly called to her aid no remarkable philosophy against the inconveniences of travel, the budget of her grievances assumed a most imposing bulk.

Dressed in the very perfection of a morning costume, her cap, her gloves, her embroidered slippers, all in the most accurate keeping with that assumed air of seclusion by which fine ladies compliment the visitor fortunate enough to be admitted to their presence, Lady Hester sat at a window, occasionally looking from the deep lace that bordered her handkerchief to the picturesque scene of mountain and river that lay before her. A fastidious taste might have found something to be pleased with in either, but assuredly her handsome features evinced no agreeable emotion, and her expression was that of utter "ennui" and listlessness.

At another window sat Sydney Onslow drawing; her brother standing behind her chair, and from time to time adding his counsels, but in a tone studiously low and whispered. "Get that shadow in something deeper, Syd, and you'll have more effect in the distance."

"What is that I hear about effect and distance?" sighed out my lady. "You surely are not drawing?"

"Only sketching; making a hurried note of that wheel, and the quaint old-fashioned house beside it," said Sydney, diffidently.

"What a refinement of cruelty! The detestable noise of that mill kept me awake all night, and you mean to perpetuate the remembrance by a picture. Pray, be a good child, and throw it out of the window."

Sydney looked up in her brother's face, where already a crimson flush of anger was gathering, but, before she could reply, he spoke for her. "The drawing is for me, Lady Onslow. You'll excuse me if I do not consent to the fate you propose for it."

"Let me look at it," said she, languidly; and the young girl arose and presented the drawing to her. "How droll!" said she, laughing; "I suppose it is peculiar to Germany that water can run up hill."

"The shadow will correct that," said Sydney, smiling; "and when the foreground is darker——" A violent slam of the door cut short the explanation. It was George Onslow, who, too indignant at the practiced impertinence towards his sister, dashed out of the room in a passion.

"How underbred your brother will persist in being, my love," said she, calmly; "that vile trick of slamming a door, they learn, I'm told, in the Guards' Club. I'm sure I always thought it was confined to the melodramas one sees at the Porte St. Martin."

At this moment, a servant appeared at the door. "Colonel Haggerstone's compliments, my lady, and begs to know how Sir Stafford is to-day?"

"Something better," replied she, curtly. And, as the man disappeared, she added, "Whose compliments did he say?"

"I did not hear the name—it sounded like Haggerstone."

"Impossible, child; we know of no such person. What hour is it?"

"A few minutes past two."

"Oh, dear! I fancied it had been four—or five—or six," sighed she, drearily. "The amiable doctor has not made his report to-day of your papa, and he went to see him immediately after breakfast."

"He told George that there was no amendment," said Sydney, gravely.

"He told George? Then he did not deign to tell me."

"You were not here at the moment. It was as he passed through the room, hurriedly."

"I conclude that I was in my dressing-room. But it is only in keeping with Mr. Grounsell's studied disrespect—a line of conduct I grieve to see him supported in by members of this family!"

"Mr. Alfred Jekyl, my lady," said a servant, "with inquiry for Sir Stafford."

"*You* appear to know best, my dear, how your papa is. Pray answer that inquiry."

"Sir Stafford is not better," said Sydney to the servant.

"Who can all these people be, my dear?" said Lady Hester, with more animation of manner than she had yet exhibited. "Jekyl is a name one knows. There are Northamptonshire Jekyls, and, if I mistake not, it was a Jekyl married Lady Oliver Drossmore, was it not? Oh, what a fool I am to ask *you*, who never know anything of family or connection! And yet I'm certain I've told you over and over the importance—the actual necessity—of this

knowledge. If you only bestowed upon Burke a tithe of the patience and time I have seen you devote to Lyell, you'd not commit the shocking mistake you fell into t'other day, of discussing the Duchess of Dartley's character with Lord Brandford, from whom she was divorced. Now, you'd never offend quartz and sandstone by miscalling *their* affinities. But here comes the doctor."

If Dr. Grounsell had been intended by nature to outrage all ultra-refined notions regarding personal appearance, he could not possibly have been more cunningly fashioned. Somewhat below the middle size, and squarely formed, his legs did not occupy more than a third of his height; his head was preternaturally large, and seemed even larger from a crop of curly yellowish hair, whose flaring ochre only rescued it from the imputation of being a wig. His hands and feet were enormous, requiring a muscular effort to move them that made all his gestures grotesque and uncouth. In addition to these native graces, his clothes were always made much too large for him, from his avowed dislike to the over-tightening and squeezing of modern fashion.

As his whole life had been passed in the superintendence of a great military hospital in the East, wherein all his conversations with his brethren were maintained in technicalities, he had never converted the professional jargon into a popular currency, but used the terms of art upon all occasions, regardless of the inability of the unmedical world to understand him.

"Well, sir, what is your report to-day?" said Lady Onslow, assuming her very stateliest of manners.

"Better, and worse, madam. The arthritis relieved—the cardiac symptoms more imminent."

"Please to bear in mind, sir, that I have not studied at Apothecaries' Hall."

"Nor I, madam, but at Edinburgh and Aberdeen, in the faculties of medicine and surgery," said Grounsell, drawing down his waistcoat, and arranging himself in what he considered an order of battle.

"Is papa better, doctor?" said Sydney, mildly.

"The articular affection is certainly alleviated, but there is mischief here," said Grounsell, placing his hand over his heart. "Fibrous tissues, my dear Miss Onslow—fibrous tissues are ticklish affairs."

"Is this advice to be construed in a moral rather than a medical sense?" said Lady Onslow, with a malicious smile.

"Either, or both," replied the doctor. "The heart will always be highly susceptible of nervous influence."

"But papa—" broke in Sydney, eagerly.

"Is suffering under metastasis—migratory gout, it may be termed—changing from articular to large organic structures."

"And, of course, you are giving him the old poisons that were in use fifty years ago?"

"What do you mean, madam?" said Grounsell, sternly.

"That shocking thing that drives people mad—colocynth, or colchicum, or something like that. You know what I mean?"

"Happily for me, madam, I can guess it."

"And are you still as obstinate as ever about the globules?"

"The homœopathic humbug?"

"If you are polite enough so to designate what I put the most implicit trust in. But I warn you, sir, I mean to exert my just and rightful influence with Sir Stafford; and in case a very great change does not appear to-morrow, I shall insist upon his trying the aconite."

"If you do, madam, the insurance offices shall hear of it!" said Grounsell, with a sternness that made the threat most significant.

"I'll send for that man from Heidelberg at once, Sydney," said Lady Hester, as, pale with passion, she seated herself at her writing-table.

"Take care what you do, madam," said Grounsell, approaching where she sat, and speaking in a low and solemn voice. "Let not any feeling of displeasure with me induce you to an act of rashness—or imprudence. My old friend's state is critical; it may at any moment become dangerous. I am convinced that what I am doing offers the most reasonable hope of serving him. Take care lest you weaken his confidence in me, when he may not be prepared to repose it in another."

"Here, Sydney, you write German; and it is possible he may not read French. This is his name—I got it in Paris—Graeffnell. Tell him to come at once—in fact, let François take a carriage for him."

Sydney Onslow looked at her mother and then at the doctor. At the latter her glance was almost imploring, but he never noticed it, turning abruptly towards the window without uttering a word.

"Can you consult with him, doctor?" asked Sydney, timidly.

"Of course not; he's a mountebank."

"Write, as I bade you, Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester. "Dr. Graeffnell is one

of the first men in Germany. Lady Heskisson sent for him when the earl fell ill at Wiesbaden."

"And the countess was a widow in four days after. Don't forget the *denouement* of the story, madam."

Sydney dropped the pen, and her hands fell powerless to her side. There was something in the sternness of the doctor that seemed to awe even Lady Onslow, for she made no reply; while Grounsell, seeing his advantage, left the room at once, without further parley.

Our readers will probably forgive us if we follow his example, and not remain to listen to the eloquent monologue in which Lady Onslow lamented her sad condition in life. Not only did she bewail her destiny, but like one of those classic personages the Greek Chorus presents us to, she proceeded to speculate upon every possible mischance futurity might have in store for her, ingeniously inventing "situations," and devising "predicaments" that nothing less gifted than self-tormenting imagination can conceive. Leaving her to all the pleasure such a pastime can give, we shall quit the house, and, although a cold, raw evening is closing in, wander out into the street.

CHAPTER V.

THE PATIENT.

Along the dark and narrow street, over which the coming night cast a dreary shadow, a single lamp was seen to shine at the door of Ludwig Kraus, the apothecary; a beacon, it is but fair to add, lighted less with the hope of attracting custom, than in obedience to the requirement of the law, for Herr Kraus was a "state" official, and bound to conform to the dictates of the government. His shop was a small triangular space, in which there was barely room for the learned dispenser and a single client at the same moment, thus giving to all his interviews the secrecy of the confessional itself. Jars, phials, flasks, and drawers rose on every side, not inscribed with the vulgar nomenclature of modern physic, but bearing the enigmatical marks and hieroglyphics known to Galen and Paracelsus. Arabic letters, dragons, strange monsters, and zodiacal signs met the eye everywhere, and did not consort ill with the spare form and high bald head of the proprietor, whose quaint-figured dressing-gown and black velvet cap gave him a kind of resemblance to an alchemist in his workshop. As Grounsell approached the glass door and peeped in, the scene that presented itself rather assisted this illusion, for straight in front of the little counter over which Kraus was leaning, sat the dwarf, Hans Roeckle, talking away with considerable animation, and from time to time seeming to expatiate upon the merits of a wooden figure which he held carefully in his hands. The small half-lighted chamber, the passive, motionless features of the chemist, the strange, wild gestures of little Hans, as, in his tongue of mysterious gutturals, he poured out a flood of words, amazed Grounsell, and excited his curiosity to the utmost. He continued to gaze in for a considerable time, without being able to guess what it might mean, and at last abandoning all conjecture he resolved to enter. Scarcely had he touched the handle of the door, however, than the dwarf, seizing the figure, concealed it beneath the skirt of his fur mantle, and retired to a corner of the shop. Dr. Grounsell's errand was to obtain certain medicines for his patient, which, from his ignorance of German, he had taken the precaution to write down in Latin. He passed the paper in silence over the counter, and waited patiently as the chemist spelt out the words. Having read it through he handed back the paper with a few dry words, which, being in his native tongue, were totally incomprehensible.

"You must have these things, surely," exclaimed Grounsell; "they are the commonest of all medicines;" and then remembering himself, he made signs in the direction of the drawers and phials to express his meaning. Again the chemist uttered some dozen words.

The doctor produced his purse, where certain gold pieces glittered, as though to imply that he was willing to pay handsomely for his ignorance; but the other pushed it away, and shook his head in resolute refusal.

"This is too bad," muttered Grounsell, angrily. "I'll be sworn he has the things, and will not give them." The chemist motioned Hans to approach, and whispered a few words in his hearing, on which the dwarf, removing his cap in courteous salutation, addressed Grounsell: "High-born and much-learned Saar, de laws make no oder that doctoren have recht to write physics."

"What!" cried Grounsell, not understanding the meaning of the speech. Hans repeated it, more slowly, and at length succeeded in conveying the fact that physicians alone were qualified to procure medicines.

"But I am a doctor, my worthy friend, a physician of long standing."

"Dos ist possible—who knows?"

"I know, and I say it," rejoined the other, tersely.

"Ja! ja!" responded Hans, as though to say the theme were not worth being warm about, one way or t'other.

"Come, my dear sir," said Grounsell, coaxingly; "pray be good enough to explain that I want these medicines for a sick friend, who is now at the hotel here, dangerously ill of gout."

"Podagra — gout!" exclaimed Hans, with sudden animation, "and dese are de cure for gout."

"They will, I hope, be of service against it."

"You shall have dem, Saar—on one condition. That ist, you will visit anoder sick man mit gout—an Englessman, too—vehr ill—vehr sick—and no rich—you understan."

"Yes, yes; I understand perfectly. I'll see him with pleasure. Tell this worthy man to make up these for me, and I'll go along with you now."

"Gut! vehr good," said Hans, as in a few words of German he expressed to the apothecary that he might venture to transgress the law in the present case when the season was over, and no one to be the wiser.

As Hans issued forth to show the way, he never ceased to insist upon the fact that the present was not a case for a fee, and that the doctor should well understand the condition upon which his visit was to be paid; and still inveighing on this theme, he arrived at the house where the Daltons dwelt. "Remember, too," said Hans, "that, though they are poor, they are of guten stamm—how say you, noble?" Grounsell listened with due attention to all Hanserl's cautions, following, not without difficulty, his strange and guttural utterances.

"I will go before. Stay here," said Hans, as they gained the landing-place; and so saying, he pushed open the door and disappeared.

As Grounsell stood alone and in the dark, he wondered within himself what strange chances should have brought a fellow-countryman into this companionship, for there was something so grotesque in Hans's appearance and manner, that it routed all notion of his being admitted to any footing of friendly equality.

The door at length opened, and the doctor followed Hans into a dimly-lighted room, where Dalton lay, half dressed upon his bed. Before Grounsell had well passed the entrance the sick man said: "I am afraid, sir, that my little friend here has taken a bit of liberty with both of us, since I believe you wanted a patient just as little as I did a doctor."

The anxious, lustrous eye, the flushed cheek, and tremulous lip of the speaker gave, at the same time, a striking contradiction to his words. Grounsell's practiced glance read these signs rapidly, and drawing near the bed, he seated himself beside it, saying: "It is quite clear, sir, that you are not well, and although, if we were both of us in our own country, this visit of mine would, as you observe, be a considerable liberty, seeing that we are in a foreign land, I hope you will not deem my intrusion of this nature, but suffer me, if I can, to be of some service to you."

Less the words themselves than a certain purpose-like kindliness in the speaker's manner induced Dalton to accept the offer, and reply to the questions which the other proposed to him. "No, no, doctor," said he, after a few moments; "there is no great mischief brewing after all. The truth is, I was fretted—harassed a little. It was about a boy of mine—I have only one—and he's gone away to be a soldier with the Austrians. You know, of course—as who doesn't?—how hard it is to do anything for a young man nowadays. If family or high connection could do it, we'd be as well off as our neighbors. We belong to the Daltons of Garrigmore, that you know are full blood with the O'Neals of Cappagh. But what's the use of blood now?—devil a good it does a man. It would be better to have your father a cotton-spinner, or an iron-master, than the descendant of Shane Mohr na Manna."

"I believe you are right," observed the doctor, dryly.

"I know I am; I feel it myself, and I'm almost ashamed to tell it. Here am I, Peter Dalton, the last of them now; and may I never leave this bed, if I could make a barony constable in the county where the king's writ couldn't run once without our leave."

"But Ireland herself has changed more than your own fortunes," remarked Grounsell.

"That's true—that's true," sighed the sick man. "I don't remember the best days of it, but I've heard of them often and often from my father. The fine old times, when Mount Dalton was filled with company from the ground to the slates, and two lords in the granary; a pipe of port wine in the hall, with a silver cup be-

side it; the Modereen hounds, huntsmen and all, living at rack and manger, as many as fifty sitting down in the parlor, and I won't say how many in the servant's hall; the finest hunters in the west country in the stables—there was life for you! Show me the equal of that in the wide world."

"And what is the present condition of the scene of these festivities?" said Grounsell, with a calm, but searching look.

"The present condition?" echoed Dalton, starting up to a sitting posture, and grasping the curtain with a convulsive grip; "I can't tell you what it is to-day, this ninth of November, but I'll tell what it was when I left it, eighteen years ago. The house was a ruin; the lawn a common; the timber cut down; the garden a waste; the tenants beggared; the landlord an exile. That's a pleasant catalogue, isn't it?"

"But there must come a remedy for all this," remarked Grounsell, whose ideas were following out a very different channel.

"Do you mean by a poor-law? Is it by taxing the half-ruined to feed the lazy? or by rooting out all that once was a gentry, to fill their places by greedy speculators from Manchester and Leeds? Is that your remedy? It's wishing it well I am! No; if you want to do good to the country, leave Ireland to be Ireland, and don't try to make Norfolk of her. Let her have her own Parliament, that knows the people and their wants. Teach her to have a pride in her own nationality, and not to be always looking at herself in shame beside her rich sister. Give her a word of kindness now and then, as you do the Scotch; but, above all, leave us to ourselves. We understand one another; you never did nor never will. We quarreled, and made friends again, and all went right with us. You came over with your Chancery Courts, and your police, and whenever we differed, you never stopped till we were beggared or hanged."

"You take a very original view of our efforts at civilization, I confess," said Grounsell, smiling.

"Civilization! civilization! I hate the very sound of the word. It brings to my mind nothing but county gaols, bridewells, turnpikes, and ministers' money. If it wasn't for civilization, would there be a receiver over my estate of Mount Dalton? Would the poor tenants be racked for the rent that I always gave time for? Would there be a big poor-house, with its ugly front staring to the highway, as they tell me there is, and a police barrack to keep it company, opposite? I tell you again, sir, that your meddling has done nothing but mischief. Our little quarrels you converted into serious animosities; our estrangements into the feuds of two opposing races; our very poverty, that we had grown accustomed to, you taught us to regard as a national disgrace, without ever instructing us how to relieve it; and there we are now on your hands—neither English in industry, nor Irish in submission—neither willing to work, nor content to be hungry!"

The doctor saw by the agitated look and tone of the sick man that the subject was one of too much excitement for him, and hastened to change the topic by jocularly expressing a hope that he might prove more successful with him than England had been with his countrymen.

"I doubt it, sir," said Dalton, gravely; "not thanking you the less for your kindness. I believe, like my poor country, that I'm past doctoring." He paused for a few seconds, and then added: "It's all fretting. It's thinking about the girls—Frank there is no fear of. That's what ails me."

Grounsell saw that to prolong his visit would be but to encourage a tone of depression that must prove injurious; so promising to return to see him in the morning, he shook Dalton's hand cordially, and followed Hans into the adjoining room, where writing materials were prepared for him.

The two girls were standing at the fire as he entered; and simple as was their dress, homely even to poverty, every trait of their costume, their looks, bespoke them of gentle blood. Their anxious glances as he came forward showed their eagerness to hear his tidings; but they did not speak a word.

"Do not be uneasy, young ladies," said he, hastening to relieve their fears. "Your father's illness has nothing serious about it. A few days will, I trust, see him perfectly restored to health. Meanwhile, you are his best physicians, who can minister to his spirits and cheer him up."

"Since my brother left us, sir, he appeared to sink hour by hour; he cannot get over the shock," said Ellen.

"I never knew him to give way before," interposed Kate. "He used to say when anything grieved him, 'he'd pay some one to fret for him.'"

"With better health you'll see his old courage return," said the doctor, as he hastily wrote a few lines of prescription, and then, laying his head in his hand, seemed for some minutes lost in thought. There were little comforts, matters of trifling luxury he wished to order, and yet he hesitated, for he did not know how far

they were compatible with their means; nor could he venture upon the hazard of offending by questioning them. As in his uncertainty he raised his eyes, they fell upon the wooden figure which the dwarf had exhibited in the apothecary's shop, and which now stood upon a table near. It was a child sleeping at the foot of a cross, around which its arms were entwined. The emaciated limbs and wasted cheek portrayed fasting and exhaustion, while, in the attitude itself, sleep seemed verging upon death.

"What is that?" asked he, hastily, as he pointed with his pen to the object.

"A poor child was found thus, frozen to death upon the Arlberg," said Kate; "and my sister carved that figure from a description of the event."

"Your sister! This was done by *you?*" said Grounsell, slowly, as he turned his gaze from the work to the artist.

"Yes," cried Hans, whose face beamed with delight; "is it not 'lieblich;' is it not vonderful? Dass, I say, alway; none have taste now— none have de love to admire!"

Stooping down to examine it better, Grounsell was struck by the expression of the face, whereon a smile of trustfulness and hope seemed warring with the rigid lines of coming death; so that the impression conveyed was more of a victory over suffering, than of a terrible fate.

"She is self-taught, sir; none even so much as assisted her by advice," said Kate, proudly.

"That will be perhaps but too apparent from my efforts," said Ellen, smiling faintly.

"I'm no artist, young lady," said Grounsell, bluntly, "but I am well versed in every variety of the human expression in suffering, and of mere truth to nature I can speak confidently. This is a fine work! —nay, do not blush, I am not a flatterer. May I take it with me, and show it to others more conversant with art than I am?"

"Upon one condition you may," said the girl, in a low, deep voice.

"Be it so; on any condition you wish."

"We are agreed, then?"

"Perfectly."

"The figure is yours——nay, sir—your promise!"

Grounsell stammered, and blushed, and looked confused; indeed, no man was less able to extricate himself from any position of embarrassment; and here the difficulties pressed on every side, for, while he scrupled to accept what he deemed a gift of real value, he felt that they, too, had a right to free themselves from the obligation that his presence as a doctor imposed. At last he saw nothing better than to yield; and in all the confusion of a bashfully awkward man, he mumbled out his acknowledgment, and catching up the figure, departed.

Hans alone seemed dissatisfied at the result, for, as he cast his wistful looks after the wooden image, his eyes swam with his tears, and he muttered as he went some words of deep, desponding cadence.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIRST VISIT.

The dreary weather of November showed no signs of "taking up." Lowering days of fog and gloom alternated with cold winds and sleet, so that all out-door occupation was utterly denied to that imprisoned party, who were left with so few resources to pass the time within. It is true they did not make the best of the bad. Lady Hester grew hourly more irritable and peevish. Sydney Onslow seldom left her room. George took to the hills every morning, and never returned before a late dinner, while the doctor, when not with Sir Stafford, spent all his time at the Daltons', with whom he had already established a close intimacy.

Lady Hester had exhausted every possible means she could imagine to while away the hours; she had spent whole days in letter-writing—folios of "tirades"—to every one she could think of. She had all the carriages inspected, and the imperials searched, for books she well knew had been left behind. She had sent for the landlord's daughter to give her lessons in German, which she thought of learning during the week. She had given a morning to the Italian boy with his white mice, and pored for hours long over the "Livre des Voyageurs," reading the names of friends who, with better fortune, had taken their departure for Italy. But, at last, there came an end even to these frail resources, and she was left utterly without an occupation to engage, or even a thought to employ her. The five minutes of morning altercation with Grounsell over, the dreary time was unbroken by a single event, or unchequered by a single hope. Sir Stafford was indeed recovering, but so slowly that weeks might be required ere he could proceed on his journey. How were they to be passed? was the fearful question to which

she could find no answer. She looked with actual envy at the party of boors who played at dominoes in the beer-house opposite, and followed with longing eyes the little mail-cart as it left the village. If she could read German, there were scores of books at her service. If she could but take a charitable turn, there was poverty enough to give her occupation from morn till night. She never knew what it was to think seriously, for meditation is the manufacture that cannot work without its raw material, and with this her mind was not stored.

It was in this pitiful frame of mind she was walking up and down the drawing-room one morning, just as the doctor had taken his departure, and with him the last little scene that was to relieve the day, when the servant entered with the card of Colonel Haggerstone, and the daily-repeated inquiry for Sir Stafford's health.

Had the gallant colonel presented himself at Wilton Crescent or the Villa, it is more than likely that the well-instructed porter had not viséd his passport, but at once consigned a name of such unimposing consonants to gentle obscurity, while such an entry in the visiting book had been coolly set down as a mistake. Not so, however. Lady Hester took up the card, and, instead of the habitual curt rejoinder—"Sir Stafford is better," said, "You may tell Colonel Haggerstone that Lady Hester will receive him."

The gallant colonel, who was negligently slapping his boots with his riding-whip below-stairs, was not a little amazed at the message. There had been a time when he would have interpreted the favor most flatteringly. He would have whispered to himself, "She has seen me passing the window—she was struck with me as I rode by." Time had, however, toned down these bright illusions, and he read the permission with a nearer approach to truth, as a fine-lady caprice in a moment of "ennui." "I thought as much," muttered he to himself as he slowly ascended the stairs; "the blockade was too strictly enforced not to tell at last. No newspapers, no books, ha! ha! Couldn't help surrendering."

The colonel had by this time given his whiskers and mustaches the last curl, thrown back his head into a position of calm dignity, as the servant, throwing wide the folding-doors, announced him. Advancing two paces and bowing low, Colonel Haggerstone said: "Your ladyship will pardon the liberty, the very great liberty, I have taken in my respectful inquiries for some days past, but, although probably not remembered by Sir Stafford, I once *did* enjoy the honor of his acquaintance—we met at Lord Kerrison's in Scotland."

Lady Onslow cut short this very uninteresting explanation by a bland but somewhat supercilious smile, that seemed to say, "What possible matter can it be?" while at the same time she motioned to him to be seated.

"May I hope that Sir Stafford continues to improve?" said he, bowing again.

"He's better to day," said Lady Onslow, languidly. "Perhaps as well as any one can be in this wretched place. You heard, I suppose, of the series of misfortunes that befel us, and compelled us to return here?"

The colonel looked mildly compassionate and inquisitive. He anticipated the possible pleasure her ladyship might feel in a personal narrative, and he was an accomplished listener. This time, however, he was wrong. Lady Onslow either did not think the occasion or the audience worth the trouble of the exertion, and merely said, "We had a break-down somewhere with an odious name. Sir Stafford would travel by that road through the Höhlen Thal, where somebody made his famous march. Who was it?"

"Massena, I think," said the colonel, at haphazard, thinking that at least the name was *ben trovato*, just as Sunday school children father everything remarkable on John the Baptist!

"Oh dear, no, it was Moreau. We stopped to breakfast at the little inn where he held his headquarters, and in the garden of which he amused himself by pistol-shooting—strange, was it not? Are you a good shot, colonel?

"Good among bad ones," said the colonel, modestly.

"Then we must have a match. I am so fond of it. You have pistols, of course?"

"I am fortunate enough to have a case of Schlessinger's best, and at your ladyship's disposal."

"Well, that is agreed upon. You'll be kind enough to select a suitable spot in the garden, and if to-morrow be fine——By the way, what is to-morrow—not Sunday, I hope?"

The colonel relieved her anxieties by the assurance that the next day would be Monday, consequently that the present one was Sunday.

"How strange! One does make sad confusion in these things abroad," said she, sighing. "I think we are better in England in that respect, don't you?"

The question was not a very clear one, but the colonel never hesitated to give in his adhesion.

"Sir Stafford always took that view in the House, and consequently differed from his party, as well as about Ireland. Poor dear Ireland! what is to be done for her?"

This was a rather more embarrassing demand than the previous one, and the colonel hemmed and coughed, and prepared for a speech of subtle generalities; but the dexterity was all unnecessary, for her ladyship had already forgotten the theme, and everything about it, as she went on: "How I pity those dear Wreckingtons, who are condemned to live there. The earl, you know, had promised solemnly that he would go any lengths for the party when he got his blue ribbon; and so they took him at his word, and actually named him to the Viceroyalty. It was a very cruel thing, but I hear nothing could be better than his conduct on hearing it: and dear Lady Wreckington insisted upon accompanying him. It was exactly like the story of—what's that man's name, who assisted in the murder of the Emperor Paul—Geroboffskoi, or something like that, whose wife followed him to the mines."

The colonel avowed that the cases were precisely alike, and now the conversation —if the word can be degraded to mean that bald disjointed chat—ran upon London people and events—their marriages, their dinners, separations, coalitions, divorces, and departures; on all which themes Haggerstone affected a considerable degree of knowledge, although, to any one less occupied with herself than her ladyship, it would have been at once apparent that all his information was derived from newspapers. It was at the close of a lamentation on the utter stupidity of everything and everywhere, that he adroitly asked where she meant to pass the winter.

"I wish I knew," said she, languidly. "The Dollingtons say Naples; the Upsleys tell us Rome; and, for my part, I pronounce for neither. Lady Dollington is my aversion, and the three Upsley girls, with their pink noses and red hair, are insufferable."

"What does your ladyship think of Florence?" asked the colonel, soothingly.

"Pretty much what I might of one of the Tonga Islands. I know nothing of the place, the people or the climate. Pray tell me about it."

"There is very little to say," said Haggerstone, shrugging his shoulders; "not but the place might be very agreeable, if there were some one of really fashionable standing to take the lead and give a tone to the society; some one who would unite indisputable rank and wealth with personal graces, and thus, as it were, by prescriptive right, assume the first place. Then, I say, Florence would be second to no city in Italy. Would that your ladyship would condescend to accept the vacant throne!"

"I!" said she, affecting astonishment; and then laughingly added: "Oh no! I detest mock sovereignty. I actually shudder at the idea of the Lady Patroness part; besides, whom should one have to reign over? Not the Browns, and Smiths, and Perkinses; not the full-pensioned East Indians, the half-pay colonels, and the no-pay Irish gentilities, that form the staple of small city society. You surely would not recommend me to such a sad preeminence."

The colonel smiled flatteringly at her ladyship's smartness, and hastened to assure her that such heresy was far from his thoughts; and then with a practiced readiness ran over a list of foreign celebrities—French, Russian and German—whose names, at least, clinked like the true metal.

This looked promisingly; it was very like cutting all English society, and had the appearance of something very exclusive, very impertinent, and very ungenerous; and now she lent a willing ear as Haggerstone revealed a plan of operations for a whole winter campaign. According to his account, it was a perfect "terra incognita," where the territorial limits and laws might be laid down at will: it was a state which called for a great dictatorship, and the sway of unlimited authority.

Now, Lady Hester had never—at least since her marriage, and very rarely even before it—been more than on the periphery of fashionable society. When she did obtain a footing within the charmed circle, it was by no prescriptive right, but rather on some ground of patronage, or some accidental political crisis, which made Sir Stafford's influence a matter of moment. There was, therefore, a flattery in the thought of thus becoming a leader in society; and she shrewdly remembered that, though there might be little real power, there would be all the tyranny of a larger sovereignty.

It is true she suffered no symptom of this satisfaction to escape her; on the contrary, she compassionated the "poor dear things" that thought themselves "the world," in such a place, and smiled with angelic pity at their sweet simplicity; but Haggerstone saw through all these disguises, and read

her real sentiments, as a practiced toad-eater never fails to do, where only affectation is the pretense. Adroitly avoiding to press the question, he adverted to Baden and its dreary weather; offered his books, his newspapers, his horses, his phaeton, and everything that was his, even his companionship as a guide to the best riding or walking roads, and, like a clever actor, made his exit at the very moment when his presence became most desirable.

Lady Hester looked out of the window, and saw, in the street beneath, the saddle-horses of the colonel, which were led up and down by a groom in the most accurate of costumes. The nags themselves, too, were handsome and in top condition. It was a little gleam of civilization, in the midst of universal barrenness, that brought up memories, some of which at least were not devoid of pain, so far as the expression of her features might be trusted. "I wonder who he can be?" said she, musing. "It's a shocking name! Haggerstone. Perhaps Sir Stafford may remember him. It's very sad to think that one should be reduced to such people." So, with a slight sigh, she sat down to indulge in a mood of deep and sincere commiseration for herself and her sorrows.

From these reveries she was aroused by the arrival of a package of books and papers from the colonel. They included some of the latest things of the day, both French and English, and were exactly the kind of reading she cared for, that half-gossipry that revolves around a certain set, and busies itself about the people and incidents of one very small world. There were books of travel by noble authors, and novels by titled authoresses; the one as tamely well bred and tiresome as the others were warm and impassioned—no bad corroborative evidence, by the way, of the French maxim, that the "safety of the Lady Georginas has an immense relation to the coldness of the Lord Georges." There were books of beauty, wherein loveliness was most aristocratic; and annuals where nobility condescended to write twaddle. There were analyses of new operas, wherein the list of the spectators was the only matter of interest, and better than these were the last fashions of "Longchamps," the newest bulletins of that great campaign which began in Adam's garden, and will endure to the "very crack of doom."

Lady Hester's spirits rallied at once from these well-timed stimulants; and when the party gathered together before dinner, George and his sister were amazed at the happy change in her manner.

"I have had a visitor," said she, after a short mystification; "a certain colonel, who assumes to be known to your father, but I fancy will scarcely be remembered by him—he calls himself Haggerstone."

"Haggerstone!" said George, repeating the name twice or thrice. "Is not that the name of the man who was always with Arlington, and of whom all the stories are told?"

"As I never heard of Arlington's companion, nor the stories in question, I can't say. Pray enlighten us," said Lady Hester, tartly.

"Haggerstone sounds so like the name," repeated George to himself.

"So like what name? Do be good enough to explain?"

"I am unwilling to tell a story which, if not justly attributable to the man, will certainly attach unpleasantly to his name hereafter."

"And in your excessive caution for yourself, you are pleased to forget *me*, Mr. Onslow. Pray remember that if I admit him to acquaintance——"

"But surely you don't mean to do so?"

"And why not?"

"In the first place, you know nothing about him."

"Which is *your* fault."

"Be it so. I have at least told you enough to inspire reserve and caution."

"Quite enough to suggest curiosity and give a degree of interest to a very commonplace character."

"Is he young, may I ask?" said George, with a half smile.

"No; far from it."

"Good-looking?"

"Just as little."

"Very agreeable and well-mannered?"

"Rather prosy, and too military in tone for my taste."

"Does he come under the recommendatory 'firman' of any dear friend or acquaintance?"

"Nothing of the kind. There is his passport," said she, pointing to his visiting ticket.

"Your ladyship used to be more difficult of access," said George, dryly.

"Very true; and so I may possibly become again. To make selections from the world of one's acquaintance is a very necessary duty; but, as my father used to say, no one thinks of using a sieve for chaff."

"This gentleman is then fortunate in his obscurity."

"Here comes Miss Onslow," said Lady Hester, "who will probably be more grate-

ful to me when she learns that our solitude is to be enlivened by the gallant colonel."

Sydney scanned over the books and journals on the table, and then quietly remarked: "If a man is to be judged of by his associates, these do not augur very favorably for the gentleman's taste."

"I see that you are both bent on making him a favorite of mine," said Lady Hester, pettishly; "and if Dr. Grounsell will only discover some atrocious circumstance in his history or character, I shall be prepared to call him 'charming.'"

The announcement of dinner fortunately broke up a discussion that already promised unfavorably; nor were any of the party sorry at the interruption.

CHAPTER VII.

A LESSON IN PISTOL-SHOOTING.

There are two great currents which divide public opinion in the whole world, and all mankind may be classed into one or other of these wide categories—"the people who praise, and the people who abuse everything." In certain sets, all is as it ought to be in this life. Everybody is good, dear, and amiable. All the men are gifted and agreeable; all the women fascinating and pretty. An indiscriminate shower of laudations falls upon everything or everybody, and the only surprise the hearer feels is how a world, so chuck-full of excellence, can possibly consist with what one reads occasionally in the *Times* and the *Chronicle*.

The second category is the Roland to this Oliver, and embraces those who have a good word for nobody, and in whose estimation the globe is one great penal settlement—the overseers being neither more nor less than the best-conducted among the convicts. The chief business of these people in life is to chronicle family disgraces and misfortunes, to store their memories with defalcations, frauds, suicides, disreputable transactions at play, unfair duels, seductions, and the like, and to be always prepared, on the first mention of a name, to connect its owner, or his grandmother, with some memorable blot, or some unfortunate event of years before. If the everlasting laudations of the one set make life too sweet to be wholesome, the eternal disparagement of the other renders it too bitter to be enjoyable; nor would it be easy to say whether society suffers more from the exercise of this mock charity on the one side, or the practice of universal malevolence on the other.

Perhaps our readers will feel grateful when we assure them that we are not intent upon pushing the investigation further. The consideration was forced upon us by thinking of Colonel Haggerstone, who was a distinguished member of class No. 2. His mind was a police sheet, or rather like a page of that celebrated "Livre Noir," wherein all the unexpiated offenses of a nation are registered. He knew the family disasters of all Europe, and not a name could be mentioned in society to which he could not tag either a seduction, a fraud, a swindle, or a poltroonery; and when such revelations are given prosaically, with all the circumstances of date, time, and place, unrelieved by the slightest spice of wit or imagination, but simply narrated as "Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire" of an individual, the world is very apt to accept them as evidences of knowledge of life, rather than what they really are—proofs of a malignant disposition. In this way, Haggerstone seemed to many the mere "old soldier," and nothing more; whereas, if nature had given him either fancy or epigrammatic smartness, he would have been set down for the incarnation of slander.

It may seem strange that Lady Hester, who had lived a good deal in the world, should never have met a character of this type, but so it was; she belonged to a certain "fast set" in society, who seem to ask for a kind of indemnity for all they do, by never, on any occasion, stopping to criticise their neighbors. This semblance of good nature is a better defensive armor than the uninitiated know of, enlisting all loose sympathies with its possessor, and even gaining for its advocates that great floating majority who speak much and think little.

In London, Haggerstone would have at once appeared the very worst "ton," and she would have avoided the acquaintance of a man so unhappily gifted; but here, at Baden, with nothing to do, none to speak to, he became actually a prize, and she listened to him for hours with pleasure as he recounted all the misdeeds of those "dear, dear friends" who had made up her own "world." There was at heart, too, the soothing flattery that whispered, "He can say nothing of *me*; the worst he can hint is, that I married a man old enough to be my father, and, if I did, I am heartily sorry for the mistake."

He was shrewd enough soon to detect the family differences that prevailed, and to take advantage of them, not by any impru-

dent or ill-advised allusion to what would have enlisted her ladyship's pride in opposition, but by suggesting occupations and amusements that he saw would be distasteful to the others, and thus alienate her more and more from their companionship. In fact, his great object was to make Lady Hester a disciple of that new school which owns Georges Sand for its patron, and calls itself "Lionne." It would be foreign to our purpose here were we to stop and seek to what social causes this new sect owes existence. In a great measure it may be traced to the prevailing taste of men for club life—to that lounging ease which exacts no tribute of respect or even attention, but suffers men to indulge their caprices to any extent of selfishness; thus unfitting them for ladies' society, or only such society as that of ladies condescending enough to unsex themselves, and to talk upon themes and discuss subjects that usually are reserved for other audiences.

Certain clever men liked this liberty—these receptions were a kind of free port, where all could be admitted duty free. Nothing was forbidden in this wide tariff, and so, conversation, emancipated from the restriction of better society, permitted a thousand occasions of display, that gradually attracted people to these reunions, and made all other society appear cold, formal, and hypocritical by contrast. This new invention had not reached England when Lady Hester quitted it, but she listened to a description of its merits with considerable interest. There were many points, too, in which it chimed in with her notions. It had novelty, liberty and unbounded caprice amongst its recommendations; and lastly, it was certain to outrage the Onslows. It was a "part" which admitted of any amount of interpolations. Under its sanction she would be free to say anything, know any one, and go anywhere. Blessed immunity that permitted all and denied nothing!

With all the vulgar requirements of "Lionism" she was already sufficiently conversant. She could ride, drive, shoot and fence; was a very tolerable billiard player, and could row a little. But with the higher walks of the craft she had made no acquaintance; she had not learned to swim, had never smoked, and was in dark ignorance of that form of language which, half mystical and all mischievous, is in vogue with the members of this sect. That she could acquire all these things rapidly and easily the colonel assured her, and, by way of "matriculating," reminded her of her challenge respecting the pistol-shooting, for which he had made every preparation in the garden of the hotel.

True to his word, he had selected a very pretty alley, at the end of which rose a wall sufficiently high to guard against accidents from stray shots. On a table were displayed, in all the dandyism such objects are capable of, a handsome case of pistols, with all the varied appliances of kid leather for wadding, bullet-moulds, rammers, hammers, screws, and rests, even to a Russia-leather bound note-book, to record the successes—nothing had been forgotten; and Lady Hester surveyed with pleasure preparations which at least implied an anxious attention to her wishes.

"Only fancy the barbarism of the land we live in," said he; "I have sent emissaries on every side to seek for some of those plaster figures so common in every city of Europe, but in vain. Instead of your ladyship cutting off Joan of Arc's head, or sending your bullet through some redoubtable enemy of England, you must waste your prowess and skill upon an ignoble jar of porcelain or a vase of Bohemian glass; unless, indeed, my last messenger shall have proved more fortunate, and I believe such is the case." As he spoke, his servant came up with a small parcel carefully enveloped in paper.

"I have got this figure, sir," said he, "with the greatest difficulty, and only indeed by pretending we wanted it as an ornamental statue. The little fellow of the toy-shop parted with it in tears, as if it had been his brother."

"It is very beautiful!" said Lady Hester, as she surveyed a small wooden statue of Goethe's "Marguerite," in the attitude of plucking the petals of a flower to decide upon her lover's fidelity.

"A mere toy!" said Haggerstone. "These things are carved by every child in the Black Forest. Does your ladyship think you could hit the feather of her cap without hurting the head?"

"I couldn't think of such profanation," replied she; "there is really something very pretty in the attitude and expression. Pray let us reserve her for some less terrible destiny."

But the colonel persisted in assuring her that these were the commonest knick-knacks that adorned every peasant's cabin—that every boor with a rusty knife carved similar figures, and in the midst of his explanations he placed the statue upon a little stone pillar about twenty paces off.

Lady Hester's objection had been little more than a caprice; indeed, had she been convinced that the figure was a valuable

work of art, she would have felt rather flattered than otherwise at the costliness of the entertainment provided for her. Like Cleopatra's pearl, it would have had the charm of extravagance at least; but she never gave the colonel credit for such gallantry, and the more readily believed all he said on the subject.

Colonel Haggerstone proceeded to load the pistols with all that pomp and circumstance so amusingly displayed by certain people on like occasions. The bullets, encased in little globes of chamois, carefully powdered with emery, were forced down the barrels by a hammer, the hair trigger adjusted, and the weapon delivered to Lady Hester with due solemnity.

"If I go wide of the mark, colonel, I beg you to remember that I have not had a pistol in my hand for above three years; indeed, it must be nearly four years since I shot a match with Lord Norwood."

"Lord Norwood! indeed!" said Haggerstone. "I wasn't aware that your ladyship had ever been his antagonist."

Had not Lady Hester been herself anxious to hide the confusion the allusion to the viscount always occasioned her, she could not have failed to remark how uncomfortably astonished was Haggerstone at the mention of that name. Nervously eager to do something—anything that might relieve her embarrassment—she pulled the trigger; but the aim was an erring one, and no trace of the bullet to be seen.

"There's no use in looking for it, Colonel Haggerstone," said she, pettishly; "I'm certain I was very wide of the mark."

"I'm positive I saw the plaster drop from the wall somewhere hereabouts," said the complaisant colonel, pointing to a spot close beside the figure. "Yes, and the twigs are broken here."

"No matter; I certainly missed, and that's quite enough. I told you I should, before I fired; and when one has the anticipation of failure, it is so easy to vindicate the impression."

It was in evident chagrin at her want of success that she spoke, and all her companion's flatteries went for nothing. Meanwhile, he presented the second pistol, which, taking hastily, and without giving herself time for an aim, she discharged with a like result.

"I'll not try again," said she, pettishly. "Either the pistols don't suit me, or the place, or the light is bad. Something is wrong, that's certain."

Haggerstone bit his lip in silence, and went on reloading the pistols without trusting himself to reply. A little conflict was going on within him, and all his intended flatteries for her ladyship were warring with the desire to display his own skill, for he was a celebrated shot, and not a little vain of the accomplishment. Vanity carried the day at last, and taking up the weapon, he raised it slowly to a level with his eye. A second or two he held it thus, his hand steady as a piece of marble.

"I have taken my aim, and now you may give the word for me to fire when you please," said he, turning his eyes from the object, and looking straight at Lady Hester.

She stared at him as if to reassure herself of the direction of his glance, and then called out "Fire!" The shot rang out clear and sharp; with it arose a shrill cry of agony, and straight before them, at the foot of the pillar, lay something which looked like a roll of clothes, only that by its panting motion it indicated life. Haggerstone sprang forward, and to his horror discovered the dwarf, Hans Roëckle, who, with his arm broken, lay actually bathed in blood. With his remaining hand he clasped the little statue to his bosom, while he muttered to himself the words, "Gerettet!—saved! saved!"

While Lady Hester hurried for assistance, Haggerstone bound up the bleeding vessels with his handkerchief; and in such German as he could command, asked how the accident had befallen.

A few low, muttering sounds were all the dwarf uttered, but he kissed the little image with a devotion that seemed like insanity. Meanwhile, the colonel's servant coming up at once recognized Hans, and exclaimed, "It is the little fellow of the toy-shop, sir. I told you with what reluctance he parted with this figure. He must be mad, I think."

The wild looks and eager expressions of the dwarf, as he clutched the image and pressed it to his heart, seemed to warrant the suspicion; and Haggerstone thought he could read insanity in every line of the poor creature's face. To the crowd that instantaneously gathered around the inn door, and which included many of his friends and acquaintances, Hans would give no other explanation of the event than that it was a mere accident; that he was passing, and received the shot by chance; nothing more.

"Is he not mad, or a fool?" asked Haggerstone of the innkeeper.

"Neither, sir; Hans Roëckle is an old and respected burgher of our town, and although eccentric and odd in his way, is not wanting for good sense or good nature."

"Ay! ay!" cried two or three of his

townsfolk, to whom the landlord translated the colonel's question; "Hans is a kind-hearted fellow, and if he loves his dolls and wooden images over-much, he never lacks in affection for living creatures."

While these and such-like observations were making around him, the dwarf's wounds were being dressed by his friend, Ludwig Kraus—an operation of considerable pain, that the little fellow bore with heroic tranquility. Not a word of complaint, not a syllable of impatience escaped him, and while from his half-closed lips a low muttered exclamation of "Saved! saved!" came forth from time to time, the bystanders deemed it the utterance of gratitude for his own escape with life.

But once only did any expression of irritation burst from him. It was when Haggerstone pulled out his purse, and with an ostentatious display of munificence asked him to name his recompense. "Take me home; take me hence!" said Hans, impatiently. "Tell the rich 'Englander' that there are wounds for which sorrow would be an ample cure, but there are others which insult is sure to fester."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NIGHT EXCURSION.

The remainder of the day after the dwarf's misfortune was passed by Lady Hester in a state of feverish irritability. Sorry as she felt for the "sad accident"—her own phrase, she was still more grieved for the effects it produced upon herself; the jar and worry of excited feelings—the uncomfortableness of being anxious about anything or anybody.

Epicurean in her code of manners as of morals, she detested whatever occasioned even a passing sensation of dissatisfaction, and hence upon the luckless colonel, the author of the present evil, fell no measured share of her displeasure. "He should have taken precaution against such a mishap—he ought to have had sufficient presence of mind to have arrested his aim—he should have fired in the air—in fact, he ought to have done anything but what he did do;" which was to agitate the nerves, and irritate the sensibilities, of a fine lady.

The conduct of the family, too, was the very reverse of soothing. Sir Stafford's gout had relapsed on hearing of the event. George Onslow's anger was such that he could not trust himself to speak of the occurrence; and as for Sydney, though full of sorrow for the dwarf, she had not a single sympathy to bestow upon her stepmother. "Were there ever such people?" she asked herself again and again. Not one had taken the trouble to ask how *she* bore up, or express the slightest anxiety for the consequences the shock might occasion *her*.

Grounsell was actually insufferable; and even hinted that if anything untoward were to happen, the very grave question might arise as to the guilt of the parties who appeared in arms without a Government permission. He reminded her ladyship that they were not in England, but in a land beset with its own peculiar prejudices and notions, and in nothing so rigorous as in the penalties on accidents that took their origin in illegality.

As for the wound itself, he informed her that the bullet had "traversed the deltoid, but without dividing the brachial artery; and, for the present, sympathetic fever and subcutaneous inflammation would be the worst consequences." These tidings were neither very reassuring nor intelligible; but all her cross-examination could elicit little better.

"Has Colonel Haggerstone been to see him?" asked she.

"No, madam. His groom called with a present of two florins."

"Oh! impossible, sir."

"Perfectly true, madam. I was present when the money was returned to the man by a young lady, whose attentions to the sufferer saved him the pain this indignity would have cost him."

"A young lady, did you say? How does he happen to be so fortunate in his attendance?"

"Her father chances to be this poor creature's tenant, and many mutual acts of kindness have passed between them."

"Not even scandal could asperse her motives in the present case," said Lady Hester, with an insolent laugh. "It looked hardly human when they lifted it from the ground."

"Scandal has been guilty of as gross things, madam," said Grounsell, sternly, "but I would defy her here, although there is beauty enough to excite all her malevolence." And with this speech, delivered with a pointedness there was no mistaking, the doctor left the room.

Impressions, or what she herself would have called "feelings," chased each other so rapidly through Lady Hester's mind, that her whole attention was now directed to the young lady of whom Grounsell spoke, and whose singular charity excited all her

curiosity. There is a strange tendency to imitation among those whose intelligences lie unexercised by any call of duty or necessity. No suggestion coming from within, they look without themselves for occupation and amusement. Lady Hester was a prominent disciple of this school. All her life she had been following, eager to see whether the fashion that became, or the pleasures that beguiled, others, might not suit herself. If such a course of existence inevitably conduces to ennui and discontent, it is no less difficult to strive against, and they who follow in the track of others' footsteps have all the weariness of the road without the cheering excitement of the journey.

If the young lady found pleasure in charity, why shouldn't she? Benevolence, too, for aught she knew, might be very becoming. There were a hundred little devices of costume and manner which might be adopted to display it. What a pretty version of the good Samaritan modernized one might give in a Shetland scarf and a cottage bonnet—the very thing Chalons would like to paint; and what an effective "interior" might be made of the dwarf's chamber, crowded with rude peasant faces, all abashed and almost awe-struck as she entered.

The longer she dwelt upon the theme, the more fascinating it became. "It would be really worth while to realize," said she to herself at last—"so amusing—and so odd, an actual adventure; besides, in point of fact, it was her duty to look after this poor creature." Just so; there never was a frivolous action, or a notion struck out by passing folly, for which its author could not find a justification in PRINCIPLE! We are everlastingly declaring against the knaveries and deceptions practiced on us in life; but if we only took count of the cheats we play off upon ourselves, we should find that there are no such impostors as our own hearts.

Nobody was ever less likely to make this discovery than Lady Hester. She believed herself everything that was good and amiable; she knew that she was handsome. Whatever contrarieties she met with in life, she was quite certain they came not from any fault of hers; and if self-esteem could give happiness she must have enjoyed it. But it cannot. The wide neutral territory between what we think of ourselves and others think of us, is filled with daring enemies to our peace, and it is impossible to venture into it without a wound to self-love.

To make her visit to the dwarf sufficient of an adventure, it must be done in secret. Nobody should know it but Célestine, her maid, who should accompany her. Affecting a slight indisposition, she could retire to her room in the evening, and then there would be abundant time to put her plan into execution. Even these few precautions against discovery were needless, for George did not return to dinner on that day, and Sydney made a headache an excuse for not appearing.

Nothing short of the love of adventure, and the indulgence of a caprice, could have induced Lady Hester to venture out in such a night. The rain fell in torrents, and swooped along the narrow streets in channels swollen to the size of rivulets. The river itself, fed by many a mountain stream, fell tumbling over the rocks with a deafening roar, amid which the crashing branches of the pine-trees were heard at intervals. What would not have been her anxieties and lamentings if exposed to such a storm when traveling, surrounded with all the appliances that wealth can compass! and yet now, of her own free will, she wended her way on foot through the darkness and the hurricane, not only without complaining, but actually excited to a species of pleasure in the notion of her imaginary heroism.

The courier, who preceded her as guide, enjoyed no such agreeable illusions, but muttered something to himself, as he went, certain reflections by no means complimentary to the whims of fine ladies; while Mademoiselle Célestine inwardly protested that anything, "not positively wrong," would be dearly purchased by the dangers of such an excursion.

"Grégoire! Grégoire! where is he now?" exclaimed Lady Hester, as she lost sight of her guide altogether.

"Here, miladi," grunted out the courier, in evident pain. "I fail to break my neck over de stone bench."

"Where's the lantern, Grégoire?"

"Blowed away, zum Teufel, I believe."

"What's he saying, Célestine?—what does he mean?"

But mademoiselle could only answer by a sob of agony over her capote de Paris, flattened to her head like a Highland bonnet.

"Have you no light? You must get a light, Grégoire."

"Impossible, miladi; dere's nobody livin' in dese houses at all."

"Then you must go back to the inn for one; we'll wait here till you return,"

A faint shriek from Mademoiselle Célestine expressed all the terror such a proposition suggested.

"Miladi will be lost if she remain here all alone."

"*Perdue! sans doute!*" exclaimed Célestine.

"I am determined to have my way. Do as I bade you, Grégoire; return for a light, and we'll take such shelter as this door affords in the meanwhile."

It was in no spirit of general benevolence that Grégoire tracked his road back to the "Russie," since, if truth must be told, he himself had extinguished the light, in the hope of forcing Lady Hester to a retreat. Muttering a choice collection of those pleasant phrases with which his native German abounds, he trudged along, secretly resolving that he would allow his mistress a reasonable interval of time to reflect over her madcap expedition. Meanwhile, Lady Hester and her maid stood shivering and storm-beaten beneath the drip of a narrow eave. The spirit of opposition alone sustained her ladyship at this conjuncture, for she was wet through, her shoes soaked with rain, and the cold blast that swept along seemed as if it would freeze the very blood in her heart.

Célestine could supply but little of comfort or consolation, and kept repeating the words, "Quelle aventure! quelle aventure!" in every variety of lamentation.

"He could easily have been back by this," said Lady Hester, after a long pause, and an anxious attention to every sound that might portend his coming; "I'm certain it is full half an hour since he left us. What a night!"

"Et quelle aventure!" exclaimed Célestine, anew.

None knew better than Lady Hester the significant depreciation of the Frenchwoman's phrase, and how differently had she rated all the hazards of the enterprise if any compromise of character were to have followed it. However, it was no time for discussion, and she let it pass.

"If he should have missed the way, and not be able to find us!" said she, after another pause.

"We shall be found dead in the morning," cried Célestine; "et pour quelle aventure, mon Dieu! pour quelle aventure!"

The possibility that her fears suggested, and the increasing severity of the storm—for now the thunder rolled overhead, and the very ground seemed to shake with the reverberation — served to alarm Lady Hester, and for the first time she became frightened at their situation.

"We could scarcely find our way back, Célestine!" said she, rather in the tone of one asking for comfort than putting a question.

"Impossible, miladi."

"And Grégoire says that these houses are all uninhabited."

"Quelle aventure!" sobbed the maid.

"What can have become of him? It is more than an hour now! What was that, Célestine?—was it lightning?—there, don't you see it yonder towards the end of the street? I declare it is Grégoire; I see the lantern."

A cry of joy burst from both together, for already hope had begun to wane, and a crowd of fearful anticipations had taken its place.

Lady Hester tried to call his name, but the clattering noise of the storm drowned the weak effort. The light, however, came nearer at each instant, and there was no longer any doubt of their rescue, when suddenly it turned and disappeared at an angle of the street. Lady Hester uttered a piercing cry, and at the instant the lantern was again seen, showing that the bearer had heard the sounds

"Here, Grégoire, we are here!" exclaimed she, in her loudest voice, and speaking in English.

Whoever carried the lantern seemed for a moment uncertain how to act, for there was no reply, nor any change of position for a few seconds, when at length the light was seen approaching where Lady Hester stood.

"I think I heard an English voice," said one whose accents proclaimed her to be a woman.

"Oh yes," cried Lady Hester, passionately, "I am English. We have lost our way. Our courier went back to the inn for a lantern, and has never returned, and we are almost dead with cold and terror. Can you guide us to the Hôtel de Russie?"

"The house I live in is only a few yards off. It is better you should take shelter there for the present."

"Take care, miladi!" whispered Célestine, eagerly. "This may be a plot to rob and murder us."

"Have no fears on that score, mademoiselle," said the unknown, laughing, and speaking in French; "we are not very rich, but as surely we are perfectly safe company."

Few as these words were, there was in their utterance that indescribable tone of good breeding and ease which at once reassured Lady Hester, who now replied to her unseen acquaintance with the observance due to an equal, and willingly accepted the arm she offered for guidance and support.

"At the end of this little street, scarcely two minutes' walking, and you will be there," said the unknown.

Lady Hester scarcely heard the remark, as she ran on with voluble levity on the dangers they had run—the terrific storm —the desertion of the courier—her own fortitude — her maid's cowardice — what must have happened if they had not been discovered—till at last she bethought her of asking by what singular accident the other should have been abroad in such a terrible night.

"A neighbor and a friend of ours is very ill, madam, and I have been to the doctor's to fetch some medicine for him."

"And I, too, was bent upon a charitable errand," said Lady Hester, quite pleased with the opportunity of parading her own merits; "to visit a poor creature who was accidentally wounded this morning."

"It is Hans Roëckle, our poor neighbor, you mean," cried the other, eagerly; "and here we are at his house." And so saying, she pushed open a door, to which a bell attached on the inside gave speedy warning of their approach.

"Dearest Kate!" cried a voice from within, "how uneasy I have been at your absence!" And at the same moment a young girl appeared with a light, which, as she shaded with her hand, left her unaware of the presence of strangers.

"Think rather of this lady, and what *she* must have suffered," said Kate, as drawing courteously back, she presented her sister to Lady Hester.

"Or, rather, what I might have suffered," interposed Lady Hester, "but for the fortunate accident of your coming. A few moments back, as I stood shivering beneath the storm, I little thought that I should owe my rescue to a countrywoman. May I learn the name of one to whom I am so deeply indebted?"

"Dalton, madam," said Nelly; and then, with a slight confusion, added, "We ought, perhaps, to tell you the circumstances which induced my sister to be abroad at such an hour."

"She knows it all," broke in Kate, "and can the more readily forgive it, as it was her own errand. But will not this lady come near the fire?" said she, addressing Mademoiselle Célestine, who, as she followed the rest into the humble chamber, was bestowing a most depreciatory glance upon the place, the furniture, and the people.

"It is only my maid," said Lady Hester, carelessly. "And now it is time I should introduce myself, and say that Lady Hester Onslow owes you all her gratitude." Ellen curtseyed respectfully at the announcement, but Kate Dalton's cheek colored slightly, and she bent a look of more than common admiration at the handsome figure of the stranger. An innate reverence for rank and title was rooted in her heart, and she was overjoyed to think that their chance acquaintance should be one of that class so distinctively marked out for honor. Prepared to admire every grace and fascination of the high-born, Kate watched with eager and delighted looks the slightest gestures, the least traits of manner, of the fashionable beauty. They were all attractions to which her heart gave a ready response. The accent in which she spoke, the careless elegance of her attitude as she lay back in her chair, the charming negligence with which she wore the little portions of dress exchanged for her own, were all inimitable graces in the eyes of the simple girl.

As for Lady Hester, accustomed to all the servile offices of her own attendants, to be punctiliously obeyed and waited on, it was yet a new sensation to watch the zealous and eager devotion with which the two sisters ministered to her wants. In utter forgetfulness of themselves, they had brought forth the little resources of their humble wardrobe, too happy, as it seemed, when they saw their services so willingly accepted. Fortunately, they did not perceive the contemptuous looks with which "mademoiselle" regarded their attentions, nor overhear her exclamation of "Mon Dieu! where did they gather together these 'chiffons?'" as she surveyed the somewhat antiquated stores of their toilet.

Even had Lady Hester's good breeding not prompted a gracious reception of what was so generously offered, the very singularity of the scene would have had its charm in her estimation. She was delighted with everything, even to Kate Dalton's slippers, which, by a most happy flattery, were a little too large for her. She fancied, too, that her costume, curiously made up of shreds and patches the most incongruous, was the dress of an Irish peasant, and was in an ecstasy at the thought of a similar one at her next fancy ball. Besides all these internal sources of self-satisfaction, the admiration of the two sisters was another and more legitimate cause of pleasure; for even Ellen, with all her natural reserve and caution, was scarcely less impressed than Kate with the charm of those fascinations which, however destined but for one class of society, are equally successful in all.

Ellen Dalton's life had not been devoid

of trials, nor had they failed to teach their own peculiar lessons; and yet her experiences had not shown her how very like right feeling good breeding can be, and how closely good manners may simulate every trait of a high and generous nature.

CHAPTER IX.

A FINE LADY'S BLANDISHMENTS.

We left Lady Hester, in our last chapter, employed in the exercise of those fascinations which, however unlike in other respects, have this resemblance to virtue, that they are assuredly their own reward. The charm of courtesy never conferred one-half the pleasure on those for whom it was exercised as to him who wielded it. It matters little whether the magician be prince or "charlatan," the art of pleasing is one of the most agreeable faculties human nature can be endowed with. Whether Lady Hester was aware of the theory or not, she felt the fact, as she saw the undisguised admiration in the faces of the two sisters; for, while she had won over Nelly by the elevation of her sentiments and the kindness of her expressions, Kate was fascinated by her beauty, her grace, her easy gayety, and a certain voluble lightness that simulates frankness.

Without anything that approached the prying of curiosity, for she was both too well bred and too little interested to have so felt such a motive, she inquired by what accident the Daltons remained at Baden so late in the season, affected to see some similarity between their cases and her own, asked in the most feeling terms for their father, whose ill-health she deplored, and then took such an interest in "dear Frank," that Kate could not resist showing a portrait of him, which, however humble its claims to art, still conveyed a not unfaithful resemblance of the handsome youth.

While thus hearing about *them*, she was equally communicative about *herself*, and enlisted all the sympathies of the girls as she recounted their escape from the torrent in the Black Forest, and their subsequent refuge in Baden. Thence she diverged to Sir Stafford's illness, her own life of seclusion and sadness, and, by an easy transition, came round to poor Hans Roëckle and the accident of that morning.

"Do tell me everything about the poor dear thing," said she, poutingly. "They say it is mad."

"No, madam," said Nelly, gravely; "Hans, with many eccentricities of manner, is very far from deficient in good sense or judgment, and is more than ordinarily endowed with right feeling and kindness of heart."

"He is a dwarf, surely."

"Yes, but in intelligence——"

"Oh, that, of course," interrupted she; "they are rarely deficient in acuteness, but so spiteful, so full of malice. My dear child, there's no trusting them. They never forget an injury, nor even an imaginary slight. There was that creature—what was his name?—that Polish thing, Benywowski, I think—you remember, they baked him in a pie, to amuse Charles the Second—well, he never forgave it afterwards, and to the day of his death could never bear the sight of pastry."

"I must except poor Hans from this category," said Nelly, mildly, and with difficulty restraining a smile. "He is amiability itself."

Lady Hester shook her head doubtfully, and went on:

"Their very caprices, my dear, lead them into all kinds of extravagances. For instance, this poor thing, it would seem, is so enamored of these wooden toys that he makes himself, that he cannot bear to part with them. Now, there's no saying to what excesses he might be carried by this absurd passion. I have read of the most atrocious murders committed under a similar fanaticism."

"I assure you, madam, there need be no fear of such in the present instance. In the first case, Hans is too good; in the second, the objects are too valueless."

"Very true, so they are; but he doesn't think them so, you know."

"Nay, my lady; nor would you either, were you to regard them with attention," broke in Kate, whose cheek was now one glow of scarlet. "Even this, half finished as it is, may lay claim to merit." And as she spoke, she removed a napkin from a little statue, before which she held the candle.

"For shame, Kate, dearest Kate!" cried Nelly, standing up in bashful discomfiture.

"It is a statuette of poor Frank, madam," continued Kate, who, totally regardless of her sister's interruption, now exhibited the figure nearer. "You see him just as he left us, his knapsack on his shoulder, his sword fastened across it, his little cap on one side of his head, and that happy smile upon his lips. Poor dear fellow! how sad a heart it covered!"

"And was this *his* work?" asked Lady Hester, in astonishment.

"No, madam; my sister Nelly was the artist of this as of all the others. Unaided and untaught, her own ingenuity alone suggesting the means, as her imagination supplied the conception——"

"Kate! dear, dear Kate!" said Ellen, with a voice of almost rebuke. "You forget how unworthy these poor efforts are of such high-sounding epithets." Then, turning to Lady Hester, she continued: "Were it to ears less charitable than yours, madam, these foolish words were spoken, I should fear the criticism our presumption would seem to call forth. But you will not think harshly of us for ignorance."

"But this figure is admirable; the attitude is graceful; the character of the head, the features, are in good keeping. I know, of course, nothing of the resemblance to your brother, but, as a work of art, I am competent to say it has high merit. Do tell me how the thought of doing these things first occurred to you."

"I learned drawing as a child, madam, and was always fond of it," said Ellen, with a degree of constraint that seemed as if the question were painful to answer.

"Yes, and so have I spent months—ay, I believe I may say years—at the easel, copying every Giorgione at Venice and every Vandyk at Genoa, and yet such a thought never suggested itself to *me*."

"I am happy to think so, madam," was the low response.

"Why so? how do you mean?" asked Lady Hester, eagerly.

"That the motive in my case never could have been yours, madam."

"And what was the motive?"

"Poverty, madam. The word is not a pleasant word to syllable, but it is even better than any attempt at disguise. These trifles, while beguiling many a dreary hour, have helped us through a season of more than usual difficulty."

"Yes, madam," broke in Kate. "You are aware that papa's property is in Ireland, and for some years back it has been totally unproductive."

"How very sad—how dreadful!" exclaimed Lady Hester. But whether the expressions referred to the condition of the Daltons or of Ireland, it is not quite clear.

"I doubt, madam, if I should have ventured on the confession," said Ellen, with a voice of calm firmness, "were it not for the opportunity it offers of bearing testimony to the kindness of our poor friend yonder, Hans Roëckle. These efforts of mine have met such favor in his eyes that he accepts them all, taking them as rapidly as they are finished, and, I need not say, treating me with a generosity that would become a more exalted patron and a better artist."

"It is quite a romance, I declare!" cried Lady Hester. "The Wood Demon and the Maiden. Only he is not in love with you, I hope?"

"I'm not quite sure of that," said Kate, laughing; "at least, when some rivalry of her own wooden images does not intervene."

"Hush! Hans is awaking," said Ellen, as on tiptoe she crossed the room noiselessly, and opened the door of the chamber where the dwarf lay. Lady Hester and Kate now drew near and peeped in. On a low settle—over which an old scarlet saddle-cloth, fringed with tarnished lace, was spread as a quilt—lay Hans Roëckle, his wounded arm supported by a pillow at his side; his dark eyes glistened with the bright glare of fever, and his cheeks were flushed and burning, as his lips moved unceasingly, with a low muttering, which he continued, regardless of the presence of those who now approached his bedside.

"What is it he is saying? Does he complain of pain?" asked Lady Hester.

"I cannot understand him," said Nelly; "for ever since his accident he has spoken in his native dialect—the patois of the Bregentzer Wald—of which I am utterly ignorant; still, he will reply to me in good German when questioned." Then, stooping down, she asked: "Are you better, Hans?"

Hans looked up steadfastly in her face without speaking; it seemed as if her voice had arrested his wandering faculties, but yet not awakened any intelligence.

"You are thirsty, Hans," said she, gently, as she lifted a cup of water to his lips. He drank greedily, and then passed his hand across his brow, as if trying to dispel some tormenting fancies. After a second or two, he said: "It was in Nuremberg, in the Oden Gasse, it happened. The Ritter von Ottocar stabbed her as she knelt at the cross; and the dwarf, Der Mohrchen, as they called him, tore off his turban to bind up the wound: and what was his reward, maiden?—tell me that! Are ye all so shamed that ye dare not speak it?"

"We know it not, Hans; we never heard of the Ritter nor the Mohrchen before."

"I'll tell you, then. They burned him as a warlock in the Hohen Platz next morning." With a wild burst of savage laughter he closed this speech, which he spoke in

good German; but immediately after his thoughts seemed to turn to his old Tyrol haunts and the familiar language of his native land, as he sang, in a low voice, the following words:

"A Buchsel zu schiessen.
A Stossring zu schlagn,
A Dienal zu Lieben,
Muss a Bue hahn."

"What does he mean? Do tell me," said Lady Hester, whose interest in the scene was more that of curiosity than compassion.

"It is a peasant dialect; but means, that a rifle to shoot with, a weapon to wield, and a maiden to love, are all that a good Tyroler needs in life," said Kate, while Nelly busied herself in arranging the position of the wounded limb—little offices for which the poor dwarf looked his gratitude silently.

"How wild his looks are!" said Lady Hester. "See how his eyes glance along the walls. as if some objects were moving before them." And so in reality was it. Hanserl's looks were riveted upon the strange and incongruous assemblage of toys which, either suspended from nails or ranged on shelves, decorated the sides of the chamber. "Ay," said he at last, with a melancholy smile, "thou'lt have to put off all this bravery soon, my pretty damsels, and don the black veil and the hood, for thy master Hans is dying!"

"He is talking to the wax figures," whispered Kate.

"And ye too, my brave hussars, and ye Uhlaners with your floating banners, must lower your lances as ye march in the funeral procession, when Hanserl is dead! Take down the wine-bush from the door, hostess, and kneel reverently, for the bell is ringing; and here comes the priest in his alb, and with the pix before him. Hush! they are chanting his requiem. Ah! yes. Hanserl is away to the far-off land,

'Wo sind die Täge lang genug,
Wo sind die Nächte mild.'"

"Come away, we do but excite his mind to wanderings," said Ellen; "so long as there is light to see these toys, his fancy endows them all with life and feeling, and his poor brain is never at rest." The sound of voices in the outer room at the same moment caught their attention, and they heard the courier of Lady Hester in deep converse with Mademoiselle Célestine. He, deploring the two hours he had passed in hunting after his mistress through the dark streets of the village; and she, not less eloquently, bewailing the misery of a night spent in that comfortless cabin. "To visit a wretched dwarf, too! Parbleu! had it been a rendezvous with some one worth while, but an excursion without an object, sans émotion même—it is too bad!"

"Que voulez-vous!" said Monsieur Grégoire, with a shrug of the shoulders; "she is English!"

"Ah! that is no reason for a vulgar caprice, and I, for one, will not endure it longer. I cannot do so. Such things compromise one's self. I'll give warning to-morrow. What would my poor dear mistress, la Marquise, say, if she only knew how 'mes petits talents' were employed?"

"Do not be rash, mademoiselle," interposed the courier; "they are rich, very rich, and we are going to Italy too, the real 'pays de Cocagne' of our profession."

How far his persuasions might have gone in inducing her to reconsider her determination there is no saying, when they were suddenly interrupted by Lady Hester's appearance.

Her first care was to ascertain that her absence from the hotel had not been remarked—her secret, as she loved to fancy it, remained sacred. Having learned thus much, she listened with a kind of childish pleasure to the courier's version of all his unhappy wanderings in search of her, until he, at last, descried a light, the only one that shone from any window in the whole village.

As Grégoire had provided himself with a sufficient number of shawls, cloaks, and clogs, and as the storm had now passed over, Lady Hester prepared to take her leave, delighted with her whole night's adventure. There had been excitement enough to make it all she could desire; nor did she well know whether most to admire her heroism during the storm, or the success with which she captivated the two sisters; the courage which planned the expedition, or the grace with which it was executed.

"You'll come and see me, Miss Dalton. Mind, I'm always at home. Remember, Miss Kate Dalton, that they must not deny me to *you*," said she, in her most winning of manners. The two girls gave their promise in bashful diffidence, while she continued: "You'll say to your papa, too, that Sir Stafford will wait on him whenever he is able to leave the house. Mr. Onslow, indeed, ought to call at once; but he is so odd. Never mind, we shall be great friends; and you'll bring all your little carving tools and your models with you, and work in my

room; your sister, her embroidery, or her lace, or her 'crochet,' or whatever it is, or you'll read German for me, like a dear child—that will be so delightful. I can't understand a word of it, but it sounds so soft; and you'll tell me all about it, won't you? And then this poor thing must want for nothing."

"Nay, madam, he is in no need of anything but kindness. In a land where such simple habits prevail, Hans Roëckle passes for rich."

"How strange! How very odd! But I remember that poor Prince of Stolzenheimer. Papa used to say that he had six cordons, but only one coat! I believe it was true."

"Hanserl is better off, madam," replied Nelly, smiling; "at least, as regards the coats."

"Tell him, then, that I've been to see him, and am so grieved at his accident, but that it was all Colonel Haggerstone's fault—a bit of silly vanity to show how well he could shoot—and I'm certain it just comes of being used to the pistols. I never missed when I fired at Norwood's!"

The utterance of that name seemed to recall her from the discursive babble. She paused, and, for a moment or two, she was silent. At last, turning to the sisters, she reiterated her hopes of a speedy meeting, and, with a cordial pressure of the hand to each, wished her last good-night, and departed.

CHAPTER X.

A FAMILY DISCUSSION.

Long before Lady Hester awoke on the following morning, every circumstance of her visit was known to Grounsell. It was the doctor's custom to see Dalton early each day, and before Sir Stafford was stirring, and to chat away an hour or so with the invalid, telling the current news of the time, and cheering his spirits by those little devices which are not among the worst resources of the Materia Medica. With all his knowledge of Lady Hester's character—her caprices, her whims, and her insatiable passion for excitement, he was still astonished beyond measure at this step; not that the false air of benevolence or charity deceived him—he was too old a practitioner in medicine, and had seen far too much of the dark side of human nature to be easily gulled—but his surprise arose from the novelty of her condescending to know, and even propitiate, the good graces of people whom she usually professed to regard as the least interesting of all classes of mankind. The "reduced lady or gentleman" had only presented themselves to Lady Hester's mind by the medium of an occasional curiously worded advertisement in a morning paper, and were invariably associated with a subsequent police report, where the object of charity was sure to be confronted with half a dozen peers or members of parliament, whose sympathies he had put under contribution to support a life of infamy or extravagance. "A begging impostor" rang in her mind as a phrase whose ingredient words could not be divorced, and she was thoroughly convinced that imposture and poverty were convertible terms. The very notion of any one having once been well off, and being now in embarrassment, was, to her deeming, most satisfactory evidence of past misconduct and present knavery. Grounsell had heard her hold forth on this theme more than once, "embroidering the sentiment" with an occasional sly allusion to himself and his own fortunes, so that he had often thought over the difficulty of serving the Daltons with Sir Stafford, by reflecting on the hostility any project would meet with from "my lady," and now accident, or something very like it, had done what all his ingenuity could not succeed in discovering.

The announcement at first rendered him perfectly mute; he heard it without power to make the slightest observation; and it was only at the end of a lengthy description from the two sisters that he exclaimed, in a kind of half soliloquy, "By Jove, it is so like her after all!"

"I'm sure of it," said Nelly; "her manner was kindness and gentleness itself. You should have seen the tender way she took poor Hanserl's hand in her own, and how eagerly she asked us to translate for her the few stray words he uttered."

"Of course she did. I could swear to it all, now that my eyes are opened."

"And with what winning grace she spoke!" cried Kate. "How the least phrase came from her lips with a fascination that still haunts me!"

"Just so, just so!" muttered Grounsell.

"How such traits of benevolence ennoble high station!" said Nelly.

"How easy to credit all that one hears of the charms of intercourse, where manner like hers prevails on every side!" cried Kate, enthusiastically.

"How thoughtful in all her kindness!"

"What elegance in every movement!"

"With what inborn courtesy she accepted

the little valueless attentions which were all we could render her!"

"How beautiful she looked in all the disorder of a dress so unlike her own splendor! I could almost fancy that old straw chair to be a handsome fauteuil since she sat in it."

"How delightful it must be to be admitted to the freedom of daily intercourse with such a person—to live within the atmosphere of such goodness, and such refinement!" And thus they went on ringing the changes upon every gift and grace, from the genial warmth of her heart to the snowy whiteness of her dimpled hands; while Grounsell fidgeted in his chair—searched for his handkerchief—his spectacles—his snuff-box, dropped them all in turn, and gathered them up again, in a perfect fever of embarrassment and indecision.

"And you see her every day, doctor?" said Nelly.

"Yes, every day, madam," said he, hastily, and not noticing nor thinking to whom he was replying.

"And is she always as charming, always as fascinating?"

"Pretty much the same, I think," said he, with a grunt.

"How delightful! And always in the same buoyancy of spirits?"

"Very little changed in that respect," said he, with another grunt.

"We have often felt for poor Sir Stafford being taken ill away from his home, and obliged to put up with the miserable resources of a watering-place in winter; but I own, when I think of the companionship of Lady Hester, much of my compassion vanishes."

"He needs it all, then," said Grounsell, as, thrusting his hands into the recesses of his pockets, he sat a perfect picture of struggling embarrassment.

"Are his sufferings so very great?"

Grounsell nodded abruptly, for he was debating within himself what course to take, for while, on one side, he deemed it a point of honor not to divulge to strangers, as were the Daltons, any of the domestic circumstances of those with whom he lived, he felt, on the other, reluctant to suffer Lady Hester's blandishments to pass for qualities more sterling and praiseworthy.

"She asked the girls to go and see her," said Dalton, now breaking silence for the first time; for, although flattered in the main by what he heard of the fine lady's manner towards his daughters, he was not without misgivings that what they interpreted as courtesy might just as probably be called condescension, against which his Irish pride of birth and blood most sturdily rebelled. "She asked them to go and see her, and it was running in my head if she might not have heard something of the family connection."

"Possibly!" asserted Grounsell, too deep in his own calculations to waste a thought on such a speculation.

"My wife's uncle, Joe Godfrey, married an Englishwoman. The sister was aunt to some rich City banker; and indeed, to tell the truth, his friends in Ireland never thought much of the connection—but you see times are changed. *They* are up now, and *we* are down—the way of the world! It's little I ever thought of claiming relationship with the like o' them!"

"But if it's they who seek us, papa?" whispered Kate.

"Ay, that alters the case, my dear; not but I'd as soon excuse the politeness. Here we are, living in a small way, till matters come round in Ireland; we can't entertain them—not even give them a dinner-party."

"Oh, dearest papa," broke in Nelly, "is not our poverty a blessing if it save us the humiliation of being absurd? Why should we think of such a thing? Why should we, with our straitened means and the habits narrow fortune teaches, presume even to a momentary equality with those so much above us?"

"Faith, it's true enough!" cried Dalton, his cheek flushed with anger. "We *are* changed, there's no doubt of it; or it is not a Dalton would say the words you've just said. I never knew before that the best in the land wasn't proud to come under our roof."

"When we had a roof," said Nelly, firmly. "And if these ancestors had possessed a true and a higher pride, mayhap we might still have one. Had they felt shame to participate in schemes of extravagance and costly display, had they withheld encouragement from a ruinous mode of living, we might still be dwellers in our own home and our own country."

Dalton seemed thunderstruck at the boldness of a speech so unlike the gentle character of her who had uttered it. To have attributed any portion of the family calamities to their own misconduct—to have laid the blame of their downfall to any score save that of English legislation, acts of parliament, grand jury laws, failure of the potato crop, tithes, Terry alts, or smut in the wheat—was a heresy he never, in his gloomiest moments, had imagined.

and now he was to hear it from the lips of his own child.

"Nelly—Nelly Dalton," said he; "but why do I call you Dalton? Have you a drop of our blood in your veins at all—or is it the Godfreys you take after? Extravagance—ruinous living—waste—what'll you say next?" He couldn't continue, indignation and anger seemed almost to suffocate him.

"Papa—dearest, kindest papa!" cried Nelly, as the tears burst from her eyes, "be not angry with me, nor suppose that any ungenerous repining against our altered lot finds a place in my heart. God knows that I grieve not for myself; in the humble sphere in which I am placed, I have found true contentment—greater, perhaps, than higher fortunes would have given me; for, here, my duties are better defined, and my sense of them is clearer. If I feel sorrow, it is for you and my dear sister—for you, papa, who suffer from many a privation; for her, who might well adorn a more exalted station. But for me—the lame Nelly, as children used to call me——" She was not suffered to finish her speech, for already her father had clasped his arms around her, and Kate, in a gush of tears, was sobbing on his shoulder.

"Where's the doctor—what's become of him?" said Dalton, as, recovering from his emotion, he wished to give a different direction to their thoughts.

"He went away half an hour ago, papa," said Kate. "He always goes off without saying good-bye, whenever there is a word said about family."

"I noticed that, too, my dear," said Dalton, "and I wouldn't wonder if he came of low people; not but he's a kind creature, and mighty good-hearted."

Nelly could probably have suggested a better reason for the doctor's conduct, but she prudently forbore from again alluding to a theme already too painful.

With the reader's permission, we will now follow him, as, with a gesture of impatience, he abruptly left the room on the very first mention by Dalton of that genealogical tree, in whose branches he loved to perch himself.

"An old fool?" muttered Grounsell, as he passed downstairs—"an old fool, that no experience will ever make wiser! Well may his native country be a stumbling-block to legislators, if his countrymen be all like him, with his family pride and pretension! Confound him, can't he see that there's no independence for a man in debt, and no true self-respect left for him who can't pay his tailor. For himself there's no help; but the poor girls! he'll be the ruin of *them*. Kate is already a willing listener to his nonsensical diatribes about blood and family; and poor Nelly's spirits will be broken in the hopeless conflict with his folly! Just so, that will be the end of it; he will turn the head of the one, and break the heart of the other, and yet, all the while, he firmly believes he is leaving a far better heritage behind him in this empty pride, than if he could bequeath every acre that once belonged to them." Thus soliloquizing, he went on ringing changes over every form of imprudence, waste, vanity, and absurdity, which, by applying to them the simple adjective of "Irish," he fancied were at once intelligible, and needed no other explanation. In this mood he made his entrance into Sir Stafford's chamber, and so full of his own thoughts that the worthy baronet could not fail to notice his preoccupation.

"Eh! Grounsell, what's the matter—another row with my lady, eh?" said he, smiling with his own quiet smile.

"Not to-day. We've not met this morning, and, consequently, the armistice of yesterday is still unbroken! The fatigue of last night has, doubtless, induced her to sleep a little longer, and so I have contrived to arrive at noon without the risk of an apoplexy."

"What fatigue do you allude to?"

"Oh, I forgot—I have a long story for you. What do you suppose her ladyship has been performing now?"

"I've heard all about it," said Sir Stafford, pettishly. "George has given me the whole narrative of that unlucky business. We must take care of the poor fellow, Grounsell, and see that he wants for nothing."

"You're thinking of the pistol-shooting; but that's not her ladyship's last," said the doctor, with a malicious laugh. "It is as a Lady Bountiful she has come out, and made her *début* last night—I am bound to say, with infinite success." And without further preface, Grounsell related the whole adventure of Lady Hester's visit to the dwarf, omitting nothing of those details we have already laid before the reader, and dilating with all his own skill upon the possible consequences of the step. "I have told you already about these people: of that old fool, the father, with his Irish pride, his Irish pretensions, his poverty, and his insane notions about family. Well, his head, a poor thing in the best of times, is gone clean mad about this visit. And then the girls! good, dear, affectionate children as they are, they're in a kind of

paroxysm of ecstasy about her ladyship's style, her beauty, her dress, the charm of her amiability, the fascination of her manner. Their little round of daily duties will henceforth seem a dreary toil, the very offices of their charity will lose all the glow of zeal when deprived of that elegance which refinement can throw over the veriest trifle. Ay! don't smile at it—the fact is a stubborn one. They'd barter the deepest devotion they ever rendered to assuage pain for one trick of that flattery with which my lady captivated them. Will all the poetry of poor Nelly's heart shut out the memory of graces associated with the vanities of fashion? Will all Kate's dutiful affection exalt those household drudgeries in her esteem, the performances of which will henceforth serve to separate her more and more from one her imagination has already enshrined as an idol?"

"You take the matter too seriously to heart, Grounsell," said Sir Stafford, smiling.

"Not a bit of it; I've studied symptoms too long and too carefully not to be ever on the lookout for results. To Lady Hester, this visit is a little episode as easily forgotten as any chance incident of the journey. But what an event is it in the simple story of *their* lives!"

"Well, well, it cannot be helped now; the thing is done, and there's an end of it," said Sir Stafford, pettishly; "and I confess I cannot see the matter as you do, for I have been thinking for two days back about these Daltons, and of some mode of being of service to them, and this very accident may suggest the way. I have been looking over some old letters and papers, and I've no doubt that I have had—unintentionally, of course—a share in the poor fellow's ruin. Do you know, Grounsell, that this is the very same Peter Dalton who once wrote to me the most insulting letters, and even a defiance to fight a duel, because a distant relative bequeathed to me a certain estate, that more naturally should have descended to him? At first, I treated the epistles as unworthy of any serious attention—they were scarcely intelligible, and not distinguished by anything like a show of reason; but when from insult the writer proceeded to menace, I mentioned the affair to my lawyer, and, indeed, gave him permission to take any steps that might be necessary to rid me of so unpleasant a correspondent. I never heard more of the matter; but now, on looking over some papers, I see that the case went hardly with Dalton, for there was a 'rule to show cause,' and an 'attachment,' and I don't know what besides, obtained against him from the King's Bench, and he was actually imprisoned eight months for this very business; so that, besides having succeeded to this poor fellow's property, I have also deprived him of his liberty. Quite enough of hardship to have suffered at the hands of any one man—and that one, not an enemy."

"And would you believe it, Onslow, we have talked over you and your affairs a hundred times together, and yet he has never even alluded to this? One would think that such an event would make an impression upon most men; but, assuredly, he is either the most forgetful or the most generous fellow on earth."

"How very strange! And so you tell me that he remembers my name and all the circumstances of that singular bequest—for singular it was—from a man whom I never saw since he was a boy?"

"He remembers it all. It was the last blow fortune dealt him, and, indeed, he seemed scarcely to require so heavy a stroke to fell him, for, by his own account, he had been struggling on, in debt and difficulty, for many a year, putting off creditors by the plausible plea that a considerable estate must eventually fall in to him. It is quite certain that he believed this himself, but he also maintained a course of expenditure that, were he even in possession of the property, it would have been impossible to keep up. His brother-in-law's parsimony, too, was a constant source of self-gratulation to him, fancying, as he did, that a considerable sum in bank stock would be among the benefits of this bequest. To find himself cut off, without even a mention of his name, was then to know that he was utterly, irretrievably ruined."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Onslow; "I never suspected the case had been so hard a one. His letters—you shall see them yourself—bore all the evidence of a man more touchy on the score of a point of honor than mindful of a mere money matter. He seemed desirous of imputing to me—who, as I have told you, never saw Mr. Godfrey for above forty years—something like undue influence, and, in fact, of having prejudiced his brother-in-law against him. He dated his angry epistles from a park or a castle—I forget which—and they bore a seal of armorial pretensions such as an archduke might acknowledge. All these signs seemed to me so indicative of fortune and standing, that I set my friend down for a very bloodthirsty Irishman, but assuredly never imagined that poverty had contributed its sting to the injury."

"I can easily conceive all that," said Grounsell. "At this very moment, with

want staring him on every side, he'd rather talk of his former style at—confound the barbarous place, I never can remember the name of it—than he'd listen to any suggestion for the future benefit of his children."

"I have been a grievous enemy to him," said Sir Stafford, musingly.

"He reckons the loss at something like six thousand a year," said Grounsell.

"Not the half of it, doctor. The estate, when I succeeded to it, was in a ruinous condition. A pauper and rebellious tenantry holding their tenures on nominal rents, and either living in open defiance of all law, or scheming to evade it by a hundred subterfuges. Matters are somewhat better; but if so, it has cost me largely to make them so. Disabuse his mind, I beg you, of this error. His loss was at least not so heavy as he reckoned."

"Faith, I'll scarcely venture on so very delicate a theme," said Grounsell, dryly. "I'm not quite so sure how he'd take it."

"I see, doctor," said Onslow, laughing, "that his duelling tastes have impressed you with a proper degree of respect. Well, let us think of something more to the purpose than rectifying a mere mistaken opinion. How can we serve him? What can be done for him?"

"Ruined gentlemen, like second-hand uniforms, are generally sent to the colonies," said Grounsell; "but Dalton is scarcely fit for export."

"What if we could get him appointed a magistrate in one of the West India Islands?"

"New rum would finish him the first rainy season."

"Is he fit for a consulship?"

"About as much as for Lord Chancellor. I tell you the man's pride would revolt at anything to which a duty was annexed. Whatever you decide on must be untrammeled by any condition of this kind."

"An annuity, then—some moderate sum sufficient to support them in respectability," said Onslow; "that is the only thing I see for it, and I am quite ready to do my part, which, indeed, is full as much a matter of honor as generosity."

"How will you induce him to accept it?"

"We can manage that, I fancy, with a little contrivance. I'll consult Prichard; he's coming here this very day about those renewals, and he'll find a way of doing it."

"You'll have need of great caution," said Grounsell; "without being naturally suspicious, misfortune has rendered him very sensitive as to anything like a slight. To this hour he is ignorant that his daughter sells those little figures; and although he sees, in a hundred appliances to his comfort, signs of resources of which he knows nothing, he never troubles his head how the money comes."

"What a strange character!"

"Strange, indeed. True pride and false pride, manly patience, childish petulance, generosity, selfishness, liberality, meanness, even to the spirits alternating between boy-like levity and downright despair! The whole is such a mixture as I never saw before, and yet I can fancy it is as much the national temperament as that of the individual."

And now Grounsell, launched upon a sea without compass or chart, hurried off to lose himself in vague speculation about questions that have puzzled, and are puzzling, wiser heads than his.

CHAPTER XI.

"A PEEP BETWEEN THE SHUTTERS" AT A NEW CHARACTER.

Not even Mademoiselle Célestine herself, nor the two London footmen, now condemned to exhibit their splendid proportions to the untutored gaze of German rustics, could have chafed and fretted under the unhappy detention at Baden with a greater impatience than did George Onslow. A young Guardsman, who often fancied that London, out of season, was a species of Palmyra; who lived but for the life that only one capital affords; who could not credit the fact, that people could ride, dress, dine, and drive anywhere else, was lamentably "ill bestowed" among the hills and valleys, the winding glens and dense pine forests of a little corner of Germany.

If he liked the excitement of hard exercise, it was when the pleasure was combined with somewhat of peril, as in a foxhunt, or heightened by the animation of a contest in a rowing match. Scenery, too, he cared for, when it came among the incidents of a deer-stalking day in the Highlands. Even walking, if it were a match against time, was positively not distasteful; but to ride, walk, row or exert himself, for the mere exercise, was in his philosophy only a degree better than a sentence to the treadmill, the slavery being voluntary not serving to exalt the motive.

To a mind thus constituted, the delay at Baden was intolerable. Lady Hester's sys-

tem of small irritations and provocations rendered domesticity and home life out of the question. She was never much given to reading at any time, and now books were not to be had: Sydney was so taken up with studying German, that she was quite uncompanionable. Her father was too weak to bear much conversation; and as for Grounsell, George always set him down for a quiz: good-hearted in his way, but a bit of a bore, and too fond of old stories. Had he been a young lady, in such a predicament, he would have kept a journal, a pretty martyrology of himself and his feelings, and eked out his sorrows between Childe Harold and Werther. Had he been an elderly one, he would have written folios by the post, and covered acres of canvas with dogs in worsted, and tigers in Berlin wool. Alas! he had no such resources. Education had supplied him with but one comfort and consolation —a cigar—and so he smoked away incessantly; sometimes as he lounged out of the window, after breakfast, in all the glory of an embroidered velvet cap and a gorgeous dressing-gown; sometimes as he sauntered in the empty saloon, or the deserted corridors, in the weed-grown garden, in the dishabille of a many-pocketed shooting-jacket and cork-soled shoes; now, as he lounged along the dreary streets, or passed along the little wooden bridge, wondering within himself how much longer a man could resist the temptation that suggested a spring over the balustrade into the dark pool beneath.

He had come abroad partly for Sydney's sake, partly because, having "gone somewhat too fast" in town, an absence had become advisable. But now, as he sauntered about the deserted streets of the little village, not knowing how long the durance might last, without an occupation, without a resource, both his brotherly love and prudence began to fail him, and he wished he had remained behind, and taken the chances, whatever they might be, of his creditors' forbearance. His moneyed embarrassments involved nothing dishonorable; he bad done no more than what some score of very well-principled young men have done, and are doing at this very hour —ay, good reader, and will do again, when you and I have gone where all our moralizing will not deceive any more—he had contracted debts, the payment of which must depend upon others—he had borrowed, what no efforts of his own could restore —he had gambled, and lost sums totally disproportionate to his fortune; but, in all these things, he was still within the pale of honorable conduct—at least, so said the code under which he lived—and George believed it.

Sir Stafford, who only learned about the half of his son's liabilities, was thunderstruck at the amount. It was scarcely a year and a half ago that he had paid all George's debts, and they were then no trifle; and now he saw all the old items revived and magnified, as if there was only one beaten road to ruin—and that began at Crocky's, and ended at "the Bench." The very names of the *dramatis personæ* were the same. It was Lazarus Levi lent the money, at sixty per cent. It was another patriarch, called Gideon Masham, discounted the same. A lucky viscount had once more "done the trick" at hazard; and if Cribbiter had not broken down in training, why Madame Pompadour had, and so the same result came about. George Onslow had got what Newmarket-men call a "squeeze," and was in for about seven thousand pounds.

Nothing is more remarkable in our English code social than the ingenuity with which we have contrived to divide ranks and classes of men, making distinctions so subtle, that only long habit and training are able to appreciate. Not alone are the gradations of our nobility accurately defined, but the same distinctions prevail among the "untitled" classes, and even descend to the professional and trading ranks; so that the dealer in one commodity shall take the "pas" of another; and he who purveys the glass of port for your dessert would be outraged if classed with him who contributed the Stilton! These hair-splittings are very unintelligible to foreigners; but, as we hold to them, the presumption is, that they suit us; and I should not have stopped now to bestow a passing notice on the system, if it were not that we see it, in some cases, pushed to a degree of extreme resembling absurdity, making even of the same career in life a sliding-scale of respectability; as for instance, when a young gentleman of good expectations and fair fortune has outraged his guardians and his friends by extravagance, he is immediately removed from the Guards, and drafted into the Infantry of the Line; if he misbehaves there, they usually send him to India; is he incorrigible, he is compelled to remain in some regiment there; or in cases of inveterate bad habits, he exchanges into the Cape Rifles, and gets his next removal from the knife of a Caffre.

Ancient geographers have decided, we are not aware on what grounds, that there is a place between "h—ll and Connaught."

Modern discovery, with more certitude, has shown one between the Guards and the Line — a species of military purgatory, where, after a due expiation of offenses, the sinner may return to the Paradise of the Household Brigade without ever transgressing the Inferno of a marching regiment. This half-way stage is the "Rifles." So long as a young fashionable falls no lower, he is safe. There is no impugnment of character—no injury that cannot be repaired. Now, George Onslow had reached so far. He was compelled to exchange into the —th, then quartered in Ireland. It is true he did not join his regiment; his father had interest enough somewhere to obtain a leave of absence for his son, and First Lieutenant Onslow, *vice* Ridgeway promoted, was suffered to amuse himself howsoever and wheresoever he pleased.

The "exchange," and the reasons for which it was effected, were both unpleasant subjects of reflection to George; and as he had few others, these continued to haunt him, till at last he fancied that every one was full of the circumstance, each muttering as he passed, "That's Onslow that was in the Coldstreams." Lady Hester, indeed, did not always leave the matter purely imaginary, but threw out occasional hints about soldiers who never served, except at St. James's or Windsor, and who were kept for the wonderment and admiration of foreign sovereigns when visiting England—just as Suffolk breeders exhibit a "punch," or a Berkshire farmer will show a hog, for the delectation of swine-fanciers. Where children show toys, kings show soldiers, and ours are considered very creditable productions of the kind; but Lady Hester averred, with more of truth than she believed, that a man of spirit would prefer a somewhat different career. These currents, coming as they did in season and out of season, did not add to the inducements for keeping the house, and so George usually left home each day, and rarely returned to it before nightfall.

It is true he might have associated with Haggerstone, who, on being introduced, made the most courteous advances to his intimacy; but George Onslow was bred in a school whose first lesson is a sensitive shrinking from acquaintance, and whose chief characteristic is distrust. Now he either had heard, or fancied he had heard, something about Haggerstone. "The colonel wasn't all right," somehow or other. There was a story about him, or somebody of his set, and, in fact, it was as well to be cautious; and so the young Guardsman, who would have ventured his neck in a steeplechase, or his fortune on a "Derby," exhibited all the deliberative wisdom of a judge as to the formation of a passing acquaintance.

If we have been somewhat prolix in explaining the reasons of the young gentleman's solitude, our excuse is, that he had thereby conveyed, not alone all that we know, but all that is necessary to be known, of his character. He was one of a class so large in the world, that few people could not count some half-dozen, at least, similar amongst their acquaintance; and all of whom would be currently set down as incapables, if it were not that now and then, every ten years or so, one of these well-looking, well-bred, indolent dandies, as if tired of his own weariness, turns out to be either a dashing soldier, with a heart to dare, and a head to devise, the boldest achievements; or a politic leader, with resources of knowledge, and a skill in debate, to confront the most polished and practiced veteran in "the Commons."

Our own experiences of our own day show that these are no paradoxical speculations. But we must not pursue the theme further; and have only to add that the reader is not to believe that George Onslow formed one of these brilliant exceptions. Whether the fault lies more in himself, or in us, we must not inquire.

If his lonely walks did not suggest any pleasant reveries, the past did not bring any more agreeable tidings. Dry statements from Mr. Orson, his lawyer—every young man about town has his lawyer nowadays—about the difficulty of arranging his affairs, being the chief intelligence he received, with, from time to time, a short and pithy epistle from a certain noble creditor, Lord Norwood, who, although having won very large sums from Onslow, never seemed in such pressing difficulty as since his good fortune.

The viscount's style epistolary was neither so marked by originality, nor so worthy of imitation, that it would be worth communicating; but as one of his letters bears slightly upon the interests of our story, we are induced to give it; and being, like all his correspondence, very brief, we will communicate it *in extenso*.

"Oh, Norwood again!" said Onslow, as he looked at the seal, and read the not very legible autograph in the corner. "My noble friend does not give a very long respite;" and biting his lips in some impatience, he opened the paper, and read:—

"Dear Onslow:—Orson has paid me the two thousand, as you ordered, but pos-

tively refuses the seventeen hundred and eighty, the Ascot affair, because I cannot give up the original two bills for twelve hundred passed to me for that debt. I told him that they were thrown into the fire—being devilishly tempted to illustrate the process with himself—six months ago, when you gave the renewals; but all won't do, the old prig persists in his demand, to comply with which is clearly impossible, for I have not even preserved the precious ashes of the incremation. I don't doubt but that, legally speaking, and in pettifogging parlance, he is all correct—but between men of honor such strictness is downwright absurdity—and, as Dillhurst says, 'something more.' Now, my dear boy, you must write to him—and at once, too—for I'm in a bad book about 'Chanticleer'—who *is* to win, it seems, after all—and say that he is acting in direct opposition to your wishes—as of course he is—that the money must be paid without more chaffing. The delay has already put me to great inconvenience, and I know how you will be provoked at his obstinacy. You've heard, I suppose, that Brentwood is going to marry Lydia Vaughan. She has thirty thousand pounds, which is exactly what Jack lost last winter. Crosbie says he ought to 'run away from her—after the start—as he carries no weight:' which is somewhat of my own opinion. What any man has to do with a wife nowadays, with the funds at eighty-two, and a dark horse first favorite for the Oaks, is more than I know. Doncaster has levanted, and the Red-House folk will smart for it. He would back Hayes's lot, and there's nothing can ever set him right again. By the way, Orson hints that if I give him a release, or something of that sort, with respect to the bills, he'd pay the cash; but this is only a dodge to make a case for lawyers' parchments, stamps, and so forth; so I won't stand it. Your writing to him will do the whole thing at once. What a jolly world it would be, old fellow, if the whole race of Orsons were carried off by the cholera, or anything akin! They are the greatest enemies to human peace in existence.

"Believe me, yours, most faithfully,

"NORWOOD.

"P. S.—I half fancy Baden is empty by this; but if you chance upon a little fellow—Heaven knows to whom he belongs, or whence he comes—called Albert Jekyl, will you tell him that I'll forward the twenty pounds whenever I win the Oaks, or marry Miss Home Greville, or any other similar piece of good fortune. When he lent me the cash, I don't believe he was the owner of as much more in the world; but it suited him to have a viscount in his debt—a devilish bad investment, if he knew but all. The chances, therefore, are that he has foundered long ago, and you will be spared the trouble of the explanation; but if he survive, say something apologetic, for letter-writing and foreign postage are only making bad worse."

Although, unquestionably, the postcript of this elegant epistle was the part which reflected most severely upon the writer's good feeling and sense of honor, George Onslow was more struck by what related to his own affairs, nor was it till after the lapse of some days that he took the trouble of considering the paragraph, or learning the name of the individual referred to. Even then, all that he could remember was, that he had seen or heard the name "somewhere," and thus, very possibly, the whole matter would have glided from his memory, if accident had not brought up the recollection.

Returning one evening later than usual from his solitary walk, he found that the hotel was closed, the door strongly secured, and all the usual precautions of the night taken, in the belief that the inmates were already safe within doors. In vain he knocked and thundered at the massive panels; the few servants occupied rooms at a distance, and heard nothing of the uproar. He shouted, he screamed, he threw gravel against the windows, and, in his zeal, smashed them, too. All was fruitless; nobody stirred, nor could he detect the slightest sign of human presence in the vast and dreary-looking building before him. The prospect was not a pleasant one, and a December night in the open air was by no means desirable; and yet, where should he turn for shelter? The other hotels were all closed and deserted, and even of the private houses not one in twenty was inhabited. Resolving to give himself one chance more for admission, he scaled the paling of the garden, and reached the rear of the hotel; but here all his efforts proved just as profitless as the former, and he was at last about to abandon all hope, when he caught sight of a faint gleam of light issuing from a small window on the first floor. Having failed to attract notice by all his cries and shouts, he determined to reach the window, to which, fortunately, a large vine, attached to the wall, offered an easy access. George was an expert climber, and in less than a minute found himself seated on the win

dow-sill, and gazing into a room by the aperture between the half-closed shutters. His first impression on looking in was that it was a servant's room. The bare, white-washed walls—the humble, uncurtained bed—three chairs of coarse wood—all strengthened this suspicion, even to the table, covered by a coarse table-cloth, and on which stood a meal—if meal it could be called—an anchorite might have eaten on Friday. A plate of the common brown bread of the country was balanced by a little dish of radishes, next to which stood a most diminutive piece of Baden cheese, and a capacious decanter of water, a long-wick'd tallow candle throwing its gloomy gleam over the whole. For a moment or two George was unable to detect the owner of this simple repast, as he was engaged in replenishing his fire; but he speedily returned, and took his place at the table, spreading his napkin before him, and surveying the board with an air of self-satisfaction such as a gourmand might bestow upon the most perfect *petit dîner*. In dress, air and look, he was thoroughly gentlemanlike; a little foppish, perhaps, in the arrangement of his hair, and somewhat too much display in the jeweled ornaments that studded his neckcloth. Even in his attitude, as he sat at the table, there was a certain air of studied elegance that formed a curious contrast with the miserable meal before him. Helping himself to a small portion of cheese, and filling out a goblet of that element which neither cheers nor inebriates, he proceeded to eat his supper. Onslow looked on with a mingled sense of wonder and ridicule, and while half disposed to laugh at the disparity of the entertainment and him who partook of it, there was something in the scene which repressed his scorn and rendered him even an interested spectator of what went forward. The piercing cold of the night at length admonished him that he should provide for his own admission into the hotel; and, although nothing was now easier than to make his presence known, yet he felt a natural reluctance at the pain he must occasion to the stranger, whose frugal mode of living and humble interior would be thus so unceremoniously exposed. "The chances are," thought George, "that these privations are only endurable because they are practiced in secret, and at no sacrifice of worldly estimation. How can I then—or what right have I—to inflict the torture of an exposure upon this young man, whoever he is?" The conclusion was very rapidly come to, and not less speedily acted upon; for he determined to spend the night, if need be, in the open air, rather than accept an alternative so painful in its consequences. His resolutions had usually not long to await their accomplishment; and, turning his back to the window, and disdaining the slow process by which he had gained the ascent, he sprang with one leap down to the ground; in doing so, however, his elbow struck the window, and at the same instant that he reached the earth, the shivered fragments of a pane of glass came clattering after him. In a moment the sash was thrown open, and a head appeared above. "I have smashed the window," cried George, in French, "as the only means of being heard. They have locked me out of the hotel, and I don't fancy spending a winter's night in walking the streets of Baden."

"You're an Englishman?" said the voice from above, in English.

"Yes; but I don't see what that has to do with the matter," replied Onslow, testily; "even a Laplander might prefer shelter in such a season."

"If you'll have the goodness to come round to the front door," said the voice—one of the very softest and meekest of voices—"I shall have great pleasure in opening it for you." And at the same time the unknown held forth his candle in polite guidance to the other's steps.

"Thanks, thanks; never mind the light, I know the way perfectly," said George, not a little ashamed at the contrast between his own gruffness and the courtesy of the stranger whose window he had broken.

Onslow had barely time to reach the front door of the inn, when it was opened for him, and he saw before him a very dapper little figure, who, with a profusion of regrets at not having heard him before, offered his candle, a wax one on this occasion, for George's accommodation. Protesting that the broken pane was not of the slightest inconvenience—that the room was a small dressing-closet—that it was not worth a moment's thought, and so forth, he permitted Onslow to escort him to the door of his room, and then wished him a good-night. The scene scarcely occupied the time we have taken to relate it, and yet in that very short space George Onslow had opportunity to see that the unknown had all the easy deportment and quiet breeding of one accustomed to good society. There was, perhaps, a little excess of courtesy, at least according to that school of politeness in which Onslow had been taught; but this might be the effect of living abroad, where such a tone usually prevailed. The

urbanity was not exactly cold enough for George's notions. "No matter; he's no snob, that's clear," thought he; "and even if he were, he's done me good service." And with this blending of selfishness and speculation he went to sleep, and slept soundly, too, not harassed by even a thought of him who passed an hour in the effort to repair his broken window, and shivered the rest of the night through from the insufficiency of his skill.

Blessed immunity theirs, who so easily forget the pain they occasion others, and who deem all things trifles that cost themselves no afterthought of regret. Happy the nature that can, without self-repining, spill the wine over aunt Betty's one "peach-colored satin," or, in careless mood, pluck the solitary flower of her only geranium. Enviable stoicism that mislays the keepsake of some poor widow, or lames the old curate's cob, the fond companion of many rambles. These, whatever others think, are very enviable traits, and enable the possessors to wear placid countenances, and talk in most meritorious strain on the blessings of equanimity and the excellent fruits of a well-trained mind.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. ALBERT JEKYL.

Onslow's first thought, on awaking the next morning, was of last night's acquaintance, but all the information he could obtain concerning him was that he was an Englishman who had passed the summer in Baden, and during the season knew and was known by every one. The waiter called him, in the usual formulary, "a very nice gentleman;" and seemed by his manner to infer that any further account might be had by—paying for it. Onslow, if he even understood the hint, was not the man to avail himself of it, so he simply ordered him to bring the hotel book, in which the names of all travelers are inscribed, and at once discovered that the proprietor of the humble *entresol*, No. 6, was a Mr. Albert Jekyl, with the ordinary qualification attached to him of "Rentier Anglais." Searching back in the same instructive volume, he found that, on his arrival in June, Mr. Jekyl had occupied a small apartment on the first-floor, from which he had subsequently removed to the second; thence to a single room in the third story, and finally settled down in the quiet seclusion of the small chamber where George had first seen him. These were very small materials from which to compile a history, but at least they conveyed one inference, and that a very common one—that the height of Mr. Jekyl's fortune and that of his dwelling observed to each other an inverse proportion, and that, as his *means* went down, *he* went up. If, then, no very valuable contribution to the gentleman's history was contained here, at least the page recorded his name; and George, reopening Norwood's letter, satisfied himself that this was the same confiding individual who had entrusted the noble viscount with a loan of twenty pounds. George now remembered to have seen his card on Lady Hester's table, with inquiry after Sir Stafford. "Poor fellow!" thought he; "another victim of 'trente-et-un.' They have cleared him out at the tables, and he is either ashamed to write home, or his friends have refused to assist him. And Norwood, too—the heartlessness of putting to contribution a poor young fellow like this!" Onslow thought worse of this than of fifty other sharp things of the noble lord's doing, and of some of which he had been himself the victim.

"I'll call upon him this very morning!" said George, half aloud, and with the tone and air of a man who feels he has said a very generous thing, and expressed a sentiment that he is well aware will expose him to a certain amount of reprobation. "Jekyl, after all, is a right good name. Lady Hester said something about Jekyls that she knew, or was related to. Good style of fellow—he looked a little tigerish, but that comes of the Continent. If he be really presentable, too, my lady will be glad to receive him in her present state of destitution. Norwood's ungracious message was a bore, to be sure, but then he need not deliver it—there was no necessity of taking trouble to be disagreeable—or better again—far better," thought he, and he burst out laughing at the happy notion, "I'll misunderstand his meaning, and pay the money. An excellent thought; for, as I am about to book up a heavy sum to his lordship, it's only deducting twenty pounds and handing it to Jekyl, and I'll be sworn he wants it most of us all."

The more Onslow reflected on it, the more delighted was he with this admirable device; and it is but fair to add that, however gratified at the opportunity of doing a kindness, he was even better pleased at the thought of how their acquaintance at the "Grosvenor" and the "Ultras" would laugh at the "sharp viscount's being sold." There was only one man of all Onslow's

set on whom he would have liked to practice this jest, and that man was Norwood. Having decided upon his plan, he next thought of the execution of it, and this he determined should be by letter. A short note, conveying Norwood's message and the twenty pounds, would save all explanation, and spare Jekyl any unpleasant feeling the discussion of a private circumstance might occasion.

Onslow's note concluded with his "thanks for Mr. Jekyl's kindness on the preceding evening," and expressing a wish to know "at what hour Mr. J. would receive a visit from him."

Within a very few minutes after the billet was despatched, a servant announced Mr. Albert Jekyl, and that young gentleman, in the glory of a very magnificent brocade dressing-gown, and a Greek cap, with slippers of black velvet, embroidered in gold, entered the room.

Onslow, himself a distinguished member of that modern school of dandyism whose pride lies in studs and shirt-pins, in watch-chains, rings and jeweled canes, was struck by the costly elegance of his visitor's toilet. The opal buttons at his wrists; the single diamond, of great size and brilliancy, on his finger; even the massive amber mouthpiece of the splendid meerschaum he carried in his hand, were all evidences of the most expensive tastes. "Could this by possibility be the man he had seen at supper?" was the question he at once asked himself; but there was no time to discuss the point, as Jekyl, in a voice almost girlish in its softness, said:

"I could not help coming at once to thank you, Mr. Onslow, for your polite note, and say how gratified I feel at making your acquaintance. Maynard often spoke of you to me; and I confess I was twenty times a day tempted to introduce myself."

"Maynard—Sir Horace Maynard!" cried Onslow, with a slight flush—half pleasure, half surprise, for the baronet was the leader of the set George belonged to—a man of great fortune, ancient family, the most successful on the English turf, and the envy of every young fellow about town. "Do you know Maynard?"

"Oh, very well indeed," lisped Jekyl, "and like him much."

Onslow could not help a stare at the man who, with perfect coolness and such an air of patronage, professed his opinion of the most distinguished fashionable of the day.

"He has a very pretty taste in equipage," continued Jekyl, "but never could attain to the slightest knowledge of a dinner."

Onslow was thunderstruck. Maynard, whose entertainments were the triumph of the Clarendon, thus criticised by the man he had seen supping like a mouse on a morsel of mouldy cheese!

"Talking of dinners, by the way," said Jekyl, "what became of Merewater?"

"Lord Merewater?—he was in waiting when we left England."

"A very tidy cook he used to have—a Spaniard called José—a perfect hand at all the Provençal dishes. Good creature, Merewater. Don't you think so?"

Onslow muttered a kind of half-assent; and added, "I don't know him." Indeed, the lord in question was reputed as insufferably proud, and as rarely admitting a commoner to the honor of his acquaintance.

"Poor Merewater! I remember playing him such a trick: to this hour he does not know who did it. I stole the 'menu' of one of his grand dinners, and gave it to old Lord Bristock's cook—a creature that might have made the messes for an emigrant ship—and such a travesty of an entertainment never was seen. Merewater affected illness, and went away from the table firmly persuaded that the whole was got up to affront him."

"I thought the Earl of Bristock lived well and handsomely?" said George.

"Down at Brentwood it was very well—one was in the country—and grouse and woodcocks, and salmon and pheasants, came all naturally and seasonably; besides, he really had some very remarkable Burgundy; and, though few people will drink it nowadays, Chambertin *is* a Christmas wine."

The cheese and the decanter of water were uppermost in George's mind, but he said nothing, suffering his companion to run on, which he did, over a wide expanse of titled and distinguished families, with all of whom he appeared to have lived on the closest terms of intimacy. Certainly of those Onslow himself knew, Jekyl related twenty little traits and tokens that showed he was speaking with true knowledge of the parties. Unlike Haggerstone, he rarely, if ever, alluded to any of those darker topics which form the staple of scandal. A very gentle ridicule of some slight eccentricity, a passing quiz of some peculiarity in dress, voice or manner, was about the extent of Jekyl's criticism, which on no occasion betrayed any malice. Even the oddities that he portrayed were usually done by some passing bit of mimicry of the individual in question. These he threw into the dialogue of his story without halt or impediment, and which, being done with great tact,

great command of face, and a most thorough appreciation of humor, were very amusing little talents, and contributed largely to his social success. Onslow laughed heartily at many of the imitations, and thus recognized characters that were introduced into a narrative, without the trouble of announcing them.

"You've heard, perhaps, the series of mishaps which compelled us to take refuge here," said George, leading the way to what he supposed would induce an equal degree of communicativeness on the other side.

"Oh! yes, the landlord told me of your disasters."

"After all, I believe the very worst of them was coming to this place in such a season."

"It is certainly seeing it '*en papillote*,'" said Jekyl, smiling, "and you, perhaps, are not an admirer of beauty unadorned."

"Say, rather, of Nature at her ugliest—for, whatever it may be in summer, with foliage and clear streams, flowers, smart folk airing and driving about, equipage, music, movement, and merry voices—now, it is really too dismal. Pray, how do you get through the day?"

Jekyl smiled one of his quiet, equivocal smiles, and slightly raised his shoulders without speaking.

"Do you shoot?"

"No," said he.

"But why do I ask—there's nothing to shoot. You ride, then?"

"No."

"Cigars will do a great deal; but, confound it, there must be a large share of the day very heavy on your hands, even with a reasonable allowance for reading and writing."

"Seldom do either!" said Jekyl, with his usual imperturbed manner.

"You haven't surely got up a flirtation with some '*Fraülein* with yellow hair?'"

"I cannot lay claim to such good fortune. I really do nothing. I have not even the usual English resource of a terrier to jump over my stick, nor was I early enough initiated into the mystery of brandy-and-water—in fact, a less occupied individual cannot well be imagined; but somehow—you'll smile if I say—I am not bored."

"It would be very ungenerous, then, to conceal your secret," cried Onslow, "for assuredly the art of killing time here, without killing one's self, is worth knowing."

"The misfortune is, I cannot communicate it; that is, even giving me credit for possessing one, my skill is like that of some great medical practitioner, who has learnt to look on disease with such practiced eyes, that the appropriate remedy rises, as it were, instinctively to his mind—he knows not how or why—and who dies without being able to transmit the knowledge to a successor. I have, somewhat in the same way, become an accomplished idler; and with such success, that the dreariest day of rain that ever darkened the dirty windows of a village inn, the most scorching dog-day that ever emptied the streets of an Italian city, and sent all the inhabitants to their siesta, never hipped me. I have spent a month with perfect satisfaction in quarantine, and bobbed for three weeks in a calm at sea, with no other inconvenience than the moans of my fellow-passengers. There's no secret in it, Mr. Onslow; or, if there be, it lies in this pretty discovery that we are always bored by our habit of throwing ourselves on the resources of somebody else, who, in his turn, looks out for another, and so on. Now, a man in a fever never dreams of cooling his hand by laying it on another patient's cheek; yet this is what we do. To be thoroughly bored, you must associate yourself with some half-dozen tired, weary, dyspeptic twaddlers, and make up a joint-stock bank of your several incapacities, learn to growl in chorus, and you'll be able to go home and practice it as a solo."

"And have you been completely alone here of late?" said George, who began to fear that the sermon on "ennui" was not unaccompanied by a taste of the evil.

"Occasionally I've chatted for half an hour with two gentlemen who reside here—a Colonel Haggerstone——"

"By the way, who is he?" broke in Onslow, eagerly.

"He has been traced back to Madras, but the most searching inquiries have failed to elicit anything further."

"Is he the man they called Arlington's Colonel Haggerstone?"

Jekyl nodded; but with an air that seemed to say he would not enter more deeply into the subject.

"And your other companion—who is he?"

"Peter Dalton, of—I am ashamed to say—I forget where," said Jekyl; who, at once assuming Dalton's bloated look, in a well-feigned Irish accent, went on: "A descendant of as ancient and as honorable a familee as any in the three kingdoms, and if a little down in the world—bad luck to them that done it!—just as ready as ever he was, to enjoy agreeable society and the ganial flow of soul."

"He's the better of the two, I take it," said Onslow.

"More interesting, certainly—just as a ruined château is a more picturesque object than a new police-station or a cut-stone penitentiary. There's another feature, also, which ought to give him the preference. I have seen two very pretty faces from time to time as I have passed the windows, and which I conjecture to belong to his daughters."

"Have you not made their acquaintance?" asked Onslow, in some surprise.

"I grieve to say I have not," sighed Jekyl, softly.

"Why, the matter should not be very difficult, one might opine, in such a place, at such a time, and with——"

He hesitated, and Jekyl added:

"With such a papa, you were about to say. Well, that is precisely the difficulty. Had my excellent friend, Peter, been a native of any other country, I flatter myself I should have known how to make my advances; but with these dear Irish their very accessibility is a difficulty of no common order. Assume an air of deference and respect, and they'll set you down for a cold formalist, with whom they can have nothing in common. Try the opposite line, and affect the free-and-easy, and the chances are that you have a duel to fight before you know you have offended. I confess that I have made several small advances, and thrown out repeated little hints about loneliness and long evenings, and so forth; and although he has concurred with me in every word, yet his practice has never followed his precept. But I don't despair. What say you if we attack the fortress as allies? I have a notion we should succeed."

"With all my heart. What's your plan?"

"At this moment I have formed none, nor is there need of any. Let us go out, like the knights-errant of old, in search of adventures, and see if they will befall us. The first step will be to make Dalton's acquaintance. Now, he always takes his walk in bad weather in the great Saal below; should he not make his appearance there to-day, as he has already absented himself for some days, I'll call to inquire after him at his own house. You'll accompany me. The rest we'll leave to fortune."

Although Onslow could not see that this step could lead to anything beyond a civil reply to a civil demand, he assented readily, and promised to meet his companion at four o'clock the same evening. As for Jekyl, he took a very different view of the whole transaction, for he knew that while to him there might be considerable difficulty in establishing any footing with the Daltons, the son of the wealthy baronet would be, in all likelihood, very differently looked on. In presenting *him*, thought he, I shall have become the friend of the family at once. It had often before been his fortune in life to have made valuable acquaintances in this maner; and although the poor Daltons were very unlikely to figure in the category of profitable friends, they would at least afford an agreeable resource against the dullness of wintry evenings, and prevent, what he himself called, the "demoralization" of absence from female society. Lastly, the scheme promised to establish a close intimacy between Onslow and himself; and here was a benefit worth all the others.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SUSPICIOUS VISITOR.

How far were the Daltons from suspecting that they were the subject of so much and such varied solicitude, and that, while Lady Hester was fancying to herself all the fashionable beauties whom Kate would eclipse in loveliness, and what an effect charms like hers would produce on society, Sir Stafford was busily concerting with his lawyer the means of effectually benefiting them; and George Onslow—for want of better—speculated, as he smoked, on the "kind of people" they would prove, and wondered whether the scheme were worth the light trouble it was to cost him. Little did they know of all this—little imagine that outside of their humble roof there lived one—save "dear Frank"—whose thoughts included them. "The purple and fine linen" category of this world cannot appreciate the force of this want of sympathy! They, whose slightest griefs and least afflictions in life are always certain of the consolations of friends, and even more bland solace of a fashionable physician—whose woes are re-echoed by the *Morning Post*, and whose sorrows are mourned in *Court Journals*—cannot frame to themselves the sense of isolation which narrow fortune impresses. "Poverty," says a classical authority, "has no heavier evil than that it makes men ridiculous." But this wound to self-love, deep and poignant though it be, is light in comparison with the crushing sense of isolation—that abstraction from sympathy in which poor men live!

The Daltons were seated round Hanserl's bed, silently ministering to the sick man, and watching with deep and anxious interest the labored respiration and convulsive twitches of his fever. The wild and rapid utterance of his lips, and the strange fancies they syllabled, often exciting him to laughter, only deepened the gravity of their countenances, and cast over the glances they interchanged a tinge of sadder meaning.

"He couldn't have better luck," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully, "just for being a friend to us! If he had never seen nor heard of us, maybe 'tis happy and healthy he'd be to-day."

"Nay, nay, papa," said Nelly, gently; "this is to speak too gloomily; nor is it good for us to throw on fortune the burden that we each should bear patiently."

"Don't tell me there is not such a thing as luck!" replied Dalton, in a tone of irritation. "I know well whether there is or no! for five-and-thirty years whatever I put my hand to in life turned out badly. It was the same whether I did anything on the spur of the moment, or thought over it for weeks. If I wished a thing, that was reason enough for it to come out wrong!"

"And even were it all as you fancy, papa, dearest," said Nelly, as she fondly drew her arm round him, "is it nothing that these reverses have found you strong of heart and high of courage to bear them? Over and over again have you told me that the great charm of field sports lay in the sense of fatigue bravely endured, and peril boldly confronted—that, devoid of these, they were unworthy of men. Is there not a greater glory, then, in stemming the tide of adverse fortune: and is it not a higher victory that carries you triumphant over the real trials of life—kind of heart, trustful and generous, as in the best days of your prosperity, and with a more gentle and forbearing spirit than prosperity ever taught?"

"That's nothing against what I was saying," said Dalton, but with a more subdued face. "There's poor little Hans, and, till a couple of days ago, he never knew what it was to be unlucky. As he told us himself, his life was a fairy tale."

"True," interposed Nelly; "and, happy as it was, and blameless and guileless he who led it, mark how many a gloomy thought—what dark, distressing fancies hover round his brain, and shadow his sick-bed! No, no! the sorrows of this world are more equally distributed than we think for, and he who seems to have fewest is oftentimes but he who best conceals them!"

Her voice shook, and became weaker as she spoke: and the last few words were barely audible. Dalton did not notice her emotion; but Kate's looks were bent upon her with an expression of fond and affectionate meaning.

"There's somebody at the door," whispered Dalton. "See who it is, Kate."

Kate arose, and, opening the door softly, beheld old Andy. His shriveled features and lusterless eyes appeared in a state of unusual excitement.

"What's the matter, Andy? What is it you want?" said she.

"Is the master here? Where's the master?"

"He's here. What do you want with him?" rejoined she.

"I want himself," said he, as with his palsied hand he motioned to Dalton to come out.

"What is it, you old fool?" said Dalton, impatiently, as he arose, and followed him outside of the room.

"There's one of them again!" said Andy, putting his mouth to Dalton's ear, and whispering in deep confidence.

"One of what? One of whom?"

"He's upstairs," muttered Andy.

"Who's upstairs? Who is he?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Didn't I know him the minit I seen him? Ayeh! Ould as I am, my eyes isn't that dim yet."

"God give me patience with you!" said Dalton; and, to judge from his face, he was not entreating a vain blessing. "Tell me, I say, what do you mean, or who is it is upstairs?"

Andy put his lips once more to the other's ear, and whispered, "An attorney!"

"An attorney?" echoed Dalton.

"Iss!" said Andy, with a significant nod.

"And how do you know he's an attorney?"

"I seen him," replied the other, with a grin; "and I locked the door on him."

"What for?"

"What for? What for, is it? Oh, murther!—murther!" whined the old creature, who, in this unhappy question, thought he read the evidence of his poor master's wreck of intellect. It was, indeed, no slight shock to him to hear that Peter Dalton had grown callous to danger, and could listen to the terrible word he had uttered without a sign of emotion.

"I seen the papers with a red string round 'em," said Andy, as though by this

incidental trait he might be able to realize all the menaced danger.

"Sirrah, ye're an old fool!" said Dalton, angrily; and, jerking the key from his trembling fingers, he pushed past him, and ascended the stairs.

If Dalton's impatience had been excited by the old man's absurd terrors and foolish warnings, his own heart was not devoid of a certain vague dread, as he slowly wended his way upwards. It was true he did not partake of old Andy's fear of the dread official of the law. Andy—who, forgetting time and place—not knowing that they were in another land, where the King's writ never ran, saw in the terrible apparition the shadows of coming misfortune. Every calamity of his master's house had been heralded by such a visit, and he could as soon have disconnected the banshee with a sudden death, as the sight of an attorney with an approaching disaster.

It is true, Dalton did not go this far, but still old impressions were not so easily effaced. And as the liberated captive is said to tremble at the clanking of a chain, so his heart responded to the fear that memory called up of past troubles and misfortunes.

"What can he want with me now?" muttered he, as he stopped to take breath. "They've left me nothing but life, and they can't take *that*. It's not that I'd care a great deal if they did! Maybe, it's more bother about them titles; but I'll not trouble my head about them. I sold the land, and I spent the money; ay, and what's more, I spent it at home among my own people, like a gentleman; and, if I'm an absentee, it's not my fault. I suppose he couldn't arrest me?" said he, after a pause. "But, God knows they're making new laws every day, and it's hard to say if they'll let a man have peace or ease in any quarter of the world before long. Well—well! there's no use guessing. I have nothing to sell—nothing to lose. I suppose they don't make it hanging matter even for an Irishman to live a trifle too fast!" And with this piece of reassuring comfort he pulled up his cravat, threw back the breast of his coat, and prepared to confront the enemy bravely.

Although Dalton made some noise in unlocking the door, and not less in crossing the little passage that led to the sitting-room, his entrance was unperceived by the stranger, who was busily engaged in examining a half-finished group by Nelly. It represented an old soldier, whose eyes were covered by a bandage, seated beside a well, while a little drummer-boy read to him the bulletin of a great victory. She had destined the work for a present to Frank, and had put forth all her genius in its composition. The glowing enthusiasm of the blind veteran—his half-opened lips—his attitude of eagerness as he drank in the words, were finely contrasted with the childlike simplicity of the boy, more intent as it seemed in spelling out the lines than following the signification.

If the stranger was not a finished connoisseur, he was certainly not ignorant of art, and was deep in its contemplation when Dalton accosted him.

"I beg pardon—Mr. Dalton, I presume—really this clever composition has made me forget myself totally. May I ask, is it the work of a native artist?"

"It was done in this place, sir," replied Dalton, whose pride in his daughter's skill was overlaid by a less worthy feeling—shame, that a Dalton should descend to such an occupation.

"I have seen very inferior productions highly prized and praised, and if I am not indiscreet——"

"To prevent any risk of that kind," observed Dalton, interrupting him, "I'll take the liberty of asking your name, and the object of this visit."

"Prichard, sir; of the firm of Prichard and Harding, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn-fields," replied the other, whose voice and manner at once assumed a business-like tone.

"I never heard the name before," said Dalton, motioning to a chair. The stranger seated himself, and, placing a large roll of papers before him on the table, proceeded to untie and arrange them most methodically, and with the air of a man too deeply impressed with the importance of his occupation to waste a thought upon the astonishment of a bystander.

"Prichard and Harding are mighty cool kind of gentlemen," thought Dalton, as he took his seat at the opposite side of the table, trying, but not with any remarkable success, to look as much at ease as his visitor.

"Copy of deed—draft of instructions—bill of sale of stock—no, here it is! This is what we want," muttered Prichard, half aloud. "I believe that letter, sir, is in your handwriting?"

Dalton put on his spectacles and looked at the document for a few seconds, during which his countenance gradually appeared to light up with an expression of joyful meaning, for his eye glistened, and a red flush suffused his cheek.

"It is, sir—that's mine, every word of

it; and what's more, I'm as ready to stand to it to-day as the hour I wrote it."

Mr. Prichard, scarcely noticing the reply, was again deep in his researches; but the object of them must be reserved for another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EMBARRASSING QUESTION.

How very seldom it is that a man looks at a letter he has written some twenty years or so before, and peruses it with any degree of satisfaction! No matter how pleasurable the theme, or how full of interest at the time, years have made such changes in circumstances, have so altered his relations with the world—dispelled illusions here, created new prospects there—that the chances are he can feel nothing but astonishment for what once were his opinions, and a strange sense of misgiving that he ever could have so expressed himself.

Rare as this pleasure is, we left Mr. Dalton in the fullest enjoyment of it, in our last chapter, and, as he read and re-read his autograph, every feature of his face showed the enjoyment it yielded him.

"My own writing, sure enough! I wish I never put my hand to paper in a worse cause! Isn't it strange," he muttered, "how a man's heart will outlive his fingers? I couldn't write now as well as I used then; but I can feel just the same There's the very words I said." And with this he read, half aloud, from the paper—"'But if you'll consent to send lawyers and attorneys to the devil, and let the matter be settled between us, like two gentlemen, Peter Dalton will meet you, when, where, and how you like, and take the satisfaction as a full release of every claim and demand he makes on you.' Just so! and a fairer offer never was made, but I grieve to say it wasn't met in the same spirit."

"When you wrote that letter, Mr. Dalton," said Prichard, not looking up from the papers before him, "you were doubtless suffering under the impression of a wrong at the hands of Sir Stafford Onslow."

"Faith, I believe you. The loss of a fine estate wasn't a trifle, whatever you may think it!"

"The question ought rather to be, what right had you to attribute that loss to *him?*"

"What right is it? All the right in the world. Who got the property? Answer me that. Wasn't it he came in as a sole legatee? But what am I talking about? Sure the thing is done and ended, and what more does he want?"

"I'm just coming to that very point, sir," said Prichard. "Sir Stafford's attention having been accidentally called to this transaction he perceives that he has unwittingly done you a great injustice, and that there is one matter, at least, on which he is bound, even for his own satisfaction——"

"Satisfaction, is it?" broke in Dalton, catching at the only word that struck his ear with a distinct signification. "Better late than never, and it's proud I am to oblige him. Not but there's people would tell you that the time's gone by, and all that sort of thing, but them was never my sentiments. 'Never a bad time for a good deed,' my poor father used to say, and you may tell him that I'll think the better of his countrymen to the day of my death for what he's going to do now."

Prichard laid down the paper he was reading, and stared at the speaker in mute amazement.

"You're his friend, I perceive," said Dalton.

"Sir Stafford is kind enough to consider me in that light."

"Faith! the kindness is all the other way," rejoined Dalton, laughing; "at least, in this country, for the seconds are just as guilty as the principals, and have no fun for their money. But, sure, we can cross over to Landau; they tell me it's Barbaria there, over the Rhine."

"Bavaria, perhaps?" interposed the other.

"Yes, that's what I said. We can be over the frontier in two hours. There's every conveniency in life," said he, rubbing his hands in high glee.

"Our business, I trust, sir, can be all arranged here, and without much delay either."

"Just as you like; I'm not fond of moving since my knee was bad, and I'm agreeable to anything."

"You seem to contemplate a hostile meeting, sir, if I understand you aright," said Prichard, slowly; "but if you had been kind enough to hear me out, you'd have seen that nothing was further from my friend's thoughts or my own."

"Oh, murther!" groaned Dalton, as he sank down into a chair.

"We never entertained any such intention."

"No duel?"

"Nothing of the kind."

"Sure, I heard you say satisfaction. I'll take my oath you said satisfaction."

"I hope sincerely, sir, that the word may bear a peaceful signification."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried Dalton, as, clasping his hands on his knees, he sat, a perfect type of disappointed hope, and totally inattentive to a very eloquent explanation that Prichard was pouring forth. "You see, now, sir, I trust," cried the latter, triumphantly, "that if my friend's intentions are not precisely what you looked for, they are not less inspired by an anxious desire to cultivate your friendship and obtain your good opinion."

"I wasn't listening to a word you were saying," said Dalton, with a sincerity that would have made many men smile; but Mr. Prichard never laughed, or only when the joke was uttered by a silk gown, or the initiative given by the bench itself.

"I was endeavoring, sir, to convey," said he again, and with infinite patience, "that, by a clause of the late Mr. Godfrey's will, the suggestion was made to the effect that, if Sir Stafford Onslow should deem it fitting and suitable, the testator would not be averse to an annuity of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds per annum being settled on Mr. Peter Dalton for the term of his life. This clause has now been brought under Sir Stafford's notice for the first time, as he never, in fact, saw the will before. The document was lodged in our hands; and as certain proceedings, of which the letter you have just acknowledged forms a part, at that period placed you in a peculiar position of hostility to Sir Stafford, we, as his legal advisers, did not take any remarkable pains to impress this recommendation on his memory."

"Go on; I'm listening to you," said Dalton.

"Well, sir, Sir Stafford is now desirous of complying with this injunction, the terms of which he reads as more obligatory upon him than his legal friends would be willing to substantiate. In fact, he makes the matter a question of feeling, and not of law; and this, of course, is a point wherein we have no right to interpose an opinion. Something like ten years has elapsed since Mr. Godfrey's death, and taking the sum at two hundred pounds with interest at five per cent., a balance of above three thousand two hundred will now be at your disposal, together with the annuity on your life; and to arrange the payment of these moneys, and take measures for their future disbursement, I have the honor to present myself before you. As for these letters, they are your own; and Sir Stafford, in restoring them, desires to efface all memory of the transaction they referred to, and to assure you that, when circumstances enable him to meet you, it may be on terms of perfect cordiality and friendship."

"Upon my soul and conscience I don't understand a word of it all!" said Dalton, whose bewildered looks gave a perfect concurrence to the speech. "Is it that I have a right to all the money?"

"Exactly, sir; Sir Stafford feels that he is simply carrying out the wishes of your relative, Mr. Godfrey——"

"But this has nothing to do with the little difference between Sir Stafford and myself? I mean, it leaves us just where we were before."

"Sir Stafford hopes that henceforth a better understanding will subsist between you and himself; and that you, seeing how blameless he has been in the whole history of your losses, will receive this act as an evidence of his desire to cultivate your friendship."

"And this two hundred a year?"

"Is Mr. Godfrey's bequest."

"But depending on Sir Stafford to pay or not, as he likes?"

"I have already told you, sir, that he conceives he has no option in the matter; and that the mere expression of a desire on Mr. Godfrey's part becomes to him a direct injunction."

"Faith! he was mighty long in finding it out, then," said Dalton, laughing.

"I believe I have explained myself on that head," replied Prichard; "but I am quite ready to go over the matter again."

"God forbid! my head is 'moidered' enough already, not to make it worse! Explanations, as they call them, always puzzle me more; but if you'd go over the subject to my daughter Nelly, her brain is as clear as the Lord Chancellor's. I'll just call her up here, for, to tell you the truth, I never see my way right in anything till Nelly makes it out for me."

Mr. Prichard was probably not grieved at the prospect of a more intelligent listener, and readily assented to the proposition; in furtherance of which, Dalton left the room to seek his daughter.

On descending to the little chamber where he had left the two girls in waiting beside the dwarf's sick-bed, he now discovered that they had gone, and that old Andy had replaced them—a change which, to judge from Hanserl's excited looks and wild utterance, was not by any means to his taste.

"Was machst du hier?" cried he, sternly, to the old man.

"Whisht! alannah! Take a sleep, acushla!" whined old Andy, as, under the

delusion that it was beside an infant his watch was established, he tried to rock the settle-bed like a cradle, and then croned away in a cracked voice one of his own native ditties:

"I saw a man weeping and makin' sad moan,
He was crying and grievin',
For he knew their deceivin',
An' rockin' a cradle for a child not his own."

"Was für katzen jammer! What for cats' music mak'st thou there?"

"Where's the girls, Andy?" whispered Dalton in the old man's ear.

"They're gone," muttered he.

"Gone where?—where did they go?"

"Fort mit ihm. Away with him. Leave him not stay. Mein head is heavy, and mein brain turn round!" screamed Hanserl.

"Will ye tell me where they're gone, I say?" cried Dalton, angrily.

"Hushoo! husho!" sang out the old man, as he fancied he was composing his charge to sleep; and then made signs to Dalton to be still, and not awaken him.

With an angry muttering, Dalton turned away and left the chamber, totally regardless of Hanserl's entreaties to take Andy along with him.

"You're just good company for each other!" said he, sulkily, to himself. "But where's these girls, I wonder?"

"Oh, papa, I have found you at last!" cried Kate, as, bounding down the stairs half a dozen steps at a time, she threw her arm round him. "She's here! she's upstairs with us; and so delightful, and so kind, and so beautiful. I never believed any one could be so charming."

"And who is she, when she's at home?" said Dalton, half sulkily.

"Lady Hester, of course, papa. She came while we were sitting with Hanserl—came quite alone to see him and us; and when she had talked to him for a while, so kindly and so sweetly, about his wound, and his fever, and his home in the Tyrol, and his mother, and everything, she turned to Nelly, and said, 'Now, my dears, for a little conversation with yourselves. Where shall we go to be quite alone and uninterrupted?' We didn't know what to say, papa; for we knew that you and the strange gentleman were busy in the sitting-room, and while I was thinking what excuse to make, Nelly told her that our only room was occupied. 'Oh, I don't care for that in the least,' said she; 'let us shut ourselves up in your dressing-room.' Our dressing-room! I could have laughed and cried at the same moment as she said it; but Nelly said that we had none, and invited her upstairs to her bedroom; and there she is now, papa, sitting on the little bed, and making Nelly tell her everything about who we are, and whence we came, and how we chanced to be living here."

"I wonder Nelly hadn't more sense," said Dalton, angrily; "not as much as a curtain on the bed, nor a bit of carpet on the floor. What'll she think of us all?"

"Oh, papa, you're quite mistaken; she called it a dear little snuggery; said she envied Nelly so much that lovely view over Eberstein and the Schloss, and said what would she not give to lead our happy and peaceful life, away from that great world she despises so heartily. How sad to think her duties tie her down to a servitude so distasteful and repulsive!"

"Isn't my lady the least taste in life of a humbug, Kitty?" whispered Dalton, as his eyes twinkled with malicious drollery.

"Papa, papa! you cannot mean——"

"No harm if she is, darling. I'm sure the pleasantest, ay, and some of the worthiest people ever I knew, were humbugs; that is, they were always doing their best to be agreeable to the company; and if they strained their conscience a bit, small blame to them for that same."

"Lady Hester is far above such arts, papa; but you shall judge for yourself. Come in now, for she is so anxious to know you."

Kate, as she spoke, had opened the door of the little bedroom, and, drawing her arm within her father's, gently led him forward to where Lady Hester was seated upon the humble settle.

"It's a nice place they showed you into, my lady," said Dalton, after the ceremony of introduction was gone through; "and there was the drawing-room, or the library, and the breakfast-parlor, all ready to receive you."

"We heard that you were engaged with a gentleman on business, papa."

"Well, and if I was, Nelly, transacting a small matter about my estates in Ireland, sure it was in my own study we were."

"I must be permitted to say that I am very grateful for any accident which has given me the privilege of an intimate with my dear young friends," said Lady Hester, in her very sweetest of manners: "and as to the dear little room itself, it is positively charming."

"I wish you'd seen Mount Dalton, my lady. There's a window, and it isn't bigger than that there, and you can see seven baronies out of it and a part of three counties—Killikelly's flour-mills, and the town

of Drumcoolaghan in the distance; not to speak of the Shannon winding for miles through as elegant a bog as ever you set eyes upon."

"Indeed!" smiled her ladyship, with a glance of deep interest.

"'Tis truth I'm telling you, my lady," continued he; "and, what's more, 'twas our own, every stick and stone of it. From Crishnamuck to Ballymodereena on one side, and from the chapel at Dooras down to Drumcoolaghan, 'twas the Dalton estate."

"What a princely territory!"

"And why not? Weren't they kings once, or the same as kings. Didn't my grandfather, Pearce, hold a court for life and death in his own parlor. Them was the happy, and the good times too," sighed he, plaintively.

"But I trust your late news from Ireland is favorable?"

"Ah! there isn't much to boast about. The old families is dying out fast, and the properties changing hands. A set of English rogues and banker-fellows, that made their money in dirty lanes and alleys——"

A sort of imploring, beseeching anxiety from his daughter Kate here brought Dalton to a dead stop, and he pulled up as suddenly as if on the brink of a precipice.

"Pray, go on, Mr. Dalton," said Lady Hester, with a winning smile; "you cannot think how much you have interested me. You are aware that we really know nothing about poor dear Ireland; and I am so delighted to learn from one so competent to teach."

"I didn't mean any offense, my lady," stammered out Dalton, in confusion. "There's good and bad everywhere; but I wish to the Lord the cotton-spinners wouldn't come among us, and their steam-engines, and their black chimneys, and their big factories; and they say we are not far from that now."

A gentle tap at the door, which communicated with the sitting-room, was heard at this moment, and Dalton exclaimed,

"Come in!" but, not suffering the interruption to stop the current of his discourse, he was about to resume, when Mr. Prichard's well-powdered head appeared at the door.

"I began to suspect you had forgotten me, Mr. Dalton," said he; but suddenly catching a glimpse of Lady Hester, he stopped to ask pardon for the intrusion.

"Faith, and I just did," said Dalton, laughing: "couldn't you contrive to step in, in the morning, and we'll talk that little matter over again?"

"Yes, Prichard; pray don't interrupt us now," said Lady Hester, in a tone of half-peevishness. "I cannot possibly spare you, Mr. Dalton, at this moment;" and the man of law withdrew, with a most respectful obeisance.

"You'll forgive me, won't you?" said she, addressing Dalton, with a glance whose blandishment had often succeeded in a more difficult case.

"And now, papa, we'll adjourn to the drawing-room," said Kate, who somehow continued to notice a hundred deficiencies in the furniture of a little chamber she had often before deemed perfect.

Dalton accordingly offered his arm to Lady Hester, who accepted the courtesy in all form, and the little party moved into the sitting-room; Nelly following, with an expression of sadness in her pale features very unlike the triumphant glances of her father and sister.

"I'm certain of *your* pardon, Mr. Dalton, and of *yours*, too, my dear child," said Lady Hester, turning towards Kate, as she seated herself on the stiff old sofa, "when I avow that I have come here determined to pass the evening with you. I'm not quite so sure that my dear Miss Dalton's forgiveness will be so readily accorded me. I see that she already looks gravely at the prospect of listening to my fiddle-faddle instead of following out her own charming fancies."

"Oh! how you wrong me, my lady!" broke in Nelly, eagerly. "If it were not for my fears of our unfitness—our inability," she stammered, in confusion and shame; and old Dalton broke in:

"Don't mind her, my lady; we're as well used to company as any family in the country; but, you see, we don't generally mix with the people one meets abroad; and why should we? God knows who they are. There was chaps here last summer at the tables you wouldn't let into the servants' hall. There was one I seen myself, with an elegant pair of horses, as nice steppers as ever you looked at, and a groom behind with a leather-strap round him, and a—" here Mr. Dalton performed a pantomime, by extending the fingers of his open hand at the side of his head, to represent a cockade—"what d'ye call it—in his hat; and who was he, did you think? 'Billy Rogers,' of Muck; his father was in the canal——"

"In the canal!" exclaimed Lady Hester, in affright.

"Yes, my lady; in the Grand Canal—an inspector at forty pounds a year—the devil a farthin' more; and if you seen the son here, with two pins in his cravat, and

a gold chain twisting and turning over his waistcoat, with his hat on one side, and yellow gloves, new every morning, throwing down the 'Naps' at that thieving game they call 'Red and Black,' you'd say he was the Duke of Leinster!"

"Was he so like his grace?" asked Lady Hester, with a delightful simplicity.

"No; but grander!" replied Dalton, with a wave of his hand.

"It is really, as you remark, very true," resumed her ladyship; "it is quite impossible to venture upon an acquaintance outside of England; and I cordially concur in the caution you practice."

"So I'm always telling the girls, 'better no company than trumpery!' not that I don't like a bit of sociality as well as ever I did—a snug little party of one's own—people whose mothers and fathers had names—the real old stock of the land. But to be taken up with every chance rapscallion you meet on the cross-roads—to be hand and glove with this, that and the other—them never was my sentiments."

It is but justice to confess there was less of hypocrisy in the bland smile Lady Hester returned to this speech than might be suspected; for, what between the rapidity of Dalton's utterance, and the peculiar accentuation he gave to certain words, she did not really comprehend one syllable of what he said. Meanwhile, the two girls sat silent and motionless. Nelly, in all the suffering of shame at the absurdity of her father's tone—the vulgarity of an assumption she had fondly hoped years of poverty might have tamed down, if not obliterated; Kate, in mute admiration of their lovely visitor, of whose graces she never wearied. Nor did Lady Hester make any effort to include them in the conversation: she had come out expressly for one sole object—to captivate Mr. Dalton; and she would suffer nothing to interfere with her project. To this end, she heard his long and tiresome monologues about Irish misery and distress, narrated with an adherence to minute and local details that made the whole incomprehensible; she listened to him with well-feigned interest. in his narratives of the Daltons of times long past, of their riotous and extravagant living, their lawlessness and their daring; nor did she permit her attention to flag while he recounted scenes and passages of domestic annals, that might almost have filled a page of savage history.

"How sorry you must have felt to leave a country so dear by all its associations and habits!" sighed she, as he finished a narrative of more than ordinary horrors.

"Ain't I breaking my heart over it? Ain't I fretting myself to mere skin and bone?" said he, with a glance of condolence over his portly figure. "But what could I do? I was forced to come out here for the education of the children—bother it for education!—but it ruins everybody nowadays. When I was a boy, reading and writing, with a trifle of figures, was enough for any one. If you could tell what twenty bullocks cost, at two pounds four and sixpence a beast, and what was the price of a score of hoggets, at fifteen shillings a head, and wrote your name and address in a good round hand, 'twas seldom you needed more; but now you have to learn everything—ay, sorrow bit, but it's learning the way to do what every one knows by nature: riding, dancing—no, but even walking, I'm told, they teach, too! Then there's French you must learn for talking, and Italian to sing!—and German—upon my soul I believe it's to snore in!—and what with music, dancing and drawing, everybody is brought up like a play-actor."

"There is, as you remark, far too much display in modern education, Mr. Dalton; but you would seem fortunate enough to have avoided the error. A young lady whose genius can accomplish such a work as this——"

"'Tis one of Nelly's, sure enough," said he, looking at the group to which she pointed, but feeling even more shame than pride in the avowal.

The sound of voices—a very unusual noise—from the door without, now broke in upon the conversation, and Andy's cracked treble could be distinctly heard in loud altercation.

"Nelly! Kitty! I say," cried Dalton, "see what's the matter with that old devil. There's something come over him to-day, I think, for he won't be quiet for two minutes together."

Kate accordingly hastened to discover the cause of a tumult in which now the sound of laughter mingled.

As *we*, however, enjoy the prerogative of knowing the facts before they could reach *her*, we may as well inform the reader that Andy, whose intelligence seemed to have been preternaturally awakened by the sight of an attorney, had been struck by seeing two strangers enter the house-door and leisurely ascend the stairs. At such a moment, and with his weak brain filled with its latest impression, the old man at once set them down as bailiffs come to arrest his master. He hobbled after them, therefore, as well as he could, and just reached the

landing as Mr. Jekyl, with his friend Onslow, had arrived at the door.

"Mr. Dalton lives here, I believe?" said Jekyl.

"Anan," muttered Andy, who, although he heard the question, affected not to have done so, and made this an excuse for inserting himself between them and the door.

"I was asking if Mr. Dalton lived here?" cried Jekyl, louder, and staring with some astonishment at the old fellow's manœuver.

"Who said he did, eh?" said Andy, with an effort at fierceness.

"Perhaps it's on the lower story?" asked Onslow.

"Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't, then!" was the answer.

"We wish to see him, my good man," said Jekyl; "or, at least, to send a message to him."

"Sure, I know well enough what ye want," said Andy, with a wave of his hand. "'Tisn't the first of yer like I seen."

"And what may that be?" asked Onslow, not a little amused by the blended silliness and shrewdness of the old man's face.

"Ayeh! I know yez well," rejoined he, shaking his head. "Be off, then, and don't provoke the house! Away wid yez, before the servants sees ye."

"This is a rare fellow," said Onslow, who, less interested than his companion about the visit, was quite satisfied to amuse himself with old Andy. "So you'll not even permit us to send our respects, and ask how your master is?"

"I'm certain you'll be more reasonable," simpered Jekyl, as he drew a very weighty-looking purse from his pocket, and, with a considerable degree of ostentation, seemed preparing to open it.

The notion of bribery, and in such a cause, was too much for Andy's feelings; and, with a sudden jerk of his hand, he dashed the purse out of Jekyl's fingers, and scattered the contents all over the landing and stairs. "Ha, ha!" cried he, "'tis only ha'pence he has, after all!" And the taunt was so far true, that the ground was strewn with kreutzers and other copper coins of the very smallest value.

As for Onslow, the scene was too ludicrous for him any longer to restrain his laughter; and although Jekyl laughed too, and seemed to relish the absurdity of his mistake, as he called it, having put in his pocket a collection of rare and curious coins, his cheek, as he bent to gather them up, was suffused with a deeper flush than the mere act of stooping should occasion. It was precisely at this moment that Kate Dalton made her appearance.

"What is the matter, Andy?" asked she, turning to the old man, who appeared, by his air and attitude, as if determined to guard the doorway.

"Two spalpeens, that want to take the master; that's what it is," said he, in a voice of passion.

"Your excellent old servant has much mistaken us, Miss Dalton," said Jekyl, with his most deferential of manners. "My friend, Captain Onslow"—here he moved his hand towards George, who bowed—"and myself, having planned a day's shooting in the 'Moorg,' have come to request the pleasure of Mr. Dalton's company."

"Oh, the thievin' villains!" muttered Andy; "that's the way they'll catch him."

Meanwhile Kate, having promised to convey their polite invitation, expressed her fears that her father's health might be unequal to the exertion. Jekyl immediately took issue upon the point, and hoped, and wondered, and fancied, and "flattered himself" so much, that Kate at last discovered she had been drawn into a little discussion, when she simply meant to have returned a brief answer; and while she was hesitating how to put an end to an interview that had already lasted too long, Dalton himself appeared.

"Is it with me these gentlemen have their business?" said he, angrily, while he rudely resisted all Andy's endeavors to hold him back.

"Oh, my dear Mr. Dalton," cried Jekyl, warmly, "it is such a pleasure to see you quite restored to health again! Here we are—Captain Onslow, Mr. Dalton—thinking of a little excursion after the woodcocks down the Moorg Thal; and I have been indulging the hope that you'll come along with us."

The very hint of an attention, the merest suggestion that bordered on a civility, struck a chord in old Dalton's nature that moved all his sympathies. It was at once a recognition of himself and his ancestry for generations back. It was a rehabilitation of all the Daltons of Mount Dalton for centuries past; and as he extended a hand to each, and invited them to walk in, he half felt himself at home again, doing the honors of his house, and extending those hospitalities that had brought him to beggary.

"Are you serious about the shooting party?" whispered Onslow to Jekyl, as he walked forward.

"Of course not. It's only a 'Grecian horse' to get inside the citadel."

"My daughter, Miss Dalton; Mr. Jekyl—Miss Kate Dalton. Your friend's name, I believe, is——"

"Captain Onslow."

Lady Hester started at the name, and, rising, at once said:

"Oh, George! *I* must introduce you to my fair friends. Miss Dalton, this gentleman calls me 'mamma;' or, at least, if he does not, it is from politeness. Captain Onslow—Mr. Dalton. Now, by what fortunate event came you here?"

"Ought I not to ask the same question of your ladyship?" said George, archly.

"If you like; only that, as I asked first——"

"You shall be answered first. Lady Hester Onslow, allow me to present Mr. Albert Jekyl."

"Oh, indeed!" drawled out Lady Hester, as, with her very coldest bow, she surveyed Mr. Jekyl through her glass, and then turned away to finish her conversation with Ellen.

Jekyl was not the man to feel a slight repulse as a defeat; but, at the same time, saw that the present was not the moment to risk an engagement. He saw, besides, that, by engaging Dalton in conversation, he should leave Lady Hester and Onslow at liberty to converse with the two sisters, and, by this act of generosity, entitle himself to gratitude on all sides. And, after all, among the smaller martyrdoms of this life, what self-sacrifice exceeds his who, out of pure philanthropy, devotes himself to the "bore" of the party! Honor to him who can lead the forlorn hope of this stronghold of weariness. Great be his praises who can turn from the seductive smiles of beauty and the soft voices of youth, and only give eye and ear to the tiresome and uninteresting. High among the achievements of unobtrusive heroism should this claim rank; and if you doubt it, my dear reader, if you feel disposed to hold cheaply such darings, try it—try even for once. Take your place beside that deaf old lady in the light auburn wig, or draw your chair near to that elderly gentleman, whose twinkling grey eyes and tremulous lip bespeak an endless volubility on the score of personal reminiscences. Do this, too, within earshot of pleasant voices and merry laughter—of that tinkling ripple that tells of conversation flowing lightly on, like a summer stream, clear where shallow, and reflective where deep! Listen to the wearisome bead-roll of family fortunes—the births, deaths, and marriages of those you never saw, and hoped never to see—hear the long narratives of past events, garbled, mistaken, and misstated, with praise and censure ever misapplied,—and then, I say, you will feel that, although such actions are not rewarded with red ribbons or blue, they yet demand a moral courage and a perseverance that in wider fields win high distinction.

Albert Jekyl was a proficient in this great art; indeed, his powers developed themselves according to the exigency, so that the more insufferably tiresome his companion, the more seemingly attentive and interested did he become. His features were, in fact, a kind of "boreemeter," in which, from the liveliness of the expression, you might calculate the stupidity of the tormentor; and the mercury of his nature rose, not fell, under pressure. And so you would have said had you but seen him that evening, as, seated beside Dalton, he heard, for hours long, how Irish gentlemen were ruined and their fortunes squandered. What jolly times they were, when men resisted the law and never feared a debt! Not that, while devouring all the "rapparee" experiences of the father, he had no eye for the daughters, and did not see what was passing around him. Ay, that did he, and mark well how Lady Hester attached herself to Kate Dalton, flattered by every sign of her unbought admiration, and delighted with the wondering homage of the artless girl. He watched Onslow, too, turn from the inanimate charms of Nelly's sculptured figures, to gaze upon the long, dark lashes and brilliant complexion of her sister. He saw all the little comedy that went on around him, even to poor Nelly's confusion, as she assisted Andy to arrange a tea-table, and, for the first time since their arrival, proceed to make use of that little service of white and gold which, placed on a marble table for show, constitutes the invariable decoration of every humble German drawing-room. He even overheard her, as she left the room, giving Andy her directions a dozen times over, how he was to procure the tea, and the sugar, and the milk—extravagances she did not syllable without a sigh. He saw and heard everything, and rapidly drew his own inferences, not alone of their poverty, but of their unfitness to struggle with it.

"And yet, I'd wager, these people," said he to himself, "are reveling in superfluities; at least, as compared to *me!* But, so it is, the rock that one man ties round his neck, another would make a stepping-stone of!" This satisfactory conclusion gave ad-

ditional sweetness to the bland smile with which he took his teacup from Nelly's hand, while he pronounced the beverage the very best he had ever tasted out of Moscow. And so we must leave the party.

CHAPTER XV.

CONTRASTS.

"So you think, Grounsell, I may be able to leave this in a day or two?" said Sir Stafford, as, on the day following the events we have just related, he slowly walked up and down his dressing-room.

"By the end of the week, if the weather only continue fine, we may be on the road again."

"I'm glad of it—heartily glad of it! Not that, as regarded myself, it mattered much where I was laid up in dock; but I find that this isolation, instead of drawing the members of my family more closely together, has but served to widen the breach between them. Lady Hester and Sydney rarely meet; George sees neither of them, and rarely comes near me, so that the sooner we go hence the better for all of us."

Grounsell gave a dry nod of assent, without speaking.

"Sydney is very anxious to go and pass some time with her aunt Conway; but I foresee that, if I consent, the difference between Lady Hester and her will then become an irreconcilable quarrel. You don't agree with me, Grounsell?"

"I do not. I never knew the ends of a fractured bone unite by grating them eternally against each other."

"And, as for George, the lounging habits of his service and cigars have steeped him in an indolence from which there is no emerging. I scarcely know what to do with him."

"It's hard enough to decide upon," rejoined Grounsell; "he has some pursuits, but not one ambition."

"He has very fair abilities, certainly," said Sir Stafford, half peevishly.

"Very fair!" nodded Grounsell.

"A good memory—a quick apprehension."

"He has one immense deficiency, for which nothing can compensate," said the doctor, solemnly.

"Application—industry?"

"No, with *his* opportunities a great deal is often acquired with comparatively light labor. I mean a greater and more important element."

"He wants steadiness, you think?"

"No; I'll tell you what he wants—he wants pluck!"

Sir Stafford's cheek became suddenly crimson, and his blue eyes grew almost black in the angry expression of the moment.

"Pluck, sir? My son deficient in courage?"

"Not as you understand it now," resumed Grounsell, calmly. "He has enough, and more than enough, to shoot me or anybody else that would impugn it. The quality I mean is of a very different order. It is the daring to do a thing badly to day in the certain confidence that you will do it better to-morrow, and succeed perfectly in it this day twelvemonth. He has not pluck to encounter repeated failures, and yet return every morning to the attack; he has not pluck to be bullied by mediocrity in the sure and certain confidence that he will live to surpass it; in a word, he has not that pluck which resists the dictation of inferior minds, and inspires self-reliance through self-respect."

"I confess I cannot see that in the station he is likely to occupy such qualities are at all essential," said Sir Stafford, almost haughtily.

"Twenty thousand a year is a fine thing, and may dispense with a great many gifts in its possessor; and a man like myself, who never owned a twentieth of the amount, may be a precious bad judge of the requisites to spend it suitably; but I'll tell you one thing, Onslow, that organ the phrenologists call 'combativeness' is the best in the whole skull."

"I think your Irish friend Dalton must have been imparting some of his native prejudices to you," said Onslow, smiling; "and, by the way, when have you seen him?"

"I went to call there last night, but I found a tea-party, and didn't go in. Only think of these people, with beggary staring them on every side, sending out for 'Caravan' tea at I don't know how many florins a pound."

"I heard of it; but then, once and away——"

"Once and away! Ay, but once is ruin."

"Well, I hope Prichard has arranged everything by this time. He has gone over this morning to complete the business; so that I trust, when we leave Baden, these worthy people will be in the enjoyment of easier circumstances."

"I see him crossing over the street now. I'll leave you together."

"No, no, Grounsell; wait and hear his

report; we may want your advice besides, for I'm not quite clear that this large sum of arrears should be left at Dalton's untrammeled disposal, as Mr. Prichard intended it should be a test of that excellent gentleman's prudence."

Mr. Prichard's knock was now heard at the door, and the next moment he entered. His pale countenance was slightly flushed, and in the expression of his face it might be read that he had come from a scene of unusual excitement.

"I have failed, completely failed, Sir Stafford," said he, with a sigh, as he seated himself, and threw a heavy roll of paper on the table before him.

As Sir Stafford did not break the pause that followed these words, Prichard resumed:

"I told you last night that Mr. Dalton, not being able clearly to understand my communication, which I own, to prevent any searching scrutiny on his part, I did my best to envelop in a covering of technicalities, referred me to his eldest daughter, in whose acuteness he reposes much confidence. If I was not impressed with the difficulty of engaging such an adversary, from his description, still less was I on meeting with the young lady this morning. A very quietly-mannered, unassuming person, with considerable good looks, which once upon a time must have been actual beauty, was seated alone in the drawing-room awaiting me. Her dress was studiously plain; and were it not for an air of great neatness throughout, I should perhaps call it even poor. I mention all these matters with a certain prolixity, because they bear upon what ensued.

"Without waiting for me to open my communication, she began by a slight apology for her presence there, occasioned, as she said, by her father's ill-health and consequent incapacity to transact business; after which she added a few words expressive of a hope that I would make my statement in the most simple and intelligible form, divested so far as might be of technical phraseology, and such as, to use her own words, a very unlettered person like herself might comprehend.

"This opening, I confess, somewhat startled me—I scarcely expected so much from her father's daughter; but I acquiesced and went on. As we concocted the whole plot together here, Sir Stafford, it is needless that I should weary you by a repetition of it. It is enough that I say I omitted nothing of plausibility, either in proof of the bequest, or in the description of the feeling that prompted its fulfillment. I descanted upon the happy event which, in the course of what seemed an accident, had brought the two families together, and prefaced their business intercourse by a friendship. I adverted to the good influence increased comforts would exercise upon her father's health. I spoke of her sister and her brother in the fuller enjoyment of all that became their name and birth. She heard me to the very end with deep attention, never once interrupting, nor even by a look or gesture expressing dissent.

"At last, when I had concluded, she said, 'This, then, is a bequest?'

"I replied affirmatively.

"'In that case,' said she, 'the terms on which it is conveyed will solve all the difficulty of our position. If my uncle Godfrey intended this legacy to be a peace-offering, however late it has been in coming, we should have no hesitation in accepting it; if he meant that his generosity should be trammeled by conditions, or subject in any way to the good pleasure of a third party, the matter will have a different aspect. Which is the truth?'

"I hesitated at this point-blank appeal, so different from what I looked for, and she at once asked to see the will. Disconcerted still more, I now prevaricated, stating that I had not brought the document with me; that a memorandum of its provisions would, I had supposed, prove sufficient; and finally assured her that acceptance of the bequest involved neither a condition nor a pledge.

"'It may, however, involve an obligation, sir," said she, firmly. 'Let us learn if such be the case.'

"'Are you so proud, Miss Dalton,' said I, 'that you cannot even submit to an obligation?"

"She blushed deeply, and with a weak voice answered:

"'We are too poor to incur a debt.'

"Seeing it was useless to dwell longer on this part of the subject, I adverted to her father's increasing age, his breaking health, and the necessity of affording him a greater share of comforts, but she suddenly stopped me, saying:

"'You may make my refusal of this favor—for such it is, and nothing less—a more painful duty than I deemed it, but you cannot alter my resolution, sir. Poverty, so long as it is honorable, has nothing mean or undeserving about it, but dependence can never bestow happiness. It is true, as you say, that my dear father might have around him many of those little luxuries that he once was used to; but with what changed hearts would not his children

minister them to him! Where would be that high prompting sense of duty that every self-sacrifice is met by now? Where that rich reward of an approving spirit that lightens toil and makes even weariness blessed? Our humble fortunes have linked us closer together; the storms of the world have made us draw nearer to each other, have given us one heart, hope and love alike. Leave us, then, to struggle on, nor cast the gloom of dependence over days that all the ills of poverty could not darken. We are happy now; who can tell what we should become hereafter?'

"I tried to turn her thoughts upon her brother, but she quickly stopped me, saying:

"'Frank is a soldier; the rewards in his career are never withheld from the deserving; at all events, wealth would be unsuitable to him. He never knew but narrow fortunes, and the spirit that becomes a more exalted condition is not the growth of a day.'

"I next ventured, but with every caution and delicacy, to inquire whether your aid and influence might not avail them in any future plans of life they might form?

"'We have no plans,' said she, simply; 'or, rather, we have had so many, that they all resolve themselves into mere castle-building. My dear father longs for Ireland again—for home as he still calls it—forgetting that we have no longer a home there. He fancies warm-hearted friends and neighbors—an affectionate people, attached to the very traditions of his name; but it is now wiser to feed this delusion than destroy it, by telling him that few, scarcely one, of his old companions still live—that other influences, other fortunes, other names, have replaced ours; we should go back there as strangers, and without even the stranger's claim to kind acceptance. Then we had thought of the new world beyond seas; but these are the lands of the young, the ardent and the enterprising, high in hope and resolute of heart; and so, at last, we deemed it wisest to seek out some quiet spot, in some quiet country, where our poverty would, at least, present nothing remarkable, and there to live for each other; and we are happy—so happy—that, save the passing dread that this delicious calm of life may not be lasting, we have few sorrows.'

"Again and again I tried to persuade her to recall her decision, but in vain. Once only did she show any sign of hesitation. It was when I charged her with pride as the reason of refusal. Then suddenly her eyes filled up, and her lip trembled, and such a change came over her features that I grew shocked at my own words.

"'Pride!' cried she. 'If you mean that inordinate self-esteem that prefers isolation to sympathy—that rejects an obligation from mere haughtiness—I know not the feeling. Our pride is not in our self-sufficiency—for every step in life teaches us how much we owe to others; but in this, that, low in lot, and humble in means, we have kept, and hope still to keep, the motives and principles that guided us in happier fortunes. Yes, you may call us proud, for we are so—proud that our poverty has not made us mean—proud that in a strange land we have inspired sentiments of kindness, and even of affection—proud that, without any of the gifts or graces which attract, we have drawn towards us this instance of noble generosity of which you are now the messenger. I am not ashamed to own pride in all these.'

"To press her further was useless; and only asking, that if by any future change of circumstances she might be induced to alter her resolve, she would still consider the proposition as open to her acceptance, I took my leave."

"This is most provoking," exclaimed Onslow.

"Provoking!" cried Grounsell; "you call it provoking! That where you sought to confer a benefit you discover a spirit greater than all the favors wealth ever gave, or ever will give! A noble nature, that soars above every accident of fortune, provoking!"

"I spoke with reference to myself," replied Onslow, tartly; "and I repeat, it is most provoking that I am unable to make a recompense where I have unquestionably inflicted a wrong!"

"Rather thank God that in this age of money-seeking and gold-hunting there lives one whose heart is uncorrupted and incorruptible," cried Grounsell.

"If I had not seen it I could not have believed it!" said Prichard.

"Of course not, sir," chimed in Grounsell, bluntly. "Yours is not the trade where such instances are frequently met with; nor have I met with many myself!"

"I beg to observe," said Prichard, mildly, "that even in *my* career I have encountered many acts of high generosity."

"Generosity! Yes, I know what that means. A sister who surrenders her legacy to a spendthrift brother—a childless widow that denies herself the humblest means of comfort to help the ruined brother of her lost husband—a wife who places in a reckless husband's hand the last little remnant

of fortune that was hoarded against the day of utter destitution ; and they are always women who do these things—saving, scraping, careful creatures, full of self-denial and small economies. Not like your generous men, as the world calls them, whose free-heartedness is nothing but selfishness—whose liberality is the bait to catch flattery. But it is not of generosity I speak here. To give, even to one's last farthing, is far easier than to refuse help when you are needy. To draw the rags of poverty closer, to make their folds drape decently, and hide the penury within, that is the victory, indeed."

"Mark you," cried Onslow, laughing, "it is an old bachelor says all this."

Grounsell's face became scarlet, and as suddenly pale as death ; and, although he made an effort to speak, not a sound issued from his lips. For an instant the pause which ensued was unbroken, when a tap was heard at the door. It was a message from Lady Hester, requesting, if Sir Stafford were disengaged, to be permitted to speak with him.

"You're not going, Grounsell ?" cried Sir Stafford, as he saw the doctor seize his hat ; but he hastened out of the room without speaking, while the lawyer, gathering up his papers, prepared to follow him.

"We shall see you at dinner, Prichard ?" said Sir Stafford, "I have some hope of joining the party myself to-day."

Mr. Prichard bowed his acknowledgments, and departed.

And now that the old baronet sat down to ponder in his mind the reasons for so strange an event as a visit in the forenoon from Lady Hester. "What can it mean ? She can't want money," thought he : "'tis but the other day I sent her a large cheque. Is she desirous of going back to England again ? Are there any new disagreements at work ?" This last thought reminded him of those of whom he had been so lately hearing—of those whose narrow fortunes had drawn them nearer to each other, rendering them more tolerant and more attached, while in his own family, where affluence prevailed, he saw nothing but dissension.

As he sat pondering over this not too pleasant problem, a tall and serious-looking footman entered the room, rolling before him an arm-chair ; another and not less dignified functionary followed, with cushions and a foot-warmer—signs which Sir Stafford at once read as indicative of a long interview, for her ladyship's preparations were always adopted with a degree of forethought and care that she very rarely exhibited in matters of real consequence.

Sir Stafford was contemplating these august demonstrations, when the solemn voice of an upper servant announced Lady Hester, and, after a second's pause, she swept into the room in all that gauzy amplitude of costume that gives to the wearer a seeming necessity of inhabiting the most spacious apartments of a palace.

"How d'ye do ?" said she, languidly, as she sank down into her chair. "I had not the least notion how far this room was off, if Clements has not been taking me a tour of the whole house."

Mr. Clements, who was still busily engaged in disposing and arranging the cushions, blandly assured her ladyship that they had come by the most direct way.

"I'm sorry for it," said she, peevishly, "for I shall have the more fatigue in going back again. There, you're only making it worse. You never can learn that I don't want to be propped up like an invalid. That will do ; you may leave the room. Sir Stafford, would you be good enough to draw that blind a little lower, the sun is directly in my eyes. Dear me, how yellow you are ! or is it the light in this horrid room ? Am I so dreadfully bilious-looking ?"

"On the contrary," said he, smiling, "I should pronounce you in the most perfect enjoyment of health."

"Oh, of course, I have no doubt of that. I only wonder you didn't call it 'rude health.' I cannot conceive anything more thoroughly provoking than the habit of estimating one's sufferings by the very efforts made to suppress them."

"Sufferings, my dear ! I really was not aware that you had sufferings."

"I am quite sure of that ; nor is it my habit to inflict others with complaint. I'm sure your friend, Mr. Grounsell, would be equally unable to acknowledge their existence. How I do hate that man ! and I know, Stafford, he hates us. Oh, you smile, as if to say, 'Only some of us ;' but I tell you he detests us all, and his old schoolfellow—as he vulgarly persists in calling you—as much as the others."

"I sincerely hope you are mistaken——"

"Polite, certainly. You trust that his dislike is limited to myself ? Not that for my own part I have the least objection to any amount of detestation with which he may honor me. It is the tribute the low and obscure invariably render the well-born, and I am quite ready to accept it ; but I own it is a little hard that I must submit to the infliction beneath my own roof."

All is not gold that glitters.

"My dear Hester, how often have I assured you that you were mistaken, and that what you regard as disrespect to yourself is the roughness of an unpolished, but sterling, nature. The ties which have grown up between him and me since we were boys together, ought not to be snapped for sake of a mere misunderstanding; and if you cannot, or will not, estimate him for the good qualities he unquestionably possesses, at least bear with him for my sake."

"So I should—so I strive to do; but the evil does not end there. He inspires everybody with the same habits of disrespect and indifference. Did you remark Clements, a few moments since, when I spoke to him about that cushion?"

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Why should you? Nobody ever does trouble his head about anything that relates to my happiness! Well, I remarked it, and saw the supercilious smile he assumed when I told him that the pillow was wrong. He looked over at *you*, too, as though to say, 'You see how impossible it is to please her.'"

"I certainly saw nothing of that."

"Even Prichard, that formerly was the most diffident of men, is now so much at his ease, so very much at home in my presence, it is quite amusing. It was but yesterday he asked me to take wine with him at dinner. The anachronism was bad enough, but only fancy the liberty!"

"And what did you do?" asked Sir Stafford, with difficulty repressing a smile.

"I affected not to hear, hoping he would not expose himself before the servants by a repetition of the request. But he went on, 'Will your ladyship'—I assure you he said that—'will your ladyship do me the honor to drink wine with me?' I merely stared at him, but never took any notice of his speech. Would you believe it—he returned to the charge again, and, with his hand on his wine-glass, began, 'I have taken the liberty——' I couldn't hear more, so I turned to George, and said, 'George, will you tell that man not to do *that?*'"

Sir Stafford could not restrain himself any longer, but broke out into a burst of hearty laughter. "Poor Prichard," said he, at last, "I almost think I see him before me!"

"You never think of saying, 'Poor Hester, these are not the associates you have been accustomed to live with!' But I could be indifferent to all these if my own family treated me with proper deference. As for Sydney and George, however, they have actually coventried me; and, although I anticipated many sacrifices when I married, this I certainly never speculated upon. Lady Wallingcroft, indeed, warned me to a certain extent of what I should meet with; but I fondly hoped that disparity of years and certain differences, the fruits of early prejudices and habits, would be the only drawbacks on my happiness, but I have lived to see my error!"

"The event has, indeed, not fulfilled what was expected from it," said Sir Stafford, with a slow and deliberate emphasis on each word.

"Oh! I comprehend you perfectly," said she, coloring slightly, and for the first time displaying any trait of animation in her features. "You have been as much disappointed as I have! Just what my aunt Wallingcroft prophesied. 'Remember,' said she—and I'm sure I have had good cause to remember it—'their ideas are not our ideas; they have not the same hopes, ambitions, or objects that we have; their very morality is not our morality!'"

"Of what people or nation was her ladyship speaking?" asked Sir Stafford, mildly.

"Of the City generally," replied Lady Hester, proudly.

"Not in ignorance either," rejoined Sir Stafford; "her own father was a merchant in Lombard Street."

"But the family are of the best blood in Lancashire, Sir Stafford."

"It may be so; but I remember Walter Crofts himself boasting that he had danced to warm his feet on the very steps of the door in Grosvenor Square which afterwards acknowledged him as the master: and as he owed his wealth and station to honest industry and successful enterprise, none heard the speech without thinking the better of him."

"The anecdote is new to me," said Lady Hester, superciliously; "and I have little doubt that the worthy man was merely embellishing an incident to suit the tastes of his company."

"It was the company around his table, as Lord Mayor of London!"

"I could have sworn it!" said she, laughing; "but what has all this to do with what I wished to speak about—if I could but remember what it was! These eternal digressions have made me forget everything."

Although the appeal was palpably directed to Sir Stafford, he sat silent and motionless, patiently awaiting the moment when recollection might enable her to resume.

"Dear me! how tiresome it is! I cannot think of what I came about, and you will not assist me in the least."

"Up to this moment you have given me no clue to it," said Sir Stafford, with a smile. "It was not to speak of Grounsell?"

"Of course not. I hate even to think of him!"

"Of Prichard, perhaps?" asked he, with a half-sly twinkle of the eye.

"Just as little!"

"Possibly your friend, Colonel Haggerstone, was in your thoughts?"

"Pray do not call him my friend. I know very little of the gentleman; I intend even to know less. I declined to receive him this morning, when he sent up his card."

"An attention I fear he has not shown that poor creature he wounded, Grounsell tells me."

"Oh, I have it!" said she, suddenly; the allusion to Hans at once recalling the Daltons, and bringing to mind the circumstances she desired to remember. "It was exactly of these poor people I came to speak. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have made the acquaintance of a most interesting family, here—a father and two daughters—named Dalton——"

"Grounsell has already told me so," interrupted Sir Stafford.

"Of course, then, every step I have taken in this intimacy has been represented in the most odious light. The amiable doctor will have, doubtless, imputed to me the least worthy motives for knowing persons in their station?"

"On the contrary, Hester. If he expressed any qualification to the circumstance, it was in the form of a fear lest the charms of your society, and the graces of your manner, might indispose them to return with patience to the dull round of their daily privations."

"Indeed!" said she, superciliously. "A weak dose of his own acquaintance would be, then, the best antidote he could advise them! But, really, I must not speak of this man; any allusion to him is certain to jar my nerves, and irritate my feelings for the whole day after. I want to interest you about these Daltons."

"Nothing more easy, my dear, since I already know something about them."

"The doctor being your informant," said she, snappishly.

"No, no, Hester; many, many years ago, certain relations existed between us, and I grieve to say that Mr. Dalton has reason to regard me in no favorable light; and it was but the very moment I received your message, I was learning from Prichard the failure of an effort I had made to repair a wrong. I will not weary you with a long and a sad story, but briefly mention that Mr. Dalton's late wife was a distant relative of my own."

"Yes, yes; I see it all. There was a little love in the business—an old flame revived in after-life—nothing serious, of course—but jealousies and misconstructions—to any extent. Dear me, and that was the reason she died of a broken heart!" It was hard to say if Sir Stafford was more amused at the absurdity of this imputation, or stung by the cool indifference with which she uttered it; nor was it easy to know how the struggle within him would terminate, when she went on: "It does appear so silly to see a pair of elderly gentlemen raking up a difference out of an *amourette* of the past century. You are very fortunate to have so quiet a spot to exhibit in!"

"I am sorry to destroy an illusion so very full of amusement, Lady Hester; but I owe it to all parties to say that your pleasant fancy has not even the shadow of a color. I never even saw Mrs. Dalton—never have yet met her husband. The event to which I was about to allude, when you interrupted me, related to a bequest——"

"Oh! I know the whole business now! It was at your suit that dreadful mortgage was foreclosed, and these dear people were driven away from their ancient seat of Mount Dalton. I'm sure I've heard the story at least ten times over, but never suspected that your name was mixed up with it. I do assure you, Sir Stafford, that they have never dropped the most distant hint of you in connection with that sad episode."

"They have been but just, Lady Hester," said he gravely. "I never did hold a mortgage over this property, still less exercised the severe right you speak of. But it is quite needless to pursue a narrative that taxes your patience so severely; enough to say that, through Prichard's mediation, I have endeavored to persuade Mr. Dalton that I was the trustee, under a will, of a small annuity on his life. He has peremptorily refused to accept it, although, as I am informed, living in circumstances of great poverty."

"Poor they must be, certainly. The house is wretchedly furnished, and the girls wear such clothes as I never saw before; not that they are even the worn and faded finery of better days, but actually the coarse stuffs such as the peasants wear!"

"So I have heard."

"Not even an edging of cheap lace round their collars; not a bow of ribbon; not an ornament of the humblest kind about them."

"And both handsome, I am told?"

"The younger, beautiful!—the deepest blue eyes in the world, with long-fringed lashes, and the most perfect mouth you can imagine. The elder very pretty too, but sad-looking, for she has a fearful lameness, poor thing. They say it came from a fall off a horse, but I suspect it must have begun in infancy; one of those dreadful things they call 'spine.' Like all persons in her condition, she is monstrously clever; carves the most beautiful little groups in boxwood, and models in clay and plaster. She is a dear, mild, gentle thing, but I suspect, with all that infirmity of temper that comes of long illness; at least, she is seldom in high spirits like her sister. Kate, the younger girl, is my favorite; a fine, generous, warm-hearted creature, full of life and animation, and so fond of *me* already."

If Sir Stafford did not smile at the undue emphasis laid upon the last few words, it was not that he had not read their full significance.

"And Mr. Dalton himself—what is *he* like?"

"Like nothing I ever met before; the oddest mixture of right sentiments and wrong inferences; of benevolence, cruelty, roughness, gentleness; the most refined consideration, and the most utter disregard for other people and their feelings, that ever existed. You never can guess what will be his sentiments at any moment, or on any subject, except on the question of family, when his pride almost savors of insanity. I believe, in his own country, he would be nothing strange nor singular; but out of it, he is a figure unsuited to any landscape."

"It is hard to say how much of this peculiarity may have come of adverse fortune," said Sir Stafford, thoughtfully.

"I'm certain he was always the same; at least, it would be impossible to imagine him anything different. But I have not come to speak of him, but of his daughter Kate, in whom I am deeply interested. You must know, Sir Stafford, that I have formed a little plan, for which I want your aid and concurrence. It is to take this dear girl along with us to Italy."

"Take her to Italy! In what position, Lady Hester? You surely never intended any menial station?"

"Of course not: a kind of humble friend—what they call a 'companion' in the newspapers—to have always with one. She is exactly the creature to dissipate low spirits and banish *ennui*, and, with the advantages of training and teaching, will become a most attractive girl. As it is, she has not been quite neglected. Her French accent is very pure; German, I conclude, she talks fluently; she plays prettily—at least, as well as one can judge on that vile tinkling old harpsichord, whose legs dance every time it is touched—and sings very pleasingly those little German ballads that are now getting into fashion. In fact, it is the tone of society—that mannerism of the world—she is deficient in more than anything else."

"She certainly could not study in a better school than yours, Lady Hester; but I see some very great objections to the whole scheme, and without alluding to such as relate to ourselves, but simply those that regard the young lady herself. Would it be a kindness to withdraw her from the sphere wherein she is happy and contented, to mingle for a season or so in another and very different rank, contracting new habits of thought, new ideas, new associations, learning each day to look down upon that humble lot to which she must eventually return?"

"She need not return to it. She is certain to marry, and marry well. A girl, with so many attractions as she will possess, may aspire to a very high match indeed!"

"This is too hazardous a game of life to please my fancy," said Sir Stafford, dubiously. "We ought to look every contingency in the face in such a matter as this."

"I have given the subject the very deepest consideration," replied Lady Hester, authoritatively. "I have turned the question over and over in my mind, and have not seen a single difficulty for which there is not an easy remedy."

"Sydney certainly ought to be consulted."

"I have done so already. She is charmed with the project. She sees, perhaps, how few companionable qualities she herself possesses, and anticipates that Miss Dalton will supply that place towards me that she is too indolent and too indifferent to fill."

"How would the family receive such a proposition? They seem to be very proud. Is it likely that they would listen to a project of this nature?"

"There lies the only difficulty; nor need it be an insuperable one, if we manage cleverly. The affair will require delicate treatment, because, if we merely invite her

to accompany us, they will naturally enough decline an invitation, to comply with which would involve a costly outlay in dress and ornament, quite impossible in their circumstances. This must be a matter of diplomacy, of which the first step is, however, already taken."

"The first step! How do you mean?"

"Simply, that I have already, but in the deepest confidence, hinted the possibility of the project to Kate Dalton, and she is wild with delight at the bare thought of it. The dear child! with what rapture she heard me speak of the balls, and fêtes, and theaters of the great world! of the thousand fascinations society has in store for all who have a rightful claim to its homage, the tribute rendered to beauty, greater than that conceded to rank or genius itself! I told her of all these, and I showed her my diamonds!"

Sir Stafford made, involuntarily, a slight gesture with his hand, as though to say, "This last was the *coup de grace*."

"So far, then, as Kate is concerned, she will be a willing ally; nor do I anticipate any opposition from her quiet, submissive sister, who seems to dote upon her. The papa, indeed, is like to prove refractory; but this must be our business to overcome."

Lady Hester, who at the opening of the interview had spoken with all the listlessness of *ennui*, had gradually worked herself up to a species of ardor that made her words flow rapidly—a sign well known to Sir Stafford that her mind was bent upon an object that would not admit of gainsay. Some experience had taught him the impolicy of absolute resistance, and trained him to a tactic of waiting and watching for eventualities, which, whether the campaign be civil, military, or conjugal, is not without a certain degree of merit. In the present case there were several escape-valves. The Daltons were three in number, and should be unanimous. All the difficulties of the plan should be arranged, not alone to their perfect satisfaction, but without a wound to their delicacy. Grounsell was certain to be a determined opponent to the measure, and would, of course, be consulted upon it. And, lastly, if everything worked well and favorably, Lady Hester herself was by no means certain to wish for it the day after she had conquered all opposition.

These, and many similar reasons, showed Sir Stafford that he might safely concede a concurrence that need never become practical, and, making a merit of his necessity, he affected to yield to arguments that had no value in his eyes.

"How do you propose to open the campaign, Hester?" asked he, after a pause.

"I have arranged it all," said she, with animation. "We must visit the Daltons together, or—better still—you shall go alone. No, no: a letter will be the right thing—a very carefully-written letter, that shall refute by anticipation every possible objection to the plan, and show the Daltons the enormous advantages they must derive from it."

"As, for instance?" said Sir Stafford, with apparent anxiety to be instructed.

"Enormous they certainly will be!" exclaimed she. "First of all, Kate, as I have said, is certain to marry well, and will be thus in a position to benefit the others, who, poor things, can do nothing for themselves."

"Very true, my dear—very true. You see all these things far more rapidly and more clearly than I do."

"I have thought so long and so much about it, I suppose there are few contingencies of the case have escaped me; and now that I learn how you once knew and were attached to the poor girl's mother——"

"I am sorry to rob you of so harmless an illusion," interrupted he, smiling; "but I have already said I never saw her."

"Oh, you did say so! I forget all about it. Well, there was something or other that brought the families in relation—no matter what—and it must be a great satisfaction to you to see the breach restored, and through my intervention, too; for I must needs say, Sir Stafford, there are many women who would entertain a silly jealousy respecting one who once occupied the first place in their husband's esteem."

"Must I once more assure you that this whole assumption is groundless? that I never——"

"Quite enough—more than I ask for—more than I have any right to ask for," broke she in. "If you did not interrupt me—and pardon me if I say that this habit of yours is calculated to produce innumerable misconceptions—I say that, if I had not been interrupted, I would have told you that I regard such jealousies as most mean and unworthy. We cannot be the arbiters of our affections any more than of our fortunes; and if in early life we may have formed attachments—imprudent attachments——" Here her ladyship, who had unwittingly glided from the consideration of Sir Stafford's case to that of her own, became confused and flurried, her cheek flushing, and her chest heaving; she looked overwhelmed with embarrassment,

and it was only after a long struggle to regain the lost clue to her discourse she could falteringly say, "Don't you agree with me? I'm sure you agree with me."

"I'm certain I should if I only understood you aright," said he, good-naturedly, and by his voice and look at once reassuring her.

"Well, so far, all is settled," said she, rising from her chair. "And now for this letter—I conclude the sooner it be done the better. When may we hope to get away from this dreary place?"

"Grounsell tells me by Friday or Saturday next I shall be able for the journey."

"If it had not been to provoke me I'm certain he would have pronounced you quite well ten days ago."

"You forget, Hester, my own sensations—not to say sufferings—could scarcely deceive me."

"On the contrary, Doctor Clarus assured me there is nothing in the world so very deceptive; that pain is only referred to the diseased part by the brain, and has no existence whatever, and that there is no such thing as pain at all. He explained it perfectly, and I understood it all at the time. He is *so* clever, Doctor Clarus, and gives people such insight into the nature of their malady, that it really becomes quite interesting to be ill under his care. I remember when William, the footman, broke his arm, Clarus used to see him every day; and to show that no union, as it is called, could take place so long as motion continued, he would gently grate the fractured ends of the bone together."

"And was William convinced of the no-pain doctrine?" cried Sir Stafford, his cheek flashing with momentary anger.

"The ignorant creature actually screamed out every time he was touched; but Clarus said it would take at least two centuries to conquer the prejudices of the common people."

"Not improbable either!" said Sir Stafford.

"Dear me, how very late it is!" cried she, suddenly; "and we dine at six!" And with a graceful motion of the hand, she said, "Bye-bye!" and left the room.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE "SAAL" OF "THE RUSSIE."

Has the observant reader ever remarked a couple of persons parading the deck of a ship at sea—walking step for step through half a day, turning with the same short jerk, to resume the same short path, and yet never interchanging a word, the rhythm of the footfall the only tie of companionship between them? They halt occasionally, too, to look over the bulwarks at some white sail far away, or some cloud-bank rising from the horizon; mayhap they linger to watch the rolling porpoises as they pass, or the swift nautilus as he glides along; but yet never a sound or token of mutual intelligence escapes them. It is enough that they live surrounded by the same influences, breathe the same air, and step in the same time; they have their separate thoughts, wide, perhaps, as the poles asunder, and yet by some strange magnetism they feel there is a kind of sociality in their speechless intercourse.

From some such cause, perhaps, it was that Colonel Haggerstone and Jekyl took their accustomed walk in the dreary dining-room of the "Hôtel de Russie." The evening was cold and cheerless, as on that when first we met them there—a drifting rain, mingled with sleet, beat against the windows, and the wind, in mournful cadences, sighed along the dreary and deserted corridors. It was a comfortless scene within doors and without. A chance glance through the window—an occasional halt to listen when the thunder rolled louder and nearer, showed that, to a certain extent, the same emotions were common to each; but nothing else betrayed any community of sentiment between them, as they paced the room from end to end.

"English people come abroad for climate!" said Haggerstone, as he buttoned his collar tightly around his neck, and pressed his hat more firmly on his head. "But who ever saw the like of this in England?"

"In England you have weather, but no climate!" said Jekyl, with one of his little smiles of self-approval, for he caressed himself when he uttered a "mot," and seemed to feel no slight access of self-satisfaction.

"It's not the worst thing we have there, sir, I promise you," rejoined Haggerstone, authoritatively.

"Our coughs and rheumatics are, indeed, sore drawbacks upon patriotism."

"I do not speak of *them*, sir; I allude to our insolent, overbearing aristocracy, who, sprung from the people as they are, recruited from the ranks of trade or law, look down upon the really ancient blood of the land—the untitled nobility. Who are they, sir, that treat us thus? The fortunate speculator, who has amassed a million;

the Attorney-General, who has risen to a Chief-Justiceship; men without ancestry, without landed influence; a lucky banker, perhaps, like our friend upstairs, may stand in the *Gazette* to-morrow or next day as baron or viscount, without one single requirement of the station, save his money."

"I confess, if I have a weakness, it is for lords," said Jekyl, simperingly. "I suppose I must have caught it very early in life, for it clings to me like an instinct."

"I very happy to avow that I have none, sir. Six centuries of gentry blood suffice for all my ambitions; but I boil over when I see the overweening presumption of these new people."

"After all, new people, like a new watch, a new coat, and a new carriage, have the best chance of lasting. Old and worn out are very nearly convertible terms."

"These are sentiments, sir, which would, doubtless, do you excellent service with the family upstairs, but are quite thrown away upon such a mere country gentleman as myself."

Jekyl smiled, and drew up his cravat, with his habitual simpering air, but said nothing.

"Do you purpose remaining much longer here?" asked Haggerstone, abruptly.

"A few days, at most."

"Do you turn north or south?"

"I fancy I shall winter in Italy."

"The Onslows, I believe, are bound for Rome?"

"Can't say," was the short reply.

"Just the sort of people for Italy. The fashionables of what the Chinese call 'second chop' go down admirably at Rome or Naples."

"Very pleasant places they are, too," said Jekyl, with a smile. "The climate permits everything—even dubious intimacies."

Haggerstone gave a short "Ha!" at the heresy of this speech, but made no other comment on it.

"They say that Miss Onslow will have about a hundred thousand pounds?" said Haggerstone, with an air of inquiry.

"What a deal of macaroni and parmesan that sum would buy!"

"Would you have her marry an Italian, sir?"

"Perhaps not, if she were to consult me on the matter," said Jekyl, blandly; "but as this is, to say the least, not very probable, I may own that I like the mixed marriages well enough."

"They make miserable 'ménages,' sir," broke in Haggerstone.

"But excessively agreeable houses to visit at."

"The Onslows are scarcely the people to succeed in that way," rejoined Haggerstone, whose thoughts seemed to revolve round this family without any power to wander from the theme. "Mere money—nothing but money to guide them."

"Not a bad pilot either, as times go."

Haggerstone uttered another short "Ha!" as though to enter a protest against the sentiment without the trouble of a refutation. He had utterly failed in all his efforts to draw Jekyl into a discussion of the banker's family, or even obtain from that excessively cautious young gentleman the slightest approach to an opinion about them; and yet it was exactly in search of this opinion that he had come down to take his walk that evening. It was in the hope that Jekyl might afford him some clue to these people's thoughts, or habits, or their intentions for the coming winter, that he had promenaded for the last hour and a half. "If he know anything of them," thought Haggerstone, "he will be but too proud to show it, and display the intimacy to its fullest extent!"

It was, then, to his utter discomfiture he learned that Jekyl had scarcely spoken to Lady Hester, and never even seen Sir Stafford or Miss Onslow. It was, then, pure invention of the waiter to say that they were acquainted. "Jekyl has done nothing," muttered he to himself, "and I suppose I need not throw away a dinner upon him to tell it."

Such were his reasonings; and long did he balance in his own mind whether it were worth while to risk a bottle of Burgundy in such a cause; for often does it happen that the fluid thrown down the pump is utterly wasted, and that it is vain to moisten the sucker, if the well beneath be exhausted.

To be, or not to be? was then the eventful point he deliberated with himself. Haggerstone never threw away a dinner in his life. He was not one of those vulgarly-minded folk who ask you, in a parenthesis, to come in to "manger la soupe," as they say, without more preparation than the spreading of your napkin. No; he knew all the importance of a dinner, and, be it acknowledged, how to give it also, and could have distinguished perfectly between the fare to set before an "habitual diner out," and that suitable to some newly arrived Englishman abroad: he could have measured his guest to a truffle! It was his boast that he never gave a pheasant when a poulet would have sufficed, nor wasted his "Chablis" on the man who would have been contented with "Barsac."

The difficulty was not, then, how to have treated Jekyl, but whether to treat him at all. Indeed, the little dinner itself had been all planned and arranged that morning; and the "trout" from the "Murg," and the grouse from Eberstein, had been "pricked off," in the bill of fare for "No. 24," as he was unceremoniously designated, with a special order about the dish of whole truffles with butter, in the fair intention of inviting Mr. Albert Jekyl to partake of them.

If a lady reveals some latent desire of conquest in the coquetry of her costume and the more than ordinary care of her appearance, so your male friend may be suspected of a design upon your confidence or your liberality by the studious propriety of his *petit dîner*. Never fall into the vulgar error that such things are mere accident. As well ascribe to chance the rotations of the seasons, or the motions of the heavenly bodies. Your *printanière* in January—your *èpigramme d'agneau* with asparagus at Christmas, show a solicitude to please to the full as ardent, and not a whit less sincere, than the soft glances that have just set your heart a-beating from the recesses of yonder opera-box.

"Will you eat your cutlet with me to-day, Mr. Jekyl?" said Haggerstone, after a pause, in which he had weighed long and well all the *pros* and *cons* of the invitation.

"Thanks, but I dine with the Onslows!" lisped out Jekyl, with a languid indifference, that, however, did not prevent his remarking the almost incredulous amazement in the colonel's face; "and I perceive," added he, "that it's time to dress."

Haggerstone looked after him as he left the room; and then, ringing the bell violently, gave orders to his servant to "pack up," for he would leave Baden next morning.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FAMILY DISCUSSION.

Something more than a week after the scenes we have just related had occurred, the Daltons were seated around the fire, beside which, in the place of honor, in an old arm-chair, propped by many a cushion, reclined Han's Roëckle. A small lamp of three burners—such as the peasants use—stood upon the table, of which only one was lighted, and threw its fitful gleam over the board, covered by the materials of a most humble meal. Even this was untasted: and it was easy to mark in the downcast and depressed countenances of the group that some deep care was weighing upon them.

Dalton himself, with folded arms, sat straight opposite the fire, his heavy brows closely knit, and his eyes staring fixedly at the blaze, as if expecting some revelation of the future from it; an open letter, which seemed to have dropped from his hand, was lying at his feet. Nelly, with bent-down head, was occupied in arranging the little tools and implements she was accustomed to use in carving; but in the tremulous motion of her fingers, and the short, quick heaving of her chest, might be read the signs of a struggle that cost heavily to subdue.

Half-concealed beneath the projection of the fireplace sat Kate Dalton—she was sewing; although to all seeming intent upon her work, more than once did her fingers drop the needle to wipe the gushing tears from her eyes, while at intervals a short sob would burst forth, and break the stillness around.

As for Hans, he seemed lost in a dreamy reverie, from which he rallied at times to smile pleasantly at a little wooden figure—the same which occasioned his disaster—placed beside him.

There was an air of sadness over everything; and even the old spaniel, Joan, as she retreated from the heat of the fire, crept with stealthy step beneath the table, as if respecting the mournful stillness of the scene. How different the picture from what that humble chamber had so often presented! What a contrast to those happy evenings, when, as the girls worked, Hans would read aloud some of those strange mysteries of Jean Paul, or the wild and fanciful imaginings of Chamisso, while old Dalton would lay down his pipe and break in upon his memories of Ireland, to ask at what they were laughing, and Frank look up distractedly from his old chronicles of German war to join in the mirth! How, at such moments, Hans would listen to the interpretation, and with what greedy ears follow the versions the girls would give of some favorite passage, as if dreading lest its force should be weakened or its beauty marred by transmission! And then those outbreaks of admiration that would simultaneously gush forth at some sentiment of high and glorious meaning—some godlike gleam of bright intelligence, which, though clothed in the language of a foreign land, spoke home to their hearts with the force that truth alone can speak!

Yes, they were, indeed, happy evenings, when around their humble hearth came

thronging the groups of many a poet's fancy—bright pictures of many a glorious scene—emotions of hearts that seemed to beat in unison with their own! They felt no longer the poverty of their humble condition—they had no memory for the little straits and trials of the bygone day, as they trod with Tieck the alley beneath the lindens of some rural village, or sat with Auerbach beneath the porch of the Vorstcher's dwelling. The dull realities of life faded before the vivid conceptions of fiction, and they imbibed lessons of patient submission and trustfulness from those brothers and sisters, who are poet's children.

And yet—what no darkness of adversity could rob them of—the first gleam of what, to worldly minds at least, would seem better fortune, had already despoiled them. Like the traveler in the fable, who had grasped his cloak the faster through the storm, but who threw it away when the hot rays scorched him, they could brave the hurricane, but not face the sunshine.

The little wooden clock behind the door struck nine, and Dalton started up suddenly.

"What did it strike, girls?" asked he, quickly.

"Nine, papa," replied Kate, in a low voice.

"At what hour was he to come for the answer?"

"At ten," said she, still lower.

"Well, you'd better write it at once," said he, with a peevishness very different from his ordinary manner. "They've remained here already four days—isn't it four days she says?—to give us time to make up our minds: we cannot detain them any longer."

"Lady Hester has shown every consideration for our difficulty," said Kate. "We cannot be too grateful for her kindness."

"Tell her so," said he, bitterly. "I suppose women know when to believe each other."

"And what reply am I to make, sir?" said she, calmly, as having put aside her work, she took her place at the writing-table.

"Faith, I don't care," said he, doggedly. "Nor is it much matter what opinion I give. I am nobody now; I have no right to decide upon anything."

"The right and duty are both yours, papa."

"Duty! So I'm to be taught my duty as well as the rest!" said he, passionately. "Don't you think there are some others might remember that they have duties also?"

"Would that I could fulfill mine as my heart dictates them," said Ellen; and her lip trembled as she spoke the words.

"Faith! I scarce know what's my duty, with all the drilling and dictating I get," muttered he, sulkily. "But this I know, there's no will left me—I dare not budge this side or that, without leave."

"Dearest papa, be just to yourself, if not to me."

"Isn't it truth I'm saying?" continued he, his anger rising with every word he spoke. "One day I'm forbid to ask my friends home with me to dinner. Another, I'm told I oughtn't to go dine with *them*. I'm tutored and lectured at every hand's turn. Never a thought crosses me but it's sure to be wrong. You din into my ears, how happy it is to be poor when one's contented."

"The lesson was yours, dear papa," said Nelly, smiling. "Don't disavow your own teaching."

"Well, the more fool me. I know better now. But what's the use of it? When the prospect of a little ease and comfort was offered to me, you persuaded me to refuse it. Ay, that you did! You began with the old story about our happy hearth and contentment; and where is it now?"

A sob, so low as to be scarcely heard, broke from Nelly, and she pressed her hand to her heart with a convulsive force.

"Can you deny it? You made me reject the only piece of kindness ever was shown me in a life long. There was the opportunity of spending the rest of my days in peace, and you wouldn't let me take it. And the fool I was to listen to you!"

"Oh, papa, how you wrong her!" cried Kate, as, in a torrent of tears, she bent over his chair. "Dearest Nelly has no thought but for us. Her whole heart is our own."

"If you could but see it!" cried Nelly, with a thick utterance.

"'Tis a droll way of showing affection, then," said Dalton, "to keep *me* a beggar, and *you* no better than a servant-maid. It's little matter about *me*, I know. I'm old and worn out—a reduced Irish gentleman, with nothing but his good blood remaining to him. But *you*, Kate, that are young and handsome—ay, faith! a deal sight better-looking than my lady herself—it's a little hard that you are to be denied what might be your whole fortune in life."

"You surely would not stake all her happiness on the venture, papa?" said Nelly, mildly.

"Happiness!" said he, scornfully; "what do you call happiness? Is it dragging out

life in poverty, like this, with the proudest friend in our list an old toy-maker?"

"Poor Hanserl!" murmured Nelly, in a low voice; but, soft as were the accents, the dwarf heard them, and nodded his head twice, as though to thank her for a recognition, of whose import he knew nothing.

"Just so! You have pity enough for strangers, but none for your own people," said Dalton, as he arose and paced the room, the very act of motion serving to increase his anger. "He was never used to better; he's just what he always was. But think of *me!* think of the expectations I was reared to, the place I used to hold, and see me now!"

"Dearest, best papa, do not say those bitter words," cried Kate, passionately. "Our own dear Nelly loves us truly. What has her life been but self-denial?"

"And have I not had my share of self-denial?" said he, abruptly. "Is there left a single one of the comforts I was always accustomed to? 'Tis sick I am of hearing about submission and patience and resignation, and the like, and that we never were so happy as now. Faith! I tell you, I'd rather have one day at Mount Dalton, as it used to be long ago, than I'd have twenty years of the life I spend here."

"No, papa, no," said Nelly, winding her arm around his waist; "you'd rather sit at the window yonder, and listen to a song from Kate—one of your own favorites—or take a stroll with us after sunset of a summer's evening, and talk of Frank, than go back to all the gayety of that wild life you speak of."

"Who says so?" asked he, roughly.

"You, yourself. Nay, don't deny it," said she, smiling.

"If I did, I was wrong, then," rejoined he, pushing her rudely away. "It was because I believed my children were affectionate and fond, and that whatever I set my heart on they'd be sure to wish just as much as myself."

"And when has that time ceased to be?" said she, calmly.

"What! when has it ceased to be?" said he, sharply. "Is it you that asks that question—you that made me refuse the legacy?"

"Nay, papa, be just," interrupted she, mildly. "The merit of that refusal was all your own. I did but explain to you the circumstances under which this gift—it was no less—was offered, and your own right feeling dictated the reply."

Dalton was silent. A struggling sense of pride in his imputed dignity of behavior warring with the desire of fault-finding.

"Maybe I did!" said he, at last, self-esteem gaining the mastery. "Maybe I saw my own reasons for what I was going to do. A Dalton is not the man to mistake what's due to his name and family; but this is a different case. Here's an invitation, as elegant a piece of politeness as I have seen, from one our own equal in every respect; she calls herself a connection, too—we won't say much about that, for we never reckoned the English relations anything—asking my daughter to join them in their visit to Italy. When are we to see the like of that again? Is it every day that some rich family will make us the same offer? It's not to cost us a sixpence; read the letter, and you'll see how nicely it's hinted that her ladyship takes everything upon herself. Well, if any one objected it might be myself; 'tis on me will fall the heaviest part of the blow. It was only the other day Frank left me; now I'm to lose Kate; not but I know very well Nelly will do her best."

Slight as was the praise, she kissed his hand passionately for it; and it was some seconds ere he could proceed.

"Yes, I'm sure you'll do all you can; but what is it, after all? Won't I miss the songs she sings for me?—won't I miss her laughing voice and her sprightly step?"

"And why should you encounter such privations, papa?" broke Nelly in. "These are, as you justly say, the greatest sources of your happiness. Why separate from them? Why rob this humble chamber of its fairest ornament? Why darken our hearth by an absence for which nothing can requite us?"

"I'll tell you why, then," said he, and a sparkling gleam of cunning lit up his eye as the casuistry crossed his mind. "Just because I can deny myself anything for my children's sake. 'Tis for them I am thinking always. Give old Peter Dalton his due, and nobody can call him selfish; not the worst enemy ever he had! Let me feel that my children are benefited, and you may leave me to trudge along the weary path before me."

"Then, there only remains to see if this promise of benefit be real," said Nelly.

"And why wouldn't it? Doesn't everybody know that traveling and seeing foreign parts is equal to any education. How many things haven't I seen myself since I came abroad, that I never dreamed about before I left home! Look at the way they dress the peas—with sugar in them. See how they shoe a horse—with a leg tied up to a post, as if they were going to cut it off. Mind the droll fashion they

have of fastening a piece of timber to the hind wheel of a coach, by way of a drag! There's no end to their contrivances."

"Let us forget every consideration but one," said Nelly, earnestly. "What are the dangers that may beset Kate, in a career of such difficulty, when, without an adviser, miles away from us all, she may need counsel or comfort. Think of her in sickness or in sorrow, or, worse than both, under temptation. Picture to yourself how dearly bought would be every charm of that refinement you covet for her, at the price of a heart weakened in its attachment to home, bereft of the simple faith that there was no disgrace in poverty. Think, above all," cried she—and for the first time her lips trembled, and her eyes swam—"think, above all, we cannot give her up forever; and yet how is she to come back again to these humble fortunes, and the daily toil that she will then regard with shame and disgust? I ask not how differently shall we appear in her eyes, for I know that, however changed her habits, how wide soever be the range of thought knowledge may have imparted, her fond, true heart will still be all our own; but can you risk her fortunes on an ocean like this?—can you peril all her future for so little?"

"To hear you talk, Nelly, one might think she was going to Jerusalem or Australia; sure, after all, it's only a few days away from us she'll be, and as for the dangers, devil a one of them I see. Peter Dalton's daughter is not likely to be ill-treated anywhere. We were always a good warrant for taking care of our own; and, to make short of it, I wish it, and Kate herself wishes it, and I don't see why our hopes should not be as strong as your fears."

"You remember, too, papa, that Dr. Grounsell agreed with me, and spoke even more strongly than I did against the scheme."

"And didn't I pay him off for his interference? Didn't I give him a bit of my mind about it, and tell him that, because a man was employed as a doctor in a family, he ought not to presume to advise them on their own affairs? Faith, I don't think he'll trouble another patient with his counsel."

"We must not forget, sir, that, if his counsel came unasked, his skill was unrequited; both came from a nature that wished us well."

"The advice and the physic were about the same value—both made me sick; and so you're like to do if you worry me any longer. I tell you now, my mind's made up, and go she shall!"

"Oh, papa, not if dear Nelly thinks——"

"What's that to me—don't I know more of the world than she does? Am I come to this time of life to be taught by a slip of a girl that never was ten miles out of her home? Sit down there now, and write the answer."

There was a stern determination in the way these last words were uttered that told Nelly how fruitless would be all further opposition. She had long since remarked, besides, how her father's temper reacted upon his health, and how invariably any prolonged excitement terminated in an attack of gout. Increasing age gave to these accesses of malady a character of danger, which she already began to remark with deep anxiety. Now she saw that immediate compliance with his wishes was the only alternative left.

She seated herself at the table, and prepared to write. For some seconds the disturbance of her thoughts, the mingled crowd of sensations that filled her mind, prevented all power of calm consideration; but the struggle was soon over, and she wrote on rapidly.

So silent was the chamber, so hushed was all within it, that the scratching noise of the pen alone broke the stillness. Speedily glided her hand across the paper, on which two heavy tears had already fallen—burning drops of sorrow that gushed from a fevered brain! A whole world of disaster, a terrible catalogue of ill, revealed itself before her; but she wrote on. She felt that she was to put in motion the series of events whose onward course she never could control, as though she was to push over a precipice the rock that in its downward rush would carry ruin and desolation along with it; but she wrote on.

At last she ceased, and all was still; not a sound was heard in the little room, and Nelly leaned her head down upon the table and wept.

But while she wept she prayed—prayed, that if the season of trouble her thoughts foreshadowed should be inevitable, and that if the cup of sorrow must, indeed, be drained, strength might be sent them for the effort. It might have been that her mind exaggerated the perils of separation, and the dangers that would beset one of Kate's temper and disposition. Her own bereavement might have impressed her with the misery that follows an unhappy attachment; and her reflective nature, shadowed by an early sorrow, might have colored too darkly a future of such uncer-

tainty. But a deep foreboding, like a heavy weight, lay upon her heart, and she was powerless to resist it.

These instincts of our nature are not to be undervalued, nor confounded with the weak and groundless terrors of the frivolous. The closing petals of the flower as the storm draws nigh, the wild cry of the sea-bird as the squall is gathering, the nestling of the sheep within the fold while yet the hurricane has not broke—are signs that, to the observant instincts, peril comes not unannounced.

"Shall I read it, papa?" said she, as she raised her head, and turned towards him a look of calm and beaming affection.

"You needn't," said he, roughly. "Of course, it's full of all the elegant phrases women like to cheat each other with. You said she will go; that's enough."

Nelly tried to speak, but the words would not come, and she merely nodded an acquiescence.

"And, of course, too, you told her ladyship that if it wasn't to a near relation of the family—one that had a kind of right, as I may say, to ask her—that I'd never have given my consent. Neither would I!"

"I said that you could give no higher proof of your confidence in Lady Hester's goodness and worth, than in committing to her charge all that we hold so dear. I spoke of our gratitude"—her voice faltered here, and she hesitated for a second or so; our gratitude!—strange word to express the feeling with which we part from what we cling to so fondly!—"and I asked of her to be the mother of her who had none!"

"Oh, Nelly, I cannot go—I cannot leave you!" burst out Kate, as she knelt down, and buried her head in her sister's lap. "I feel already how weak and unable I am to live among strangers, away from you and dear papa. I have need of you both!"

"May I never leave this spot if you're not enough to drive me mad!" exclaimed Dalton. "You cried two nights and a day because there was opposition to your going. You fretted till your eyes were red, and your cheeks all furrowed with tears; and now that you get leave to go—now that I consent to—to—to sacrifice—ay, to sacrifice my domestic enjoyments to your benefit—you turn short round and say you won't go!"

"Nay, nay, papa," said Nelly, mildly, "Kate but owns with what fears she would consent to leave us, and in this shows a more fitting mind to brave what may come, than if she went forth with a heart brimful of its bright anticipations, and only occupied with a future of splendor and enjoyment."

"I ask you again, is it into the backwoods of Newfoundland—is it into the deserts of Arabia she is going?" said Dalton, ironically.

"The country before her has perils to the full as great, if not greater than either," rejoined Nelly, lowly.

"There's a ring at the bell," said Dalton, perhaps not sorry to cut short a discussion in which his own doubts and fears were often at variance with his words; for, while opposing Nelly with all his might, he was frequently forced to coincide secretly with that he so stoutly resisted. Vanity alone rose above every other motive, and even hardened his heart against separation and absence from his favorite child. Vanity to think that *his* daughter would be the admired beauty in the *salons* of the great and highly born—that she would be daily moving in a rank the most exalted—that his dear Kate would be the attraction of courts—the centre of adulation wherever she went. So blinded was he by false reasoning, that he actually fancied himself a martyr to his daughter's future advancement, and that this inveterate egotism was a high and holy self-denial! "My worst enemy never called me selfish," was the balm that he ever laid on his chafed spirit, and always with success. It would, however, have been rather the part of friend than of enemy to have whispered that selfishness was the very bane and poison of his nature. It was his impulse in all the wasteful extravagance of his early life. It was his motive in all the struggles of his adversity. To sustain a mock rank—to affect a mock position—to uphold a mock standard of gentility, he was willing to submit to a thousand privations of his children and himself; and to gratify a foolish notion of family pride, he was ready to endure anything—even to separation from all he held dearest.

"Lady Hester's courier has come for the answer to her note, papa," said Nelly, twice over, before Dalton heard her, for he was deep sunk in his own musings.

"Let him come in and have a glass of wine," said Dalton. "I'd like to ask him a few questions about these people."

"Oh, papa!" whispered Nelly, in a tone at once so reproachful that the old man colored and looked away.

"I meant about what time they were to start on the journey," said he, confusedly.

"Lady Hester told us they should leave this to-morrow, sir."

"Short notice for us. How is Kate to

have all her clothes packed and everything arranged? I don't think that is treating us with much respect, Nelly."

"They have waited four days for our decision, papa—remember that."

"Ay, to be sure. I was forgetting that; and she came every day to press the matter more and more; and there was no end to the note-writing besides. I must say that nothing could beat their politeness. It was a mighty nice attention, the old man coming himself to call here; and a fine, hale, good-looking man he is! a better figure than ever his son will be. I don't much like Mr. George, as they call him."

"Somewhat colder and more reserved, I think, than the other," said Nelly. "But about this answer, papa?"

"What a hurry they're in! Is it a return to a writ, that they must press for it this way? Well, well, I ought to be used to all manner of interruptions and disturbances by this time. Fetch me a candle, till I seal it;" and he sighed, as he drew forth his old-fashioned watch, to which, by a massive steel chain, the great family seal was attached, firmly persuaded that in the simple act he was about to perform he was achieving a mighty labor, at the cost of much fatigue. "No rest for the wicked!' as my old father used to say," muttered he, in a happy ignorance whether the philosophy emanated from his parent, or from some higher authority. "One would think that at my time of life a man might look for a little peace and ease; but Peter Dalton hasn't such luck! Give me the letter," said he querulously. "There is Peter Dalton's hand and seal—his act and will," muttered he, with a half solemnity, as he pressed the wax with his heavy signet. "'*Semper eadem;*' there's the ancient motto of our house, and faith, I believe Counsellor O'Shea was right when he translated it, 'The devil a better!'"

He read the address two or three times over to himself, as if there was something pleasurable in the very look of the words, and then he turned his glance towards Hans, as in a dreamy half-consciousness he sat still, contemplating the little statue of Marguerite.

"Isn't it droll to think we'd be writing to the first in the land, and an old toy-maker sitting beside the fire all the time," said Dalton, as he shook his head thoughtfully, in the firm conviction that he had uttered a very wise and profound remark. "Well—well—well! Life is a queer thing!"

"Is it not stranger still that we should have won the friendship of poor Hanserl, than have attracted the notice of Lady Hester?" said Nelly. "Is it not a prouder thought that we have drawn towards us from affectionate interest the kindness that has no touch of condescension?"

"I hope you are not comparing the two," said Dalton, angrily. "What's the creature muttering to himself?"

"It's Gretchen's song he's trying to remember," said Kate.

> "Nach ihm nur schau' ich
> Zum Fenster hinaus!"

said Hans, in a low, distinct voice. "'Was kommt nach,'—what comes next, Fräulein?"

"You must ask sister Nelly, Hanserl," said Kate; but Nelly was standing behind the massive stove, her face covered with her hands.

"'Zum Fenster hinaus,'" repeated he, slowly; "and then, Fräulein, and then?"

"Tell him, Nelly; tell him what follows."

> "Nach ihm nur schau' ich
> Zum Fenster hinaus;
> Nach ihm nur geh' ich
> Aus dem Haus!"

repeated she.

"Ja, ja!" cried Hans, delightedly—

> "Nach ihm nur geh' ich
> Aus dem Haus!"

"What does that mean?" said Dalton with impatience.

"It's Gretchen's song, papa," said Nelly—

> "His figure I gaze on,
> O'er and o'er;
> His step I follow
> From the door."

"I hope it isn't in love the creature is," said Dalton; and he laughed heartily at the conceit, turning at the same time his look from the dwarf, to bestow a most complacent glance at the remains of his own once handsome stature. "Oh dear! oh dear!" sighed he; "isn't it wonderful, but there isn't a creth or a cripple that walks the earth that hasn't a sweetheart!"

A cough, purposely loud enough to announce his presence, here came from the courier in the ante-chamber, and Dalton remembered that the letter had not yet been despatched.

"Give it to him, Nelly," said he, curtly.

She took the letter in her hand, but stood for a second or two as if powerless to move.

"Must it be so, dearest papa?" said she,

and the words almost choked her utterance.

Dalton snatched the letter from her fingers, and left the room. His voice was heard for an instant in conversation with the courier, and the moment after the door banged heavily, and all was still.

"It is done, Kate!" said she, throwing her arms around her sister's neck. "Let us now speak of the future; we have much to say, and short time to say it; and first let us help poor Hans downstairs."

The dwarf, clutching up the wooden image, suffered himself to be aided with all the submissiveness of a patient child, and, with one at either side of him, slowly crept down the stairs to his own chamber. Disengaging himself by a gentle effort as he gained his door, Hans removed his cap from his head and made a low and deep obeisance to each of the girls separately, while he bade them a good night.

"Leb wohl, Hanserl, Leb wohl!" said Kate, taking his hand affectionately. "Be ever the true friend that thou hast proved hitherto, and let me think of thee, when far away, with gratitude."

"Why this? How so, Fräulein?" said Hans, anxiously; "why farewell? why sayest thou 'Leb wohl,' when it is but 'good-night'?"

"Kate is about to leave us for a short space," said Nelly, affecting to appear at ease and calm. "She is going to Italy, Hanserl."

"Das schöne Land!—that lovely land!" muttered he, over and over. "Dahin, dahin," cried he, pointing with his finger to the southward, where the gold orange blooms. "There would I wander too."

"You'll not forget me, Hanserl?" said the young girl, kindly.

"Over the great Alps and away!" said Hans, still talking to himself; "over the high snow peaks which cast their shadows on our cold land, but have terraces for the vine and olive-garden, yonder! Thou'lt leave us, then, Fräulein?"

"But for a little while, Hans, to come back afterwards and tell thee all I have seen."

"They come not back from the sunshine to the shade," said Hans, solemnly. "Thou'lt leave not the palace for the peasant's hut; but think of us, Fräulein, think sometimes, when the soft sirocco is playing through thy glossy hair—when sounds of music steal over thy senses among the orange groves, and near the shadows of old temples—think of this simple fatherland and its green valleys. Think of them with whom thou wert so happy, too! Splendor thou mayest have—it is thy beauty's right; but be not proud, Fräulein. Remember what Chamisso tells us, 'Das Noth lehrt beten,' 'Want teaches prayer,' and to that must thou come, however high thy fortune."

"Kate will be our own wherever she be," said Nelly, clasping her sister affectionately to her side.

"Bethink thee well, Fräulein, in thy wanderings, that the great and the beautiful are brethren of the good and the simple. The cataract and the dewdrop are kindred! Think of all that teaches thee to think of home, and remember well, that when thou losest the love of this humble hearth thou art in peril. If to any of thy childish toys thou sayest, 'Ich liebe dich nicht mehr,' then art thou changed indeed." Hans sat down upon his little bed as he spoke, and covered his face with his hands.

Nelly watched him silently for a few seconds, and then with a gentle hand closed the door and led Kate away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CARES AND CROSSES.

The lamp in Kate Dalton's chamber was still burning when the morning dawned, and by its uncertain flicker might be seen the two sisters, who, clasped in each other's arms, sat upon the low settle-bed. Nelly, pale and motionless, supported Kate, as, overcome by watching and emotion, she had fallen into a heavy slumber. Not venturing to stir, lest she should awaken her, Nelly had leaned against the wall for support, and, in her unmoved features and deathly pallor, seemed like some monumental figure of sorrow.

It was not alone the grief of an approaching separation that oppressed her. Sad as it was to part from one to whom she had been mother and sister too, her affliction was tinged with a deeper coloring in her fears for the future. Loving Kate dearer than anything in the world, she was alive to all the weak traits of her character; her credulity—her trustfulness—her fondness for approbation, even from those whose judgments she held lightly—her passion for admiration even in trifles—were well known to her, and while, perhaps, these very failings, like traits of childish temperament, had actually endeared her the more to Nelly, she could not but dread their effect when they came to be exercised in the world of strangers.

Not that Nelly could form the very

vaguest conception of what that world was like. Its pleasures and its perils, its engagements and hazards, were all unknown to her. It had never been even the dreamland of her imagination. Too humble in spirit, too lowly by nature to feel companionship with the great and titled, she had associated all her thoughts with those whose life is labor; with them were all her sympathies. There was a simple beauty in the unchanging fortune of the peasant's life—such as she had seen in the Schwarzwald, for intance—that captivated her. That peaceful domesticity was the very nearest approach to happiness, to her thinking, and she longed for the day when her father might consent to the obscurity and solitude of some nameless "Dorf" in the dark recesses of that old forest. With Frank and Kate such a lot would have been a paradise. But one was already gone, and she was now to lose the other too. "Strange turn of fortune," as she said, "that prosperity should be more cruel than adversity. In our days of friendless want and necessity we held together; it is only when the promise of brighter destinies is dawning that we separate. It is but selfishness after all," though she, "to wish for an existence like this; such humble and lowly fortunes might naturally enough become 'lame Nelly,' but Frank, the high-hearted, daring youth, with ambitious hopes and soaring aspirations, demands another and a different sphere of action; and Kate, whose attractions would grace a court, might well sorrow over a lot of such ignoble obscurity. What would not my sorrow and self-reproach be if I saw that, in submitting to the same monotony of this quietude, they should have become wearied and careless—neither taking pleasure in the simple pastimes of the people, nor stooping to their companionship? And thus all may be for the best," said she, half aloud, "if I could but feel courage to think so. We may each of us be but following his true road in life."

A long intimacy with affliction will very frequently be found to impress even a religiously disposed mind with a strong tinge of fatalism. The apparent hopelessness of all effort to avert calamity, or stem the tide of evil fortune, often suggests, as its last consolation, the notion of a predetermined destiny, to which we are bound to submit with patient trustfulness; a temperament of great humility aids this conviction. Both of these conditions were Nelly's; she had "supped sorrow" from her cradle, while her estimate of herself was the very lowest possible. "I suppose it is so," she said again; "all is for the best."

She already pictured to herself the new spring this change of fortune would impart to her father's life—with what delight he would read the letters from his children—how he would once more, through them, taste of the world whose pleasures he was so fondly attached to. "I never could have yielded him a gratification like this," said Nelly, as the tears rose in her eyes. "I am but the image of our fallen fortunes, and in me, 'poor lame Nelly,' he can but see reflected our ruined lot. All is for the best—it must be so!" sighed she, heavily; and just as the words escaped, her father, with noiseless step, entered the chamber.

"To be sure it is, Nelly darling," said he, as he sat down near her, "and glad I am that you've come to reason at last. 'Tis plain enough this isn't the way the Daltons ought to be passing their life, in a little hole of a place, without society or acquaintance of any kind. You and I may bear it—not but it's mighty hard upon me sometimes, too—but Kate there, just look at her and say, is it a girl like that should be wasting away her youth in a dreary village? Lady Hester tells me, and sure nobody should know better, that there never was the time in the world when real beauty had the same chance as now, and I'd like to see the girl that could stand beside her. Do you know, Nelly"—here he drew closer, so as to speak in a whisper—"do you know that I do be fancying the strangest kind of things might happen to us yet—that Frank might be a great general, and Kate married to God knows what sort of a grandee, with money enough to redeem Mount Dalton, and lay my old bones in the churchyard with my ancestors! I can't get it out of my head but it will come about, somehow. What do you think yourself?"

"I'm but an indifferent castle-builder, papa," said she, laughing softly. "I rarely attempt anything beyond a peasant hut or a shealing!"

"And nobody could make the one or the other more neat and comfortable, that I'll say for you, Nelly. It would have a look of home about it before you were a day under the roof!"

The young girl blushed deeply; for, humble as the praise might have sounded to other ears, to hers it was the most touching she could have listened to.

"I'm not flattering you a bit. 'Tis your own mother you take after; you might put her down in the bleakest spot of Ireland, and 'tis a garden she'd make it. Let her stop for shelter in a cabin, and before the shower was over, you'd not know the place. It would be all swept and clean, and the

dishes ranged neatly on the dresser; and the pig—she couldn't abide a pig—turned out, and the hens driven into the cowshed, and the children's faces washed, and their hair combed, and, maybe, the little gossoon of five years old upon her knee, saying his 'Hail, Mary,' or his 'A B C,' while she was teaching his mother how to wind the thread off the wheel, for she could spin a hank of yarn as well as any cottier's wife in the townland! The kind creature she was! But she never had a taste for real diversion; it always made her low-spirited and sad."

"Perhaps the pleasures you speak of were too dearly purchased, papa," said Nelly.

"Indeed, maybe they were," said he, dubiously, and as though the thought had now occurred to him for the first time; "and now that you say it, I begin to believe it was that same that might have fretted her. The way she was brought up, made her think so, too. That brother was always talking about wastefulness and extravagance, and so on; and, if it was in her nature, he'd have made her as stingy as himself; and look what it comes to after all. *We* spent it when we had it—the Daltons are a good warrant for that—and there was he grubbing and grabbing all his days, to leave it after him to a rich man, that doesn't know whether he has so many thousands more or not."

Nelly made no reply, not wishing to encourage, by the slightest apparent interest, the continuance on the theme, which invariably suggested her father's gloomiest reveries.

"Is that her trunk, Nelly?" said Dalton, breaking silence after a long interval, and pointing to an old and journey-worn valise that lay half open on the floor.

"Yes, papa," said Nelly with a sigh.

"Why, it's a mean-looking, scrubby bit of a thing; sure it's not the size of a good tea-chest!" said he, angrily."

"And yet too roomy for all its contents, papa. Poor Kate's wardrobe is a very humble one."

"I'd like to know where's the shops here; where's the milliners and the haberdashers. Are we in College-green or Grafton Street, that we can just send out and have everything at our hand's turn? 'Tisn't on myself I spend the money. Look at these gaiters; they're nine years old next March; and the coat on my back was made by Peter Stevens, that's in his grave now! The greatest enemy ever I had could not face me down that I only took care of myself. If that was my way, would I be here now? See the rag I'm wearing round my throat—a piece of old worsted like a rug—a thing——"

He stopped, and stammered, and then was silent altogether, for he suddenly remembered it was Nelly herself who had worked the article in question.

"Nay, papa," broke she in, with her own happy smile; "you may give it to Andy to-morrow, for I've made you a smart new one, of your own favorite colors, too, the Dalton green and white."

"Many a time I've seen the same colors coming in first on the Corralin course!" cried Dalton, with enthusiasm; for at the impulse of a new word his mind could turn from a topic of deep and painful interest to one in every way its opposite. "You were too young to remember it; but you were there, in the landau, with your mother, when Baithershin won the Murra handicap, the finest day's flat racing—I have it from them that seen the best in England—that ever was run in the kingdom. I won eight hundred pounds on it, and, by the same token, lost it all in the evening at 'blind hookey' with old Major Haggs, of the 5th Foot—not to say a trifle more besides. And that's her trunk!" said he, after another pause, his voice dropping at the words, as though to say, "What a change of fortune is there!" "I wonder neither of you hadn't the sense to take my old traveling chest, that's twice the size, and as heavy as a lead coffin besides. Sorrow one would ever know if she hadn't clothes for a whole lifetime! Two men wouldn't carry it upstairs when it's empty."

"When even this valise is too large, papa?"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" broke in Dalton; "you've no contrivance, after all. Don't you see that it's not what's inside I'm talking about at all, but the show before the world. Didn't I live at Mount Dalton on the fat of the land, and every comfort a gentleman could ask, five years and eight months after I was ruined? And hadn't I credit wherever I went, and for whatever I ordered? And why? Because of the house and place! I was like the big trunk beyond; nobody knew how little there was in it. Oh, Nelly dear, when you've seen as much of life as me, you'll know that one must be up to many a thing for appearance' sake."

Nelly sighed, but made no reply. Perhaps in secret she thought how much trouble a little sincerity with the world would save us.

"We'll be mighty lonesome after her," said he, after a pause.

Nelly nodded her head in sadness.

"I was looking over the map last night, and it ain't so far away, after all," said Dalton. "'Tisn't much more than the length of my finger on the paper."

"Many a weary mile may lie within that space," said Nelly, softly.

"And I suppose we'll hear from her every week, at least?" said Dalton, whose mind vacillated between joy and grief, but still looked for its greatest consolations from without.

Poor Nelly was, however, little able to furnish these. Her mind saw nothing but sorrow for the present; and, for the future, difficulty, if not danger.

"You give one no comfort at all," said Dalton, rising impatiently. "That's the way it will be always now, when Kate goes. No more gayety in the house; not a song nor a merry laugh! I see well what a dreary life there is before me."

"Oh, dearest papa, I'll do my very best, not to replace her, for that I never could do, but to make your days less wearisome. It will be such pleasure, too, to talk of her, and think of her! To know of her happiness, and to fancy all the fair stores of knowledge she will bring back with her, when she comes home at last!"

"If I could only live to see them back again, Frank and Kate, one at each side of me, that's all I ask for in this world now," muttered he, as he stole noiselessly away, and closed the door behind him.

CHAPTER XIX.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ROAD.

If the arrival of a great family at an hotel be a scene of unusual bustle and excitement, with teeming speculations as to the rank and the wealth of the new comers, the departure has also its interests, and even of a higher nature. In the former case all is vague, shadowy, and uncertain; the eye of the spectator wanders from the muffled figures as they descend, to scrutinize the lackeys, and even the luggage, as indicative of the strangers' habits and condition; and even to the shrewd perceptions of that dread functionary—the head waiter—the identity of the traveler assumes no higher form, nor any more tangible shape, than that they are No. 42 or 57.

When the hour of leave-taking has come, however, their characters have become known, their tastes and habits understood, and no mean insight obtained into their prejudices, their passions and their pursuits. The imposing old gentleman, whose rubicund nose and white waistcoat are the guarantees for a taste in port, has already inspired the landlord with a sincere regard. "My lady's" half-invalid caprices about diet, and air, and sunshine, have all written themselves legibly in "the bill." The tall son's champagne score incurred of a night, and uncounted of a morning, are not unrecorded virtues; while even the pale young ladies, whose sketching propensities involved donkeys, and ponies and picnics, go not unremembered.

Their hours of rising and retiring—their habits of society or seclusion—their preferences for the *Post* or the *Times*, have all silently been ministering to the estimate formed of them; so that in the commonest items of the hotel ledger are the materials for their history. And with what true charity are their characters weighed! How readily does mine host forgive the transgressions which took their origin in his own Burgundy; how blandly smiled at the follies begotten of his Johannisberg! With what angelic temper does the hostess pardon the little liberties "young gentlemen from college *will* take!" Oh! if our dear, dear friends would but read us with half the charity, or even bestow upon our peccadilloes a tithe of this forgiveness! And why should it not be so? What are these same friends and acquaintances but guests in the same great inn which we call "the world;" and who, as they never take upon them to settle our score, need surely not trouble themselves about the "items"?

While the Daltons were still occupied in the manner our last chapter has described, the "Hôtel de Russie" was the scene of considerable bustle, the preparations for departure engaging every department of the household within doors and without. There were carriage-springs to be lashed with new cordage; drag-chains new tipped with steel; axles to smear; hinges to oil; imperials to buckle on; cap-cases to be secured; and then what a deluge of small articles to be stowed away in most minute recesses, and yet be always at hand when called for. Cushions and cordials, and "chauffe-pieds" and "Quarterlies," smelling-boxes and slippers, and spectacles and cigar-cases, journals and "John Murrays"—to be disposed of in the most convenient places. Every corridor and landing was blocked up with baggage, and the courier wiped his forehead, and "*sacréd*" in half desperation at the mountain of trunks and portmanteaus that lay before him.

"This is not ours!" said he, as he came to a very smart valise of lacquered leather, with the initials A. J. in brass on the top.

"No; that's Mr. Jekyl's," said Mr. George's man, Twig; "he ain't a-goin' with *you*—he travels in our britzska."

"I'm more like de conducteur of a diligenz than a family courier," muttered the other sulkily. "I know noting of de baggage, since we take up strangers at every stage! and always arme Teufeln—poor devils—that have not a sou en poche!"

"What's the matter now, Mister Greg'ry?" said Twig, who very imperfectly understood the other's jargon.

"The matter is, I will resign my 'function'—je m'en vais—dat's all! This is noting besser than an 'Eil wagen' mit passengers! Fust of all we have de doctor, as dey call him—wid his stuff birds and beasts, his dried blumen and sticks, till de roof is like de Jardin des Plantes at Paris, and he himself like de bear in de middle; den we have das verfluchte parroquet of Milady, and Flounce, de lapdog, dat must drink every post-station, and run up all de hills for exercise! Dam! Ich bin kein Hund, and needn't run up de hills too! Mademoiselle Célestine have a what d'ye call 'Affe'—a ape! and though he be little, a reg'lar teufelchen to hide the keys and de money, when he find 'em; and den dere is de yong lady collectin' all de stones off de road—lauter paving-stones—which she smash wid a leetle hammer! Ach Gott—what is de world grow! when a Fräulein fall in love wid Felsen and Steine!"

"Monsieur Grégoire! Monsieur Grégoire!" screamed out a sharp voice from a window overhead.

"Mademoiselle!" replied he, politely touching his cap to the femme-de-chambre.

"Be good enough, Monsieur Grégoire, to have my trunks taken down—there are two in the fourgon, and a cap-case on the large carriage."

"Hagel and Sturm—dey are under everyting. How am I——"

"I can't possibly say," broke she in, "but it must be done."

"Can't you wait, mademoiselle, till we reach Basle?"

"I'm going away, Monsieur Grégoire. I'm off to Paris!" was the reply, as the speaker closed the sash and disappeared.

"What does she say?" inquired Twig, who, as this dialogue was carried on in French, was in total ignorance of its meaning.

"She has given her 'démission,' said the courier, pompously—"resign her portefeuille, and she have made a very bad affair!—dat's all. Your gros milor is very often bien bête—he is very often rude, savage, forget his manners, and all dat—but" and here his voice swelled into the full soundness of a perfect connection—"but he is *alway* rich. Ja—ja, immer reich," said he over to himself. "Allons! now to get at her verdammte baggage! de two trunks, and de leetle box, and de ape, and de sac, and de four or five baskets! Diable d'affaire! Monsieur Tig, do me the grace to mount on high dere, and give me dat box."

"I have nothing to say to your carriage, Mister Greg'ry; I'm the Captain's gentleman, and never do take any but a single-handed situation;" and with this very haughty speech, Mr. Twig lighted a fresh cigar and strolled away.

"Alle böse Teufeln holen de good for nichts," sputtered Grégoire, who now waddled into the house to seek for assistance.

Whatever apathy and indifference he might have met with from the English servants, the people of the hotel were like his bond-slaves. Old and young, men and women, the waiter, and the ostler, and the chambermaid—and that strange species of *grande utilité*, which in German households goes by the name of "Haus-knecht"—a compound of boots, scullion, porter, pimp, and drudge,—were all at his command. Nor was he an over-mild monarch; a running fire of abuse and indignity accompanied every order he gave, and he stimulated their alacrity by the most insulting allusions to their personal defects and deficiencies.

Seated upon a capacious cap-case, with his courier's cap set jauntily on one side, his meerschaum like a scepter in his hand, Grégoire gave out his edicts right royally; and soon the court-yard was strewn with trunks, boxes, and bags of every shape, size, and color. The scene, indeed, was not devoid of tumult; for, while each of the helpers screamed away at the top of his throat, and Grégoire rejoined in shouts that would have done credit to a bull, the parrot gave vent to the most terrific cries and yells as the ape poked him through the bars of his cage with the handle of a parasol.

"There, that's one of them," cried out Monsieur Grégoire, "that round box beside you; down with it here."

"Monsieur Grégoire—Monsieur Grégoire!" cried mademoiselle from the window once more.

The courier looked up, and touched his cap.

"I'm not going, Monsieur Grégoire; the affair is arranged."

"Ah! I am charmed to hear it, mademoiselle," said he, smiling in seeming ecstasy, while he muttered a malediction between his teeth.

"Miladi has made submission, and I forgive everything. You must pardon all the trouble I've given you."

"These happy tidings have made me forget it," said he, with a smile that verged upon a grin. "Peste!" growled he, under his breath, "we'd unpacked the whole fourgon."

"Ah que vous êtes aimable!" said she, sighing.

"Belle tigresse!" exclaimed he, returning the leer she bestowed; and the window was once more closed upon her exit. "I submitted to the labor, in the hope we had done with you forever!" said he, wiping his forehead; "and la voilà—there you are—back again. Throw that ape down; away with him, cursed beast!" cried he, venting his spite upon the minion, since he dared not attack the mistress. "But what have we here?"

This latter exclamation was caused by the sudden entrance into the court-yard of two porters, carrying an enormous trunk, whose iron fastenings and massive padlock gave it the resemblance of an emigrant's sea-chest. A few paces behind walked Mr. Dalton, followed again by old Andy, who, with a huge oil-silk umbrella under one arm, and a bundle of cloaks, shawls, and hoods on the other, made his way with no small difficulty.

Grégoire surveyed the procession with cool amazement, and then, with a kind of mock civility, he touched his cap, and said, "You have mistak de road, saar; de diligenz-office is over de way."

"And who told you I wanted it?" said Dalton, sternly. "Maybe I'm just where I ought to be! Isn't this Sir Stafford Onslow's coach?"

"Yes, saar; but you please to remember it is not de 'Eil wagen.'"

"Just hold your prate, my little chap, and it will be pleasanter and safer—ay, safer, too, d'ye mind? You see that trunk there; it's to go up with the luggage and be kept dry, for there's valuable effects inside."

"Dat is not a trunk—it is a sentry-house, a watsch-box. No gentleman's carriage ever support a ting of dat dimension!"

"It's a trunk, and belongs to me, and my name is Peter Dalton, as the letters there will show you; and so no more about it, but put it up at once."

"I have de orders about a young lady's luggage, but none about a great coffin with iron hoops," said Grégoire, tartly.

"Be quiet, now, and do as I tell you, my little chap. Put these trifles, too, somewhere inside, and this umbrella in a safe spot; and here's a little basket, with a cold pie and a bottle of wine in it."

"Himmel and Erde! how you tink milady travel mit dass schweinerei?"

"It's not pork; 'tis mutton, and a pigeon in the middle," said Dalton, mistaking his meaning. "I brought a taste of cheese, too, but it's a trifle high, and may be it's as well not to send it."

"Is the leetle old man to go, too?" asked Grégoire, with an insolent grin, and not touching the profanation of either cheese or basket.

"That's my own servant, and he's not going," said Dalton; "and now that you know my orders, just stir yourself a little, my chap, for I'm not going to spend my time here with you."

A very deliberate stare, without uttering a word, was all the reply Grégoire returned to this speech; and then addressing himself to the helpers, he gave some orders in German about the other trunks. Dalton waited patiently for some minutes, but no marks of attention showed that the courier even remembered his presence, and at last he said:

"I'm waiting to see that trunk put up; d'y hear me?"

"I hear yer well, but I mind noting at all," said Grégoire, with a grin.

"Oh! that's it," said Dalton, smiling, but with a twinkle in his grey eyes that, had the other known him better, he would scarcely have fancied—"that's it, then!" And taking the umbrella from beneath Andy's arm, he walked deliberately across the yard to where a large tank stood, and which, fed from a small *jet d'eau*, served as a watering-place for the post-horses. Some taper rods of ice now stood up in the midst, and a tolerably thick coating covered the surface of the basin.

Grégoire could not help watching the proceedings of the stranger, as with the iron-shod umbrella he smashed the ice in one or two places, piercing the mass till the water spouted up through the apertures.

"Have you any friend who live dere?" said the courier, sneeringly, as the sound of the blows resembled the noise of a door-knocker.

"Not exactly my man," said Dalton, calmly; "but something like it."

"What is't you do, den?" asked Grégoire, curiously.

"I'll tell you," said Dalton; "I'm break-

ing the ice for a new acquaintance ;" and, as he spoke, he seized the courier by the stout leather belt which he wore around his waist, and, notwithstanding his struggles and his weight, he jerked him off the ground, and, with a swing, would have hurled him head foremost into the tank, when, the leather giving way, he fell heavily to the ground, almost senseless from shock and fright together. "You may thank that strap for your escape," said Dalton, contemptuously, as he threw towards him the fragments of broken leather.

"I will have de law, and de Polizei, and de Gericht. I will have you in de Kerker, in chains, for dis !" screamed Grégoire, half choked with passion.

"May I never see peace, but if you don't hold your prate I'll put you in it ! Sit up there, and mind your business ; and, above all, be civil, and do what you're bid."

"I will fort; I will away. Noting make me remain in de service," said Grégoire, brushing off the dirt from his sleeve, and shaking his cap. "I am respectable courier —travel wid de Fürsten vom Königlichen Haüsen—mit Russen, Franzosen, Osterreichen ; never mit barbaren, never mit de wilde animalen."

"Don't, now—don't, I tell you," said Dalton, with another of those treacherous smiles whose expression the courier began to comprehend. "No balderdash ! no nonsense ! but go to your work, like a decent servant."

"I am no Diener ; no serve anybody," cried the courier, indignantly.

But somehow there was that in old Dalton's face that gave no encouragement to an open resistance, and Monsieur Grégoire knew well the case where compliance was the wisest policy. He also knew that in his vocation there lay a hundred petty vengeances more than sufficient to pay off any indignity that could be inflicted upon him. "I will wait my times," was the reflection with which he soothed down his rage, and affected to forget the insult he had just suffered under.

Dalton, whose mind was cast in a very different mould, and who could forgive either himself or his neighbor without any great exertion of temper, turned now coolly away, and sauntered out into the street. The flush of momentary anger that colored his cheek had fled, and a cast of pale and melancholy meaning sat upon his features, for his eye rested on the little wooden bridge which crossed the stream, and where now two muffled figures were standing, that he recognized as his daughters.

They were leaning on the balustrade, and gazing at the mountain that, covered with its dense pine wood, rose abruptly from the river-side. It had been the scene of many a happy ramble in the autumn, of many a delightful excursion, when, with Frank, they used to seek for fragments of wood that suited Nelly's sculptures. How often had they carried their little basket up yonder street path, to eat their humble supper upon the rock, from which the setting sun could be seen. There was not a cliff nor crag, not a mossy slope, not a grass bank, they did not know; and now, as they looked, all the past moments of pleasure were crowding upon their memory, tinged with the sad foreboding that they were never again to be renewed.

"That's the 'Riesen Fels,' Nelly, yonder," said Kate, as she pointed to a tall, dark rock, on whose slopes the drifting snow had settled. "How sad and dreary it is, compared with what it seemed on Frank's birthday, when the nightingale was singing overhead, and the trickling stream came sparkling along the grass when we sat together. I can bear to part with it better thus, than if all were as beautiful as then."

Nelly sighed, and grasped her sister's hand closer, but made no answer.

"Do you remember poor Hanserl's song, and his little speech about our all meeting there again in the next year, Nelly ?"

"I do," said Nelly, in a low and whispering voice.

"And when Frank stood up, with his little gilt goblet, and said,

> 'With hearts as free from grief or care,
> Here's to our happy——'

'Wiederkehr,' cried Hanserl, supplying the word so aptly, how we all laughed, Nelly, at his catching the rhyme ?"

"I remember," sighed Nelly, still lower.

"What are you thinking of, Nelly dearest ?" said Kate, as she stood for a few seconds gazing at the sorrow-struck features of the other.

"I was thinking, dearest," said Nelly, "that when we were met together there on that night, none of us foresaw what since has happened. Not the faintest suspicion of a separation crossed our minds. Our destinies, whatever else might betide, seemed at least bound up together. Our very poverty was like the guarantee of our unity, and yet see what has come to pass—Frank gone ; you, Kate, going to leave us now. How shall we speculate on the future, then, when the past has so betrayed us ? How

pilot our course in the storm, when, even in the calm. still sea, we have wandered from the track?"

"Nelly! Nelly! every moment I feel more faint-hearted at the thought of separation. It is as though, in the indulgence of a mere caprice, I were about to incur some great hazard. Is it thus it appears to you?"

"With what expectations do you look forward to this great world you are going to visit, Kate? Is it mere curiosity to see with your own eyes the brilliant scenes of which you have only read? Is it with the hope of finding that elegance and goodness are sisters, that refinement of manners is the constant companion of noble sentiments and right actions—or does there lurk in your heart the longing for a sphere wherein you yourself might contest for the prize of admiration? Oh! if this have a share in your wishes, my own dear sister, beware of it. The more worthy you are of such homage, the greater is your peril! It is not that I am removed from all temptations of this kind; it is not because I have no attractions of beauty, that I speak thus—even poor lame Nelly cannot tear from her woman's heart the love of admiration. But for *you*, I fear—for you, Kate, to whom these temptations will be heightened by your own deservings. You *are* beautiful, and you blush as I speak the word; but what if the time come when you hear it unmoved—the modest sense of shame gone, what will replace it? Pride—yes, my dear sister, Pride and Ambition! You will long for a station more in accordance with your pretensions, more suited to your tastes."

"How you wrong me, Nelly!" burst Kate in. "The brightest dream of all this brilliant future is the hope that I may come back to you more worthy of your love; that, imbibing some of those traits whose fascinations we have already felt, I may bring beneath our humble roof some memories, at least, to beguile your toil."

"Oh, if that time should come!"

"And it will come, dearest Nelly," said Kate, as she threw her arms around her, and kissed her affectionately. "But, see! there is papa, yonder; he is beckoning to us to join him." And the two girls hastened forward to where Dalton was standing at the corner of the street.

"I'm thinking we ought to go up there now," said Dalton, with a motion of his hand in the direction of the hotel. "Take my arm, each of you."

They obeyed, and walked along in silence, till they reached the inn, where Dalton entered, with a certain assumed ease and confidence that very commonly, with him, covered a weak purpose and a doubting spirit.

"Is Sir Stafford at home, or Lady Onslow?" asked he of Mr. Twig, who, with a cigar in his mouth, and a *Galignani* in his hand, never rose from the seat he occupied.

"Can't say, sir," was the cool response, which he delivered without lifting his eyes from the newspaper.

"Do *you* know, ma'am?" said he, addressing Mademoiselle Célestine, who happened to pass at the moment—"do you know, ma'am, if Lady Onslow's at home?"

"She never receive in de morning," was the curt reply. And, with a very impudent stare at the two sisters, whose dress imposed no restraint upon her insolence, mademoiselle flounced past. "Come along, girls," said Dalton, angrily, and offended that he should appear to his children as if wanting in worldly tact and knowledge—"come with *me*." And he proceeded boldly upstairs.

A folding-door lay open before them into a large chamber, littered with boxes, trunks, and traveling gear of all kinds. Making his way through these, while he left his daughters outside, Dalton approached a door that led into an inner room, and knocked sharply at it with his knuckles.

"You may take it away, now; I've used cold water!" cried a voice from within, that at once proclaimed Dr. Grounsell.

Dalton repeated his summons more confidently.

"Go to the devil, I say!" cried the doctor; "you've made me cut my chin;" and the enraged Grounsell, with his face covered with lather, and streaming with blood, flung open the door in a passion. "Oh! Dalton, this you, and the ladies here," springing back ashamed, as Kate's hearty burst of laughter greeted him. "Come in, Dalton, come in," said he, dragging the father forward and shutting the door upon him. "I was longing to see you, man; I was just thinking how I could have five minutes' talk with you. What answer have you given to the letter they've sent you?"

"What d'ye think?" said Dalton, jocularly, as he seated himself in a comfortable chair.

"What do I think?" repeated he twice or thrice over. "Egad, I don't know what to think! I only know what to hope and wish it may have been!"

"And what's that?" said Dalton, with a look of almost sternness, for he was not ignorant of the doctor's sentiments on the subject.

"A refusal, of course," said Grounsell,

who never yet was deterred by a look, a sign, or an innuendo, from any expression of his sentiments.

"And why so, sir?" rejoined Dalton, warmly.

"On every ground in the world. What has your fine, generous-hearted, dear child in common with that vile world of envy, malice, and all wickedness you'd throw her amongst? What similarity in thought, feeling, or instinct between *her* and that artificial class with whom you would associate her, with their false honor, false principle, and false delicacy—nothing real or substantial about them but their wickedness? If you were a silly woman, like the mother in the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' I could forgive you; but a man—a hardened, worldly man, that has tasted poverty, and knows the rubs of life—I've no patience with you, d—n me if I have!"

"A little more of this, and I'll have done with *you*," said Dalton, as he clenched his fist, and struck his knee a hard blow. "You presume to talk of us as people whose station was always what our present means imply; but I'd have you to know that we've better blood in our veins——"

"Devil take your blood! you've made me spill mine again," cried Grounsell, as he sliced a piece off his chin, and threw down his razor in a torrent of anger, while Dalton grinned a look of malicious satisfaction. "Couldn't your good blood have kept you above anything like dependence?"

Dalton sprang to his feet, and, clutching the chair, raised it in the air; but as suddenly dashed it on the floor again, without speaking.

"Go on," cried Grounsell, daring him. "I'd rather you'd break *my* skull than that dear girl's heart; and *that's* what you're bent on. Ay, break her heart! no less. You can't terrify me, man, by those angry looks. You couldn't wound me, either, by retaliating, and calling me a dependent. I know I am such. I know well all the ignominy, all the shame; but I know, too, all the misery of the position. But, mark me, the disgrace and the sorrow end where they begin—with myself alone. I have none to blush for me; I stand alone in the world, a poor, scathed, sapless, leafless trunk. But it is not so with *you*. Come, come, Dalton, you fancy that you know something of life because you have passed so many years of it among your equals and neighbors in your own country; but you know nothing—absolutely nothing—of the world as it exists here."

A hearty but contemptuous laugh broke out from Dalton as he heard this speech. It was, indeed, somewhat of a surprise to listen to such a charge. He, Peter Dalton, that knew a spavined horse, or could detect a windgall better than any man in the country—he, that never was "taken in" by a roarer, nor deceived by a crib-biter—to tell him that he knew nothing of life!

"That'll do, doctor, that'll do," said he, with a most compassionate smile at the other's ignorance. "I hope you know more about medicine than you seem to do about men and women." And, with these words, he left the room, banging the door after him as he went, and actually ashamed that he had been betrayed into warmth by one so evidently deficient in the commonest knowledge in the world.

"I'm sorry I kept you waiting, girls," said he, approaching them. "And, indeed, I might have spent my time better, too. But no matter; we must try and find out her ladyship now, for the morning is slipping over."

As he spoke, George Onslow appeared, and recognizing the party with much cordiality, conducted them to the breakfast-room, where Sir Stafford, Lady Hester and Miss Onslow were seated. If Sydney's reception of the two sisters was less enthusiastic than Lady Hester's, it was not less kind. Nelly was won almost instantaneously by the unaffected ease and simplicity of her manner. As for Dalton himself, her ladyship had intended to carry him by storm. She suffered him to declaim about his ancestors and their wealth; heard him with assumed interest in all his interminable stories of Daltons for six generations; and artfully opposed to his regrets at the approaching departure of his daughter the ingenious consolation that she was not about to sojourn with mere strangers, but with those united to her by the ties of kindred. George had, meanwhile, made two or three efforts to engage Kate in conversation, but, whether from the preoccupation of her mind, agitated as it well might be at such a moment, or that his topics were so utterly new and strange to her, his attempt was not attended with any signal success. A sense of shame, too, at the disparity of her own and her sister's appearance, in contrast with the quiet elegance of Lady Hester and Miss Onslow's dress, oppressed her. Strange was it that this feeling should have agitated her now, she who always hitherto had never wasted a thought on such matters, and yet she felt it acutely; and as she glanced from the rustling robe of silk to the folds of her own homely costume, her heart beat painfully, and her breathing came short. Was she

already changed, that thoughts like these could impress her so strongly? Had Adam's first shame descended to his daughter? "How unlike I am to them!" was the bitter thought that rose to her mind, and eat like a cancer into her heart.

The sense of inferiority, galling and torturing as it is, becomes infinitely more unendurable when connected with matters of trivial importance. There is a sense of indignant anger in the feeling that we are surpassed by what seem the mere conventionalities and tricks of society, and, although Kate knew not the source of her unhappiness, some of it lay in this fact. Every little gesture, every little motion, the merest peculiarities of voice or accent, now struck her as distinctive of a class—a class to which no imitation would ever give her a resemblance. If it were not for very shame, she would have drawn back now at the eleventh hour. More than once was she on the verge of confessing what was passing within her mind, but fears of various kinds—of her father's anger, of ridicule, of the charge of frivolity—all conspired to keep her silent, and she sat and listened to descriptions of pleasure and scenes wherein she had already lost every interest, and which somehow came associated with a sense of her own inferiority.

Never did home seem so regrettable as at that moment: the humble fireside in winter; the happy evenings with little Hanserl; the summer's day ramble in the forest; their little feasts beside the waterfall, under the ivy-clad walls of Eberstein—all rose before her. They were pleasures which had no alloy in her humble lot, and why desert them? She had almost gained courage to say that she would not, when a chance word caught her ear—one word!—how little to hang a destiny upon! It was Lady Hester, who, conversing in a half-whisper with Mr. Dalton, said:

"She will be perfectly beautiful when dressed becomingly."

"Was this, then, all that was needed to give her the stamp and semblance of the others? Oh, if she could believe it! If she could but fancy that, at some future time, such graceful elegance would be her own, that gentle languor that chastened quietude of Sydney, or that sparkling lightness of Lady Hester herself!

"What time de horses, saar?" said the courier, popping his head into the room.

"I scarcely know—what do you say, Lady Hester?"

"I'm quite ready—this instant if you like—indeed, I'm always the first," said she, gaily; "nobody travels with less preparation than I do. There, see all I want!" and she pointed to a fan, and a book, and a smelling-bottle; as if all her worldly effects and requirements went no further, and that four great imperials and a dozen capacious boxes were not packed with her wardrobe. "I do detest the worry and fuss some people make about a journey for a week, or even a month beforehand; they unsettle themselves and every one around them; putting under lock and key half the things of every-day utility, and making a kind of 'gaol-delivery' of all the imprisoned old cloaks and dresses of the toilet. As for me, I take the road as I'd go to the opera, or drive out in the park—I ask for my bonnet, that's all!"

There was some truth in this. Her ladyship did, in fact, give herself not a whit more thought or consideration for preparation of any kind, than if the excursion had been a promenade.

"It is now two o'clock," said Sir Stafford, "and if we mean to reach Offenburg to-night we must not lose more time. Isn't it Offenburg you advised as our halt, Mr. Jekyl?"

"Yes, Sir Stafford," simpered out that bland personage. "It is a most comfortable little inn, and a very praiseworthy cook."

"By-the-by, has any one thought of ordering luncheon here?" cried George.

Jekyl gave a nod, to intimate that he had taken that precaution.

"And, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, "what of those bullfinches, for I must have them?"

"They are safely caged and packed in our Britzska, madam. You'll also find that your sketch-book and the water-colors are available at any moment, Miss Onslow," said he, with a respectful gesture. She smiled, and bowed her thanks in silence.

"And de horses, saar?" asked the courier once more, for during this colloquy he had been standing in expectation of his orders.

"Do tell him, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, with that tone of languor that bespoke her dislike to the trouble of even a trifling degree of resolution.

"I think we shall say in one hour, Grégoire," said Jekyl, mildly. "And, perhaps, it would be better that you should see——" What this matter was that the courier should bestow his special attention upon is not on record in this history, inasmuch as when the speaker had reached thus far, he passed out of the door, talking as he went, in a low and confidential tone.

"Capital fellow—Jekyl!" exclaimed George; "he forgets nothing."

"He appears to be a most accomplished traveler," said Sir Stafford.

"And such a linguist!" said Sydney.

"And so amusing!" added my lady.

"And such a rogue!" muttered Dalton to himself, who, although so open to any imposition that took the form of flattery, could at once detect the knavery that was practiced upon others, and who, at a glance, read the character of the new acquaintance.

"Don't you like the stir and excitement of the road, my dear child?" said Lady Hester to Kate, who, with very red eyes and very pale cheeks, stood in a window to avoid being observed. "There is something so adventurous about a journey always. One may be robbed, you know, or the carriage upset, as happened to ourselves t'other day; or mistaken for somebody else, and carried off to prison. It gives such a flurry to the spirits to think of these things, and a life of monotony is so very detestable."

Kate tried to smile an assent, and Lady Hester ran on in the same strain, extolling the delights of anything and everything that promised an excitement. "You know, my dear child, that this little place has almost been death to me," added she. "I never was so bored in all my life; and I vow I shall detest a mill and a pine forest to the last day I live. If it had not been for you and your sweet sister, I do not know what we should have done; but it's all over now. The dreary interval is passed, and when we turn the foot of that hill yonder, we shall have seen the last of it."

Kate's heart was almost bursting as she heard these words. To speak thus of the little valley would have been a profanation at any time, but to do so now when she was about to leave it—when she was about to tear herself away from all the ties of love and affection, seemed an actual cruelty.

"Small places are my aversion," continued Lady Hester, who, when satisfied with her own talk, never cared much what effect it was producing upon others. "One grows down insensibly to the measure of a petty locality, with its little interests, its little people, and its little gossip—don't you think so, dear?"

"We were so happy here!" murmured Kate, in a voice that a choking fullness of her throat almost stifled.

"Of course you were, child, very happy, and it was very good of you to be so. Yes, very good and very right." Here Lady Hester assumed a peculiar tone, which she always put on whenever she fancied that she was moralizing. "Natural amiability of disposition, and all that sort of thing, is very nice indeed; but there's luncheon, I see, and now, my dear, let us take our places without loss of time. George, will you give your arm to Miss Dalton? Mr. Dalton—but where's Mr. Dalton?"

"Papa has taken him with him to his dressing-room," answered Sydney, "but begged you'd not wait; they'll be back presently."

"No lady does wait at luncheon," said Lady Hester, snappishly, while, drawing Kate's arm within her own, she led her into the adjoining room.

The party had scarcely seated themselves at table when they were joined by Jekyl. Indeed, Lady Hester had only time to complain of his absence when he appeared; for it was a trick of that gentleman's tact merely to make himself sufficiently regretted not to be blamed. And now he came to say that everything was ready—the postilions in the saddle, the carriages drawn up before the door, the relays all been ordered along the road, the supper bespoken for the end of the journey. These pleasant facts he contrived to season with a running fire of little gossip and mimicry, in which the landlord, and Grégoire, and Mademoiselle Célestine were the individuals personated.

Never were Mr. Jekyl's peculiar abilities more in request; for the moment was an awkward and embarrassing one for all, and none, save himself, were able to relieve its seriousness. Even Nelly smiled at the witty sallies and playful conceits of this clever talker, and felt almost grateful to him for the momentary distraction he afforded her from gloomier thoughts. With such success did he exert himself, that all the graver sentiments of the occasion were swallowed up in the pleasant current of his small-talk, and no time given for a thought of that parting which was but a few minutes distant. Sir Stafford and Mr. Dalton were not sorry to discover the party in this pleasant humor, and readily chimed in with the gayety around them.

The bugle of the postilions at length announced that "time was up," and the half-hour which German politeness accords to leave-taking expired. A dead silence succeeded the sound, and, as if moved by the same instinctive feeling, the two sisters arose and withdrew into a window. Close locked in each other's arms, neither could speak. Kate's thick sobs came fast and full, and her heart beat against her sister's side as though it were bursting. As for Nelly, all that she had meant to say, the

many things she had kept for the last moment, were forgotten, and she could but press the wet cheek to her own, and murmur a tremulous blessing.

"Oh, if I could but remain with you, Nelly dearest," sobbed Kate; "I feel even already my isolation. Is it too late, sister dear, is it too late to go back?"

"Not if this be not a sudden impulse of sorrow for parting, Kate; not if you think you would be happier here."

"But papa! how will he—what will he——"

She had not time for more, when her father joined them. A certain flurry of his manner showed that he was excited by talking and wine together. There was that in the expression of his features, too, that betokened a mind ill at ease with itself—a restless alternating between two courses.

"'Tis you are the lucky girl, Kate," said he, drawing his arm around her, and pressing her to him. "This day's good luck pays me off for many a hard blow of fortune. They're kind people you are going with, real gentry, and our own blood into the bargain."

A thick, heavy sob was all the answer she could make.

"To be sure you're sorry; why wouldn't you be sorry, leaving your own home and going away among strangers; and 'tis I am sorry to let you go!"

"Are you so, dearest papa? Are you really sorry to part with me? Would you rather I'd stay behind with you and Nelly?" cried she, looking up at him with eyes swimming in tears.

"Would I, is it?" said he, eagerly, as he kissed her forehead twice; then, suddenly checking himself, he said, in an altered voice, "But that would be selfish, Kate, nothing else than downright selfish. Ask Nelly, there, if that's my nature? Not that Nelly will ever give me too good a character!" added he, bitterly. But poor Ellen neither heard the question nor the taunt; her mind was traveling many a long mile away in realms of dreary speculation.

"I'm sorry to interrupt a moment like this," said Sir Stafford, "but I believe I must take you away, Miss Dalton; our time is now of the shortest."

One fond and long embrace the sisters took, and Kate was led away between Sir Stafford and her father, while Nelly went through a round of leave-takings with the others, in a state of semi-consciousness that resembled a dream. The courteous flatteries of Lady Hester fell as powerless on her ear as the rougher good wishes of Grounsell. George Onslow's respectful manner was as unnoticed as the flippant smartness of Albert Jekyl's. Even Sydney's gentle attempt at consolation was heard without heeding; and when one by one they had gone and left her alone in that dreary room, she was not more aware of her solitude than when they stood around her.

Couriers and waiters passed in and out to see that nothing had been forgotten; doors were slammed on every side; loud voices were calling; all the turmoil of a departure was there, but she knew nothing of it. Even when the loud cracking of the postilions' whips echoed in the court-yard, and the quick clatter of horses' feet and heavy wheels resounded through the arched doorway, she was still unmoved; nor did she recover full liberty of thought till her father stood beside her, and said, "Come, Nelly, let us go home."

Then she arose, and took his arm without a word. She would have given her life to have been able to speak even a few words of comfort to the poor old man, whose cheeks were wet with tears, but she could not utter a syllable.

"Ay, indeed," muttered he, "it will be dreary home now!"

Not another word was spoken by either as they trod their way along the silent streets, over which the coming glow of evening threw a mournful shadow. They walked, with bent-down heads, as if actually fearing to recognize the objects that they had so often looked upon with *her*, and, slowly traversing the little Platz, they gained their own door. There they halted, and, from habit, pulled the bell. Its little tinkle, heard in the stillness, seemed suddenly to recall them both to thought, for Dalton, with a melancholy smile, said:

"'Tis old Andy is coming now! 'Tisn't *her* foot I hear! Oh, Nelly, Nelly, how did you ever persuade me to this! Sure I know I'll never be happy again!"

Nelly made no answer. The injustice of the speech was well atoned for in her mind by the thought that, in shifting the blame from himself to her, her father might find some sort of consolation; well satisfied to become the subject of his reproach, if the sacrifice could alleviate his sorrow.

"Take that chair away; throw it out of the window," cried he, angrily; "it breaks my heart to look at it." And with this he leaned his head upon the table and sobbed like a child.

CHAPTER XX.

A VERY SMALL "INTERIOR."

In one of the most favored spots of that pleasant quay which goes by the name of the Lungo l'Arno, at Florence, there stood a small, miserable-looking, rickety old building of two stories high, wedged in between two massive and imposing palaces, as though a buffer to deaden the force of collision. In all probability it owed its origin to some petty usurpation, and had gradually grown up, from the unobtrusive humility of a cobbler's bulk, to the more permanent nuisance of stone and mortar. The space occupied was so small as barely to permit of a door and a little window beside it, within which hung a variety of bridles, halters, and such like gear, with here and there the brass-mounted harnessing of a Calasina, or the gay worsted tassels and fringed finery of a peasant's Barroccino. The little spot was so completely crammed with wares, that for all purposes of traffic it was useless; hence, everything that pertained to sale was carried on in the street, thus contributing by another ingredient to the annoyance of this misplaced residence. Threats, tyranny, bribery, seductions of twenty kinds, intimidation in as many shapes, had all failed in inducing its owner to remove to another part of the town. Gigi—every one in Florence is known by his Christian name, and we never heard him called by any other—resisted oppressions as manfully as he was proof against softer influences, and held his ground, hammering away at his old "demi-piques," burnishing bits and scouring housings, in utter indifference to the jarred nerves and chafed susceptibilities of his fine neighbors. It was not that the man was indifferent to money. It was not that the place was associated with any family reminiscences. It was not from its being very favorable to the nature of his dealings, since his chief customers were usually the frequenters of the less fashionable localities. It was the simple fact that Gigi was a Florentine, and, like a Florentine, he saw no reason why he shouldn't have the sun and the Arno as well as the Guiciardoni who lived at his right, or the Rinuncini, who dwelt on his left hand.

Small and contracted as that miserable frontage was, the sun *did* shine upon it just as pleasantly as on its proud neighbors, and the bright Arno glided by with its laughing ripples; while, from the little window above-stairs, the eye ranged over the cypress-clad hill of San Miniato and the fair gardens of the Boboli. On one side lay the quaint old structure of the Ponte Vecchio, with its glittering stores of jewelry, and on the other the graceful elliptic arches of St. Trinita spanned the stream. The quay before the door was the chosen rallying-point of all Florence; the promenade where lounged all its fashionables of an evening, as they descended from their carriages after the accustomed drive in the Cascini. The Guardie Nobili passed daily, in all their scarlet bravery, to and from the Pitti Palace; the Grand Ducal equipage never took any other road. A continual flow of travelers to the great hotels on the quay contributed its share of bustle and animation to the scene; so that here might be said to meet, as in a focus, all that made up the life, the stir, and the movement of the capital.

Full of amusement and interest, as that morning panorama often is, our object is less to linger beside it than, having squeezed our way between the chaotic wares of Gigi's shop, to ascend the little, dark, and creaking stairs which leads to the first story, and into which we now beg to introduce our reader. There are but two rooms, each of them of the dimensions of closets, but furnished with a degree of pretension that cannot fail to cause amazement as you enter. Silk draperies, carved cabinets, bronzes, china, chairs of ebony, tables of Buhl, a Persian rug on the floor, an alabaster lamp suspended from the ceiling, miniatures in handsome frames, and armor cover the walls; while, scattered about, are richly-bound books and prints, and drawings in water-color. Through the half-drawn curtain that covers the doorway—for there is no door—you can peep into the back room, where a lighter and more modern taste prevails; the gold-sprigged curtains of a French bed, and the Bohemian glass that glitters everywhere, bespeaking another era of decorative luxury.

It is not with any individious pleasure for depreciation, but purely in the interests of truth, that we must now tell our reader that, of all this seeming elegance and splendor, nothing, absolutely nothing, is real. The brocaded silks have been old petticoats; the ebony is lacquer; the ivory is bone; the statuettes are plaster, glazed so as to look like marble; the armor is "papier mâché"—even to the owner himself, all is imposition, for he is no other than Albert Jekyl.

Now, my dear reader, you and I see these things in precisely the same light; the illusion of a first glance stripped off, we smile as we examine, one by one, the ingenious

devices meant to counterfeit ancient art or modern elegance. It is possible, too, that we derive as much amusement from the ingenuity exercised, as we should have had pleasure in contemplating the realities so typified. Still there is one individual to whom this consciousness brings no alloy of enjoyment—Jekyl has persuaded himself to accept all as fact. Like the Indian, who first carves and then worships his god, he has gone through the whole process of fabrication, and now gazes on his handiwork with the eyes of a true believer. Gracefully reclined upon an ottoman, the mock amber mouthpiece of a gilt hookah between his lips, he dreams, with half-closed eyes, of Oriental luxury! A Sybarite in every taste, he has invented a little philosophy of his own. He has seen enough of life to know that thousands might live in enjoyment out of the superfluities of rich men, and yet make them nothing the poorer. What banquet would not admit of a guest the more? What *fête* to which another might not be added? What four-in-hand prances by without some vacant seat, be it even in the rumble? What gilded gondola has not a place to spare? To be this "complement" to the world's want is, then, his mission.

No man invents a "métier" without a strong element of success. The very creative power is an earnest of victory. It is true that there had been great men before Agamemnon; so had there been a race of "diners-out" before Jekyl; but he first reduced the practice to system, showing that all the triumphs of cookery, all the splendor of equipage, all the blandishments of beauty, all the fascinations of high society, may be enjoyed by one who actually does not hold a "share in the company," and, without the qualification of scrip, takes his place among the directors.

Had he brought to this new profession common-place abilities and inferior acquirements, he would have been lost amid that vulgar herd of indistinguishables which infest every city, and whose names are not even "writ in water." Jekyl, however, possessed many and varied gifts. He might have made a popular preacher in a watering-place; a very successful doctor for nervous invalids; a clever practitioner at the bar; an admirable member of the newspaper press! He might have been very good as an actor; he would have been glorious as an auctioneer! With qualities of this order, a most plastic wit, and an India-rubber conscience, what bound need there be to his success! Nor was there. He was, in all the society of the capital, not alone an admitted and accepted, but a welcome, guest. He might have failed to strike this man as being clever, or that as being agreeable. Some might be disappointed in his smartness; some might think his social claims overrated; none were ever offended by anything that fell from him. His great secret seemed to lie in the fact that, if generally easy to be found when required, he was never in the way when not wanted. Had he possessed the gift of invisibility, he could scarcely have been more successful in this latter good quality. He never interrupted a confidence; never marred a *tête-à-tête*; a kind of instinct would arrest his steps as he approached a boudoir where his presence would be undesirable; and he has been known to retire from a door on which he had already placed his hand, with a sudden burst of intelligence suggesting "to come another day."

These, however, seem mere negative qualities; his positive ones were, however, not less remarkable. The faculties which some men might have devoted to abstract science or metaphysical inquiry, he, with a keen perception of his own fitness, resolved to exercise upon the world around him. His botany was a human classification; all his chemistry an analysis of men's motives. It is true, perhaps, that the poet's line may have been received by him with a peculiar limitation, and that, if "the proper study of mankind is man," his investigations took a shape scarcely contemplated by the writer. It was not man in his freedom of thought and action, not man in all the consciousness of power, and in the high hope of a great destiny that attracted him—no! it was for small humanity that he cared——for all the struggles and wiles, and plots and schemings of this wicked world—for man amid its pomps and vanities, its balls, its festivals, its intrigues, and its calamities.

He felt, with the great dramatist, that "all the world's a stage," and, the better to enjoy the performance, he merely took a "walking character," that gave him full leisure to watch the others. Such was our friend, Albert Jekyl, or as he was properly called by his acquaintance, Le Duc de Dine-out, to distinguish him from the Talleyrands, who are Ducs de Dino.

Let us now, without further speculation, come back to him, as with his window open to admit the "Arno sun," he lay at full length upon his ottoman, conning over his dinner-list. He had been for some time absent from Florence, and in the interval a number of new people had arrived, and some of the old had gone away. He was,

therefore, running over the names of the present and the missing, with a speculative thought for the future.

"A bad season, it would seem!" muttered he, as his eye traced rapidly the list of English names, in which none of any distinction figured. "This comes of Carbonari and Illuminati humbug. They frighten John Bull, and he will not come abroad to see a barricade under his window. Great numbers have gone away too—the Scotts, the Carringdons, the Hopleys!—three excellent houses; and those dear Milnwoods, who, so lately 'reconciled to Rome,' as the phrase is, 'took out their piety' in Friday fish-dinners.

"The Russians, too, have left us; the Geroboffskys gone back to their snows again, and expiating their 'liberal tendencies' by a tour in Siberia. The Chaptowitsch, recalled in disgrace for asking one of Louis Philippe's sons to a breakfast! We have got in exchange a few Carlists, half a dozen 'Legitimists,' with very stately manners and small fortunes. But a good house to dine at, a good *salon* for a lounge, a pleasant haunt for all seasons and at all hours, what is there? Nothing, absolutely nothing. And what a city this was once—crammed, as it used to be, with dear delightful 'ruined families;' that is, those who left ruin to their creditors at home, to come out and live gloriously abroad. And now I look down my list, and, except my little Sunday dinner at 'Marescotte's,' and that half-luncheon thing I take at the Villa Pessarole, I really see nothing for the whole week. The Onslows, alone, figure in strong capitals. Let me see, then, how they must be treated. I have already housed them at the Palazzo Mazzarini, and, for some days at least, their time will be filled up with upholsterers, decorators, and such like. Then the campaign will open, and I can but watch eventualities, and there will be no lack of these. The young Guardsman likes play. I must see that Prince Carini does not get hold of him. Miss Onslow has a taste for Gothic and stained glass; that, nowadays, often ends in a love of saints' shin-bones and other relics. My lady is disposed to be a 'fast one;' and, in fact, except the gruff old doctor, who is a confounded bore, the whole craft is deficient in ballast. But I was forgetting 'the Dalton'—shame on me, for she is very pretty indeed!" He seemed to ruminate and reflect for some minutes, and then said aloud, "Yes, ma belle Catharine, with the aid of Albert Jekyl, with *his* counsel to guide, and *his* head to direct you, there's no saying what your destiny might not be! It would be, I know well, very hard to convince you of the fact, and possibly, were I to try it, you'd be silly enough to fancy me in love with you!" Albert Jekyl in love! The idea was so excellent that he lay back and laughed heartily at it. "And yet," said he, after a pause, "you'll see this fact aright one of these days. You'll learn the immense benefit my knowledge would be when joined to your own beauty. Ay, Kate! but it will be too late—just so, too late; then, like every one else, you'll have played all your trumps before you begin to learn the game. A girl who has caught up every trick of manner, every little tactic of society within a month, and who, at this hour, would stand the scrutiny of the most fastidious eye, is a great prize in the wheel. This aptitude might lead to great things, though, in all probability, it will never conduce save to very little ones!"

With this reflection Jekyl arose to begin his toilet, an occupation which, less from dandyism than pure self-love, he usually prolonged during the whole morning. It was to him a period of self-examination. He seemed—to use a mercantile figure—to be taking stock of his own capabilities, and investigating his own means of future success. It was an "open day"—that is, he knew not where he should dine; so that his costume, while partaking of all the characteristics of the morning, had yet combined certain little decorative traits that would not be unsuitable if pressed to accept an unpremeditated hospitality.

There were very few, indeed, with whom Jekyl would have condescended so to dine, not only from the want of dignity incurred, but that on principle he would have preferred the humblest fare at home to the vulgarity of a pot-luck dinner, which invariably, as he said himself, deranged your digestion, and led to wrong intimacies.

His dress being completed, he looked out along the crowd to see in whose carriage he was to have a seat to the Cascini. More than one inviting gesture motioned him to a place, as equipage after equipage passed on; but, although some of those who sought him were high in rank, and others distinguished for beauty and attraction, Jekyl declined the courtesies with that little wave of the hand so significative in all Italian intercourse. Occasionally, indeed, a bland, regretful smile seemed to convey the sorrow the refusal cost him; and once he actually placed his hand over where his heart might be, as though to

express a perfect pang of suffering; but still he bided his time.

At last, a very dark visage, surrounded by a whisker of blackest hair, peeped from beneath the head of a very shabby calèche, whose horse and coachman were all of the "seediest," and Jekyl cried out, "Morlache!" while he made a sign towards the Cascini. The other replied by spreading out his hand horizontally from his mouth, and blowing along the surface—a pantomime meant to express a railroad. Jekyl immediately descended and took his place beside him.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FAMILY PICTURE.

THE fashionable life of a great city has a character of sameness which defies all attempts at portraiture. Well-bred people, and their amusements, are all constructed so perfectly alike—certain family traits pervading them throughout—that every effort at individualization is certain to be a failure. You may change the *venue*, if you will, from London to Paris, to Vienna, or St. Petersburg, but the issue is always the same; the very same interests are at work, and the same passions exercised by the selfsame kind of people. If such be the rule among the first-rate capitals of Europe, it is very far from being the case in those smaller cities which belong to inferior states, and which, from reasons of health, pleasure or economy, are the resort of strangers from different parts of the world. In these, society is less disciplined, social rank less defined; conflicting claims and rival nationalities disturb the scene, and there is, so to say, a kind of struggle for pre-eminence, which in better-regulated communities is never witnessed. If, as is unquestionably true, such places rarely present the attractions of good society, they offer to the mere observer infinitely more varied and amusing views of life than he would ever expect to see elsewhere. As in the few days of a revolution, when the "barricades are up," and all hurrying to the conflict, more of national character will be exhibited than in half a century of tame obedience to the law; so here are displayed, to the sun and the noonday, all those passions and pretensions which rarely see the light in other places.

The great besetting sin of this social state is the taste for NOTORIETY. Everything must contribute to this! Not alone wealth, splendor, rank, and genius, but vice, in all its shapes and forms, must be notorious. "Better be calumniated in all the moods and tenses than untalked of," is the grand axiom. Do something that can be reported of you; good, if you will—bad, if you must; but do it. If you be not rich enough to astonish by the caprices of your wealth, do something by your wits, or even your whiskers. The color of a man's gloves has sufficed to make his fortune.

Upon this strange ocean, which, if rarely storm-shaken, was never perfectly tranquil, the Onslows were now launched, as well pleased as people usually are who, from being of third or fourth-rate importance in their own country, suddenly awake to the fact that they are celebrities abroad.

The Mazzarini Palace had long been untenanted; its last occupant had been one of the Borghese family, whose princely fortune was still unable to maintain the splendor of a residence fitted only for royalty. To learn, therefore, that a rich "milordo" had arrived there with the intention of passing his winter, was a piece of news that occupied every tongue in the city. Gossips were questioned about the private history, the Peerage consulted for such facts as were public. Sir Stafford's wealth was actively discussed, and all possible inroads upon it his son's extravagance might have made, debated and decided on. A minute investigation into their probable reasons for leaving England was also instituted, in which conjectures far more ingenious than true figured prominently. What they were like—what they said, did, and meant to do—was the sole table-talk of the capital.

"They've had their horses out from England," said one; "They've taken the best box at the Pergola," said another; "They've engaged Midchekoff's cook," said a third; "They've been speaking to Gridani about his band," chimed in a fourth; and so on. All their proceedings were watched and followed by that eager vulturehood which hungers for ortolans, and thirsts for iced champagne.

Nor were the Onslows without offering food for this curious solicitude. From the hour of her arrival, Lady Hester had been deeply engaged, in concert with her grand vizier, Albert Jekyl, in preparations for the coming campaign. An army of upholsterers, decorators, and such like, beset the palazzo with enormous vans crammed full of wares. Furniture, that had served royal guests, and was even yet in high preservation, was condemned, to give way to newer and more costly decoration; rich stuffs and hangings, that had been the admiration of many a visitor, were ruthlessly pulled down,

to be replaced by even more gorgeous materials; till at last it was whispered about, that, except some antique cabinets, the pictures, and a few tables of malachite or marble, little or nothing remained of what once constituted the splendor of the place.

These were mere rumors, however, for as yet none, save Albert Jekyl himself, had seen the interior; and from him, unless disposed to accord it, all confidence was hopeless. Indeed, his little vague stare when questioned—his simpering, "I shouldn't wonder," "It is very likely," or, "Now that you mention it, I begin to think so, too"—would have disarmed the suspicion of all who had not studied him deeply. What the Onslows were going to do, and when they would do it, were, then, the vexed questions of every coterie. In a few days more the carnival would begin, and yet no announcement of their intentions had yet gone forth—no programme of future festivities been issued to the world. A vague and terrible fear began to prevail that it was possible they meant all these splendid preparations for themselves alone. Such a treason was incredible at first; but as day followed day, and no sign was made, suspicion ripened into actual dread; and now the eager expectants began to whisper among themselves dark reasons for a conduct so strange and inexplicable.

Haggerstone contributed his share to these mysterious doubtings; for, while not confessing that his acquaintance with the Onslows was of the very slightest, and dated but from a week before, he spoke of them with all the affected ease and information of one who had known them for years.

Nor were his comments of the most flattering kind; for, seeing how decidedly every effort he made to renew acquaintance was met by a steady opposition, he lost no time in assuming his stand as enemy. The interval of doubt which had occurred as to their probable mode of life was favorable for this line of action. None knew if they were ever to partake of the splendor and magnificence of the Mazzarini; none could guess what chance they had of the sumptuous banquets of the rich man's table. It was a lottery, in which, as yet, they had not even a ticket, and what so natural as to depreciate the scheme!

If the courts of law and equity be the recognized tribunals by which the rights of property are decided, so there exist in every city not less decisive courts, which pronounce upon all questions of social claims, and deliver judgments upon the pretensions of every new arrival amongst them. High amid the number of these was a certain family called Ricketts, who had been residents of Florence for thirty odd years back. They consisted of three persons—General Ricketts, his wife, and a maiden sister of the general. They inhabited a small house in a garden within the boulevard, dignified by the name of the "Villino Zoe." It had originally been the humble residence of a market-gardener, but, by the aid of paint and plaster, contrived to impose upon the world almost as successfully as did the fair owner herself by the help of similar adjuncts. A word, however, for the humanities before we speak of their abiding-place. The "general"—heaven alone knew when, where, or in what service he became so—was a small, delicate little man, with bland manners, a weak voice, a weak stomach, and a weaker head; his instincts all mild, gentle, and inoffensive, and his whole pursuit in life a passion for inventing fortifications, and defending passes and *têtes-du-pont* by lines, circumvallations, and ravelins, which cost reams of paper and whole buckets of water-color to describe. The only fire which burned within his nature was a little flickering flame of hope that one day the world would awake to the recognition of his great discoveries, and his name be associated with those of Vauban and Carnot. Sustained by this, he bore up against contemporary neglect and actual indifference; he whispered to himself that, like Nelson, he would one day "have a gazette of his own," and in this firm conviction, he went on with rule and compass, measuring and daubing and drawing from morn till night, happy, humble, and contented: nothing could possibly be more inoffensive than such an existence. Even the French—our natural enemies—or the Russians—our Palmerstonian "Bêtes Noires"—would have forgiven, had they but seen, the devices of his patriotism. Never did heroic ardor burn in a milder bosom; for, though his brain reveled in all the horrors of siege and slaughter, he would not have had the heart to crush a beetle.

Unlike him in every respect was the partner of his joys: a more bustling, plotting, scheming existence it was hard to conceive. Most pretenders are satisfied with aspiring to one crown; *her* ambitions were "legion." When Columbus received the taunts of the courtiers on the ease of his discovery, and merely replied that the merit lay simply in the fact that he alone had made it, he was uttering a truth susceptible of very wide application. Nine-tenths of the inventions which promote the

happiness or secure the ease of mankind, have not been a whit more difficult than that of balancing the egg. They only needed that some one should think of them "practically." Thousands may have done so in moods of speculation or fancy; the grand requisite was a practical intelligence. Such was Mrs. Ricketts's. As she had seen at Naples the lava used for mere road-making, which, in other hands and by other treatment, might have been fashioned into all the shapes and colors of Bohemian glass, so did she perceive that a certain raw material was equally misapplied and devoted to base uses, but which, by the touch of genius, might be made powerful as the wand of an enchanter. This was "Flattery." Do not, like the Spanish courtiers, my dear reader—do not smile at her discovery, nor suppose that she had been merely exploring an old and exhausted mine. Her flattery was not, as the world employs it, an exaggerated estimate of existing qualities, but a grand poetic and creative power, that actually begot the great sublime it praised. Whatever your walk, rank, or condition in life, she instantly laid hold of it to entrap you. No matter what your size, stature, or symmetry, she could costume you in a minute! Her praises, like an elastic-web livery, fitted all her slaves; and slaves were they of the most abject slavery, who were led by the dictation of her crafty intelligence!

A word about poor Martha, and we have done; nor, indeed, is there any need we should say more than that she was universally known as "poor Martha" by all their acquaintance. Oh! what patience, submission, and long-suffering it takes before the world will confer its degree of martyr—before they will condescend to visit, even with so cheap a thing as compassion, the life of an enduring self-devotion. Martha had had but one idol all her life—her brother; and although, when he married late in years, she had almost died broken-hearted at the shock, she clung to him and his fortunes, unable to separate from one to whose habits she had been ministering for above thirty years. It was said that originally she was a person of good common faculties, and a reasonably fair knowledge of the world; but to see her at the time of which we now speak, not a vestige remained of either—not a stone marked where the edifice once stood. Nor can this be matter of wonderment. Who could have passed years amid all the phantasmagoria of that unreal existence, and either not gone clean mad, or made a weak compromise with sanity, by accepting everything as real? Poor Martha had exactly these two alternatives—either to "believe the crusts mutton," or be eternally shut out from all hope. Who can tell the long and terrible struggle such a mind must have endured?—what little bursts of honest energy repelled by fear and timidity?—what good intentions baffled by natural humility, and the affection she bore her brother?

It may have, nay, it did, cost her much to believe this strange creed of her sister-in-law; but she ended by doing so. So implicit was her faith, that, like a true devotee, she would not trust the evidence of her own senses, if opposed by the articles of her belief. The very pictures, at whose purchase she had been present, and whose restoration and relacquering had been the work of her own hands, she was willing to aver had been the gifts of royal and princely personages. The books for which she had herself written to the publishers, she would swear were all tributes offered by the respective writers to the throne of taste and erudition. Every object with whose humble birth and origin she was familiar, was associated in her mind with some curious history, which, got off by rote, she repeated with full credulity. Like the well-known athlete, who lifted a bull because he had accustomed himself to the feat since the animal had been a calf, rising from small beginnings, she had so educated her faculties, that now nothing was above her powers. Not all the straits and contrivances by which this motley display was got up—not all the previous schemes and plottings—not all the discussions as to what king or kaiser this should be attributed—by what artist that was painted—who carved this cup—who enameled that vase—could shake the firmness of her faith when the matter was once decided. She might oppose the bill in every stage; she might cavil at it in committee, and divide on every clause; but when it once became law, she revered it as a statute of the land. All her own doubts faded away on the instant; all her former suggestions vanished at once; a new light seemed to break on her mind, and she appeared to see with the eyes of truth and discernment. We have been led away beyond our intention in this sketch, and have no space to devote to that temple wherein the mysteries were celebrated. Enough, if we say that it is small and ill-arranged, its discomfort increased by the incongruous collection of rare and curious objects by which it was filled. Stuffed lions stood in the hall; mock men in armor guarded the entrance to the li-

brary; vast glass cases of mineralogical wealth, botanical specimens, stuffed birds, impaled butterflies, Indian weapons, Etrurian cups, Irish antiquities, Chinese curiosities, covered the walls on every side. Not a specimen amongst them that could not trace its presentation to some illustrious donor. Miniatures of dear, dear friends were everywhere; and what a catholic friendship was that which included every one, from Lord Byron to Chalmers, and took in the whole range of morals, from Mrs. Opie to Fanny Elssler. Indeed, although the fair Zoe was a "rigid virtue," her love of genius, her "mind-worship," as she called it, often led her into strange intimacies with that intellectual class whose strength lies in pirouettes, and whose gifts are short petticoats. In a word, whatever was "notorious" was her natural prey; a great painter, a great radical, a great basso, a great traveler; any one to lionize, anything to hang history upon; to enlist, even "for one night only," in that absurd comedy which was performed at her house, and to display among her acquaintances as another in that long catalogue of those who came to lay the tribute of their genius at her feet.

That a large section of society was disposed to be rude and ungenerous enough to think her a bore, is a fact that we are, however unwilling, obliged to confess; but her actual influence was little affected by the fact. The real serious business of life is often carried on in localities surrounded by innumerable inconveniences. Men buy and sell their millions, subsidize states, and raise loans in dens dark and dismal enough to be prison-cells. In the same way, the Villino was a recognized rendezvous of all who wanted to hear what was going on in the world, and who wished to be *à la hauteur* of every current scandal of the day. Not that such was ever the tone of the conversation; on the contrary, it was "all taste and the musical glasses," the "naughty talk" being the mere asides of the scene.

Now, in that season of foreign life which precedes the Carnival, and on those nights when there is no opera, any one benevolent enough to open his doors to receive is sure of full houses; so the Villino "improved the occasion" by announcing a series of Tuesdays and Fridays, which were, as the papers say, frequented by all the rank and fashion of the metropolis. It is at one of these "at homes" that we would now present our reader—not, indeed, during the full moon of the reception, when the crowded rooms, suffocating with heat, were crammed with visitors, talking in every tongue of Europe, and every imaginable dialect of each. The great *mêlée* tournament was over, and a few lingered over the now empty lists, discussing in familiar converse the departed guests and the events of the evening.

This privy council consisted of the reader's old acquaintance, Haggerstone; a Russo-Polish Count Petrolaffski, a dark, sallow-skinned, odd-looking gentleman, whose national predilections had raised him to the rank of an enemy to the emperor, but whose private resources, it was rumored, came from the imperial treasury to reward his services as a spy; a certain Mr. Scroope Purvis, the brother of Mrs. Ricketts, completing the party. He was a little, rosy-cheeked old man, with a limp and a stutter, perpetually running about retailing gossip, which, by some accident or other, he invariably got all wrong, never, on even the most trifling occasion, being able to record a fact as it occurred.

Such were the individuals of a group which sat around the fire in close and secret confab, Mrs. Ricketts herself placed in the midst, her fair proportions gracefully disposed in a chair whose embroidery displayed all the quarterings and emblazonment of her family for centuries back. The "bill" before the house was the Onslows, whose *res gestæ* were causing a most intense interest everywhere.

"Have dey return your call, madam?" asked the Pole, with an almost imperceptible glance beneath his dark brows.

"Not yet, count; we only left our cards yesterday." This, be it said in parenthesis, was "inexact"—the visit had been made eight days before. "Nor should we have gone at all, but Lady Foxington begged and entreated we would. 'They will be so utterly without guidance of any kind,' she said; 'you must really take them in hand.'"

"And you will take dem in your hand—eh?"

"That depends, my dear count—that depends," said she, pondering. "We must see what line they adopt here; rank and wealth have no influence with us if ununited with moral and intellectual excellence."

"I take it, then, your circle will be more select than amusing this winter," said Haggerstone, with one of his whip-cracking enunciations.

"Be it so, colonel," sighed she, plaintively. "Like a lone beacon on a rock, with——I forget the quotation."

"With the phos-phos-phos-phate of lime upon it?" said Purvis, "that new discov-co-covery?"

"With no such thing! A figure is, I perceive, a dangerous mode of expression."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried he, with a peculiar cackle, whose hysteric notes always carried himself into the seventh heaven of enjoyment, "you would cut a pretty figure if you were to be made a beacon of, and be burned like Moses. Ha! ha! ha!"

The lady turned from him in disdain, and addressed the colonel.

"So you really think that they are embarrassed, and that is the true reason of their coming abroad?"

"I believe I may say I know it, ma'am!" rejoined he. "There is a kind of connection between our families, although I should be very sorry they'd hear of it—the Badelys and the Harringtons are first cousins."

"Oh, to be sure!" broke in Purvis. "Jane Harrington was father—no, no, not father—she was mo-mo-mother of Tom Badely; no! that isn't it, she was his aunt, or his brother-in-law, I forget which."

"Pray be good enough, sir, not to involve a respectable family in a breach of the common law," said Haggerstone, tartly, "and leave the explanation to me."

"How I do dislike dat English habit of countin' cousins," said the Pole; "you never see tree, four English togeder widout a leetle tree of genealogie in de middle, and dey do sit all round, fighting for de fruit."

"Financial reasons, then, might dictate retirement," said Mrs. Ricketts, coming back to the original theme.

A very significant nod from Haggerstone inferred that he concurred in the remark.

"Four contested elections for a county, ma'am, a spendthrift wife, and a gambling son, rarely increase a man's income," said he, sententiously.

"Do he play? What for play is he fond of?" asked the Pole, eagerly.

"Play, sir? There is nothing an Englishman will not play at—from the turf, to tossing for sovereigns."

"So *Hamlet* say, in Shakspeare, 'de play is de ting,'" cried the count, with the air of a man who made a happy quotation.

"They are going to have plays," broke in Purvis; ; "Jekyl let it out to night. They're to get up a Vau-vau-vau-vau——"

"A *tête de veau*, probably, sir," said Haggerstone; "in which case," continued he, in a whisper, "you would be invaluable."

"No, it isn't that," broke in Purvis; "they are to have what they call Proverbs."

"I trust they have engaged your services as *Solomon*, sir," said Haggerstone, with that look of satisfaction which always followed an impudent speech.

"I heard the subject of one of them," resumed the other, who was far too occupied with his theme to bestow a thought upon a sarcasm. "There's a lady in love with—with—with her Mam-mam-mam—"

"Her mamma," suggested the Pole.

"No, it isn't her mamma; it's her Mamame-ameluke slave; and he, who is a native prince, with a great many wives of his own——"

"Oh, for shame, Scroope, you forget Martha is here," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was always ready to suppress the bore by a call to order on the score of morals.

"It isn't wrong, I assure you; just hear me out; let me only explain——"

"There, pray don't insist, I beg you," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a regal wave of her hand.

"Why, it's Miss Dalton is to play it, Jekyl says," cried Purvis, in a tone of most imploring cadence.

"And who may Miss Dalton be?" asked Mrs. Ricketts

"She's the niece—no, she's the aunt—or rather her father is aunt to—to——"

"He may be an old lady, sir; but, surely——"

"Oh, I have it now!" broke in Purvis. "It was her mother; Miss Da-a-alton's mother was uncle to a Stafford."

"Perhaps I can shorten the pedigree," said Haggerstone, tartly. "The young lady is the daughter of a man whom this same Sir Stafford tricked out of his fortune; they were distant relatives, so he hadn't even the plea of blood-relationship to cover his iniquity. It was, however, an Irish fortune, and, like a Spanish château, its loss is more a question of feeling than of fact. The lawyers still say that Dalton's right is unimpeachable, and that the Onslows have not even the shadow of a case for a jury."

"An' have de lady no broder nor sister?" asked the count, who had heard this story with much attention.

"She has, sir, both brother and sister, but both illegitimate, so that this girl is the heiress to the estate."

"And probably destined to be the wife of the young Guardsman," said Mrs. Ricketts.

"Guessed with your habitual perspicuity, madam," said Haggerstone, bowing.

"How very shocking! What worldliness one sees everywhere!" cried she, plaintively.

"The world is excessively worldly, madam," rejoined Haggerstone; "but I really believe that we are not a jot worse than were the patriarchs of old."

"Ah, oui, les patriarches!" echoed the Pole, laughing, and always ready to seize

upon an allusion that savored of irreverence.

"Count! Colonel Haggerstone!" cried Mrs. Ricketts, in reproof, and with a look to where Martha sat at her embroidery-frame. "And this Miss Dalton—is she pretty?"

"She is pretty at this moment, madam; but, with a clever hairdresser and a good milliner, would be downright beautiful. Of course these are adjuncts she is likely to find during her sojourn with the Onslows."

"Poor thing! how glad one would be to offer her a kinder asylum," said Mrs. Ricketts, while she threw her eyes over the cracked china monsters and mock Vandykes around her; "a home," added she, "where intellectuality and refinement might compensate for the vulgar pleasures of mere wealth!"

"She may want such, one of these days yet, or I'm much mistaken," said Haggerstone. "Onslow has got himself very deep in railway speculations; he has heavy liabilities in some Mexican mining affairs, too. They've all been living very fast; and a crash—a real 'crash'"—this word he gave with a force of utterance that only malignity could compass—"is almost certain to follow. What an excellent stable will come to the hammer then! There's a 'Bonesetter' colt worth a thousand guineas, with his engagements."

And now there was a little pause in the dialogue, while each followed out the thoughts of his own mind. Haggerstone's were upon the admirable opportunity of picking up a first-rate batch of horses for a fourth of their value; Mrs. Ricketts was pondering over the good policy of securing possession of a rich heiress as a member of her family, to be held in bondage as long as possible, and eventually—if it must be—given in marriage to some unprovided-for cousin; the Pole's dreams were of a rich wife; and Purvis, less ambitious than the rest, merely reveled in the thought of all the gossip this great event, when it should come off, would afford him; the innumerable anecdotes he would have to retail of the family and their wastefulness; the tea-parties he should enliven by his narratives; the soirées he would amuse with his sallies. Blessed gift of imbecility! how infinitely more pleasurable to its possessor than all the qualities and attributes of genius!

"Dat is ver pretty, indeed, très jolie!" said the count, bestowing a look of approval at the embroidery-frame, whereupon, for eight mortal months, poor Martha labored at the emblazonment of the Ricketts arms; "de leetle dogs are as de life."

"They are tigers, Monsieur le Comte," replied she, modestly.

"Oh, pardon! de are 'tigres!'"

"Most puppies are somewhat tigerish nowadays," chimed in Haggerstone, rising to take his leave.

"You are leaving us early, colonel," said the old general, as he awoke from a long nap on the little corner sofa, which formed his resting-place.

"It is past two, sir; and, even in *your* society, one cannot cheat time. Then, having acquitted himself of his debt of impertinence, he wished them good-night. The others, also, took their leave and departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

KATE.

Let us now return to Kate Dalton, whose life, since we last saw her, had been one round of brilliant enjoyment. To the pleasure of the journey, with all its varied objects of interest, the picturesque scenery of the Via Mala, the desolate grandeur of the Splugen, the calm and tranquil beauty of Como, succeeded the thousand treasures of art in the great cities where they halted. At first every image and object seemed associated by some invisible link with thoughts of home. What would Nelly think or say of this? was the ever-recurring question of her mind. How should she ever be able to treasure up her own memories and tell of the wonderful things that every moment met her eyes? The quick succession of objects, all new and dazzling, were but so many wonders to bring back to that "dear fireside" of home. The Onslows themselves, who saw everything without enthusiasm of any kind, appeared to take pleasure in the freshness of the young girl's admiration. It gave them, as it were, a kind of reflected pleasure, while, amid galleries and collections of all that was rare and curious, nothing struck them as half so surprising as the boundless delight of her unhackneyed nature.

Educated to a certain extent by watching the pursuits of her sister, Kate knew how to observe with taste, and admire with discrimination. Beauty of high order would seem frequently endowed with a power of appreciating the beauty of art—a species of relation appearing almost to subsist between the two.

Gifted with this instinct, there was an intensity in all her enjoyments, which displayed itself in the animation of her man-

ner, and the elevated expression of her features. The coldest and most worldly natures are seldom able to resist the influence of this enthusiasm; however hard the metal of their hearts, they must melt beneath this flame. Lady Hester Onslow, herself, could not remain insensible to the pure sincerity and generous warmth of this artless girl. For a time the combat, silent, unseen, but eventful, was maintained between these two opposite natures, the principle of good warring with the instincts of evil. The victory might have rested with the true cause—there was every prospect of its doing so—when Sydney Onslow, all whose sympathies were with Kate, and whose alliance had every charm of sisterhood, was suddenly called to England by tidings of her aunt's illness. Educated by her aunt Conway, she had always looked up to her as a mother, nor did the unhappy circumstances of her father's second marriage tend to weaken this feeling of attachment. The sad news reached them at Genoa; and Sydney, accompanied by Doctor Grounsell, at once set out for London. If the sudden separation of the two girls, just at the very moment of a budding friendship, was sorrowfully felt by both, to Lady Hester the event was anything but welcome.

She never had liked Sydney; she now detested the notion of a stepdaughter, almost of her own age, in the same society with herself: she dreaded, besides, the influence that she had already acquired over Kate, whose whole heart and nature she had resolved on monopolizing. It was not from any feeling of attachment or affection—it was the pure, miser-like desire for possession, that animated her. The plan of carrying away Kate from her friends and home had been her own; *she*, therefore, owned her; the original title was vested in her; the young girl's whole future was to be in her hands; her "road in life" was to be at *her* dictation. To be free of Sydney and the odious doctor by the same event was a double happiness, which, in spite of all the decorous restraints bad news impose, actually displayed itself in the most palpable form.

The Palazzo Mazzarini was now to be opened to the world, with all the splendor wealth could bestow, untrammeled by any restriction the taste of Sydney or the prudence of the doctor might impose. Sir Stafford, ever ready to purchase quiet for himself at any cost of money, objected to nothing. The cheapness of Italy, the expectations formed of an Englishman, were the arguments which always silenced him if he ventured on the very mildest remonstrance about expenditure; and Jekyl was immediately called into the witness-box, to show that, among the economics of the Continent, nothing was so striking as the facilities of entertaining. George, as might be supposed, had no dislike to see their own house the great center of society, and himself the much sought-after and caressed youth of the capital.

As for Kate, pleasure came associated in her mind with all that could elevate and exalt it—refinement of manners, taste, luxury, the fascinations of wit, the glitter of conversational brilliancy. She had long known that she was handsome, but she had never felt it till now; never awoke to that thrilling emotion which whispers of power over others, and which elevates the possessor of a great quality into a species of petty sovereignty above their fellows. Her progress in this conviction was a good deal aided by her maid; for, at Jekyl's suggestion, a certain Mademoiselle Nina had been attached to her personal staff.

It was not easy at first for Kate to believe in the fact at all that she should have a peculiar attendant; nor was it without much constraint and confusion that she could accept of services from one whose whole air and bearing bore the stamp of breeding and tact. Mademoiselle Nina had been the maid of the Princess Menzikoff, the most distinguished belle of Florence, the model of taste and elegance in dress; but when the princess separated from her husband, some unexplained circumstances had involved the name of the *femme de chambre*, so that, instead of "exchanging without a difference," as a person of her great abilities might readily have done, she had disappeared for a while from the scene and sphere in which habitually she moved, and only emerged from her seclusion to accept the humble position of Kate Dalton's maid. She was a perfect type of her own countrywomen in her own class of life. Small and neatly formed, her head was too large for her size, and the forehead over-large for the face, the brows and temples being developed beyond all proportion; her eyes, jet black and deeply set, were cold, stern-looking and sleepy, sadness, or rather weariness, being the characteristic expression of the face. Her mouth, however, when she smiled, relieved this, and gave a look of softness to her features. Her manner was that of great distance and respect—the trained observance of one who had been always held in the firm hand of discipline, and never suffered to assume the slightest approach to a

liberty. She contrived, however, even in her silence, or in the very few words she ever uttered, to throw an air of devotion into her service that took away from the formality of a manner that at first seemed cold, and even repulsive. Kate, indeed, in the beginning, was thrown back by the studied reserve and deferential distance she observed; but as days went over, and she grew more accustomed to the girl's manner, she began to feel pleased with the placid and unchanging demeanor that seemed to bespeak a mind admirably trained and regulated to its own round of duties.

While Kate sat at a writing-table adding a few lines to that letter which, begun more than a week ago, was still far from being completed, Nina, whose place was beside the window, worked away with bent-down head, not seeming to have a thought save for the occupation before her. Not so Kate: fancies came and went at every instant, breaking in upon the tenor of her thoughts, or wending far away on errands of speculation. Now, she would turn her eye from the page to gaze in wondering delight at the tasteful decorations of her little chamber—a perfect gem of elegance in all its details; then she would start up to step out upon the terrace, where even in winter the orange-trees were standing, shedding their sweet odor at every breeze from the Arno; with what rapturous delight she would follow the windings of that bright river till it was lost in the dark woods of the Cascini! How the sounds of passing equipages, the glitter and display of the moving throng, stirred her heart, and then, as she turned back within the room, with what a thrill of ecstasy her eyes rested on the splendid ball-dress which Nina had just laid upon the sofa! With a trembling hand she touched the delicate tissue of Brussels lace, and placed it over her arm in a graceful fold, her cheek flushing and her chest heaving in consciousness of heightening beauty.

Nina's head was never raised, her nimble fingers never ceased to ply, but beneath her dark brows her darker eyes shot forth a glance of deep and subtle meaning, as she watched the young girl's gesture.

"Nina," cried she, at last, "it is much too handsome for me; although I love to look at it, I actually fear to wear it. You know I never have worn anything like this before."

"Mademoiselle is too diffident and too unjust to her own charms; beautiful as is the robe, it only suits the elegance of its wearer."

"One ought to be so graceful in every gesture, so perfect in every movement beneath folds like these," cried Kate, still gazing at the fine tracery.

"Mademoiselle is grace itself!" said she, in a low, soft voice, so quiet in its utterance that it sounded like a reflection uttered unconsciously.

"Oh, Nina! if I were so! If I only could feel that my every look and movement were not recalling the peasant girl; for, after all, I have been little better—our good blood could not protect us from being poor, and poverty means so much that lowers!"

Nina sighed, but so softly as to be inaudible, and Kate went on:

"My sister Nelly never thought so; she always felt differently. Oh! Nina, how you would love her if you saw her, and how you would admire her beautiful hair, and those deep blue eyes, so soft, so calm, and yet so meaning."

Nina looked up, and seemed to give a glance that implied assent.

"Nelly would be so happy here, wandering through these galleries and sitting for hours long in these beautiful churches, surrounded with all that can elevate feeling or warm imagination; she, too, would know how to profit by these treasures of art. The frivolous enjoyments that please me would be beneath her. Perhaps she would teach me better things; perhaps I might turn from mere sensual pleasure to higher and purer sources of happiness."

"Will mademoiselle permit me to try this wreath?" said Nina, advancing with a garland of white roses, which she gracefully placed around Kate's head.

A half cry of delight burst from Kate as she saw the effect in the glass.

"Beautiful, indeed!" said Nina, as though in concurrence with an unspoken emotion.

"But, Nina, I scarcely like this—it seems as though—I cannot tell what I wish—as though I would desire notice—I, that am nothing—that ought to pass unobserved."

"You, mademoiselle," cried Nina—and for the first time a slight warmth coloring the tone of her manner—"you, mademoiselle, the belle, the beauty, the acknowledged beauty of Florence!"

"Nina! Nina!" cried Kate, rebukingly.

"I hope mademoiselle will forgive me. I would not for the world fail in my respect," said Nina, with deep humility; "but I was only repeating what others spoke."

"I am not angry, Nina—at least, not with you," said Kate, hurriedly. "With myself, indeed, I'm scarcely quite pleased. But who could have said such a silly thing?"

"Every one, mademoiselle; every one, as they were standing beneath the terrace t'other evening. I overheard Count Labinski say it to Captain Onslow; and then my lady took it up and said, 'You are quite right, gentlemen; there is nothing that approaches her in beauty."

"Nina! dear Nina!" said Kate, covering her flushed face with both hands.

"The Count de Melzi was more enthusiastic than even the rest. He vowed that he had grown out of temper with his Raffaelles since he saw you."

A hearty burst of laughter from Kate told that this flattery, at least, had gone too far. And now she resumed her seat at the writing-table. It was of the Splugen Pass and Como she had been writing; of the first burst of Italy upon the senses, as, crossing the High Alps, the land of the terraced vine lay stretched beneath. She tried to fall back upon the memory of that glorious scene as it broke upon her; but it was in vain. Other and far different thoughts had gained the mastery. It was no longer the calm lake, on whose mirrored surface snow-peaks and glaciers were reflected—it was not of those crags, over which the wild-fig and the olive, the oleander and the mimosa, are spreading, she could think. Other images crowded to her brain; troops of admirers were before her fancy; the hum of adulation filled her ears; splendid *salons*, resounding with delicious music, and ablaze with a thousand wax-lights, rose before her imagination, and her heart swelled with conscious triumph. The transition was most abrupt, then, from a description of scenery and natural objects to a narrative of the actual life of Florence:

"Up to this, Nelly, we have seen no one, except Mr. Jekyl, whom you will remember as having met at Baden. He dines here several days every week, and is most amusing with his funny anecdotes and imitations, for he knows everybody and is a wonderful mimic. You'd swear Doctor Grounsell was in the next room if you heard Mr. Jekyl's imitation. There has been some difficulty about an opera-box, for Mr. Jekyl, who manages everybody, will insist upon having Prince Midchekoff's, which is better than the royal box, and has not succeeded. For this reason we have not yet been to the opera; and, as the palace has been undergoing a total change of decoration and furniture, there has been no reception here as yet; but on Tuesday we are to give our first ball. All that I could tell you of splendor, my dearest Nelly, would be nothing to the reality of what I see here. Such magnificence in every detail; such troops of servants, all so respectful and obliging, and some dressed in liveries that resemble handsome uniforms! Such gold and silver plate; such delicious flowers everywhere—on the staircase, in the drawing-room—here, actually, beside me as I write. And, oh! Nelly, if you could see my dress! Lace, with bouquets of red camellia, and looped up with strings of small pearls. Think of *me*, of poor Kate Dalton, wearing such splendor! And, strange enough, too, I do not feel awkward in it. My hair, that you used to think I dressed so well myself, has been pronounced a perfect horror; and although I own it did shock me at first to hear it, I now see that they were perfectly right. Instead of bands, I wear ringlets down to my very shoulders; and Nina tells me there never was such an improvement, as the character of my features requires softening. Such quantities of dress as I have got, too! for there is endless toilet here; and although I am now growing accustomed to it, at first it worried me dreadfully, and left me no time to read. And, *à propos* of reading, Lady Hester has given me such a strange book. 'Mathilde,' it is called—very clever, deeply interesting, but not the kind of reading you would like; at least, neither the scenes nor the characters such as you would care for. Of course I take it to be a good picture of life in another sphere from what I have seen myself; and if it be, I must say there is more vice in high society than I believed. One trait of manners, however, I cannot help admiring: the extreme care that every one takes never to give even the slightest offense; not only that the wrong thing is never said, but never even suggested. Such an excessive deference to others' feelings bespeaks great refinement, if not a higher and better quality. Lady Hester is delightful in this respect. I cannot tell you how the charm of her manner grows into a fascination. Captain Onslow I see little of, but he is always good-humored and gay; and as for Sir Stafford, he is like a father in the kindliness and affection of his cordiality. Sydney I miss greatly; she was nearly of my own age, and although so much superior to me in every way, so companionable and sister-like. We are to write to each other if she does not return soon. I intended to have said so much about the galleries, but Mr.

Jekyl does quiz so dreadfully about artistic enthusiasm, I am actually ashamed to say a word; besides, to me, Nelly, beautiful pictures impart pleasure less from intrinsic merit than from the choice of subject and the train of thoughts they originate; and for this reason I prefer Salvator Rosa to all other painters. The romantic character of his scenery, the kind of story that seems to surround his characters, the solemn tranquility of his moonlights, the mellow splendor of his sunsets, actually heighten one's enjoyment of the realities in nature. I am ashamed to own that Raphael is less my favorite than Titian, whose portraits appear to reveal the whole character and life of the individual represented. In Velasquez there is another feature ——" Here came an interruption, for Nina came with gloves to choose, and now arose the difficult decision between a fringe of silver filigree and a deep fall of Valenciennes lace —a question on both sides of which Mademoiselle Nina had much to say. In all these little discussions, the mock importance lent to mere trifles at first amused Kate, and even provoked her laughter; but, by degrees, she learned not only to listen to them with attention, but even to take her share in the consultation. Nina's great art lay in her capacity for adapting a costume to the peculiar style and character of the wearer, and, however exaggerated were some of her notions on this subject, there was always a sufficiency of shrewd sense and good taste in her remarks to overbear any absurdity in her theory. Kate Dalton, whose whole nature had been simplicity and frankness itself, was gradually brought to assume a character with every change of toilet; for, if she came down to breakfast in a simple robe of muslin, she changed it for a "costume de paysanne" to walk in the garden; and this again for a species of hunting-dress to ride in the Cascini—to appear afterwards at dinner in some new type of a past age. An endless variety of these devices at last engaging attention, and occupying time, to the utter exclusion of topics more important and interesting.

The letter was now to be resumed; but the clue was lost, and her mind was only fettered with topics of dress and toilet. She walked out upon the terrace to recover her composure; but beneath the window was rolling on that endless tide of people and carriages that swells up the great flood of a capital city. She turned her steps to another side, and there, in the pleasure-ground, was George Onslow, with a great horse-sheet round him, accustoming a newly-purchased Arabian to the flapping of a riding-skirt. It was a present Sir Stafford had made her the day before. Everything she saw, everything she heard, recalled but one image—herself! The intoxication of this thought was intense. Life assumed features of delight and pleasure she had never conceived possible before, There was an interest imparted to everything, since in everything she had her share. Oh! most insidious of all poisons is that of egotism, which lulls the conscience by the soft flattery we whisper to ourselves, making us to believe that we are such as the world affects to think us. How ready are we to take credit for gifts that have been merely lent us by a kind of courtesy, and of which we must make restitution, when called upon, with what appetite we may.

For the time, indeed, the ecstasy of this delusion is boundless! Who has not, at some one moment or other of his life, experienced the entrancing delight of thinking that the world is full of his friends and admirers, that good wishes follow him as he goes, and kind welcomes await his coming? Much of our character for good or evil, of our subsequent utility in life, or our utter helplessness, will depend upon how we stand the season of trial. Kate Dalton possessed much to encourage this credulity; she was not only eminently handsome, but she had that species of fascination in her air which a clever French writer defines as the feminine essence, "plus femme que les autres femmes." If a very critical eye might have detected in her manner and address certain little awkwardnesses, a less exacting judgment would have probably been struck with them as attractions, recalling the fact of her youth, her simplicity, and the freshness of her nature. Above all other charms, however, was the radiant happiness that beamed out in every word, and look, and gesture: such a thorough sense of enjoyment—so intense a pleasure in life—is among the very rarest of all gifts.

There was enough of singularity, of the adventurous, in the nature of her position to excel all the romance of her nature; there was more than enough of real splendor around her to give an air of fact and truth to the highest flights of her imagination. Had she been the sole daughter of the house and name, flatteries and caresses could not have been lavished on her more profusely—her will consulted—her wishes inquired—her taste evoked on every occasion. And yet, with all these seductions about her, she was not yet spoiled—not

yet! Home and its dear associations were ever present to her mind; her humble fortune, and that simple life she used to lead, enforcing lessons of humility not yet distasteful. She could still recur to the memory of the little window that looked over the "Murg," and think the scenery beautiful. Her dear, dear papa was still all she had ever thought him. Nelly was yet the sweet-tempered, gentle, gifted creature she worshiped as a sister; even Hanserl was the kind, quaint emblem of his own dreamy "Vaterland." As yet no conflict had arisen between the past and the present—between the remembrance of narrow fortune and all its crippling exigencies, and the enjoyment of wealth, that seems to expand the generous feelings of the heart. The luster of her present existence threw, as yet, no sickly light over the bygone—would it might have been always so!

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SMALL SUPPER PARTY.

The great ball at the Mazzarini Palace "came off" just as other great balls have done, and will continue to do, doubtless, for ages hence. There was the usual, perhaps a little more than the usual, splendor of dress and diamonds—the same glare, and crash, and glitter, and crowd, and heat; the same buoyant light-heartedness among the young; the same corroding *ennui* of the old; taste in dress was criticised—looks were scanned—flirtations detected—quarrels discovered—fans were mislaid—hearts were lost—flounces were torn, and feelings hurt. There was the ordinary measure of what people call enjoyment, mixed up with the ordinary proportion of envy, shyness, pretension, sarcasm, coldness and malice. It was a grand tournament of human passions in white satin and jewels; and if the wounds exchanged were not as rudely administered, they were to the full as dangerous as in the real lists of combat. Yet, in this mortal conflict, all seemed happy; there was an air of voluptuous abandonment over everything; and whatever cares they might have carried within, as far as appearance went, the world went well and pleasantly with them. The ball was, however, a splendid one; there was everything that could make it such. The *salons* were magnificent in decoration—the lighting a perfect blaze. There was beauty in abundance—diamonds in masses—and a Royal Highness from the court, an insignificant little man, it is true, with a star and a stutter, who stared at every one, and spoke to nobody. Still he was the center of a glittering group of handsome aides-de-camp, who displayed their fascinations in every gesture and look.

Apart from the great floodtide of pleasure—down which so many float buoyantly—there is ever on these occasions a deeper current that flows beneath, of human wile and cunning and strategy, just as, in many a German fairy tale, some curious and recondite philosophy lies hid beneath the little incidents related to amuse childhood. It would lead us too far from the path of our story were we to seek for this "tiny thread amid the woof;" enough for our present purpose if we slightly advert to it, by asking our reader to accompany us to the small chamber which called Albert Jekyl master, and where now, at midnight, a little table of three covers was laid for supper. Three flasks of champagne stood in a little ice-pail in one corner, and on a dumb-waiter was arrayed a dessert, which, for the season, displayed every charm of rarity; a large bouquet of moss-roses and camellias ornamented the center of the board, and shed a pleasant odor through the room. The servant—whose dress and look bespoke him a waiter from a restaurant in the neighborhood—had just completed all the arrangements of the table, placing chairs around it, and heaped fresh wood upon the hearth, when a carriage drew up at the door. The merry sound of voices and the step of feet were heard on the stairs, and the next moment a lady entered, whose dress of black lace, adorned with bouquets of blue flowers, admirably set off a figure and complexion of Spanish mould and character. To this, a black lace veil fastened to the hair behind, and worn across the shoulders, contributed. There was a lightness and intrepidity in her step as she entered the room that suited the dark, flashing, steady glance of her full black eyes. It would have, indeed, been difficult to trace in that almost insolent air of conscious beauty the calm, subdued and almost sorrow-struck girl whom we have seen as Nina in a former chapter; but, however dissimilar in appearance, they were the same one individual, and the humble *femme de chambre* of Kate Dalton was the celebrated ballet-dancer of the great theater of Barcelona.

The figure which followed was a strange contrast to that light and elegant form. He was an old, short man, of excessive corpulence in body, and whose face was bloated and purple by intemperance. He was dressed in the habit of a priest, and was in

reality a canon of the Dome Cathedral. His unwieldy gait, his short and labored respiration, increased almost to suffocation by the ascent of the stairs and his cumbrous dress, seemed doubly absurd beside the flippant lightness of the "Ballerina." Jekyl came last, mimicking the old canon behind his back, and putting the waiter's gravity to a severe test by the bloated expansion of his cheek and the fin-like motion of his hands as he went.

"Ecco me!" cried he out, with a deep grunt, as he sank into a chair, and wiped the big drops from his forehead with the skirt of his gown.

"You tripped up the stairs like a gazelle, Padre," said the girl, as she arranged her hair before the glass, and disposed the folds of her veil with all the tact of coquetry.

A thick snort like the ejaculation a hippopotamus might have uttered, was the only reply, and Jekyl, having given a glance over the table to see all was in order, made a sign for Nina to be seated.

"Accursed be the stairs and he that made them!" muttered the Padre. "I feel as if my limbs had been torn on the rack. I have been three times up the steps of the high altar already to-day, and am tired as a dog."

"Here is your favorite soup, Padre," said Jekyl, as he moved a ladle through a smoking compound, whence a rich odor of tomato and garlic ascended. "This will make you young again."

"And who said I would wish to be young again?" cried the priest, angrily. "I have experience of what youth means every day in the confessional, and I promise you age has the best of it."

"Such a ripe and ruddy age as yours, Padre!" said the girl, with affected simplicity.

"Just so, minx," rejoined he; "such ripeness as portends falling from the tree! Better even that than to be worm-eaten on the stalk—ay! or a wasp's nest within, girl—you understand me."

"You will never be good friends for half an hour together," said Jekyl, as he filled their glasses with champagne, and then touching his own to each, drank off a bumper.

"These are from Savoy, these truffles, and have no flavor," said the Padre, pushing away his plate. "Let me taste that lobster, for this is a half-fast to-day."

"They are like the priests," said Nina, laughing; "all black without and rotten within!"

"The ball went off admirably last night," interposed Jekyl, to stop what he foresaw might prove a sharp altercation.

"Yes," said Nina, languidly. "The dresses were fresher than the wearers. It was the first time for much of the satin—the same could not be said for many of the company."

"The Balderoni looked well," said Jekyl.

"Too fat, caro mio—too fat!" replied Nina.

"And she has eight penances in the week," grunted out the canon.

"There's nothing like wickedness for *embonpoint*, Padre," said Nina, laughing.

"Angels are always represented as chubby girls," said the priest, whose temper seemed to improve as he ate on.

"Midchekoff, I thought, was out of temper all the evening," resumed Jekyl; "he went about with his glass in his eye seeking for flaws in the lapis lazuli, or retouches in the pictures; and seemed terribly provoked at the goodness of the supper."

"I forgive him all, for not dancing with 'my lady,'" said Nina. "She kept herself disengaged for the prince for half the night, and the only reward was his Russian compliment of, 'What a bore is a ball, when one is past the age of dancing!'"

"Did the Noncio eat much?" asked the Padre, who seemed at once curious and envious about the dignitary.

"He played whist all night," said Jekyl, "and never changed his partner!"

"The old Marchesa Guidotti?"

"The same. You know of that, then, Padre?" asked Jekyl.

A grunt and a nod were all the response.

"What a curious chapter on 'La vie privée' of Florence your revelations might be, Padre," said Jekyl, as if reflectingly. "What a deal of iniquity, great and small, comes to your ears every season!"

"What a vast amount of it has its origin in that little scheming brain of thine, Signor Jekyli, and in the fertile wits of your fair neighbor! The unhappy marriages thou hast made—the promising unions thou hast broken—the doubts thou hast scattered here, the dark suspicions there—the rightful distrust thou hast lulled, the false confidences encouraged—Youth, Youth, thou hast a terrible score to answer for!"

"When I think of the long catalogue of villany you have been listening to, Padre, not only without an effort, but a wish to check; when every sin recorded has figured in your ledger, with its little price annexed; when you have looked out upon the stormy sea of society, as a wrecker ranges his eye over an iron-bound coast in the gale, and thinks of the 'waifs' that soon will be

his own; when, as I have myself seen you, you have looked indulgently down on petty transgressions, that must one day become big sins, and, like a skillful angler, throw the little fish back into the stream, in the confidence that when full-grown you can take them—when you have done all these things and a thousand more, Padre, I cannot help muttering to myself, Age, Age, what a terrible score thou hast to answer for!"

"I must say," interposed Nina, "you are both very bad company, and that nothing can be in worse taste than this interchange of compliments. You are both right to amuse yourselves in this world as your faculties best point out, but each radically wrong in attributing motives to the other. What, in all that is wonderful, have we to do with motives? I'm sure *I* have no grudges to cherish, no debts of dislike to pay off, anywhere. Any *diablerie I* take part in, is for pure mischief' sake. I do think it rather a hard case, that, with somewhat better features, and I know a far shrewder wit than many others, I should perform second and third-rate parts in this great comedy of life, while many without higher qualifications are 'cast for the best characters.' This little score I do try and exact, not from individuals, but the world at large. Mischief with me is the child's pleasure in deranging the chessmen when the players are most intent on the game."

"Now, as to these Onslows—for we must be practical, Padre mio," said Jekyl, "let us see what is to be done with them. As regards matrimony, the real prize has left for England—this Dalton girl may or may not be a 'hit;' some aver that she is heiress to a large estate, of which the Onslows have obtained possession, and that they destine her for the young Guardsman. This must be inquired into. My lady has 'excellent dispositions,' and may become anything or everything."

"Let her come to 'the Church', then," growled out the canon.

"Gently, Padre, gently," said Jekyl; "you are really too covetous, and would drag the river always from your own net. We have been generous, hugely generous, to you for the last three seasons, and have made all your converts the pets of society, no matter how small and insignificant their pretensions. The vulgar have been adopted in the best circles; the ugly, dubbed beautiful; the most tiresome of old maids have been reissued from the mint as new coinage. We have petted, flattered, and fawned upon those 'interesting Christians,' as the *Tablet* would call them, till the girls began to feel that there were no partners for a polka outside the Church of Rome, and that all the 'indulgences' of pleasure, like those of religion, came from the Pope. We cannot give you to the Onslows, or, at least, not yet. We have yet to marry the daughter, provide for the friend, squeeze the son."

"Profligate young villain!—Reach me the champagne, Nina; and, Nina, tell your young mistress that it is scarcely respectful to come on foot to the mid-day mass; that the clergy of the town like to see the equipages of the rich before the doors of the cathedral, as a suitable homage to the Church. The Onslows have carriages in abundance, and their liveries are gorgeous and splendid!"

"It was her own choice," said Nina; "she is a singular girl for one that never before knew luxury of any kind."

"I hate these simple tastes," growled out the Padre; "they bespeak that obstinacy which people call a 'calm temperament.' Her own dress, too, has no indication of her rank, Nina."

"That shall be cared for, Padre."

"Why shouldn't that young soldier come along with her? Tell him that our choir is magnificent; whisper him that the beautiful Marchesa di Guardoni sits on the very bench beside Miss Dalton."

Nina nodded an assent.

"The young girl herself is lax enough about her duties, Nina; she has not been even once to confession."

"That comes of these English!" cried Nina: "they make our service a constant jest. There is always some vulgar quizzing about saint-worship, or relic reverence, or the secrets of the confessional, going on amongst them."

"Does she permit this?" asked the priest, eagerly.

"She blushes sometimes occasionally, she smiles with a good-humor meant to deprecate these attacks, and now and then, when the sallies have been pushed too far, I have seen her in tears for some hours after."

"Oh, if these heretics would but abstain from ridicule!" cried the canon. "The least lettered amongst them can scoff, and gibe, and rail. They have their stock subjects of sarcasm, too, handed down from father to son—poor, witless, little blasphemies—thefts from Voltaire, who laughed at themselves—and much mischief do they work! Let them begin to read, however,—let them commence to 'inquire,' as the phrase has it, and the game is our own."

"I think, Padre," said Jekyl, "that more of your English converts are made

upon principles of pure economy—Popery, like truffles, is so cheap abroad!"

"Away with you! away with you!" cried the Padre, rebukingly. "They come to us as the children seek their mother's breast. Hand me the macaroni."

"Padre mio," broke in Jekyl, "I wish you would be Catholic enough to be less Popish. We have other plots in hand here, besides increasing the funds of the 'Holy Carmelites;' and while we are disputing about the spoil, the game may betake themselves to other hunting-grounds. These Onslows must not be suffered to go hence."

"Albert is right," interposed Nina. "When the 'Midchekoff' condescends to think himself in love with the Dalton girl—when the Guardsman has lost some thousands more than he can pay—when my lady has offended one-half of Florence, and bullied the other—then the city will have taken a hold upon their hearts, and you may begin your crusade when you please. Indeed, I am not sure, if the season be a dull one, I would not listen to you myself."

"As you listened once before to the Abbé D'Esmonde," said the canon maliciously.

The girl's cheek became deep red, and even over neck and shoulders the scarlet flush spread, while her eyes flashed a look of fiery passion.

"Do you dare—are you insolent enough to——"

Her indignation had carried her thus far, when, by a sudden change of temper, she stopped, and, clasping her hands over her face, burst into tears.

Jekyl motioned the priest to be silent, while, gently leading the other into the adjoining room, he drew the curtain, and left her alone.

"How could you say that?" said he—"you Padre, who know that this is more than jest?"

"Spare not the sinner, neither let the stripes be light—'Non sit levis flagella,' says Origen."

"Are the ortolans good, Padre?" asked Jekyl, while his eye glittered with an intense appreciation of the old canon's hypocrisy.

"They are delicious, succulent, and tender," said the priest, wiping his lips. "Francesco does them to perfection."

"You at least believe in a cook," said Jekyl, but in so low a voice as to escape the other's notice.

"She is sobbing still," said the canon, in a whisper, and with a gesture towards the curtained doorway. "I like to hear them gulping down their sighs. It is like the glug-glug of a rich flask of 'Lagrime.'"

"But don't you pity them, Padre?" asked Jekyl, in mock earnestness.

"Never! never! First of all, they do not suffer in all these outbursts. It is but decanting their feelings into another vessel, and they love it themselves! I have had them for hours together thus in the confessional, and they go away after, so relieved in mind, and so light of heart, there's no believing it."

"But Nina," said Jekyl, seriously, "is not one of these."

"She is a woman," rejoined the Padre, "and it is only a priest can read them."

"You see human nature as the physician does, Padre, always in some aspect of suffering. Of its moods of mirth and levity you know less than we do who pass more butterfly lives!"

"True in one sense, boy; ours are the stony paths—ours are the weary roads in life! I like that Burgundy."

"It's very pleasant, Padre. It is part of a case I ordered for the Onslows, but their butler shook the bottle when bringing it to table, and they begged me to get rid of it."

"These wines are not suited to Italy generally," said the canon; "but Florence has the merit of possessing all climates within the bounds of a single day, and even Chambertin is scarcely generous enough when the Tramontana is blowing!"

"Well, have you become better mannered? May I venture to come in?" cried Nina, appearing at the doorway.

"'Venga pure! venga pure!" growled out the canon. "I forgive thee everything. Sit down beside me, and let us pledge a friendship forever."

"There, then, let this be a peace-offering," said she, taking the wreath of flowers from her own head and placing it on the brows of the Padre. "You are now like old Bacchus in the Boboli."

"And thou like——"

"Like what? speak it out!" cried she, angrily.

"Come, come, do, I beseech you, be good friends," interposed Jekyl. "We have met for other objects than to exchange reproaches."

"These are but the 'iræ amantium,' boy," said the priest; "the girl loves me with her whole heart."

"How you read my most secret thoughts!" said she, with a coquettish affectation of sincerity.

"Lectiones pravissimæ would they be!" muttered he, between his teeth.

"What is that? What is he mumbling there, Albert?" cried she, hastily.

"It is a benediction, Nina," replied Jekyl; "did you not hear the Latin?"

Peace was at last restored, and what between the adroit devices of Jekyl and the goodness of his champagne, a feeling of pleasant sociality now succeeded to all the bickering, in which the festivity was prolonged to a late hour. The graver business which brought them together—the Onslows and their affairs—being discussed, they gave way to all the seductions of their exalted fancies. Jekyl, taking up his guitar, warbled out a French love song, in a little treble a bullfinch might have envied; Nina, with the aid of the Padre's beads for castanets, stepped the measure of a bolero; while the old priest himself broke out into a long chant, in which Ovid, Petrarch, Anacreon and his breviary alternately figured, and under the influence of which he fell fast asleep at last, totally unconscious of the corked mustaches and eyebrows with which Nina ornamented his reverend countenance.

The sound of wheels in the silent street at last admonished them of the hour, and, opening the window, Jekyl saw a brougham belonging to Sir Stafford just drawing up at the door.

"François is punctual," said Nina, looking at her watch; "I told him five o'clock."

"Had we not better set him down first?" said Jekyl, with a gesture towards the priest; "he does not live far away."

"With all my heart," replied she; "but you're not going to wash his face?"

"Of course I am, Nina. The jest might cost us far more than it was worth." And, so saying, Jekyl proceeded to arrange the disordered dress and disheveled hair of the Padre, during the performance of which the old priest recovered sufficient consciousness to permit himself to be led downstairs and deposited in the carriage.

An hour later and all was still! Jekyl slumbering peacefully on his little French bed, over which the rose-colored mosquito curtains threw a softened half-sunset hue; a gentle smile parted his lips, as in his dreams—the dreams of a happy and contented nature—he wove pleasant fancies and devised many a future scheme.

In his own dreary little den, behind the "Duomo," the Padre also slept heavily, not a thought, not a single passing idea breaking the stagnant surface of his deep lethargy.

Nina, however, was wakeful, and had no mind for repose. Her brilliant costume carefully laid aside, she was arranging her dark hair into its habitually modest braid; her very features composing themselves, as she did so, into their wonted aspect of gentleness and submission.

All the change of dress being little in comparison with the complete alteration now observable in her whole air and demeanor, she seemed a totally different being. And she was so, too; for, while hypocrites to the world, we completely forget that we share in the deception ourselves.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A MIDNIGHT RECEPTION.

It was past midnight, the opera was just over, and the few privileged guests who were permitted to pay their visits to Lady Hester Onslow were assembling in the little drawing-room and boudoir, sacred to these exclusive receptions. Nothing could be in stronger contrast than the gorgeous splendor of the apartment and the half-dressed, careless, lounging ease of the men as they stretched themselves on the ottomans, lounged on the sofas, or puffed their cigars, alike indifferent to the place and the presence of two ladies who, dressed in the very perfection of "toilet," did the honors of the reception.

Lady Hester, who wore a small embroidered velvet cap, coquettishly set on one side of the head, and a species of velvet jacket, such as is common in Greece, lay upon a sofa beneath a canopy of pink silk covered with lace; a most splendidly ornamented hookah, the emerald mouthpiece of which she held in her hand, stood on a little cushion beside her; while grouped around in every attitude that taste or caprice suggested—on chairs, on cushions, squabs, "*prie-Dieu*," and other drawing-room devices of a like nature—were some half-dozen men, whose air and bearing pronounced them long habituated to all the usages of society. One stamp of feature and style pervaded all; pale, dark-eyed, black-bearded, and weary-looking, they seemed as though they were tired of a life of dissipation, and yet utterly incapable of engaging in any other.

All born to high rank, some to large fortune, they found that no other career was open to them except vice in one shape or other. The policy of their rulers had excluded them from every road of honorable ambition; neither as statesmen nor soldiers could they hope to win fame or glory. Their habits of life and the tone of society gave no impulse to the cultivation of

science or literature. The topics discussed in their circle never by chance adverted to a book; and there they were, with heads whose development indicated all that was intellectual, with brows and foreheads that betokened every gift of mental excellence, wearing away life in the dullest imaginable routine of dissipation, their minds neglected, their hearts corrupted, enervated in body, and deprived of all energy of character; they wore, even in youth, the exhausted look of age, and bore in every lineament of their features the type of lassitude and discontent.

In the adjoining room sat Kate Dalton at a tea-table. She was costumed—for we cannot use any milder word—in a species of "moyen-âge" dress, whose length of stomacher and deep-hanging sleeves recalled the portraits of Titian's time; a small cap covered the back of her head, through an aperture in which the hair appeared, its rich auburn masses fastened by a short stiletto of gold, whose hilt and handle were studded with precious stones; a massive gold chain, with a heavy cross of the same metal, was the only ornament she wore. Widely different as was the dress from that humble guise in which the reader first knew her, the internal change was even greater still; no longer the bashful, blushing girl, beaming with all the delight of a happy nature, credulous, light-hearted, and buoyant, she was now composed in feature, calm, and gentle-mannered; the placid smile that moved her lips, the graceful motion of her head, her slightest gestures, her least words, all displaying a polished ease and elegance which made even her beauty and attraction secondary to the fascination of her manner. It is true, the generous frankness of her beaming eyes was gone; she no longer met you with a look of full and fearless confidence; the cordial warmth, the fresh and buoyant sallies of her ready wit, had departed, and in their place there was a timid reserve, a cautious, shrinking delicacy, blended with a quiet but watchful spirit of repartee, that flattered by the very degree of attention it betokened.

Perhaps our reader will not feel pleased with us for saying that she was more beautiful now than before; that intercourse with the world, dress, manners, the tact of society, the stimulus of admiration, the assured sense of her own charms, however they may have detracted from the moral purity of her nature, had yet invested her appearance with higher and more striking fascinations. Her walk, her curtsey, the passing motion of her hand, her attitude as she sat, were perfect studies of grace. Not a trace was left of her former manner; all was ease, pliancy, and elegance. Two persons were seated near her: one of these, our old acquaintance, George Onslow; the other was a dark, sallow-visaged man, whose age might have been anything from thirty-five to sixty; for, while his features were marked by the hard lines of time, his figure had all the semblance of youth. By a broad blue ribbon round his neck he wore the decoration of Saint Nicholas, and the breast of his coat was covered with stars, crosses, and orders of half the courts of Europe. This was Prince Midchekoff, whose grandfather, having taken an active part in the assassination of the Emperor Paul, had never been reconciled to the Imperial family, and was permitted to reside in a kind of honorable banishment out of Russia: a punishment which be bore up under, it was said, with admirable fortitude. His fortune was reputed to be immense, and there was scarcely a capital of Europe in which he did not possess a residence. The character of his face was peculiar; for, while the forehead and eyes were intellectual and candid, the lower jaw and mouth revealed his Calmuck origin, an expression of intense, unrelenting cruelty being the impression at once conveyed by the thin, straight, compressed lips, and the long, projecting chin seeming even longer from the black-pointed beard he wore. There was nothing vulgar or commonplace about him; he never could have passed unobserved anywhere, and yet he was equally far from the type of high birth. His manners were perfectly well bred; and, although he spoke seldom, his quiet and attentive air, and his easy smile, showed he possessed the still rarer quality of listening well.

There was another figure, not exactly of this group, but at a little distance off, beside a table in a recess, on which a number of prints and drawings were scattered, and in the contemplation of which he affected to be absorbed; while, from time to time, his dark eyes flashed rapidly across to note all that went forward. He was a tall and singularly handsome man, in the dress of a priest. His hair, black and waving, covered a forehead high, massive, and well developed; his eyes were deep-set, and around the orbits ran lines that told of long and hard study—for the Abbé D'Esmonde was a distinguished scholar; and, as a means of withdrawing him for a season from the overtoil of reading, he had been attached temporarily as a species of under-secretary to the mission of the "Nonce." In this guise he was admitted into all the society of the capital, where his polished

address and gentle manner soon made him a general favorite.

Equally removed from the flippant levity of the abbé as a class, and the gross and sensual coarseness of the "old priest," D'Esmonde was a perfect man of the world, so far as taking a lively interest in all the great events of politics, watching eagerly the changeful features of the times, and studying acutely the characters of the leading men, at whose dictates they were modified. Its pleasures and amusements, too, he was willing to partake of moderately and unobtrusively; but he held himself far apart from all those subjects of gossip and small-talk which, in a society of lax morality, occupy so considerable a space, and in which the great dignitaries who wear scarlet and purple stockings are often seen to take a lively and animated share. Some ascribed this reserve to principle; others called it hypocrisy; and some, again, perhaps with more truth, deemed it the settled line of action of one who already destined himself for a high and conspicuous station, and had determined that his character should add weight and dignity to his talents.

It might have been thought that he was a singular guest to have been admitted to receptions like the present; but Jekyl, who managed everything, had invited him, on the principle, as he said, that a gourmand has a decanter of water always beside him at dinner, "not to drink, but because it looks temperate." The abbé's presence had the same effect; and, certainly, his calm and dignified demeanor, his polished address, and cultivated tone, were excellent certificates of good character for the rest.

At the tea-table the conversation languished, or only went forward at intervals. Onslow's French was not fluent, and he was silent from shame. Kate felt that she ought not to take the lead; and the prince, habitually reserved, spoke very little, and even that in the discursive, unconnected tone of a man who was always accustomed to find that any topic *he* started should be instantly adopted by the company.

The cold and steady stare with which he surveyed her would, but a short time back, have covered her face with a blush; she could not have borne unabashed the glance of searching, almost insolent, meaning he bestowed upon her; but now, whatever her heart might have felt, her features were calm and passionless; nor did she in the slightest degree show any consciousness of a manner that was costing Onslow a struggle whether to laugh at or resent.

In one sense these two men were rivals, but each so impressed with proud contempt for the other, their rivalry was unknown to both. Kate, however, with her woman's tact, saw this, and knew well how her least smile or slightest word inclined the balance to this side or to that. The prince was inveighing against the habit of wintering in Italy as one of the most capital blunders of the age.

"We forget," said he, "that, in our present civilization, art is always first and nature second, as we see evidenced in all the results of agriculture. It is not the most fertile soil, but the highest-labored one, which produces the best fruits. So with respect to climate, we never bear in mind that, where nature does most, man always does least."

"According to that rule, prince, we should winter at St. Petersburg, and spend the dog-days at Calcutta," said Kate, smiling.

"So we should," replied he; "the appliances to resist heat or cold, of man's invention, are far better adapted to enjoyment than the accidental variations of climate."

"In my country," said Onslow, tartly, "men study less how to avoid the inclemencies of weather than how to become indifferent to them. Hunting, shooting, and deer-stalking, are very sure methods to acquire this."

The prince paid no attention to the remark, but turned the conversation into another channel, by asking Kate if she had ever read Fourier's book; from this he wandered away to the characteristic differences of national music; thence to the discoveries then making in Central America; and lastly, engaged her in an animated discussion of the question of slavery. On none of these points was he deeply or even well informed, but he possessed that fluency and facility which intercourse with society confers; and as all his knowledge was derived from men, and not from books, it bore a certain stamp of originality about it that secured attention. Not, indeed, from George Onslow; he was the most bored of men. None of the topics were his topics. Of Tattersall's, the Guards' Club, the society of London, the odds on the "Derby," he could have discoursed well and pleasantly—from what was "wrong" with the Sambucca filly, to what was not right with Lady Flutterton's niece, he could have told you everything; but all these other themes were, in his estimation, but sheer pedantry; and, indeed, they only lacked a little knowledge—a very little would have sufficed—to be so.

"He is gone," said the prince, with a

caustic smile which revealed a plan; "gone at last."

"So, then, this was a device of yours, prince," said she, laughing. "I really must call my cousin back, and tell him so."

"No, no," said he, seriously. "I have won my battle, let me profit by my victory. Let me speak to you on another subject." He drew his chair a little nearer to the table as he spoke, and laid his arm on it. Kate's heart beat fast and full; the color came and went rapidly in her cheek; a vague sense of fear, of shame, and of triumphant pride, were all at conflict within her. There was but one theme in the world that could have warranted such a commencement—so serious, so grave, so purpose-like. Was this, then, possible? The glittering stars—all a blaze of brilliants—that shone beside her, seemed an emblem of that high state which was now within her reach; and what a torrent of varied emotions rushed through her heart! Of home, of her father, of Nelly, of Frank, and lastly, what thoughts of George—poor George—who she knew loved her, and to whom, without loving, she was not altogether indifferent. "Do not be agitated, mademoiselle," said the prince, laying the slightest touch of his jeweled fingers on her arm; "I ask a little patience, and a little calm consideration, for what I am about to say."

"Is that really like an Irish peasant's cottage, Miss Dalton?" said the abbé, as he held before her a drawing of one, in all the details of its most striking misery.

"Yes, perfectly—not exaggerated in the least," said she, hurriedly, blushing alike at the surprise and the interruption.

"You have no such misery, Monsieur le Prince, in Russia, I believe?" remarked the priest, with a courteous bend of the head.

"We are well governed, sir; and nothing displays it more palpably than that no man forgets his station," said the prince, with an insolent *hauteur* that made Kate blush over neck and forehead, while D'Esmonde stood calm and passionless under the sarcasm.

"So I have always heard, sir," said he, blandly. "I remember, when at Wredna ——"

"You have been at Wredna?" asked the prince, in an altered voice.

But the other, not heeding the interruption, went on:

"I remember, when at Wredna, to have heard an anecdote, which strikingly illustrates the rigid obedience yielded to power, and the condition of public opinion at the same time. A manumitted slave, who was raised to high rank and wealth by the favor of the Czar, had returned to Wredna in the capacity of governor. A short time after his arrival, he was tormented by applications and letters from a woman in great poverty, who asserted that she was his mother. Fedeorovna, of course in secret, proved the truth of her assertion, but the only answer she received was a significant caution to be silent, and not appeal to a relationship which could only prove offensive. Perhaps incredulous of the authentic character of so cruel a reply, perhaps stung to angry indignation by it, she carried the humble basket of fruit and vegetables that she hawked for a livelihood before the door of the great mansion where her son resided, but, instead of advertising her wares, as is customary in these Muscovite markets, by some picture of a saint or some holy inscription, she carried a little placard, with the inscription—'The Mother of Alexovitch,' the name of the governor. A crowd soon gathered around this singular booth, heralded by so strange an announcement, and as speedily the police resorted to the spot, and carried the offender before the judge. The defense was the simple one, that she had merely averred the truth. I need not weary you with the mockery of investigation that followed; the result is all I need tell. This woman was knouted and sent away to Siberia. So much for the governor. As for the governed, they were enthusiastic in praise of his justice and clemency; for he might have ordered her to be beheaded."

"Do you tell this story as a fact, sir?" said the prince, whose dark cheek became almost green in its sallowness as he spoke.

"I tell it distinctly as a fact. The papa who received the woman's confession repeated the tale on his own death-bed, from whence it reached me."

"Priests can be liars, whether Greek or Roman," said the prince, in a voice almost suffocated with passion; and then, suddenly checking the course of his anger, he turned to Kate with a sickly smile, and said, "Mademoiselle will pardon a rudeness in her presence which nothing short of so gross a calumny could have elicited."

"I will furnish you with all the names to-morrow, Monsieur le Prince," said D'Esmonde, in a whisper; and sauntered away into the adjoining room.

"You look pale, Miss Dalton," said the prince.

"That shocking story——"

"Which of course you don't believe."

"The Abbé D'Esmonde I have always heard to be a person of strict veracity and of extreme caution."

"Be careful of him, Miss Dalton. It is not without good reason that I say this."

There was a degree of solemnity in the way he uttered these words that made Kate thoughtful and serious. Unaccustomed to see in society anything but features of pleasure and amusement, she was suddenly awakened to the conviction that its calm waters covered rocks and quicksands as perilous as stormier seas. Could people so full of amiabilities be dangerous acquaintances?—was there poison in this charmed cup?—was the doubt which sprang to her mind——But she had not time for the inquiry, as the prince offered her his arm to the supper-room.

CHAPTER XXV.

"A LEVANTER."

In our penal settlements nothing is more common than to find the places of honor and distinction filled by men who were once convicts, and who may date the favorable turn of their fortune to the day of their having transgressed the law; so in certain continental cities are individuals to be found occupying conspicuous stations and enjoying a large share of influence whose misdeeds at home first made them exiles, and who, leaving England in shame, are received abroad with honor. There is this difference between the two cases: for, while the convict owes all his future advancement to his own efforts at reformation, the absentee obtains his "brevet" of character by the simple fact of his extradition. He shakes off his rascalities as he does his rheumatism, when he quits the foggy climate of England and emerges, spotless and without stain, upon the shores of Ostend or Boulogne.

To do this, however, he must not bear a plebeian name, nor pertain to the undistinguishable herd of vulgar folk. He must belong to some family of mark and note, with peers for his uncles and peeresses for cousins; nor is he always safe if he himself be not a member of an hereditary legislature. We have been led to these reflections by having to chronicle the arrival in Florence of Lord Norwood; a vague and confused murmur of his having done something, people knew not what, in England having preceded him. Some called him "poor Norwood," and expressed sorrow for him; others said he was a capital fellow, up to everything, and that they were delighted at his coming. A few of very tender and languishing virtue themselves wondered if they ought to meet him as before, but the prevailing impression was charitable. The affair at Graham's might have been exaggerated, the Newmarket business was possibly a mistake. "Any man might owe money, and not be able to pay it," was a sentiment pretty generally repeated and as generally believed; and, in fact, if to be tried by one's peers be an English privilege, the noble viscount here enjoyed it at the hands of a jury unimpeachable on the score of equality.

We are far from suggesting that Norwood's character as a "shot" had any concern with this mild verdict; but certain it is his merits in this capacity were frequently remembered, and always with honorable mention.

"No man plays *écarté* better," said Haggerstone, while as yet the viscount's arrival was unknown, and as he discussed the rumors upon him before a group of listening Englishmen at the door of the "Club"—no man plays *écarté* better—nor with better luck!" added he, with a chuckle that was intended to convey a meaning beyond the mere words.

"Has he been a large winner, then?" asked one of the bystanders, respectfully, looking to the colonel for information, for, in a certain set, he was regarded as the most thoroughly conversant man with all the faults and follies of high life.

"No man wins invariably, sir, except Brooke Morris, perhaps," replied he, always happy at the opportunity to quote the name of a man of fashion in a tone of familiarity.

"That was the Mo-Mo-Morris that ruined Hopeton, wasn't it?" broke in Purvis, quite forgetting that the individual he addressed was reported to have a share in the transaction. Haggerstone, however, did not deign a reply, but puffed his cigar in perfect contempt of his questioner.

"Who is this coming up here?" said one; "he looks like a new arrival. He is English, certainly—that frock has a London cut there's no mistaking."

"By Jove, it's Norwood!" cried Haggerstone, edging away, as he spoke, from the group. Meanwhile, the noble viscount, a well-dressed, well-whiskered man, of about thirty, came leisurely forward, and touching his hat familiarly, said:

"Ha! you here. Haggerstone! What is Florence doing?"

"Pretty much as it always did, my lord.

I don't think its morals have improved since you knew it a few years ago."

"Or you wouldn't be here, Haggy—eh?" said the viscount, laughing at his own joke. "Not suit your book, if it took a virtuous turn—eh?"

"I plead guilty, my lord. I believe I do like to shoot folly as it flies."

"Ah, yes! And I've seen you taking a sitting shot at it too, Haggy," said the other, with a heartier laugh, which, despite of the colonel's efforts not to feel, brought a crimson flush to his cheek.

"Is there any play going on, Haggy?"

"Nothing that you would call play, my lord; a little whist for Nap. points, a little *écarté*, a little piquet, and, now and then, we have a round game at Sabloukoff's."

"Poor old fellow! and he's alive still? And where's the Jariominski?"

"Gone back to Russia."

"And Maretti?"

"In Saint Angelo, I believe."

"And that little Frenchman—what was his name?—his father was a marshal of the empire.

"D'Acosta."

"The same. Where is he?"

"Shot himself this spring."

"Pretty girl, his sister. What became of her?"

"Some one told me that she had become a Sœur de Charité."

"What a pity! So they're all broken up, I see."

"Completely so."

"Then what have you got in their place?"

"Nothing fast, my lord, except, perhaps, your friends the Onslows."

"Yes; they're going it, I hear. Isn't there a rich niece, or cousin, or something of that sort with them?"

"They've got a prettyish girl, called Dalton; but as to her being rich, I think it very unlikely, seeing that her family are living in Germany in a state of the very closest poverty."

"And Master George, how does he carry on the war?" said the viscount, who seemed quite heedless of the other's correction.

"He plays a little peddling *écarté* now and then; but you can see that he has burned his fingers, and dreads the fire. They say he's in love with the Dalton girl."

"Of course he is, if they live in the same house; and he's just the kind of fool to marry her too. Who's that little fellow listening to us?"

"Purvis, my lord; don't you remember him? He's one of the Ricketts's set."

"To be sure I do. How are you, Purvis? You look so young and so fresh, I could not persuade myself it could be my old acquaintance."

"I have taken to homœ-homœ-homœ-homœ——" Here he opened his mouth wide, and gasped till he grew black in the face.

"What's the word? Give it him, Haggy. It's all up with him," said the viscount.

"Homœopathy—eh?"

"Just so. Homœ-homœ——"

"Confound it, man, can't you be satisfied? when you're once over the fence you needn't go back to leap it. And how is the dear—what's her name—Agathe?—no, Zoe—how is she?"

"Quite well, my lord, and would be cha-cha-cha-rmed to see you."

"Living in that queer humbug still—eh?"

"In the Vill-ino, my lord, you mean?"

"Egad! she seems the only thing left; like the dog on the wreck—eh, Haggy?"

"Just so, my lord," said the other, with a complacent laugh.

"What a mass of old crockery she must have got together by this time!" said the viscount, yawning with a terrible recollection of her tiresomeness.

"You came out with a yacht, my lord?" asked Haggerstone.

"Pretty well, for a man that they call ru-ru-ruined," said Purvis, laughing.

Norwood turned a look of angry indignation at him, and then, as if seeing the unworthiness of the object, merely said:

"A yacht is the only real economy nowadays. You get rid at once of all trains of servants, household, stable people—even the bores of your acquaintance you cut off. Bye-bye, Purvis." And, with a significant wink at Haggerstone, he passed across the street, in time to overtake Onslow, who was just passing.

"I think I ga-ga-gave it him there," cried Purvis, with an hysterical giggle of delight; who, provided that he was permitted to fire his shot, never cared how severely he was himself riddled by the enemy's fire. Meanwhile, the viscount and his friend were hastening forward to the Mazzarini Palace, as totally forgetful of Purvis as though that valuable individual had never existed.

We may take this opportunity to mention, that when the rumors which attributed a grand breach of honorable conduct to Lord Norwood had arrived at Florence,

Sir Stafford, who never had any peculiar affection for the viscount, declared himself in the very strongest terms on the subject of his offending, and took especial pains to show the marked distinction between occasions of mere wasteful extravagance and instances of fraudulent and dishonest debt.

It was in vain he was told that the rigid rule of English morality is always relaxed abroad, and that the moral latitude is very different in London and Naples. He was old-fashioned enough to believe that honor is the same in all climates; and having received from England a very detailed and specific history of the noble lord's misdoings, he firmly resolved not to receive him.

With all George Onslow's affection and respect for his father, he could not help feeling that this was a mere prejudice—one of the lingering remnants of a past age; a sentiment very respectable, perhaps, but totally inapplicable to present civilization, and quite impracticable in society. In fact, as he said himself, "Who is to be known, if this rule be acted on? What man, or, further still, what woman of fashionable life will stand this scrutiny? To attempt such exclusiveness, one should retire to some remote provincial town—some fishing village of patriarchal simplicity; and, even there, what security was there against ignoble offendings? How should he stand the ridicule of his club and his acquaintance, if he attempted to assume such a standard?" These arguments were strengthened by his disbelief, or rather his repugnance, to believe the worst of Norwood; and furthermore, supported by Lady Hester's open scorn for all such "hypocritical trumpery," and her avowal that the viscount should be received, by *her*, at least. Exactly, as of old, George Onslow's mind was in a state of oscillation and doubt—now, leaning to this side, now, inclining to that—when the question was decided for him, as it so often is in like cases, by a mere accident; for, as he loitered along the street, he suddenly felt an arm introduced within his own; he turned hastily round, and saw Norwood, who, with all his customary coolness, asked after each member of the family, and at once proposed to pay them a visit.

Of all men living, none were less suited than Onslow for assuming any part, or taking any decisive line, which could possibly be avoided, or even postponed. He hated, besides, to do an ungracious thing anywhere, or to any one. It might be, thought he, that Norwood's scrape could all be explained away. Perhaps, after all, the thing is a mere trifle; and if he were to take the decided line of cutting a man without due cause, the consequences might be most injurious. These, and fifty such-like scruples, warred within him, and so engaged his attention, that he actually heard not one word of all that "town gossip" which Norwood was retailing for his amusement. At last, while following out his own thoughts, George came to the resolution of finding out at once the precise position in which Norwood stood, and to this end asked the last news from Newmarket.

Norwood's coolness never forsook him at a question whose very suddenness was somewhat awkward.

"Bad enough," said he, with an easy laugh. "We have all of us been 'hit hard.' Knolesby has lost heavily. Burchester, too, has had a smasher; and I myself have not escaped. In fact, George, the 'legs' have had it all their own way. I suppose you heard something about it out here?"

"Why, yes; there were reports——"

"Oh, hang reports, man! Never trust to old women's tales. And that confounded fellow Haggerstone, I'm certain, has been spreading all kinds of stories. But the facts are simple enough."

"I'm heartily glad you say so; for, to tell you the truth, Norwood, my father is one of the prejudiced about this affair, and I am dying to be able to give him a full explanation of the whole."

"Ah! Sir Stafford, too, among the credulous!" said Norwood, slowly. "I could scarcely have supposed so. No matter; only I did fancy that he was not exactly the person to form hasty conclusions against any man's character. However, you may tell him—for, as for myself, I'll not condescend to explain to any one but you—the thing is a very simple one. There was a mare of Hopeton's, a Brockdon filly, entered for the Slingsby, and a number of us agreed to 'go a heavy thing' upon her against the field. A bold *coup* always, George, that backing against the field. Never do it, my boy, and particularly when you've a set of rascally foreign legs banded against you—Poles and Hungarian fellows, George, the downiest coves ever you met, and who, in their confounded jargon, can sell you before your own face. Nothing like John Bull, my boy. Straight, frank, and open John forever! Hit him hard, and he'll hit you again; but no treachery, no stab in the dark. Oh, no, no! The turf in England was another thing before these continental rascals came amongst us. I was always against admit-

ting them within the ring. I blackballed a dozen of them at the club. But see what perseverance does; they're all in now. There's no John Bull feeling among our set, and we're paying a smart price for it. Never trust those German fellows, George. Out of England there is no truth, no honor. But, above all, don't back against the field; there are so many dodges against you; so many 'dark horses' come out fair. That's it, you see; that's the way I got it so heavily; for when Ruxton came and told me that 'Help-me-Over' was dead lame, I believed him. A fetlock lameness is no trifle, you know; and there was a swelling as large as my hand around the coronet. The foreign fellows can manage that in the morning, and the horse will run to win the same day. I saw it myself. Ah! John Bull forever! No guile, no deceit in him. Mind me, George, I make this confession for you alone. I'll not stoop to repeat it. If any man dare to insinuate anything to my discredit, I'll never give myself the trouble of one word of explanation, but nail him to it—twelve paces, and no mistake. I don't think my right hand has forgot its cunning. Have him out at once, George; parade him on the spot, my boy; that's the only plan. What, is this your quarter?" asked he, as they stopped at the entrance of the spacious palace. "I used to know this house well of old. It was the embassy in Templeton's time. Very snug it used to be. Glad to see you've banished all those maimed old deities that used to line the staircase, and got rid of that tiresome tapestry, too. Pretty vases those—fresh-looking that conservatory—they're always strong in camellias in Florence. This used to be the billiard-room; I think you've made a good alteration; it looks better as a *salon*. Ah! I like this—excellent taste that chintz furniture—just the thing for Italy, and exactly what nobody ever thought of before!"

"I'll see if my lady be visible," said George, as he threw the *Morning Post* to his friend, and hastily quitted the chamber.

Norwood was no sooner left alone than he proceeded to take a leisurely survey of the apartment, in the course of which his attention was arrested by a water-color drawing, representing a young girl leaning over a balcony, and which he had no difficulty in at once guessing to be Kate Dalton. There was something in the character of her beauty—an air of almost daring haughtiness—that seemed to strike his fancy, for, as he gazed, he drew himself up to his full height, and seemed to assume in his own features the proud expression of the portrait.

"With a hundred thousand and that face one might make you a viscountess, and yet not do badly either!" said he to himself; and then, as if satisfied that he had given time enough to a mere speculative thought, he turned over the visiting cards to see the names of the current acquaintance: "Midchekoff, Estrolenka, Janini, Tiverton, Latrobe—the old set; the Ricketts, too, and Haggerstone. What can have brought them here? Oh, there must have been a ball, for here are shoals of outsiders; the great Smith-Brown-and-Thompson community; and here, one the very smallest of pasteboards, in the very meekest of literals, have we our dear friend, 'Albert Jekyl.' He'll tell me all I want to know," said Norwood, as he threw himself back on the comfortable depth of a well-cushioned chair, and gave way to a pleasant reverie.

When George Onslow had informed Lady Hester of Norwood's arrival, he hastened to Sir Stafford's apartment, to tell him how completely the viscount had exonerated himself from any charge that might be made to his discredit; not, indeed, that George understood one syllable of the explanation, nor could trace anything like connection between the disjointed links of the narrative; he could only affirm his own perfect conviction in Norwood's honor, and hope an equal degree of faith from his father. Fortunately for his powers of persuasiveness, they were not destined to be so sorely tried, for Sir Stafford had just walked out, and George, too eager to set all right about Norwood, took his hat and followed, in the hope of overtaking him.

Lady Hester was already dressed, and about to enter the drawing-room, when George told her that Norwood was there; and yet she returned to her room, and made some changes in her toilet, slight, and perhaps too insignificant to record, but yet of importance enough to occupy some time, and afford her an interval for thoughts which, whatever their nature, served to flush her cheek and agitate her deeply.

It is an awkward thing at any time to meet with the person to whom you once believed you should have been married; to see, on the terms of mere common acquaintance, the individual with whose fate and fortune you at one time fancied your own was indissolubly bound up, for weal or woe, for better or for worse. To exchange the vapid commonplaces of the world; to bar-

ter the poor counters of that petty game called society with her or him with whom you have walked in all the unbounded confidence of affection, speculating on a golden future, or glorying in a delicious dream of present bliss; to touch with ceremonious respect that hand you have so often held fast within your own; to behold with respectful distance that form beside which you have sat for hours, lost in happy fancies; to stand, as it were, and trace out with the eye some path in life we might have followed, wondering whither it might have led us, if to some higher pinnacle of gratified ambition, if to disappointments darker than those we have ever known; speculating on a future which is already become a past, and canvassing within our hearts the follies that have misled and the faults that have wrecked us! Such are among the inevitable reminiscences of meeting; and they are full of a soft and touching sorrow, not all unpleasing either, as they remind us of our youth and its buoyancy. Far otherwise was the present case. Whatever might have been the bold confidence with which Lady Hester protested her belief in Norwood's honor, her own heartfelt knowledge of the man refuted the assertion. She knew thoroughly that he was perfectly devoid of all principle, and merely possessed that conventional degree of fair-dealing indispensable to association with his equals. That he would do anything short of what would subject him to disgrace, she had long seen; and, perhaps, the unhappy moment had come when even this restraint was no longer a barrier. And yet, with all this depreciating sense of the man, would it be believed that she had once loved him! ay, with as sincere an affection as she was capable of feeling for anything.

'Tis true, time and its consequences had effaced much of this feeling; his own indifference had done something, her new relations with the world had done more; and if she ever thought of him now, it was with a degree of half terror that there lived one man who had so thoroughly read all the secrets of her heart, and knew every sentiment of her nature.

Norwood was sitting in a chair as she entered, amusing himself with the gambols of a little Blenheim spaniel, whose silver collar bore the coronet of the Russian prince. He never perceived Lady Hester until she was close beside him, and in an easy, half indifferent tone, said:

"How d'ye do, my lord?"

"What, Hester!" said he, starting up, and taking her hand in both his own.

She withdrew it languidly, and, seating herself, not upon the sofa to which he wished to lead her, but in a chair, asked when he had arrived, and by what route.

"I came out in a yacht; stopping a few days at Gibraltar, and a week at Malta."

"Had you pleasant weather?"

"After we got clear of the Channel, excellent weather."

"You came alone, I suppose?"

"Quite alone."

"How do you get on without your dear friend, Effingdale, or your 'familiar,' Upton?"

Norwood colored a little at a question the drift of which he felt thoroughly, but tried with a laugh to evade an answer.

"Are they in England? I thought I read their names at the Newmarket meeting?" asked she, after waiting in vain for a reply.

"Yes; they were both at Newmarket," replied he, shortly.

"Was it a good meeting?"

"I can scarcely say so," rejoined he, attempting a laugh. "*My* book turned out very unfortunately."

"I heard so," was the short reply; and in a tone so dry and significant that a dead silence followed.

"Pretty spaniel, that," said Norwood, trying a slight sortie into the enemy's camp. "A present, I suppose, from Midchekoff?"

"Yes."

"It is not clean-bred, however, no more than his late master. Have you seen much of the prince?"

"He comes here every evening, after the opera."

"What a bore that must be—he is a most insufferable proser."

"I must say I disagree with you; I reckon him excessively agreeable."

"How changed you must be, Hes—Lady Hester."

"I believe I am, my lord."

"And yet you look the same—the very same as when we sauntered for hours through the old woods at Dipsley." She blushed deeply; less, perhaps, at the words, than at the look which accompanied them.

"Is this your newly-found niece or cousin?" said Norwood, as he pointed to the portrait of Kate Dalton.

"Yes. Isn't she pretty?"

"The picture is."

"She is much handsomer, however—a charming creature in every respect—as you will confess when you see her."

"And for what high destiny is she meant? Is she to be a Russian princess, a duchessa of Italy, or the good wife of an untitled Englishman?"

"She may have her choice, I believe, of either of the three."

"Happy girl!" said he, half scornfully; "and when may I hope to behold so much excellence?"

"To-day, if you like to dine here."

"I should like it much—but—but——"

"But what?"

"It's better to be frank at once, Hester," said he, boldly, "and say that I feel you are grown very cold and distant towards me. This is not your old manner, this not exactly the reception I looked for. Now, if you have any cause for this, would it not be better and fairer to speak it out openly than continue to treat me in this slighting fashion? You are silent—so there is something; pray let's hear it."

"What of Newmarket?" said she, in a low voice, so faint as almost to be a whisper.

"So that's it," said he, as he folded his arms and looked steadfastly at her.

There was something in the cold and steady gaze he bestowed upon her that abashed, if not actually alarmed, Lady Hester. She had seen the same look once or twice before, and always as the prelude to some terrible evidence of his temper.

"Lady Hester," said he, in a low, distinct, and very slow voice, as though he would not have her lose a word he spoke, "the explanation which a man would ask for at the peril of his life, ought not, in common justice, to be quite costless to a lady. It is perfectly possible that you may not care for the price—be it so; only I warn you that if you wish for any information on the subject you allude to, *I* will inquire whether——"

Here he dropped his voice, and whispered two or three words rapidly in her ear, after which she lay back, pale, sick, and almost fainting, without strength to speak or even to move.

"Do not say, or still less feel, that this contest is of my provoking. Never was any man less in the humor to provoke hostilities, and particularly from old friends. I have just had bad luck—the very worst of bad luck. I have lost everything but my head; and even that, cool and calculating as it is, may go too if I be pushed too far. Now you have a frank and free confession from me. I have told you more than I would to any other living—more, perhaps, than I ought even to you."

"Then what do you intend to do here?" asked she, faintly.

"Wait—wait patiently for a while. Fix upon any one that I can discover mutters a syllable to my discredit, and shoot him as I would a dog."

"There may be some who, without openly discussing, will shun your society, and avoid your intercourse."

"Sir Stafford, for instance," said he, with an insolent laugh. She nodded slightly, and he went on: "My lady's influence will, I am certain, set me right in that quarter."

"I may be unequal to the task."

"You can at least try, madam."

"I have tried, Norwood. I have gone the length of declaring that I disbelieved every story against you—that I reposed the most implicit faith in your honor—and that I would certainly receive you and admit your visits as heretofore."

"And, of course, you'll keep your word?"

"If you exact it——"

"Of course I shall! Hester, this is no time for quibbling. I've got into a mess, the worst of all the bad scrapes which have ever befallen me. A little time and a little management will pull me through—but I must have both; nor is it in such a place, and with such a society as this, a man need fear investigation. I came here, as formerly one went, to live 'within the rules.' Let me, at least, have the benefit of the protection for condescending to the locality."

"Sir Stafford, my lady," said a servant, throwing open a door; and the old baronet entered hastily, and, without deigning to notice Lord Norwood, walked straight up to Lady Hester, and said a few words in a low voice.

Affecting to occupy himself with the books upon the table, Norwood watched the dialogue with keen but stealthy glances, and then, as the other turned suddenly round, said:

"How d'ye do, Sir Stafford? I am glad to see you looking so well."

"I thank you, my lord; I am perfectly well," said he, with a most repelling coldness.

"You are surprised to see me in Florence, for certain," said the other, with a forced laugh.

"Very much surprised to see you *here*, my lord," was the abrupt reply.

"Ha! ha! ha! I thought so!" cried Norwood, laughing, and pretending not to feel the point of the remark. "But, nowadays, one flits about the world in slippers and dressing-gown, and traveling inflicts no fatigue. I only left England ten days ago."

"The post comes in seven, my lord," said Sir Stafford. "I have had letters this morning, written this day week, and which

give the last events in town life up to the very hour."

"Indeed! and what's the news, then?" said he, negligently.

"If your lordship will favor me with your company for a few minutes, I may be able to enlighten you," said Sir Stafford, moving towards the door.

"With the greatest pleasure. Good-bye, Lady Hester," said he, rising. "You said seven o'clock dinner, I think?"

"Yes," replied she, but in a voice almost inarticulate from shame and terror.

"Now, Sir Stafford, I'm at your orders," said the viscount, gaily, as he left the room, followed by the old man, whose crimson cheek and flashing eye bespoke the passion which was struggling within him.

Of the two who now entered Sir Stafford's library, it must be owned that Lord Norwood was, by many degrees, the more calm and collected. No one, to have looked at him, could possibly have supposed that any question of interest, not to say of deep moment, awaited him; and as he carried his eyes over the well-filled shelves and the handsome fittings of the chamber, nothing could be more naturally spoken than the few complimentary expressions on Sir Stafford's good taste and judgment.

"I shall not ask you to be seated, my lord," said the old baronet, whose tremulous lip and shaking cheek showed how deep-felt was his agitation. "The few moments of interview I have requested will be, I have no doubt, too painful to either of us, nor could we desire to prolong them. To me, I own, they are very, very painful."

These hurried, broken and unconnected sentences fell from him as he searched for a letter among a number of others that littered the table.

Lord Norwood bowed coldly, and, without making any reply, turned his back to the fire, and waited in patience.

"I have, I fear, mislaid the letter," said Sir Stafford, whose nervous anxiety had now so completely mastered him that he threw the letters and papers on every side without perceiving it.

The viscount made no sign, but suffered the search to proceed without remark.

"It was a letter from Lord Effingdale," continued the baronet, still busied in the pursuit—"a letter written after the Newmarket settling, my lord; and, if I should be unfortunate enough not to find it, I must only trust to my memory for its contents."

Lord Norwood gave another bow, slighter and colder than the former, as though to say that he acquiesced perfectly, without knowing in what.

"Ah! here it is! here it is!" cried Sir Stafford, at last detecting the missing document, which he hastily opened and ran his eyes over. "This letter, my lord," continued he, "announces that, in consequence of certain defalcations on your part, the members of the 'Whip Club' have erased your lordship's name from their list, and declared you incapacitated from either entering a horse or naming a winner for the stakes in future. There, there, my lord, is the paragraph, coupled with what you will doubtless feel to be a very severe, but just, comment on the transaction."

Norwood took the letter and read it leisurely—as leisurely and calmly as though the contents never concerned him, and then, folding it up, laid it on the chimney-piece beside him.

"Poor Effingdale!" said he, smiling; "he ought to spell better, considering that his mother was a governess. He writes '*naming*' with an 'e.' Didn't you remark that?"

But, as Sir Stafford paid no attention to the criticism, he went on:

"As to the 'Whip,' I may as well tell you, that I scratched my own name myself. They are a set of low 'legs,' and, except poor Effy, and two or three others of the same brilliant stamp, not a gentleman amongst them."

"The defalcation is, however, true?" asked Sir Stafford.

"If you mean to ask whether a man always wins at Doncaster or Newmarket, the question is of the easiest to answer."

"I certainly presume that he always pays what he loses, my lord," replied Sir Stafford, coloring at the evasive impertinence of the other.

"Of course he does, when he has it, Sir Stafford; but that is a most essential condition, for the 'turf' is not precisely like a mercantile pursuit."

Sir Stafford winced under the flippant insolence with which this was spoken.

"There is not exactly a fair way to calculate profit, nor any assurance against accidental loss. A horse, Sir Stafford, is not an Indiaman; a betting man is, therefore, in a position quite exceptional."

"If a man risks what he cannot pay, he is dishonorable," said Sir Stafford, in a short, abrupt tone.

"I see that you cannot enter into a theme so very different from all your habits and pursuits. You think there is a kind of bankruptcy when a man gets a little behind with his bets. You don't see that all these transactions are on 'honor,' and that, if one does 'bolt,' he means to 'book

up' another time. There was George, your own son——"

"What of him?—what of George?" cried Sir Stafford, with a convulsive grasp of the chair, while all the color fled from his cheek, and he seemed ready to faint with emotion.

"Oh, nothing in the world to cause you uneasiness. A more honorable fellow never breathed than George."

"Then, what of him? How comes his name to your lips at such a discussion as this? Tell me, this instant, my lord. I command—I entreat you!"

And the old man shook like one in an ague; but Norwood saw his vantage-ground, and determined to use it unsparingly. He therefore merely smiled and said:

"Pray be calm, Sir Stafford. I repeat, that there is nothing worthy of a moment's chagrin. I was only about to observe that, if I had the same taste for scandal-writing as poor Effy, I might have circulated a similar story about your son George. He left England, owing me a good round sum, for which, by the way, I was terribly 'hard up;' and, although the money was paid eventually, what would you have thought of *me*—what would the world have thought of *him*—if I had written such an epistle as this?"

And, as he spoke, his voice and manner warmed into a degree of indignant anger, in which, as if carried away, he snatched the letter from the chimney-piece and threw it into the fire. The act was unseen by Sir Stafford, who sat with his head deeply buried between his hands, a low faint groan alone bespeaking the secret agony of his heart.

"My son has, then, paid you? He owes nothing, my lord?" said he, at last, looking up, with a countenance furrowed by agitation.

"Like a trump!" said Norwood, assuming the most easy and self-satisfied manner. "My life upon George Onslow! Back him to any amount and against the field anywhere! A true John Bull!—no humbug, no nonsense about *him!*—straightforward and honorable always!"

"Your position is, then, this, my lord," said Sir Stafford, whose impatience would not permit him to listen longer—"you have quitted England, leaving for future settlement a number of debts, for which you have not the remotest prospect of liquidation."

"Too fast—you go too fast!" said the viscount, laughing.

"Lord Effingdale writes the amount at thirty thousand pounds, and adds that, as a defaulter———"

"There's the whole of it," broke in Norwood. "You ring the changes about that one confounded word, and there is no use in attempting a vindication. 'Give a dog a bad name,' as the adage says. Now, I took the trouble this very morning to go over the whole of this tiresome business with George. I explained to him fully, and I hope, to his entire satisfaction, that I was simply unfortunate in it—nothing more. A man cannot always 'ride the winner;' I'm sure I wish *I* could. Of course, I don't mean to say that it's not a confounded 'bore' to come out here and live in such a place as this, and just at the opening of the season, too, when town is beginning to fill; but 'needs must,' we are told, when a certain gent sits on the coach box."

Sir Stafford stood, during the whole of this speech, with his arms folded and his eyes fixed upon the floor. He never heard one word of it, but was deeply intent upon his own thoughts. At length he spoke in a full, collected, and firm voice: "Lord Norwood—I am, as you have told me, perfectly unfited to pronounce upon transactions so very unlike every pursuit in which my life has been passed. I am alike ignorant of the feelings of those who engage in them, and of the rules of honor by which they are guided; but this I know, that the man whom his equals decline to associate with at home, is not recognizable abroad; and that he who leaves his country with shame, cannot reside away from it with credit."

"This would be a very rude speech, Sir Stafford Onslow, even with the palliative preface of your ignorance, if our relative ages admitted any equality between us. I am the least bellicose of men—I believe I can say I may afford to be so. So long, therefore, as you confine such sentiments to yourself, I will never complain of them; but if the time comes that you conceive they should be issued for general circulation——"

"Well, my lord, what then?"

"Your son must answer for it—that's all!" said Norwood; and he drew himself up and fixed his eye steadily on the distant wall of the room, with a look and gesture that made the old man sick at heart. Norwood saw "how his shot told," and turning hastily round, said: "This interview, I conclude, has lasted quite long enough for either of us. If you have any further explanations to seek for, let them come through a younger man, and in a more regular form. Good morning."

Sir Stafford bowed, without speaking, as the other passed out.

To have seen them both at that moment, few would have guessed aright on which side lay all the disgrace, and where the spirit of rectitude and honor.

Sir Stafford, indeed, was most miserable. If the viscount's mock explanations did not satisfy a single scruple of *his* mind, was it not possible they might have sufficed with others more conversant with such matters? Perhaps he is not worse than others of his own class. What would be his feelings if he were to involve George in a quarrel for such a cause? This was a consideration that pressed itself in twenty different forms, each of them enough to appal him. "But the man is a defaulter; he has fled from England with 'shame,'" was the stubborn conviction which no efforts of his casuistry could banish; and the more he reflected on this the less possible seemed anything like evasion or compromise.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE END OF THE FIRST ACT."

THE point discussed in our last chapter, if not a momentous one in itself, was destined to exercise a very important influence upon the fortunes of the Onslow family. The interview between Sir Stafford and the viscount scarcely occupied five minutes; after which the baronet wrote a note of some length to her ladyship, to which she as promptly replied; a second, and even a third interchange of correspondence followed. The dinner-party appointed for that day was put off; a certain ominous kind of silence pervaded the house. The few privileged visitors were denied admission. Mr. Proctor, Sir Stafford's man, wore a look of more than common seriousness. Mademoiselle Célestine's glances revealed a haughty sense of triumph. Even the humbler menials appeared to feel that something had occurred, and betrayed in their anxious faces some resemblance to that vague sense of half-curiosity, half-terror, the passengers of a steamboat experience when an accident, of whose nature they know nothing, has occurred to the machinery.

Their doubts and suspicions assumed more shape when the order came that Sir Stafford would dine in the library, and her ladyship in her own room, George Onslow alone appearing in the dining-room. There was an air of melancholy over everything, the silence deepening as night came on. Servants went noiselessly to and fro, drew the curtains and closed the doors with a half-stealthy gesture, and seemed as though fearful of awakening some slumbering outbreak of passion.

We neither have, nor desire to have, secrets from our readers. We will therefore proceed to Sir Stafford's dressing-room, where the old baronet sat moodily over the fire, his anxious features and sorrow-struck expression showing the ravages even a few hours of suffering had inflicted. His table was littered with papers, parchments, and other formidable-looking documents. Some letters lay sealed here; others were half-written there; everything about him showed the conflict of doubt and indecision that was going on within his mind; and truly a most painful struggle was maintained there.

For some time back he had seen with displeasure the course of extravagance and waste of all his household; he had observed the habits of reckless expense with which his establishment was maintained; but, possessing a very ample fortune, and feeling that probably some change would be made with the coming summer, he had forborne to advert to it, and endured with what patience he could a mode of life whose very display was distasteful to him. Now, however, a more serious cause for anxiety presented itself, in the class of intimates admitted by Lady Hester to her society. Of the foreigners he knew comparatively little, but that little was not to their advantage. Some were wealthy voluptuaries, glad to propagate their own habits of extravagance among those they suspected of fortunes smaller than their own. Others were penniless adventurers, speculating upon everything that might turn to their profit. All were men of pleasure, and of that indolent, lounging, purposeless character so peculiarly unpleasing to those who have led active lives, and been always immersed in the cares and interests of business.

Such men, he rightly judged, were dangerous associates to his son, the very worst acquaintances for Kate, in whom already he was deeply interested; but still no actual stain of dishonor—no palpable flaw could be detected in their fame till the arrival of Lord Norwood added his name to the list.

To receive a man of whose misconduct in England he had acquired every proof, was a step beyond his endurance. Here or never must he take his stand; and manfully he did so. At first, by calm argument and remonstrance, and at last by firm resolution and determination. Without adverting to what had passed between the

viscount and himself, the letter he addressed to Lady Hester conveyed his unalterable resolve not to know Lord Norwood. Lady Hester's reply was not less peremptory, and scarcely as courteous. The correspondence continued with increasing warmth on both sides, till Sir Stafford palpably hinted at the possible consequences of a spirit of discordance and disagreement so ill-adapted to conjugal welfare. Her ladyship caught up the suggestion with avidity, and professed that, whatever scruples his delicacy might feel, to hers there was none in writing the word —"separation."

If the thought had already familiarized itself to his mind, the word had not; and strange it is, that the written syllables should have a power and a meaning that the idea itself could never realize.

To men who have had little publicity in their lives, and that little always of an honorable nature, there is no thought so poignantly miserable as the dread of a scandalous notoriety. To associate their names with anything that ministers to gossip—to make them tea-table talk—still worse, to expose them to sneering and impertinent criticisms, by revealing the secrets of their domesticity, is a torture to which no mere physical suffering has anything to compare. Sir Stafford Onslow was a true representative of this class of feeling. The sight of his name in the list of directors of some great enterprise, as the patron of a charity, the governor of an hospital, or the donor to an institution, was about as much of newspaper notoriety as he could bear without a sense of shrinking delicacy; but to become the mark for public discussion in the relations of his private life—to have himself and his family brought up to the bar of that terrible ordeal, where bad tongues are the eloquent, and evil speakers are the witty, was a speculation too terrible to think over: and this was exactly what Lady Hester was suggesting!

Is it not very strange that woman, with whose nature we inseparably and truly associate all those virtues that take their origin in refinement and modesty, should sometimes be able to brave a degree of publicity to which a man, the very hardiest and least shamefaced, would succumb, crestfallen and abashed; that her timid delicacy, her shrinking bashfulness, can be so hardened by the world, that she can face a notoriety where every look is an indictment, and every whisper a condemnation?

Now, if Lady Hester was yet remote from this, she had still journeyed one stage of the road. She had abundant examples around her of those best received and best looked on in society, whose chief claim to the world's esteem seemed to be the contempt with which they treated all its ordinances. There was a dash of heroism in their effrontery that pleased her; they appeared more gay, more buoyant, more elastic in spirits than other people; their increased liberty seemed to impart enlarged and more generous views, and they were always "good-natured," since, living in the very glassiest of houses, they never "shied" a pebble.

While, then, Sir Stafford sat overwhelmed with shame and sorrow at the bare thought of the public discussion that awaited him, Lady Hester was speculating upon condolence here, approbation there, panegyrics upon her high spirit, and congratulations upon her freedom. The little, half-shadowy allusions her friends would throw out from time to time upon the strange unsuitableness of her marriage with a man so much her senior, would soon be converted into comments of unrestricted license. Besides—and perhaps the greatest charm of all was—she would then have a grievance; not the worn-out grievance of some imaginary ailment that nobody believes in but the "doctor"—not the meek agonies of a heart complaint, that saves the sufferer from eating bad dinners in vulgar company, but always allows them a respite for a *déjeuner* at the court or a supper after the opera with a few chosen "convives"—but a real, substantial grievance, over which men might be eloquent and ladies pathetic. Such were the different feelings with which two persons contemplated the same event. Sir Stafford's thoughts turned instantly towards England. What would be said there by all these friends who had endeavored to dissuade him from this ill-suited union? Their sorrowful compassion was even less endurable than the malice of others; and Grounsell, too—what would his old friend think of a catastrophe so sudden? In his heart, Sir Stafford was glad that the doctor was absent; much as he needed his counsel and advice, he still more dreaded the terror of his triumphant eye at the accomplishment of his often-repeated prediction.

From George he met no support whatever. He either believed, or thought that he believed, Norwood's garbled explanation. Intercourse with a certain set of "fast men" had shown him that a man might do a "screwy" thing now and then, and yet not be cut by his acquaintance; and the young Guardsman deemed his father's rigid no-

tions nothing but prejudices—very excellent and commendable ones, no doubt, but as inapplicable to our present civilization as would be a coat of mail or a backpiece of chain-armor. George Onslow, therefore, halted between the two opinions. Adhering to his father's side from feelings of affection and respect, he was drawn to Lady Hester's by his convictions; not, indeed, aware how formidable the difference had already become between them, and that, before that very night closed in, they had mutually agreed upon a separation, which, while occupying the same house, was essentially to exclude all intercourse.

One consideration gave Sir Stafford much painful thought. What was to become of Kate Dalton in this new turn of affairs? The position of a young girl on a visit with a family living in apparent unity and happiness was very wide apart from her situation as the companion of a woman separated, even thus much, from her husband. It would be equally unfair to her own family, as unjust to the girl herself, to detain her then in such a conjuncture. And yet what was to be done? Apart from all the unpleasantness of proposing an abrupt return to her home, came the thought of the avowal that must accompany the suggestion—the very confession he so dreaded to make. Of course the gossiping of servants would soon circulate the rumor. But then they might not spread it beyond the Alps, nor make it the current talk of a German watering-place. Thus were his selfish feelings at war with higher and purer thoughts. But the struggle was not a long one. He sat down and wrote to Lady Hester. Naturally assuming that all the reasons which had such force for himself would weigh equally with her, he dwelt less upon the arguments for Kate's departure than upon the mode in which it might be proposed and carried out. He adverted with feeling to the sacrifice the loss would inflict upon Lady Hester, but professed his conviction in the belief that all merely selfish considerations would give way before higher and more important duties.

"As it is," said he, "I fear much that we have done anything but conduce to this dear girl's welfare and happiness. We have shown her glimpses of a life whose emptiness she cannot appreciate, but by whose glitter she is already attracted. We have exposed her to all the seductions of flattery, pampering a vanity which is perhaps her one only failing. We have doubtless suggested to her imagination dreams of a future never to be realized, and we must now consign her to a home where all the affections of fond relatives will be unequal to the task of blinding her to its poverty and its obscurity. And yet even this is better than to detain her here. It shall be my care to see in what way I can—I was about to write 'recompense,' nor would the word be unsuitable—recompense Mr. Dalton for the injury we have done him as regards his child; and if you have any suggestion to make me on this head, I will gladly accept it."

The note concluded with some hints as to the manner of making the communication to Kate, the whole awkwardness of which Sir Stafford, if need were, would take upon himself.

The whole temper of the letter was feeling and tender. Without even in the most remote way adverting to what had occurred between Lady Hester and himself, he spoke of their separation simply in its relation to Kate Dalton, for whom they were both bound to think and act with caution. As if concentrating every thought upon *her*, he did not suffer any other consideration to interfere. Kate, and Kate only, was all its theme.

Lady Hester, however, read the lines in a very different spirit. She had just recovered from a mesmeric trance, into which, to calm her nervous exaltation, her physician, Dr. Buccellini, had thrown her. She had been lying in a state of half-hysterical apathy for some hours, all volition—almost all vitality—suspended, under the influence of an exaggerated credulity, when the letter was laid upon the table.

"What is that your maid has just left out of her hand?" asked the doctor, in a tone of semi-imperiousness.

"A letter—a sealed letter," replied she, mystically waving her hand before her half-closed eyes.

The doctor gave a look of triumph at the bystanders, and went on:

"Has the letter come from a distant country, or from a correspondent near at hand?"

"Near!" said she, with a shudder.

"Where is the writer at this moment?" asked he.

"In the house," said she, with another and more violent shuddering.

"I now take the letter in my hand," said the doctor, "and what am I looking at?"

"A seal with two griffins supporting a spur."

The doctor showed the letter on every side, with a proud and commanding gesture. "There is a name written in the corner of the letter, beneath the address. Do you know that name?"

A heavy, thick sob was all the reply.

"There—there—be calm, be still," said he, majestically motioning with both hands towards her; and she immediately became composed and tranquil. "Are the contents of this letter such as will give you pleasure?"

A shake of the head was the answer.

"Are they painful?"

"Very painful," said she, pressing her hand to her temples.

"Will these tidings be productive of grand consequences?"

"Yes, yes!" cried she, eagerly.

"What will you do, when you read them?"

"Act!" ejaculated she, solemnly.

"In compliance with the spirit, or in rejection?"

"Rejection!"

"Sleep on—sleep on," said the doctor, with a wave of his hand; and, as he spoke, her head drooped, her arm fell listlessly down, and her long hand heavy breathing denoted deep slumber. "There are people, Miss Dalton," said he to Kate, "who affect to see nothing in mesmerism but deception and trick, whose philosophy teaches them to discredit all that they cannot comprehend. I trust you may never be of this number."

"It is very wonderful, very strange," said she, thoughtfully.

"Like all the secrets of nature, its phenomena are above belief; yet, to those who study them with patience and industry, how compatible do they seem with the whole order and spirit of creation! The great system of vitality being a grand scheme of actionary and reactionary influences, the centrifugal being in reality the centripetal, and those impulses we vainly fancy to be our own instincts being the impressions of external forces. Do you comprehend me?"

"Not perfectly; in part, perhaps," said she, diffidently.

"Even that is something," replied he, with a bland smile. "One whose future fortunes will place her in a station to exert influence is an enviable convert to have brought to truth."

"I!" said she, blushing with shame and surprise together; "surely, you mistake, sir; I am neither born to rank, nor like to attain it."

"Both one and the other, young lady," said he, solemnly; "high as your position will one day be, it will not be above the claims of your descent. It is not on fallible evidence that I read the future."

"And can you really predict my fortune in life?" asked she, eagerly.

"More certainly than you would credit it, when told," said he, deliberately.

"How I should like to hear it—how I should like to know——" She stopped, and a deep blush covered her face.

"And why should you not know that your dreams will be realized?" said he, hastily, as if speaking from some irresistible impulse. "What more natural than to desire a glance, fleeting though it be, into that black vista, where the bright lightning of prophecy throws its momentary splendor!"

"And how know you that I have had dreams?" said she, innocently.

"I know of them but by their accomplishment. I see you not in the present or the past, but in the future. There your image is revealed to me, and surrounded by a splendor I cannot describe. It is gorgeous and barbaric in magnificence; there is something feudal in the state by which you are encompassed that almost speaks of another age."

"This is mere dreamland, indeed," said she, laughing.

"Nay, not so; nor is it all bright and glorious, as you think. There are shadows of many a dark tint moving along the sunlit surface."

"But how know you all this?" asked she, half incredulously.

"As you slept last evening in a mesmeric slumber on that sofa; but I will hear no further questioning. Look to our patient here, and if that letter agitate her overmuch, let me be sent for." And, with these words, delived oracularly, the doctor left the room; while Kate seated herself beside the sofa where Lady Hester slept.

It was late in the night when Lady Hester awoke, and soon remembering that a letter had arrived, broke the seal and read it. If the proposal of Sir Stafford was in every way unacceptable, there was something which compensated for all in the excitement of spirits an act of opposition was sure to produce; nor was it without a sense of triumph that she read lines penned in evident sorrow and depression of spirit. In fact, she made the not uncommon error of mistaking sorrow for repentance, and thought she perceived in her husband's tone a desire to retrace his steps. It is difficult to say whether such an *amende* would have given her pleasure; certainly she would not have accepted it without subjecting him to a term of probation of more or less length. In any case, as regarded Kate, she was decided at once upon a positive refusal; and as, with *her*, a resolve and a mode of action were usually the work of the same

moment, she motioned to Kate to sit down beside her on the sofa, and passing her arm around her, drew her fondly towards her.

Kate dearest," said she, "I'm sure nothing would induce you to leave me—I mean, to desert and forsake me."

Kate pressed the hand she held in her own to her lips with fervor, but could not speak for emotion.

"I say this," said Lady Hester, rapidly, "because the moment has come to test your fidelity. Sir Stafford and I—it is needless to state how and by what means—have at last discovered, what I fancy the whole world has seen for many a day, that we were totally unsuited to each other, in taste, age, habit, feeling, mode of life and thought; that we have nothing in common, neither liking nor detesting the same things, but actually at variance upon every possible subject and person. Of course all attempt to cover such discrepancies must be a failure. We might trump up a hollow truce, child, but it never could be an alliance; and so we have thought—I'm sure it is well that we have hit upon even one topic for agreement—we have thought that the best, indeed the only, thing we could do, was—to separate."

An exclamation, almost like an accent of pain, escaped Kate at these words.

"Yes, dearest," resumed Lady Hester, "it was his own proposal, made in the very coldest imaginable fashion; for men have constantly this habit, and always take the tone of dignity when they are about to do an injustice. All this, however, I was prepared for, and could suffer without complaint; but he desires to rob me of you, my dear child—to deprive me of the only friend, the only confidante I have in the world. I don't wonder that you grow pale and look shocked at such cruelty, concealed, as it is, under the mask of care for your interests and regard for your welfare; and this to *me*, dearest—to me, who feel to you as to a sister—a dear, dear sister!" Here Lady Hester drew Kate towards her, and kissed her twice affectionately. "There's his letter, my sweet child; you can read it; or better, indeed, that you should not, if you would preserve any memory of your good opinion of him."

"And he that was ever so kind, so thoughtful, and so generous!" cried Kate.

"You know nothing of these creatures, my dear," broke in Lady Hester. "All those plausibilities that they play off in the world are little emanations of their own selfish natures. They are eternally craving admiration from us women, and that is the true reason of their mock kindness and mock generosity! I'm sure," added she, sighing, "*my* experience has cost me pretty dearly! What a life of trial and privation has mine been!"

Lady Hester sighed heavily as her jeweled fingers pressed to her eyes a handkerchief worth a hundred guineas, and really believed herself a case for world-wide sympathy. She actually did shed a tear or two over her sorrows, for it is wonderful on what slight pretension we can compassionate ourselves! She thought over all the story of her life, and wept! She remembered how she had been obliged to refuse the husband of her choice; she forgot to be grateful for having escaped a heartless spendthrift; she remembered her acceptance of one inferior to her in rank, and many years her senior; but forgot his wealth, his generosity, his kindliness of nature, and his high character. She thought of herself as she was at eighteen—the flattered beauty, daughter of a peer, courted, sought after, and admired; but she totally forgot what she was at thirty, with faded attractions, unthought of, and, worse still, unmarried. Of the credit side of her account with fortune she omitted not an item; the debits she slurred over as unworthy of mention. That she should be able to deceive herself is nothing very new or strange, but that she should succeed in deceiving another is indeed singular; and such was the case. Kate listened to her, and believed everything; and when her reason failed to convince, her natural softness of disposition served to satisfy her that a more patient, long-suffering, unrepining being never existed than Lady Hester Onslow.

"And now," said she, after a long peroration of woes, "can you leave me here, alone and friendless?—will you desert me?"

"Oh, never, never!" cried Kate, kissing her hand and pressing her to her heart. "I would willingly lay down my life to avert this sad misfortune; but, if that cannot be, I will share your lot with the devotion of my whole heart."

Lady Hester could scarcely avoid smiling at the poor girl's simplicity, who really fancied that separation included a life of seclusion and sorrow, with restricted means, and an obscure position; and it was with a kind of subdued drollery she assured Kate that, even in her altered fortunes, a great number of little pleasures and comforts would remain for them. In fact, by degrees the truth came slowly out, that the great change implied little else than unrestrained liberty of action, freedom to go

anywhere, know any one, and be questioned by nobody. The equivocal character of the position adding a piquancy to the society, inexpressibly charming to all those who, like the Duchesse d'Abrantes, think it only necessary for a thing to be "wrong," to make it perfectly delightful.

Having made a convert of Kate, Lady Hester briefly replied to Sir Stafford that his proposition was alike repugnant to Miss Dalton as to herself—that she regretted the want of consideration on his part, which could have led him to desire that she should be friendless at a time when the presence of a companion was more than ever needed. This done, she kissed Kate three or four times affectionately, and retired to her room, well satisfied with what the day had brought forth, and only wishing for the morrow, which should open her new path in life.

It often happens in life that we are never sufficiently struck with the force of our own opinions or their consequences, till, from some accident or other, we come to record them. Then it is that the sentiments we have expressed, and the lines of action adopted, suddenly come forth in all their unvarnished truth. Like the images which the painter, for the first time, commits to canvas, they stand out to challenge a criticism which, so long as they remained in mere imagination, they had escaped.

This was precisely Kate Dalton's case now. Her natural warm-heartedness, and her fervent sense of gratitude, had led her to adopt Lady Hester's cause as her own; generous impulses, carrying reason all before them, attached her to what she fancied to be the weaker side. "The divinity that doth hedge" "beauty" made her believe that so much loveliness could do no wrong; nor was it till she came to write of the event to her sister, that even a doubt crossed her mind on the subject. The difficulty of explaining a circumstance of which she knew but little, was enhanced by her knowledge of Ellen's rigid and unbending sense of right. "Poor dear Nelly," said she, "with her innocence of mind, will understand nothing of all this, or she will condemn Lady Hester at once. Submission to her husband would, in her opinion, have been the first of duties. She cannot appreciate motives which actuate society in a rank different from her own. In her ignorance of the world, too, she might deem my remaining here unadvisable; she might counsel my return to home; and thus I should be deserting, forsaking, the dear friend who has confided all her sorrows to my heart, and reposes all her trust in my fidelity. This would break Lady Hester's heart and my own together; and yet nothing is more likely than such a course. Better a thousand times not expose her friend's cause to such a casualty. A little time and a little patience may place matters in a position more intelligible and less objectionable; and, after all, the question is purely a family secret, the divulgence of which, even to a sister, is perhaps not warrantable."

Such were among the plausibilities with which she glanced over her conduct; without, however, satisfying herself that she was in the right. She had only begun the descent of lax morality, and her head was addled by the new sensation. Happy are they who, even from weak nerves, relinquish the career!

Kate's letter home, then, was full of gay revelations. Galleries, churches, gardens; objects of art or historic interest; new pictures of manners, sketches of society, abounded. There were descriptions of *fêtes*, too, and brilliant assemblies, with great names of guests and gorgeous displays of splendor. Well and sweetly were they written; a quick observation and a keen insight into character in every line. The subtle analysis of people and their pretensions, which comes of mixture with the world, was pre-eminent in all she said; while a certain sharp wit pointed many of the remarks, and sparkled in many a brilliant passage.

It was altogether a lively and a pleasant letter. A stranger, reading it, would have pronounced the writer clever and witty; a friend would have regretted the want of personal details, the hundred little traits of egoism, that speak confidence and trust. But to a sister—and such a sister as Nelly—it was, indeed, barren! No outpouring of warm affection; no fond memory of home; no reference to that little fireside, whence her own image had never departed, and where her presence was each night invoked.

Oh! Kate, has Hanserl's dark prophecy thrown its shadow already to your feet? Can a young heart be so easily corrupted, and so soon?

CHAPTER XXVII.

A SMALL DINNER AT THE VILLINO ZOE.

Among the penalties great folk pay for their ascendency, there is one most remarkable, and that is the intense interest taken in all their affairs by hundreds of worthy

people who are *not* of their acquaintance. This feeling, which transcends every other known description of sympathy, flourishes in small communities. In the capital of which we are now speaking, it was at its very highest pitch of development. The Onslows furnished all the table-talk of the city; but in no circle were their merits so frequently and ably discussed as in that little parliament of gossip which held its meetings at the "Villino Zoe."

Mrs. Ricketts, who was no common diplomatist, had done her utmost to establish relations of amity with her great neighbor. She had expended all the arts of courtesy, and all the devices of politeness, to effect this "entente cordiale;" but all in vain. Her advances had been met with coldness, and "something more;" her perfumed little notes, written in a style of euphuism all her own, had been left unanswered; her presents of fruits and flowers unacknowledged—it is but fair to add, that they never proceeded farther than the porter's lodge—even her visiting-cards were only replied to by the stiff courtesy of cards, left by Lady Hester's "chasseur;" so that, in fact, failure had fallen on all her endeavors, and she had not even attained to the barren honor of a recognition as they passed in the promenade.

This was a very serious discomfiture, and might, when it got abroad, have sorely damaged the Ricketts's ascendency in that large circle, who were accustomed to regard her as the glass of fashion. Heaven knew what amount of insubordination might spring out of it! what rebellious notions might gain currency and credit! It was but the winter before when a duchess, who passed through, on her way to Rome, asked "who Mrs. Ricketts was?" and the shock was felt during the whole season after. The Vandyk, for whose authenticity Martha swore, was actually called in question. The "Sèvres" cup she had herself painted, was the subject of a heresy as astounding. We live in an age of movement and convulsion—no man's landmarks are safe now—and Mrs. Ricketts knew this.

The Onslows, it was clear, would not know *her*; it only remained, then, to show why she would not know *them*. It was a rare thing to find a family settling down at Florence against whom a "true bill" might not easily be found of previous misconduct. Few left England without a reason that might readily become an allegation. Bankruptcy and divorce were the light offenses; the higher ones, we must not speak of. Now the Onslows, as it happened, were not in this category. Sir Stafford's character was unimpeachable—her ladyship's had nothing more grave against it than the ordinary levities of her station. George "had gone the pace," it was true, but nothing disreputable attached to him. There was no use, therefore, in "trying back" for a charge, and Mrs. Ricketts perceived that they must be arraigned on the very vaguest of evidence. Many a head has fallen beneath the guillotine for a suspicion, and many a heart been broken on a surmise!

A little dinner at the Villino opened the plan of proceedings. It was a small "auto-da-fé" of character, at which the Onslows were to be the victims, while the grand inquisitors were worthily represented by the Polish count, Haggerstone, Purvis and a certain Mr. Foglass, then passing through Florence on his way to England. This gentleman, who was the reputed son of a supposed son of George the Fourth, was received as "very good royalty" in certain circles abroad, and, by virtue of a wig, a portly chest, and a most imposing pomposity of manner, taken to be exceedingly like his grandfather—just on the same principle as red currant jelly makes middling mutton resemble venison.

To get rid of his importunity, a minister had made him consul in some remote village of the East, but finding that there were neither fees nor perquisites, Foglass had left his post to besiege the doors of Downing Street once more, and, if rejected as a suppliant, to become an admirable grievance for a Radical member, and a "very cruel case of oppression" for the morning papers.

Foglass was essentially a "humbug," but, unlike most, if not all other humbugs, without the smallest ingredient of any kind of ability. When men are said to live by their wits, their capital is, generally speaking, a very sufficient one; and that interesting class of persons known as adventurers, numbers many clever talkers, shrewd observers, subtle tacticians and admirable billiard-players; with a steady hand on a pistol, but ready to "pocket" either an "insult" or a "ball," if the occasion require it. None of these gifts pertained to Foglass. He had not one of the qualities which either succeed in the world or in society, and yet, strange to say, this intolerable bore had a kind of popularity; that is to say, people gave him a vacant place at their dinners, and remembered him at picnics.

His whole strength lay in his wig, and a certain slow, measured intonation, which he found often attracted attention to what

he said, and gave his tiresome anecdotes of John Kemble, Munden and Mathews, the semblance of a point they never possessed. Latterly, however, he had grown deaf, and, like most who suffer under that infirmity, taken to speaking in a whisper so low as to be inaudible — a piece of politeness for which even our reader will be grateful, as it will spare him the misery of his twaddle.

Haggerstone and he were intimates—were it not a profanation of the word, we should say, friends. They were, however, always together; and Haggerstone took pains to speak of his companion as a "monstrous clever fellow, who required to be known to be appreciated." Jekyl probably discovered the true secret of the alliance, in the fact that they always talked to each other about the nobility, and never gave them their titles—an illusory familiarity with dukes and earls that appeared to render them supremely happy. Richmond, Beaufort, Cleveland and Stanley were in their mouths as "household words."

After all, it was a harmless sort of pastime; and if these "imaginary conversations" gave them pleasure, why need we grumble?

We have scruples about asking our reader even to a description of the Ricketts's dinner. It was a true Barmecide feast. There was a very showy bouquet of flowers; there was a lavish display of what seemed silver; there was a good deal of queer china and impracticable glass; in short, much to look at, and very little to eat. Of this fact the Pole's appreciation was like an instinct, and as the *entrées* were handed round, all who came after him became soon aware of. Neither the wine nor the dessert were temptations to a long sitting, and the party soon found themselves in the drawing-room.

"Son Excellence is going to England?" said the Pole, addressing Foglass, who had been announced as an ambassador; "if you do see de Count Ojeffskoy, tell him I am living here, as well as a poor exile can, who have lost palaces, and horses, and diamonds, and all de rest."

"Ah! the poor dear count!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, while Martha prolonged the echo.

"You carry on the war tolerably well, notwithstanding," said Haggerstone, who knew something of the other's resources in *piquet* and *écarté*.

"Carry on de war!" rejoined he, indignantly; "wid my fader, who work in de mines! and my beautiful sisters, who walk naked about de streets of Crakow!"

"What kind of climate have they in Crak-Crak-Crak——" A fit of coughing finished a question which nobody thought of answering; and Purvis sat down, abashed, in a corner.

"Arthur, my love," said Mrs. Ricketts —she was great at a diversion, whenever such a tactic was wanted—"do you hear what Colonel Haggerstone has been saying?"

"No, dearest," muttered the old general, as he worked away with rule and compass.

"He tells me," said the lady, still louder, "that the Onslows have separated. Not an open, formal separation, but that they occupy distinct apartments, and hold no intercourse whatever."

"Sir Stafford lives on the *rez de chaussée*," said Haggerstone, who, having already told the story seven times the same morning, was quite perfect in the recital—"Sir Stafford lives on the *rez de chaussée*, with a small door into the garden. My lady retains the entire first floor and the grand conservatory. George has a small *garçon* apartment off the terrace."

"How very distressing!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, whose woe-worn looks seemed to imply that she had never heard of a similar incident before; "and how unlike us, Arthur," added she, with a smile of beaming affection. "He has ever been what you see him, since the day he stole my young, unsuspecting heart."

The colonel looked over at the object thus designated, and, by the grin of malice on his features, appeared to infer that the compliment was but a sorry one, after all.

"'John Anderson, my Jo, John,'" muttered he, half aloud.

"'We've climbed the hill toge-ge-gether,'" chimed in Purvis, with a cackle.

"Gather what, sir?—blackberries, was it?" cried Haggerstone.

"Don't quote that low-lived creature," said Mrs. Ricketts; "a poet only conversant with peasants and their habits. Let us talk of our own order. What of these poor Onslows?"

"Sir Stafford dines at two, madam. A cutlet, a vegetable, and a cherry tart; two glasses of Gordon's sherry, and a cup of coffee."

"Without milk. I had it from Proctor," broke in Purvis, who was bursting with jealousy at the accuracy of the other's narrative.

"You mean without sugar, sir," snapped Haggerstone. "Nobody does take milk-coffee after dinner."

"I always do," rejoined Purvis, "when I can't get mara-mara-mara——"

"I hope you can get maraschino down easier than you pronounce it, sir."

"Be quiet, Scroope," said his sister; "you always interrupt."

"He do make de devil of misverstandness wit his what-ye-call-'em," added the Pole, contemptuously.

And poor Purvis, rebuked on every side, was obliged to fall back beside Martha and her embroidery.

"My lady," resumed Haggerstone, "is served at eleven o'clock. The moment Granzini's solo is over in the ballet, an express is sent off to order dinner. The table is far more costly than Midchekoff's."

"I do believe well," said the count, who always, for nationality's sake, deemed it proper to abuse the Russian. "De Midchekoff cook tell me he have but ten paoli—how you say—par tête—by the tête—for his dinner; dat to include everything, from de caviar to de sheeze."

"That was not the style at the Pavilion formerly," roared out Haggerstone, repeating the remark in Foglass's ear.

And the ex-consul smiled blandly towards Mrs. Ricketts, and said "he'd take anything to England for her with pleasure."

"He's worse than ever," remarked Haggerstone, irritably. "When people have a natural infirmity, they ought to confine themselves to their own room."

"Particularly when it is one of the tem-tem-temper," said Purvis, almost choked with passion.

"Better a hasty temper than an impracticable tongue, sir," said Haggerstone.

"Be quiet, Scroope," added Mrs. Ricketts; and he was still. Then, turning to the colonel, she went on: "How thankful we ought to be that we never knew these people! They brought letters to us—some, indeed, from dear and valued friends. That sweet Diana Comerton, who married the Duke of Ellswater, wrote a most pressing entreaty that I should call upon them."

"She didn't marry the duke; she married his chap-chaplain," chimed in Purvis.

"Will you be quiet, Scroope?" remarked the lady.

"I ought to know," rejoined he, grown courageous in the goodness of his cause. "He was Bob Nutty. Bitter Bob, we always called him at school. He had a kind of a poly-poly-poly——"

"A polyanthus," suggested Haggerstone.

"No. It was a poly-polypus, that made him snuffle in his speech."

"Ach Gott!" sighed the Pole; but whether in sorrow for poor Bob, or in utter weariness at his historian, was hard to say.

"Lady Foxington, too," said Mrs. Ricketts, "made a serious request that we should be intimate with her friend, Lady Hester. She was candid enough to say that her ladyship would not suit *me*. 'She has no soul, Zoe,' wrote she, 'so I needn't say more.'"

"Dat is ver bad," said the Pole, gravely.

"Still I should have made her acquaintance, for the sake of that young creature—Miss Dalton, I think they call her—and whom I rather suspect to be a distant cousin of ours."

"Yes; there were Dawkinses at Exeter—a very respectable solicitor, one was Joe Dawkins," came in Purvis; "he used to say we were co-co-co-connections."

"This family, sir, is called Dalton, and not even a stutter can make that Dawkins."

"Couldn't your friend Mr. Foglass find out something about these Daltons for us, as he goes through Germany?" asked Mrs. Ricketts of the colonel.

"No one could execute such a commission better, madam, only you must give him his instructions in writing. Foglass," added he, at the top of his voice, "let me have your note-book for a moment."

"With pleasure," said he, presenting his snuff-box.

"No; your memorandum-book!" screamed the other, louder.

"It's gone down," whispered the deaf man. "I lost the key on Tuesday last."

"Not your watch, man. I want to write a line in your note-book;" and he made a pantomimic of writing.

"Yes, certainly; if Mrs. R. will permit, I'll write to her with pleasure."

"Confound him!" muttered Haggerstone; and, taking up a visiting-card, he wrote on the back of it, "Could you trace the Daltons, as you go back by Baden?"

The deaf man at once brightened up; a look of shrewd intelligence lighted up his fishy eyes as he said:

"Yes, of course; say, what do you want?"

"Antecedents—family—fortune," wrote Haggerstone.

"If they have de tin," chimed in the Pole.

"If they be moral and of irreproachable reputation," said Mrs. Ricketts.

"Are they related to the other Dawkinses?" asked Purvis. "Let him ask if their mother was not godfather to—no, I mean grandfather—to the Reverend Jere-Jere-Jere——"

"Be quiet, Scroope—will you be quiet?"

"There, you have it all, now," said Haggerstone, as he finished writing; "their 'family, fortune, flaws, and frailties'— 'what they did, and where they did it'— observing accuracy as to Christian names, and as many dates as possible."

"I'll do it," said Foglass, as he read over the instruction.

"We want it soon, too," said Mrs. Ricketts. "Tell him we shall need the information at once."

"This with speed," wrote Haggerstone at the foot of the memorandum.

Foglass bowed a deep assent.

"How like his grandfather!" said Mrs. Ricketts, in ecstasy.

"I never knew he had one," whispered Haggerstone to the Pole. "His father was a coachmaker in Long Acre."

"Is he not thought very like them?" asked Mrs. Ricketts, with a sidelong glance of admiration at the auburn peruke.

"I've heard that the wig is authentic, madam."

"He has so much of that regal urbanity in his manner."

"If he is not the first gentleman of England," muttered Haggerstone to himself, "he is the first one in his own family, at least."

"By the way," said Mrs. Ricketts, hastily, "let him inquire into that affair of Lord Norwood."

"No necessity, madam. The affair is in *Bell's Life*, with the significant question, 'Where is he?' But he can learn the particulars, at all events." And he made a note in the book.

"How dreadful all this, and how sad to think Florence should be the resort of such people!"

"If it were not for rapparees and refugees, madam, house-rent would be very inexpensive," said the colonel, in a subdued voice; while, turning to the Pole, he added, "And if respectability is to be always a caricature, I'd as soon have its opposite. I suppose you do not admit the viscount, madam?"

"He has not ventured to present himself," said Mrs. Ricketts, proudly. "I hope that there is at least one sanctuary where virtue can live unmolested." And, as she spoke, she looked over to Martha, who was working away patiently; but whether happy in the exclusive tariff aforesaid, or somewhat tired of "protection," we are unable to say.

"What has he do?" asked the count.

"He has done the 'Ring' all round, I believe," said Haggerstone, chuckling at a joke which he alone could appreciate.

"Dey do talk of play in England!" said the Pole, contemptuously. "Dey never do play high, wit dere leetle—how you call 'em?—bets, of tree, four guinea, at *écarté*. But in Polen we have two, tree, five tousand crowns on each card. Dere, crack! you lose a fortune, or I do win one! One evening at Garowidsky's I do lose one estate of seventeen million florins, but I no care noting for all dat! I was ver rich, wit my palaces and de mayorat—how you call dat?"

Before this question could be answered, the servant threw open the double door of the *salon*, and announced, "Milordo Norwood!" A shell might have burst in the apartment and not created much more confusion. Mrs. Ricketts gave a look at Martha, as though to assure herself that she was in safety. Poor Martha's own fingers trembled as she bent over her frame. Haggerstone buttoned up his coat and arranged his cravat with the air of a man so consummate a tactician that he could actually roll himself in pitch and yet never catch the odor; while Purvis, whose dread of a duelist exceeded his fear of a mad dog, ensconced himself behind a stand of geraniums, where he resolved to live in a state of retirement until the terrible viscount had withdrawn. As for the count, a preparatory touch at his mustache, and a slight arrangement of his hair, sufficed him to meet anything; and as these were the ordinary details of his daily toilet, he performed them with a rapidity quite instinctive.

To present one's self in a room where one's appearance is unacceptable is, perhaps, no slight test of tact, manner, and effrontery; to be actually indifferent to the feelings around is to be insensible to the danger; to see the peril, and yet appear not to notice it, constitutes the true line of action. Lord Norwood was perfect in this piece of performance, and there was neither exaggerated cordiality nor any semblance of constraint in his manner as he advanced to Mrs. Ricketts, and, taking her hand, pressed it respectfully to his lips.

"This salutation," said he, gaily, "is a commission from Lord Kennycroft, your old and constant admirer. It was his last word as we parted: 'Kiss Mrs. Ricketts's hand for me, and say I am faithful as ever.'"

"Poor dear lord! General, here is Lord Norwood come to see us."

"How good of him—how very kind! Just arrived from the East, my lord?" said he, shaking Foglass by the hand in mistake.

"No, sir; from Malta." He wouldn't say England, for reasons. "Miss Ricketts,

I am most happy to see you—and still occupied with the fine arts? Haggy, how d'ye do? Really it seems to me like yesterday since I sat here last in this delightful arm-chair, and looked about me on all these dear familiar objects. You've varnished the Correggio, I think?"

"The Vandyke, my lord."

"To be sure—the Vandyke. How stupid I am! Indeed, Lady Foxington said that not all your culture would ever make anything of me."

"How is Charlotte?" asked Mrs. Ricketts—this being the familiar for Lady F.

"Just as you saw her last. Thinner, perhaps, but looking admirably."

"And the dear duke—how is he?"

"Gouty—always gouty—but able to be about."

"I am so glad to hear it. It is so refreshing to talk of old friends."

"They are always talking of you. I'm sure 'Zoe'—forgive me the liberty—Zoe Ricketts is an authority on every subject of taste and literature."

"How did you come here, my lord?" whispered Haggerstone.

"The new opera broke down, and there is no house open before twelve," was the hasty reply.

"Is Jemima married, my lord?"

"No. There's something or other wrong about the settlements. Who's the foreigner, Haggy?"

"A Pole. Petrolaffsky."

"No, no—not a bit of it. *I* know him," said the other, rapidly; then, turning to Mrs. Ricketts, he grew warmly interested in the private life and adventures of the nobility, for all of whom she entertained a most catholic affection.

It was, indeed, a grand field-day for the peerage; even to the "pensioners" all were under arms. It was a review such as she rarely enjoyed, and certainly she "improved the occasion." She scattered about her noble personages with the profusion of a child strewing wild-flowers. There were dukes she had known from their cradles; marchionesses with whom she had disported in childhood; earls and viscounts who had been her earliest playmates; not to speak of a more advanced stage in her history, when all these distinguished individuals were suppliants and suitors. To listen to her you would swear that she had never played shuttlecock with anything under an earl, nor trundled a hoop with aught below a lord-in-waiting! Norwood fooled her to the top of her bent. To use his own phrase, "he left her easy hazards, and everything on the balls." It is needless to state that, in such pleasant converse, she had no memory for the noble viscount's own trans gressions. He might have robbed the exchequer, or stolen the crown jewels, for anything that she could recollect; and when, by seeming accident, he did allude to Newmarket, and lament his most "unlucky book," she smiled complacently, as though to say that he could afford himself even the luxury of being ruined and not care for it.

"Florence is pretty much as it used to be, I suppose," said he; "and one really needs one's friends to rebut and refute foolish rumors, when they get abroad. Now, you'll oblige me by contradicting, if you ever hear, this absurd story. I neither did win forty thousand from the Duke of Stratton, nor shoot him in a duel for non-payment."—Both these derelictions were invented on the moment.—"You'll hear fifty other similar offenses laid to my charge; and I trust to you and the Onslows for the refutation. In fact, it is the duty of one's own class to defend 'their order.'"

Mrs. Ricketts smiled blandly, and bowed—bowed as though her gauze turban had been a coronet, and the tinsel finery jeweled strawberry leaves! To be coupled with the Onslows in the defense of a viscount was a proud thought. What if it might be made a grand reality!

"*A propos* of the Onslows, my lord," said she, insidiously, "you are very intimate with them. How is it that we have seen so little of each other? Are we not congenial spirits?"

"Good heavens! I thought you were like sisters. There never were people so made for each other. All your tastes, habits, associations—forgive me, if I say your very antipathies—are alike; for you both are unforgiving enemies of vulgarity. Depend upon it, there has been some underhand influence at work. Rely on't, that evil tongues have kept you apart." This he said in a whisper, and with a sidelong glance towards where Haggerstone sat at *écarté* with the Pole.

"Do you really think so?" asked she, reddening with anger, as she followed the direction of his eyes.

"I can hit upon no other solution of the mystery," said he, thoughtfully; "but know it I will, and must. You know, of course, that they can't endure him?"

"No, I never heard that."

"It is not mere dislike, it is actual detestation. I have striven to moderate the feeling. I have said, 'True enough, the man is bad "ton," but you needn't admit him to anything like intimacy. Let him

come and go with the herd you receive at your large parties, and, above all, never repeat anything after him, for he has always the vulgar version of every incident in high life.'"

Mrs. Ricketts raised her arched eyebrows and looked astonished, but it was a feeling in which acquiescence was beautifully blended; and the viscount marked it well.

"You must tell me something of this Miss Dalton," said he, drawing his chair closer; "they affect a kind of mystery about her. Who is she? What is she?"

"There are various versions of her story abroad," said Mrs. Ricketts, who now spoke like the Chief Justice delivering a charge. "Some say that she is a natural daughter of Sir Stafford's; some aver that she is the last of a distinguished family, whose fortune was embezzled by the Onslows; others assert that she is a half-sister of Lady Hester's own; but who ought to know the truth better than you, my lord?"

"I know absolutely nothing. She joined them in Germany, but where, when, and how, I never heard."

"I'll soon be able to inform you, my lord, on every detail of the matter," said she, proudly. "Our kind friend yonder, Mr. Foglass, has undertaken to discover everything. Mr. F.—will you touch his arm for me, Martha?" and, the gentleman, being aroused to consciousness, now arose and approached Mrs. Ricketts's chair—"may I be permitted to take a glance at your note-book?" This speech was accompanied by a pantomimic gesture which he quickly understood. "I wish to show you, my lord," said she, addressing the viscount, "that we proceed most methodically in our searches after title, as I sometimes call it—ha! ha! ha! Now, here is the precious little volume, and this will explain the degree of accuracy such an investigation demands. This comes of living abroad, my lord," added she, with a smile. "One can never be too cautious—never too guarded in one's intimacies! The number of dubious people one meets with—the equivocal characters that somehow obtain a footing in society——Here, I really must ask you to decipher these ingenious hieroglyphics yourself." And she handed the book to his lordship.

He took it courteously at the spot she opened it, and, as his eyes fell upon the page, a slight—very slight—flush rose to his cheek, while he continued to read the lines before him more than once over. "Very explicit, certainly!" said he, while a smile of strange meaning curled his lip; and then, closing the book, he returned it to the lady's hand; not, however, before he had adroitly torn out the page he had been looking at, and which contained the following words: "Norwood's affair—the precise story of the N. M. business—if cut in England, and scratched at the 'Whip.'"

"I cannot sufficiently commend either your caution or your tact, Mrs. Ricketts," said he, bowing urbanely; "without a little scrutiny of this kind, our *salons* would be overrun with blacklegs and bad characters!"

It was now late—late enough for Lady Hester—and the viscount rose to take his leave. He was perfectly satisfied with the results of his visit. He had secretly enjoyed all the absurdities of his hostess, and even stored up some of her charming flights for repetition elsewhere; he had damaged Haggerstone, whose evil-speaking he dreaded, and, by impugning his good breeding, had despoiled him of all credit; he had seen the Polish count in a society which, even such as it was, was many degrees above his pretensions, and, although they met without recognition, a masonic glance of intelligence had passed between them; and, lastly, he had made an ally of the dear Zoe herself, ready to swear to his good character, and vouch for the spotless honor of all his dealings on turf or card-table.

"Has he explained the Newmarket affair, madam?" said Haggerstone, as the door closed on the viscount's departure.

"Perfectly, colonel; there is not the shadow of a suspicion against him."

"And so he was not scr-scr-scratched at the 'Whip'?" cried Purvis, emerging from his leafy retreat.

"Nothing of the kind, Scroope."

"A scratch, but not a wound, perhaps," said Haggerstone, with a grin of malice.

"I am ver happy—please ver moosh," said the count, "for de sake of de order. I am republiquecain, but never forget I'm de noble blood!"

"Beautiful sentiment!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, enthusiastically. "Martha, did you hear what the count said? General, I hope you didn't lose it?"

"I was alway for de cause of de people," said the count, throwing back his hair wildly, and seeming as if ready to do battle at a moment's warning.

"For an anti-monarchist, he turns up the king wonderfully often at *écarté*," said Haggerstone, in a low muttering, only overheard by Martha.

"I don't think the demo-demo-demo——" But before Purvis had finished his polysyllabic word, the company had time

to make their farewell speeches and depart; indeed, as the servant came to extinguish the lamps, he found the patient Purvis very red in the face, and with other signs of excitement, deeply seated in a chair, and as if struggling against an access of suffocation.

What the profound sentiment which he desired to enunciate might therefore be, is lost to history, and this true narrative is unable to record.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE VISCOUNT'S VISION.

When Lord Norwood arrived at the Mazzarini Palace, he was surprised not to find the usual half-dozen carriages of the *habitués* drawn up in the court-yard, and still more so to learn that her ladyship did not receive that evening. He ascended to George Onslow's apartment, and discovered that he had dined with Prince Midchekoff, and not yet returned. Not knowing how to spend the hours, so much earlier than those of his usually retiring to rest, he lighted a cigar, and threw himself on a sofa before the fire.

The reveries of men who live much in the world are seldom very agreeable; the work of self-examination comes with a double penalty when it is rarely exercised, and the heavy arrears of time are formidable scores to confront. Lord Norwood was no exception to this theory. Not that he was one to waste time or temper in self-reproaches. The bygone was essentially with him the "irrevocable." It might, it is true, occasionally suggest a hint for the future, but it never originated a sorrow for the past. His philosophy was a very brief code, and comprised itself in this—"That he didn't think well of himself, but thought worse of all others." All that he had seen of life was duplicity, falsehood, selfishness and treachery. In different stations these characteristics took different forms; and what was artfully cloaked in courtesy by the lord, was displayed in all its naked deformity by the plebeian.

He might have conducted himself respectably enough had he been rich—at least he fervently believed so—but he was poor, and therefore driven to stratagems to maintain his position in society. Cheated by his guardians and neglected by his tutor, he was sent into the world half-ruined and wholly ignorant, to become at first a victim, and afterwards the victimizer. With no spirit of retributive vengeance—there was nothing of reprisal in his line of conduct—he simply thought that such was the natural and inevitable course of events, and that every man begins as dupe and ends as knave. The highest flight of the human mind, in his esteem, was successful hypocrisy; and although without the plastic wit or the actual knowledge of life which are required well to sustain a part, he had contrived to impose upon a very large number of persons who looked up to his rank; for, strange enough, many who would not have been duped by a commoner fell easy victims to the arts of "my lord."

The value of his title he understood perfectly. He knew everything it could, and everything it could not, do for him. He was aware that the aristocracy of England will stand by one of their order through many vicissitudes; and that he who is born to a coronet has a charmed life, in circumstances where one less noble must perish ingloriously. He knew, too, how, for very shame's sake, they would screen one of themselves, and by a hundred devices seem to contradict before the world what they lament over behind its back; and, lastly, he knew well that he had always a title and a lineage to bestow, and that the peerage was the great prize among the daughters of men.

Now, latterly, he had been pushing prerogative somewhat too far; he had won large sums from young men not out of their teens; he had been associated in play transactions with names less than reputable; and, finally, having backed a stable to an immense amount at Newmarket, had levanted on the day of his losing. He had done the act deliberately and calmly. It was a *coup* which, if successful, replaced him in credit and affluence; if a failure, it only confirmed the wavering judgment of his set, and left him to shift for the future in a different sphere; for, while a disgraced viscount is very bad company for viscounts, he is often a very welcome guest amongst that amiable, innocent class who think the privileges of the aristocracy include bad morals with blue ribbons.

The turf could now no longer be a career with him. *Écarté* and *lansquenet* were almost as much out of the question. Billiards, as Sir Walter said of literature, "might be a walking-stick, but never a crutch." There was, then, nothing left for it but marriage. A rich heiress was his last *coup*, and as, in all likelihood, the thing could not be done twice, it required great circumspection.

In England this was easy enough. The manufacturing districts were grown ambi-

tious. Cotton lord were desirous of a more recognized nobility; and millowners could be found ready to buy a coronet at the cost of half their fortune. But from England late events had banished him, and with a most damaged reputation.

Now, carrying nobility to the continent was like bringing coals to Newcastle, the whole length and breadth of the land being covered with counts, barons, dukes and princes; and although English nobility stands on a different footing, there was no distinguishing the "real article" amid this mass of counterfeit.

Every Frenchman of small fortune was an *émigré* count; every German, of none, was sure to be a baron; all Poles, unwashed, uncombed and uncared for, were of the very cream of the aristocracy; and as for Italians! it was a nation of princes, with their uncles all cardinals. To be a viscount in such company was, perhaps, like Lord Castlereagh's unstarred coat, *plus distingué,* but certainly more modest. The milor, if not associated with boundless wealth, six carriages, two couriers, three cooks, and a groom of the chambers, the whole of the "Russie," or the "Black Eagle," means nothing abroad; if not bound up with all the extravagance and all the eccentricities of riches, if not dazzling by display or amazing by oddity, it is a contradiction of terms; and to be an English noble without waste, profusion and absurdity, is to deny your country or be a counterfeit of your class.

Lord Norwood knew and felt all these things. They had often occupied his speculations and engaged his thoughts; so that, if his mind reverted to them now, it was to regard them as facts for future theory to build upon, as mathematicians make use of the proofs of geometry without going over the steps which lead to conviction. No; all his present reflections took a practical form, and might be summed up in the one resolve, "I must go no further. I have done everything that a man dare do—perhaps a little more—and yet keep his footing in the world." That tacit verdict of "not proven," which had been passed upon so many of his actions, might at any moment be reversed now: and a review of his life's career presented anything but a bright retrospect. Expulsion from a great school at thirteen: three years' private dissipation and secret wickedness in a clergyman's family; a dissolute regiment, from which he was given leave to sell out at Malta; two years with the Legion, or Don Carlos, it mattered not which, in Spain; a year or so in London, with a weak attempt at reformation; a staff appointment in India obtained and sold; exposure partly hushed up; debts; Jews; renewals; the fleet; the bankruptcy court; a few disreputable duels; an action for seduction; ending with the last affair at Newmarket, made up the grand outline, the details comprising various little episodes with which we must not trouble ourselves.

One incident, however, would come up prominently before his lordship's mind, and, however little given to let the past usurp the thoughts which should be given to the present, it still insisted upon sharing his attention. This was no less than a little love affair in Spain with a "ballerina" of the opera, with whom, by the aid of a young priest then studying at Saragossa, he had contracted a mock marriage. The sudden movement of a corps of the army to which he was attached gave him an opportunity of an easy divorce from his bride, and it is likely he had not twice thought of her since the event had happened. Now, however, that an intention of marrying in reality occurred to him, the incident came freshly to his mind, and he jocularly wondered if his second marriage might prove more fortunate than his first.

The hour and the place were favorable to reverie. It was past midnight; all was silent and noiseless in the great palace; the sharp ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece was the only sound to be heard, save, at a long distance off, the dull, subdued flow of the Arno. The room itself, unlighted, except by the flickering wood-fire, was in deep shadow; and, lulled by these influences and his mild "Manilla," Norwood was free to revel in so much of dreamland as natures like his ever explore.

Who can tell whether men of this stamp know what it is to "grieve"—whether chagrin for some momentary disappointment, anger at being thwarted, is not the nearest approach to sorrow that they ever feel? The whole course of their lives seems opposed to the notion of deep or intense feeling, and the restless activity of their ingenious minds appears to deny the possibility of regrets. As for Norwood, he would have laughed at the puerility of going over the bygone; therefore, if he did recur to a former incident of his life, it was involuntarily and probably induced by the accidental similarity with those which now engaged his thoughts.

"If this Dalton girl be rich," thought he, "I might do worse. There are no relatives to make impertinent inquiries, or ask awkward questions. Hester can, and must, if I desire, assist me. Living out of England, the girl herself will have heard noth-

ing of my doings, and in name, appearance and air, she is presentable anywhere." He thought, too, that, as a married man, his character would be in a measure rehabilitated. It would be like entering on a new road in life; and if this could be done with a certain degree of style and outlay, he had great trust in the world's charity and forgiveness to pardon all the past. "A good house and a good cook," thought he, "are the best witnesses to call to character I have ever met. Turtle and champagne have proved sovereign remedies for slander in all ages; and the man who can sport Lafitte in the evening, and split a pencil at twenty paces of a morning, may defy envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitableness."

To find out about this girl's fortune was, then, his first object. As for family, his own rank was enough for both. The matter must be done quickly. The London season over, England would be pouring its myriads of talking, gossiping travelers over the continent, and then he should be discussed—probably avoided and shunned, too.

Even already certain unmistakable signs of coolness announced themselves amongst the men of his acquaintance. George Onslow avoided play when in his company. Treviliani, one of Lady Hester's chief danglers, and the patron of the turf in Tuscany, wouldn't even allude to a horse before him. Prince Midchekoff went further, and actually, save on rare occasions, omitted him from his dinner list. Now, although Norwood averred that he detested "*petit jeu*," hated spooney talk about racing, and dreaded the tiresome display of a "Tartar feast," these were all threatening indications, and he saw their meaning. He would willingly have fastened upon some one man—fixed a quarrel on him and shot him. He had more than once in life adopted this policy with success; but here it would have been inapplicable, and the public opinion he sought to bring on his own side would have been only more inevitably arrayed against him.

"In what a mess does the want of money involve a man!" thought he, as he lay before the half-dying embers of the wood fire. "Had I won my bets on 'Chanticleer,' or had I backed 'Amontillado,' how different had been my position to-day! That the simple change of one name for another in my betting-book—the mere hazard of a choice—of a horse, too—should influence a man's whole life, is a pretty fair instance of what the world is! Had I 'come right,' I should now be the favored guest of some noble duke, shooting his grace's pheasants, drinking his Burgundy, and flirting with his daughters. Fortune willed it otherwise, and here I am, actually plotting a match with a nameless girl to rescue myself from utter ruin. Three weeks ago I would not have believed this could happen; and who can tell what another three weeks may bring forth?—perhaps already there is mischief brewing. What if my lady's refusal to receive this evening may have some signification in it? Haggerstone is too courteous by half, and Jekyl has never called upon me since my arrival!" He laughed ironically as he said this, and added, "It is a bold game after all for *them* to play! Reprisals—to two of them at least—might prove awkward; and as for 'Master Albert,' he lives but on general sufferance! There has been a long run of luck against me—nothing but ill-fortune since the day I might have married Hester, and yet hung back, and that very same year she marries another, and inherits an immense fortune in India. What a blow to each of us! Such has been my lot through life; always backing the loser till the very moment when luck changes, and his turn comes to win."

As these thoughts passed through his mind, weariness, the silence of the hour, the darkened room, induced slumber; and although once or twice he made a half-effort to arouse himself and go home, the listless feeling gained the mastery, and he dropped off to sleep. The uneasy consciences have oftentimes very easy slumbers. Norwood's was of the calmest: not a dream, not one flitting fancy disturbed it.

It was already nigh day as he lay thus, when the dull roll of wheels beneath the window in part awoke him; at least, it so far aroused him that he remembered where he was, and fancied that it might be George Onslow, on the return from his dinner-party. He lay for some minutes expecting to hear his step upon the stair, and see him enter the room; but as all seemed to resume its wonted quiet, he was dozing off again, when he heard the sound of a hand upon the lock of the door.

It is one of the strange instincts of half-slumber to be often more alive to the influence of subdued and stealthy sounds than to louder noise. The slightest whisperings, the low murmurings of a human voice, the creaking of a chair, the cautious drawing back of a curtain, will jar upon and arouse the faculties that have been insensible to the rushing flow of a cataract, or the dull booming of the sea.

Slight as were the sounds now heard, Norwood started as he listened to them,

and, at once rousing himself, he fixed his eyes upon the door, in which the handle was seen to turn slowly and cautiously. The first impression that it was a robber immediately occurred to him, and he determined to lie still and motionless, to watch what might happen. He was not wanting in personal courage, and had full confidence in his strength and activity.

The door at last opened ; at first, a very little and slowly, then gradually more and more, till, by the mysterious half-light to which his eyes had grown accustomed, Norwood could see the flounces of a female dress, and the small, neat foot of a woman beneath it. The faint, uncertain flame of the fire showed him thus much, but left the remainder of the figure in deep shadow.

Whether from excess of caution, or that she was yet hesitating what course to take, she remained for some seconds motionless, and Norwood, who had subdued his breathing to the utmost, lay in the deep shadow speculating on the upshot of an adventure from which he promised himself at least an amusing story. The deep black lace which fell over the arched instep indicated a degree of rank in the wearer that gave a piquancy to the incident, and imparted a zest to the curiosity of a man who probably knew no higher pleasure in life than in possessing the secrets of his acquaintance.

He had time to run over in his mind a dozen little speculations of who she was, ere she stirred; and at last, as if with change of purpose, he saw, or fancied that he saw, the door begining slowly to close. Whether this was a mere trick of his excited imagination, or not, a sudden gesture of impatience on his part threw down one of the cushions of the sofa. A slight shriek —so slight as to be barely heard—broke from the female, and she banged the door to. Norwood reached it with a spring ; but although, as he wrenched it open, he could yet hear the rustling of a woman's dress in the passage, the sharp sound of a door hastily shut and locked defied all thought of pursuit, and he stood pondering over what had happened, and almost doubtful of its reality.

"At least the fair visitor belongs to the family ; that much I may rely upon," said he, as he lighted a candle to explore the locality a little closer. The corridor, however, abruptly stopped at a small door, which was locked on the inside, but to what portion of the house it led he could not even conjecture. He was not a very unlikely man to trace the clue of such an adventure as this seemed to be. It was one of those incidents with which his course of life had made him somewhat conversant; and few were better able to fill up from conjecture every blank of such a history. Nor was he one to shrink from any suspicion, no matter how repugnant to every thought of honor, nor how improbable to every mind less imbued with vice than his own.

For a moment or two, however, he almost doubted whether the whole might not have been a dream, so sudden, so brief, so trackless did it all appear. This doubt was, however, quickly resolved, as his eyes fell upon the floor, where a small fragment of a lace dress lay, as it was caught and torn off in the closing door. Norwood took it up, and sat down to examine it with attention.

"Point d'Alençon," said he, "bespeaks no vulgar wearer; and such is this! Who could have thought of George Onslow playing Lothario! But this comes of Italy. And now to find her out." He ran over to himself half a dozen names, in which were nearly as many nationalities, but some doubt accompanied each. "No matter," thought he, "the secret will keep."

He suddenly remembered at the instant that he had promised an acquaintance to pass some days with him in the Maremma, shooting; and, not sorry to have so good a reason for a few days' absence, he arose and set out towards his hotel, having first carefully placed within his pocket-book the little fragment of lace—a clue to a mystery he was resolved to explore hereafter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK'S JOURNEY.

Our readers may, ere this, have surmised that Frank Dalton's career as a soldier was neither very adventurous nor exciting, since otherwise we should scarcely have so nearly forgotten htm. When he parted with Hanserl to pursue his journey, his heart was full of warring and conflicting emotions, love of home, and hope of future distinction, alternately swaying him; so that, while his affections drew him ever backwards, his ambitions urged him to go on.

"I could have been so happy to have lived with them," thought he, "even as a peasant lives—a life of daily toil. I would have asked for no higher fortune than that peaceful home we had made for ourselves

by our own affections—the happy fireside, that sufficed us for all the blandishments of wealth and riches. Still there would have been something ignoble in this humility—something that would ill become my blood as a Dalton. It was not thus my ancestors understood their station—it was not with such lowly ambitions *their* hearts were stirred. Count Stephen himself might at this hour have been in obscurity and poverty—as great, perhaps, as our own—had he been thus minded; and now he is a field-marshal, with a 'Maria Teresa' cross on his breast! and this without one friend to counsel or to aid him! What a noble service is that where merit can win its way self-sustained and independent—where, without the indignity of a patron, the path of honorable enterprise lies free and open to all! What generous promptings, what bold aspirations such a career engenders! He shall not be ashamed of me—he shall not have to blush for the Dalton blood," said the boy, enthusiastically; and he reveled in a dream of the old count's ecstasy, on finding a nephew so worthy of their name, and in his fancy he saw pictures of future scenes in which he figured. All of these had the same rose tint; for while in some he imagined himself winning the high rewards of great achievements, in others he was the caressed and flattered guest of rank and beauty. "To think that I should once have been thus!" cried he, laughing at the conceit, "trudging along the high road with a knapsack on my shoulder, like a Bursch in his 'Wander-jahre;'" and then he vowed to himself that he would have a picture taken of his humble guise as first he started in life, to hang up at some future day beside the decorated soldier he was yet to be.

Selfishness can wear many a mask. Sometimes it can array itself in features almost noble—more often its traits are of the very meanest. Frank's egotism was of the former kind. He wanted to attain distinction by an honorable path—he would not have stooped to any other. He was ready to do, or dare, all for greatness. No peril could deter, no danger could daunt, him; but yet was he totally deficient in that greatest element of success—that patient discipline of the mind which, made up of humility and confidence, can wait and bide its time, earning the prizes of life before it claim them. His pride of family, however, was his greatest blemish, since it suggested a false notion of distinction—a pretension so groundless, that, like a forged bank-note, it was sure to involve even the bearer in disgrace.

So full was he of himself and his own future, that he took but little note of the way as he went. Avoiding, from a sense of pride, to associate with the "traveling youths," as they are called, he walked along from early morning to late evening, alone and companionless. It was mostly a dreary and uninteresting road, either leading through dark and gloomy pine forests, or over great plains of swampy surface, where the stubble of the tall maize, or the stunted vines, were the only traces of vegetation. As he drew near the Tyrol, however, the great mountains came in sight, while the continual ascent told that he was gradually reaching the land of glaciers and snow-peaks. Day by day he found the road less and less frequented: these lonely districts were little resorted to by the wandering apprentices, so that frequently Frank did not meet a single traveler from day-dawn till night. Perhaps he felt little regret at this, leaving him, as it did, more time for those day-dreams in which he loved to revel. Now and then, some giant mountain, glittering in the sun; or some dark gorge, thousands of feet below him, would chase away his reverie, and leave him, for a time, in a half-bewildered and wondering astonishment; but his thoughts soon resumed their old track, and he would plod along, staff in hand, as before.

Walking from before daybreak to a late hour of the evening, Frank frequently accomplished in his day's journey as many miles as the traveler who, by post, only spent the few hours of midday on the road; in fact, he might have thus measured his speed had he been less wrapped up in his own fancies, since, for several days, a calèche, drawn by three post-horses, had regularly passed him on the road, and always about the same hour.

Frank saw nothing of this; and when, on a bright and frosty day he began the ascent of the Arlberg, he little knew that the carriage, about half a mile in front, had been his traveling companion for the past week. Disdaining to follow the winding high-road, Frank ascended by those foot-tracks which gain upon the zig-zags, and thus soon was miles in advance of the calèche. At last he reached the half-way point of ascent, and was glad to rest himself for a few minutes on one of the benches which German thoughtfulness for the wayfarer never neglects to place in suitable spots. A low parapet, of a couple of feet, separated the road from a deep and almost perpendicular precipice, at the foot of which, above two thousand feet beneath, stood the village of Stuben. There, was

the little chapel in which he had his morning's mass—there, the little platz, where he had seen the post-horses getting ready for the travelers; there, too, the little fountain, covered over with a shed of straw, and glistening with many an icicle in the bright sun. The very voices of the people reached him where he sat; and the sounds of a street-organ floated upwards through the still atmosphere. It was a scene of peaceful isolation, such as would have pleased Nelly's fancy. It was like one of those "Dorfs" she herself had often carved to amuse a winter's evening, and Frank's eyes filled up as he thought of her and of home.

The sound of feet upon the snow suddenly roused him, and, on looking round, Frank saw a traveler slowly coming up the pass. His dress at once proclaimed that he was not a pedestrian save from choice, and was merely sauntering along in advance of his carriage. In the mere cursory glance Frank bestowed upon him he could see that he was a young and handsome man, with a certain soldierlike bearing in his air that well suited his bold but somewhat stern features.

"You journey well, young fellow," said he, addressing Frank familiarly. "This is the fifth day we have been fellow-travelers; and although I have post-horses, you have always kept up with me on your feet."

Frank touched his cap with a somewhat stiff courtesy at this unceremonious address; and, without deigning a reply, employed himself in arranging the straps of his knapsack.

"Are you a soldier?" asked the stranger.

"A cadet!" replied Frank as bluntly.

"In what regiment, may I ask?"

"The Franz Carl."

"Ah! my own old corps," said the other, gayly. "I served four years with them in the Banat. From what part of the empire are you—you haven't the accent of an Austrian?"

"I am an Irishman."

"Oh! that explains it. And your name?"

"Dalton. And now, sir, what may be yours? for I don't see why this curiosity is to be one-sided," said Frank, with an air even more insolent than the words.

"I am Count Ernest of Walstein," said the other, without a touch of irritation.

"What rank do you hold in the service?" asked Frank, boldly.

"That of lieutenant-colonel, boy."

"And your age may be about thirty?" said Frank, half in question and half in sarcasm.

"I was twenty-eight last August," was the calm reply.

"By Jove! that *is* a service!" exclaimed Frank, "where a man scarcely ten years my senior may command a regiment!"

The other laughed, and after a brief pause, said, "People are in the habit of calling me fortunate, so that you must not suppose my case to be the rule."

"Be it so: even as an exception, the example is a bright one. Another may do what you have done."

"If you mean that I have earned my rank by services, boy," said the count, smiling, "you would make a grave mistake. My promotion had another source."

Frank looked as though he were curious to hear the explanation, but the other gave none.

"How do you call yourself?" asked he of Frank, after a pause.

"Dalton," replied the boy, more respectfully than before.

"We have a field-marshal of that name in the service—a most gallant old soldier, too."

"My grand-uncle!" cried Frank, with enthusiasm.

"Indeed! So you are a grand-nephew to the Graf von Auersberg," said the count, taking a more deliberate view than he had yet bestowed upon him. "Then how comes it you are traveling in this fashion, and on foot?"

"I have not asked you why you journey in a calèche with three horses," said Frank, insolently.

"It's my habit to do so."

"This, then, may be *mine*, sir," said Frank, throwing his knapsack on his shoulder, and preparing to depart.

"Is not the Franz Carl at Vienna?" said the count, not seeming to notice the irritation of his manner.

"I believe so."

"Well, then, as I am going thither, perhaps you will accept of a seat in my calèche?"

There was a frankness in the way this offer was made that suddenly routed the ill-temper Frank had fallen into. No one was less disposed than himself to accept of a favor from a perfect stranger; but the tone and manner of the proffer had, somehow, disarmed it of all appearance of such; and as he stood uncertain what answer to make, the count added: "I'm always lucky. I was just wishing for a traveling companion, and fortune has thrown us into acquaintanceship."

"I don't know—I can scarcely tell," said Frank, hesitating, "how or what to answer."

"You forget that we are comrades, Dalton—or shall be, at least, in another day or two," said the count, familiarly; "so step in, and no more about it."

The calèche had drawn up as he spoke, and the courier stood, cap in hand, beside the door, so that Frank had no time for any but an abrupt refusal, and *that* he could not give: he therefore bowed his head, and sprang in. The door was slammed sharply to, and the next moment the horses were rattling along over the snow, the merry bells of the harness jingling pleasantly as they went.

Probably no two beings could present a much stronger contrast than the two who now journeyed along side by side. The one, rich, highly placed, and distinguished with every gift of fortune at his command, and yet pleasure-sick, weary, and discontented; the other, poor, and almost friendless, full of hope, and ardent with all the buoyancy of youth. The count was as jaded and tired of life as the cadet was eager to enjoy it. Notwithstanding, perhaps we should rather say in virtue of, these strong contrarieties, they made admirable traveling companions, and the road slipped away unconsciously to each.

At Innspruck they halted for a day or two, and Frank accompanied his new friend to the cafés and theaters, mingling in the throng of those whose life is a round of easy dissipation. It is true that, to conform by dress and demeanor with these, Frank was obliged to spend the golden coins of Nelly's purse; louis after louis went in some one extravagance or another—sacrifices that cost him many a pang, but which, from pride, he bore up against with seeming indifference. Walstein presented him everywhere as the nephew of the old Field-Marshal von Auersberg; and as nothing was more common than to see a young cadet dispensing the most lavish sums, with equipages, liveries, and servants, none seemed surprised that the youth should indulge in these habits and tastes of extravagance. His very enjoyment seemed like an earnest of being long habituated to these modes of life, for whether he played or drank, or in whatever excesses he mingled, there was ever the same joyous spirit; and Frank Dalton had all the outward signs of a youth rich in every accident of fortune. At first, thoughts of his humble home, and of those by whose sacrifices he was enabled to indulge in such costly pleasures, would cross his mind, and, what between shame and sorrow, he felt degraded and debased before himself; but, by degrees, the levity of action induced, as it ever will do, the levity of thinking; and he suffered himself to believe that "he was no worse than others." A more fatal philosophy than this, youth never adopted; and he who seeks a low standard rarely stops till he falls beneath even that. Frank's pride of family made him vain, and his vanity made him credulous; he, therefore, implicitly believed all that his new companions told him, the familiar "thee and thou" of "camaraderie" giving an air of friendship to all the flatteries.

"Were I a nephew of a field-marshal, like thee, I'd not serve in an infantry corps. I'd be in the Lichtenstein Hussars, or the Lancers of the Kaiser," said one.

"So he will," cried another. "Dalton only joined the Franz Carl to get his promotion quickly. Once at Vienna, he will be an officer, and ready to exchange his regiment."

"Old Auersberg can make thee what he will, lad," said a third. "He might have been Minister of War himself if he had liked it. The Emperor Franz loved him as a brother."

"And he is rich, too; no one knows how rich," broke in a fourth. "He commanded for many years on the Turkish frontier, in those good days when our Grenzers used to make forays upon the villages, and every Pashalic paid its blackmail for peace' sake."

"Thou art a lucky dog, Dalton, to find thy promotion and an inheritance thus secured to thee."

"When thou hast a regiment, lad, don't forget us poor devils here, that have no uncles in the 'Maria Teresa' category.

"I'd lay my life on't, that he is a colonel before I become Rittmeister," said a young lieutenant of dragoons, "and I have had five years' hard service in Gallicia and Servia."

"And why not?" broke in Count Walstein, who sat silently, up to this, smoking his meerschaum in a corner. "Has the empire lost its aristocratic character? Are not birth and blood to have their claims, as of old?"

This speech met a ready acceptance, for the company consisted of those who either were, or affected to be, of noble extraction.

"How our fathers deceive themselves in trying to deceive us!" said a young Hungarian cadet. "I, too, was sent off to join my regiment on foot. Just fancy—to walk from Arad to Presburg! I, that never went twenty miles in my life save on the saddle! They fitted me with my knap-

sack—just such a thing as Dalton's. I suppose about as many florins jingled in my purse as in his. They gave me their blessing and a map of the road, with each day's journey marked out upon it. And how far did I go afoot, thinkst thou?—two miles and a half. There I took an 'Eil Bauer,' with four good horses and a wicker calèche, and we drove our sixty, sometimes seventy, miles a day. Each night we put up at some good country house or other—Honyadi's—Ctzyscheny's—Palfi's; all lay on the road, and I found out about fifty cousins I never knew of before, and made a capital acquaintance, too, the Prince Paul of Ettlingen, who, owning a regiment of light dragoons, took me into his corps, and when I joined them at Leutmeritz, I was already an officer. What stuff it is they preach about economy and thrift! Are we the sons of peasants or petty shopkeepers? It comes well, too, from them in their princely châteaux to tell us that we must live like common soldiers. So that, while yesterday, as it were, I sat at a table covered with silver, and drank my Tokay from a Venetian glass, to-morrow I must put up with sour Melniker, or, mayhap, Bavarian beer, with black bread and a sausage to help it down! Our worthy progenitors knew better in their own younger days, or we should not have so many debts and mortgages on our estates—eh, Walstein?"

"I suppose the world is pretty much alike, in every age," said the count, laughing. "It now and then takes a virtuous fit, and affects to be better than it used to be; but I shrewdly suspect that the only difference is in the hypocritical pretension. When I entered the service—and it is not so many years ago that I cannot recollect it—the cant was, to resemble that rough school of the days of old Frederick and Maria Teresa. Trenck's 'Pandours,' with their scarlet breeches stuffed into their wide boot-tops, were the mode; and to wear your moustache to your shoulders—to cry 'Bey'm Henker!' and 'Alle Blitzen!' every moment, were the veritable types of the soldier. Now we have changed all that. We have the Anglomania of English grooms and equipages, top-boots, curricles, hurdle races, champagne suppers. Dalton will be the 'ton' in his regiment, and any extravagance he likes to launch into certain to have its followers."

The youth blushed deeply; partly in conscious pride at the flattery, partly in the heartfelt shame at its inappropriateness to himself; and even the sincerity with which his comrades drank his health could not drown the self-reproaches he was suffering under.

"Thou art an only son, too, Dalton," said another. "What favors fortune will shower upon one happy fellow! Here am I, one of seven; and, although my father is a Count of the Empire, four of us have to take service in the infantry."

"What of that?" said a dark-complexioned fellow, whose high cheek-bones and sharp underjaw bespoke a Pole. "I am a second-lieutenant in the regiment my grandfather raised and equipped at his own cost; and if I were to lose a thousand pounds at 'lansquenet' to-morrow I'd be broke, like the meanest 'Bursch' in the corps."

"It's better to be a rich Englander," cried one.

"And with a field-marshal for a grand-uncle!" chimed in another.

"And a 'Maria Teresa' to ask for thy grade as officer," said a third.

"It's a jolly service to all of us," said a young Bohemian, who, although but a cadet, was a prince, with a princely fortune. "I ask for nothing but a war to make it the best life going."

"A war with whom?" cried several together.

"What care I with whom or where! With Prussia, if you will, to fight out our old scores about Franconia; with Russia, if you like better, for the Danubian provinces, and her Servian supremacy; with France—she's always ready, with a cause or without one; with Italy—to round off our frontier, and push our limits to the Apennines; I'd say with England, only Dalton mightn't like it."

"And where would you pick your quarrel with England?" said Frank, laughing.

"Easily enough—through our ambassador at the Porte, or some outlying station, where Russia is her rival."

"Hang your politics," broke in a Hungarian. "Let us fight when the time comes, but not bother our heads about the cause. I'd rather take my chance of a sabre-cut any day than addle my brains with too much thought. Here's to you, Dalton—mayst soon be a Rittmeister of hussars, lad: a prouder thing thou needst not ask for."

"Thou shalt give us a jolly supper at the 'Schwan,' Dalton, when we meet at Vienna," said another.

"And we'll pledge those fair sisters of thine—and they're both handsome, I'll be sworn—in the best Tokay Palfi's vineyard can yield."

"My regiment will be in garrison, in the

Leopoldstadt, next month, and I'll remind thee of this pledge."

"And we shall be at Lintz," broke in another; "and thou mayst reckon on me, if I have to suffer an arrest for it afterwards."

"So it is agreed, Dalton, we are thy guests. For what day shall it be?"

"Ay, let us name the day," cried several together.

"When he is named an officer," said Walstein. "That will be time enough."

"Nay, nay — the day month after he arrives at Vienna," cried the Bohemian. "I have given three breakfasts and five suppers on the occasion of my promotion, and the promotion has never come yet."

"The day month after I arrive, then, be it," said Dalton. "We meet at—where is it?"

"The 'Schwan,' lad—the first *restaurant* of Europe. Let men talk as they will of the Cadran Bleu and the Trois Frères, I'd back Hetzinger's cook against the world; and as for wine, he has Steinkammer at thirty florins the flask! And we'll drink it, too—eh, Dalton? and we'll give a 'Hoch Lebe' to that old grandfather or granduncle of thine. We'll add ten years to his life."

"A poor service to Dalton!" said another; "but here come Walstein's horses, and now for a last glass together before we part."

The parting seemed, indeed, to be "sweet sorrow," for each leave-taking led to one flask more, friendship itself appearing to make wondrous progress as the bottle went round. The third call of the postilion's bugle — a summons that even German loyalty could scarcely have courage to resist —at last cut short the festivities, and Frank once more found himself in the calèche, where at least a dozen hands contested for the last shake of his, and a shower of good wishes mingled with the sounds of the crashing wheels.

"Glorious fellows!" cried Dalton, in an ecstasy of delight; "such comrades are like brothers."

Walstein smiled at the boy's enthusiasm, and lighted his meerschaum in silence; and thus they journeyed, each too full of his own thoughts to care for converse. It was not at such a moment that Dalton could give away to dark or serious reflections; the blandishments and caresses of his new friends were too powerful to admit of any rivalry in his mind; and even when he did revert to thoughts of home, it was to picture to himself his father's pride at seeing him in the society of these high-born youths; of Kate's delight at the degree of notice he attracted; and even Nelly—poor Nelly!—he fancied yielding a gentle, half-reluctant assent to a companionship which, if costly and expensive, was sure to be honorable and high-minded.

"What would Hanserl say, too," thought he, "if he saw me seated at the table with those whose high-sounding names are the pride of Austrian chivalry—the Thuns, the Lichtensteins, the Schwartenschilds, and the Walsteins—families old as the Hapsburgs themselves? Little Hanserl, to whom these glorious families were the great lights of history—oh, if he could have set eyes on me this last evening, when, with arms around my neck, they called me comrade!" From this he wandered on to thoughts of his uncle, investing the old field-marshal with every noble and soldierlike attribute, and, above all, fancying him as overflowing with affection and kindness. What hosts of questions did he ask about his father and his sisters—how often had he to repeat their names and paint their resemblances, going over the most minute details of family history, and recounting the simplest incidents of their daily life, for "Uncle Stephen would know all."

In such pleasant fancies he fell fast asleep, even in his dreams to carry out those imaginings that, waking, had no control of reason.

Frank Dalton was awaked from a sound sleep and a pleasant dream of home by the hoarse voice of a mounted dragoon, ordering the postilion to halt; and, on looking out, he saw that they were drawn up close beside the angle of the great wooden bridge that crosses the Danube, under the walls of Vienna. The whole scene was one of wonderment and surprise to him. At his feet, as it were, rolled the stream of the rapid Danube; its impetuous flood splashing and foaming amid the fragments of ice floated down from the mountain regions, and which every moment were shivered against the stone breakwaters with the crash of thunder. Beyond the river, rose the fortified walls of the city, covered with a dense multitude of people, eager spectators of a grand military display, which, with all the pomp of war, poured forth beneath the dark archway of the entrance-gate, and, winding over the "glacis," crossed the bridge and held on its course towards the Prater.

It was a clear, bright day of winter, the blue sky almost cloudless, and the sharp outline of every object stood out, crisp and well defined, in the thin atmosphere. Nothing could be more favorable for the effect of

such a spectacle. The bright weapons glanced and glittered like silver—the gay trappings and brilliant uniforms showed in all their splendor—the scarlet lancers, the blue-clad hussars, the cuirassiers, with their towering helmets, vied with each other in soldierlike bearing; while the dense mass of infantry moved along with a surging, waving motion—like a vast sea heaving with a ground-swell. It was an army complete in every detail—for, even to the "ambulances" for the wounded, everything was there!

"A review by the emperor!" said Walstein; "and see, there comes his staff." And he pointed to a group of horsemen, whose waving plumes and floating dolmans were seen at a little distance off in the plain.

"Oh, let us follow them!" cried Frank, enthusiastically. "Such a glorious sight as this I never even imagined."

"You'll see enough—perhaps too many such!" said the count, languidly. "It's a favorite pastime of our old general's to drag us out of quarters in the very depth of winter, and spend a day in the snow of the Prater."

"Who could have a thought for weather or hardship when engaged in such a scene?" said Frank.

"So, evidently, think those worthy field-marshals and generals of division, who, well mounted, and swathed in furs, canter down to the ground, an hour after we have reached it, and ride back again when they have 'taken the salute,' leaving us to plod wearily home, through wet roads and sloppy streets, to our cold barracks. But just the reverse is the opinion of those poor fellows yonder, with blue faces and frost-bitten knuckles, and who have neither pride in this display, nor sympathy with the success of what is called 'a fine manœuvre.'"

Frank shook his head distrustfully. He wished not to credit the opinion, but knew not how to refute it, and was silent.

"That is the 'Franz Carl,' Dalton," said Walstein, pointing to a column of infantry, who, in their dark grey overcoats, seemed a sad-looking, gloomy mass. "They've got the best band and the most savage colonel in the service."

Frank gazed at the regiment with a strange sensation of awe and fear.

"There lies my destiny!" thought he. "Who knows what friendships or enmities await me yonder? What hearts in that dark mass will beat responsively with my own—what sources of sorrow or affliction may I meet with amongst them!"

"I wish thou hadst a better regiment, Dalton," said Walstein.

"How a better? Is it not a brave and distinguished corps?"

"Brave enough," said the other, laughing; "and as for distinction, an archduke owns and commands it. But that is not what I mean. The regiment is a poor one; the officers are from Upper Austria, with little or no fortune—fellows who dine for a zwanziger, play dominoes for two kreutzers, waltz at the wine-gardens, and fight duels with sabers."

Frank laughed at the description; but his laugh had more of gloom than mirth about it, for he felt at every moment the false position he occupied and how inextricably complicated his circumstances were becoming. Every allusion to others showed him in what light he was himself regarded. "Was this deception honorable?—was it possible to continue it?" were the questions that would obtrude upon him, and for which no ingenuity could find answer.

"There's the corps for you, Dalton," said Walstein, drawing his attention to the "Hungarian guard," all glittering with gold embroidery, and mounted upon the most beautiful white chargers—at once the most perfect riders and the best mounted cavalry in Europe. "In that regiment you are certain of being quartered either here or in Prague. Those laced jackets are too costly wear to send down to the Banat, or among the wilds of Wallachia. Besides, the empress likes to see these gaudy fellows on their 'Schimmels' beneath the palace windows. Your uncle will, of course, grumble a little about the cost; perhaps your father, too, will look a little grave when he hears of six thousand florins for a 'dolman,' and four for a 'schabrach;' while ten or twelve horses—the very least you could keep—would scarcely sound like a moderate stable. Still, depend upon it, the corps is as good for service as it is costly, and Creptowitz, their colonel, is a true hussar."

For a moment Dalton hesitated whether he should not make the honest avowal of his narrow fortune, and tell that he had no pretension to such habits of cost and expense; but shame was too powerful to permit the acknowledgment. He had already gone too far to retract, and he felt that any candor now would be the confession of a cheat. If these were harassing and torturing reflections, one flickering ray of hope still glimmered through the gloom; and this was, what he might expect from his uncle. "If he be really rich, as they say," thought Frank—"if his favor be so great

with the emperor—even such a career as this may not be above my prospects." As he revolved these thoughts, he sat with his head buried between his hands, forgetful of where he was and all around him.

"You're losing everything, Dalton," said Walstein. "See, there go the 'Kaiser Jägers,' with their bugles, the finest in the service; and yonder are the Lichtenstein 'light-horse,' mounted on thoroughbred cattle; and there, to the left, those savage-looking fellows with long beards, they are the Croat grenadiers.' But here comes the emperor!" And, as he spoke, one deafening cheer burst forth along the line, and was echoed back from the walls of Vienna; while every band struck up the national hymn of Austria, and the proud notes of "God preserve the emperor!" floated through the air.

A brilliant staff of generals of every arm of the service accompanied the Kaiser; and Walstein ran quickly over the names of these, many of whom were among the first nobility of the empire. Some were the war-worn veterans of the great campaigns; some, the young hopes of Austrian chivalry; but, conspicuous above all, was a figure, whose stature, as well as the singularity of his uniform, attracted Frank's notice. He was a very tall old man, dressed in a uniform of purple velvet slashed with gold, and actually covered with the crosses and decorations of various orders. His cap was a tall shako of red-brown fur, from which a long, straight scarlet plume floated, and beneath which his grey hair was fastened in a queue, that hung half-way down his back. Yellow buskins, ornamented with massive gold spurs, completed a costume which seemed almost a compromise between the present and some bygone age.

The figure of the wearer, too, suited well this impression. There was a stern rigidity of look as he sat still and motionless in his saddle, which relaxed into the polished urbanity of an old courtier as often as the emperor addressed him. When bowing to the mane of his charger, he seemed the very type of courtesy; while, as he retired his horse, there was all the address and ease of a practiced rider.

"There, to the left of Walmoden, on the powerful black horse, do you see that handsome old man in the purple tunic?" said Walstein.

"I have been watching him for several minutes back," replied Frank. "What a singular uniform!"

"Yes. It was the dress of the artillery of the Imperial Guards, in the days of Wagram and Lobau; and he is permitted to retain it, by a special leave of the emperor—a favor he only avails himself of on occasions like the present."

"What a mass of orders he wears!"

"He has all that the empire can bestow, from the 'Iron Cross' to the 'Maria Teresa.' He has the 'Legion of Honor,' too, sent him by Napoleon himself! It was that officer who at Elchingen rode up to the head of a French column, and told them that the wagons they were pursuing were the 'ammunition of the rear guard!' 'If you advance,' said he, 'we'll fire them, and blow you and ourselves to atoms!' The coolness and heroism of the daring were acknowledged by a brave enemy. The French halted, and our train proceeded on its way. Mayhap you have heard the anecdote before?"

"Never," said Frank, still gazing with admiration at the old soldier.

"Then I may as well tell you that he is the Count Dalton von Auersberg," said Walstein, lying back to enjoy the youth's amazement.

"What! Uncle Stephen?—Is that our uncle?" burst out Frank, in delight.

"I wish I could call him 'ours,' with all my heart," said Walstein, laughing. "Any man might well be proud of such a relative."

But Frank never heard nor heeded the remark; his whole soul was wrapped up in the contemplation of the old field-marshal, on whom he gazed as a devotee might have done upon his saint.

"He's like my father," muttered Frank, half aloud; "but haughtier-looking and older. A true Dalton in every feature! How I long to speak to him—to tell him who I am."

"Not here, though—not here!" said Walstein, laying his hand on the youth's arm, for he almost feared lest he should give way to the sudden impulse. "Were you even the colonel of your regiment, you could not approach him now."

Frank stared with some surprise at a remark which seemed to treat so slightingly the ties of blood and kindred; while Walstein, by no means easy on the score of his companion's prudence, gave the word to the postilion to drive on; and they entered the city of Vienna.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE THREAT OF "A SLIGHT EMBARRASSMENT."

THE Mazzarini Palace was now a proverb for all that was dissipated and extravagant

throughout Florence, and in proportion as the society which frequented it was select and few in number, the more absurd were the rumors that went abroad of its dissipations and excesses. In default of a real, good, tangible scandal, the world invented a thousand shadowy little slanders, that, if not as deadly to reputation at once, were just as certain to kill character in the long run.

Sir Stafford's gout, by which he was confined to his bed or a sofa, was pronounced the lingering agonies of a broken heart. "My lady's" late dinners were orgies where every licentiousness held sway. George was a reckless gambler who had already jeopardized all the wealth of his family; and, as for Kate, she was at the mercy of that amiable temperament of the human mind which always believes the worst, and as constantly draws the darkest inference from its belief.

Now, Sir Stafford was very gouty, very irritable and very unhappy to boot, about a number of matters, which, however deeply interesting to himself, should have had no concern for the world. My lady did dine at eleven o'clock at night, and the company was assuredly not that from which a discriminating public would have selected archbishops, or even minor canons, consisting for the most part of that class of which we have already made mention in a former chapter, with, now and then, some passer-through of rank, or some stray diplomate on his way to or from his post. George Onslow was a large loser at play, but without having recourse to those stratagems for payment which were so generally ascribed to him. While Kate — poor Kate—was neither better nor worse than the reader has hitherto known her.

We do not, in this admission, seek to conceal the fact that she was very different from what first we saw her. Society had taught her tact, grace, and elegance of deportment. Admiration had rendered her—yes, we say it advisedly—admiration had rendered her very attractive, drawing forth a thousand resources of fascination, and a thousand arts of pleasing, that often wither and die in the cold chill of neglect. The most fastidious critic could not have detected a fault in her manner; an ill-natured one might have objected to what seemed an excess of gracefulness; but even this was relieved by a youthful freshness and buoyancy of temperament, the last—the very last remnant of her former self.

She was the belle of Florence. Her sovereignty admitted of nothing like a rival. Whether she drove, or rode, or danced, or walked, the same admiring throng surrounded her; some, sincere in all their admiration; others, but following the lead which fashion took; and others, again, watchful observers of a manner in which they fancied they could trace the settled plan of a daring and ambitious character. Vanity had been the foible of her childish years; it was now the vice of her womanhood. Lady Hester ministered to this failing in a hundred ways. Liking Kate as well as it was possible for her to like anything, she took an intense pleasure in all the admiration she met with.

As an actor is said to "create the part" which is written for him, when he impresses the personation with traits peculiarly his own, so did she fancy that Kate was but a reflected image of all her own graces and fascinations; and probably the proudest days of her own triumphs never yielded more enjoyment than she now felt in the flattering praises bestowed upon Kate Dalton.

There were good-natured people who said that Lady Hester's admiration had another source, and that, as a somewhat *passée* beauty, she knew the full value of a younger and handsomer woman in attracting to her circle and society all that was distinguished by rank or station. We are not prepared to deny some force to this argument, but assuredly it had less weight than other reasons. Lady Hester's own claims, besides, were higher than these detractors admitted. She was, although not very young, still very handsome, her rank and wealth both considerable, and her manner the perfection of that school to which she belonged. If her affection for Kate was only another form of selfishness, it was not the less strong on that account. She was the confidante of her sorrows—by no means a sinecure office; the chief counselor in all her plans; she was the lay-figure on which she experimented a hundred devices in costume and toilet; and lastly—greatest charm of all—she was a dependent. Not, indeed, that Kate herself so understood her position: pride of family, the Dalton heritage, was too powerful in her to admit of this. Deeply, sincerely grateful she was for all Lady Hester's kindness; her affection she returned tenfold; but no sense of inferiority mingled with this feeling, save that which arose from her own devoted admiration of her friend.

The homage amid which she passed her life, the unceasing flow of flatteries around her, were not very likely to undeceive

on this point. A more respectful devotion could not have waited on a princess of the royal house. The great Midchekoff gave balls in her honor. The Arab horses of Treviliani were all placed at her disposal. The various visits to objects of curiosity or taste were arranged for her pleasure, and nothing omitted that could tend to stimulate her vanity and heighten her self-esteem.

The utmost we can say for her all this while is, that if she was carried away by the excitement of this adulation, yet, in her heart, she was as little corrupted as was well possible. She could not be other than enamored of a life so unchanging in its happiness, nor could she disconnect the enjoyments around her from the possession of great wealth. She thought of what she had been a few months back: the same Kate Dalton, braving the snows of a dark German winter, with threadbare cloak and peasant "sabots," an object of admiration to none except to poor Hanserl, perhaps! And yet now, unchanged, unaltered, save in what gold can change, how different was her position! It had been well if her love of splendor had stopped here. It went farther, however, and inspired a perfect dread of humble fortune.

Over and over again did she hear disparaging remarks bestowed upon the striving efforts of "respectable poverty," its contrivances derided, its little straits held up to ridicule. In dress, equipage, or household, whatever it did, was certain to be absurd; and yet all of these people, so laughed at and scorned, were in the enjoyment of means far above her own father's!

What a false position was this! How full of deceit must she become to sustain it! She invoked all her sophistry to assure herself that their condition was a mere passing state; that at some future—perhaps not even a remote one—they should have "their own again;" and that, as in family and descent they were the equals of any, so they were not inferior in all the just claims to consideration and respect. She tried to think of her father and Nelly moving in the circles she now lived in; but, even alone, and in the secrecy of her own thoughts, her cheek became scarlet with shame, and she actually shuddered at the very notion. And even Frank, her once ideal of all that was graceful and noble-looking, how would he pass muster beside these essenced "fashionables" who now surrounded her! She endeavored to console herself by thinking that her father would have despised the lounging, unmanly lives they led; that Ellen would have retired in bashful modesty from a society whose tone of freedom and license would have shocked her; and that Frank would have found no companionship in a class whose pleasures lay only in dissipation; and yet, all her casuistry could not reassure her. The fascinations amid which she lived were stronger than her reason.

She became first aware of the great change in herself on recognizing how differently a letter from home affected her to what it had done some months before. At first, she would have hastened to her room, and locked the door, in an ecstasy of delight to be alone with dearest Nelly—to commune with her own sweet sister in secret—to hang on every line, every word, with delight, fancying herself once more with arms clasped around her, or bending down beside her cheek as she leaned over her work-table. How every little detail would move her; how every allusion would bring up home before her—the snug little chamber of an evening, as the bright fire glowed on the hearth, and Nellie brought out her tools for modeling, while Hanserl was searching for some passage, a line, or a description that Nelly wanted; and then the little discussions that would ensue as to the shape of some weapon, or the fashion of some costume of a past age, so often broken in upon by her father, whose drolleries would set them laughing!

With what interest, too, she would follow each trifling occurrence of their daily life; the progress Nelly was making in her last group; its difficulties how would she ponder over, and wonder how to meet them! With what eager curiosity would she read the commonest details of the household, the dreary burden of a winter's tale! and how her heart bounded to hear of Frank—the soldier—although all the tidings were that he was with his regiment, but "spoke little of himself or the service."

Now, however, the glow of delight which a letter used to bring up was changed for a deep blush of anxiety and shame—anxiety, she knew not wherefore or how; of shame, because Nelly's writing on the address was quaint and old-fashioned; while the paper and the seal bespoke the very lowliest acquaintance with epistolary elegance. The letter she used to grasp at with a high-beating heart she now clutched with greater eagerness, but in terror lest others should see and mark its vulgar exterior!

How differently, too, did the contents affect her: so long as they referred to herself, in her own latest narrative of her life,

she read with avidity and pleasure. Nelly's innocent wonderment was a very delightful sensation; her affectionate participation in her happiness was all grateful; even her gentle warnings against the seductions of such a career were not unpleasing; but the subject changed to home, and what an alteration came over her spirit! How dark and dismal became the picture—how poverty-stricken each incident and event—what littleness in every detail—how insignificant the occupations that interested them!

How great the surprise she felt at their interest in such trifles! how astonished that their hopes and fears, their wishes or their dreads, could take so mean a form! This came with peculiar force before her, from a paragraph that closed Nelly's last letter, and which ran thus:

"Think of our happiness, dearest Kate! We have just seen one who saw you lately—one of your Florence acquaintances; and I believe I might go further, and say friends, for the terms in which he spoke of you evinced sincere and true regard. It was so kind of him to find us out, just to come and tell us about you; indeed, he remained a day here for no other purpose, since his diplomatic duties were urging him to England with speed."

When Kate had read thus far, she stopped; her face and neck crimson with shame, and her heart beating almost audibly. With lightning rapidity she ran over to herself three or four names of ministers and envoys who had lately left Florence, trembling to think it might be the gorgeous Russian, Naradskoi, the princely Neapolitan, Camporese, or the haughty Spaniard, Don Hernandez Orloes, who had visited their humble interior. What a humiliation for her, if she were ever to see them again! Home, at that instant, presented itself before her but as the witness of her shame: how sordid and miserable did its poverty appear, and with what vulgarity associated! Her poor old father, around whose neck but a moment before she would have hung with rapture, she shrank from with very terror; his dress, his look, his accent—every word he spoke, every allusion he made, were tortures to her; and Nelly—even Nelly—how she blushed to fancy her humble guise and poor exterior; the little dress of colored wool, from the pockets of which her carving tools appeared; and then how the scene rose before her!—her father producing Nelly's last work, some little group in clay or wood. She pictured to herself his pride—her sister's bashfulness—the stranger's pretended admiration! Till now, these emotions had never seemed a counterfeit. Oh! how she shuddered as her thoughts took more and more the colors of reality, and the room itself, and its poverty-struck furniture, rose before her! At last she read on:

"His visit was of course a great honor, and, probably, had he come on any other errand but to speak of you, we should have been half overwhelmed with the condescension; but in very truth, Kate, I quite forgot all his greatness and his grandeur, and lost sight of his ever holding any higher mission than to bring news of my dearest sister. Papa, of course, asked him to dinner. I believe he would have invited the Czar himself under like circumstances; but, fortunately for us, for him, and perhaps for you, too, he was too deaf to hear the request, and politely answered that he would send my letter to you with pleasure, under his own diplomatic seal; and so we parted. I ought to add that Mr. Foglass intends speedily to return to Florence."

Three or four times did Kate read this name over before she could persuade herself that she had it aright. Foglass! she had never even heard of him. The name was remarkable enough to remember, as belonging to a person of diplomatic rank, and yet it was quite new to her. She turned to Lady Hester's invitation book, but no such name was there. What form her doubts might have taken there is no knowing, when Mr. Albert Jekyl was seen to cross the court-yard, and enter the house.

Knowing that, if any could, he would be the person to resolve the difficulty, she hastened downstairs to meet him.

"Mr. Jekyl," cried she, hurriedly, "is there such a man as Mr. Foglass in this breathing world of ours?"

"Of course there is, Miss Dalton," said he, smiling at her eagerness.

"A minister or an envoy at some court?"

"Not that I have ever heard," repeated he, with a more dubious smile.

"Well, a secretary of embassy, perhaps?—something of that kind? Who is he?—what is he?—where does he belong to?"

"You mean Bob, Miss Dalton," said he, at once puffing out his cheeks and running his hand through his hair, till it became a very good resemblance of the ex-consul's wig, while, by a slight adjustment of his waistcoat, he imitated the pretentious

presence of the mock royalty. "'You mean Bob, madam,'" said he, mimicking his measured intonation and pompous tone—"'Old Fogey, as Mathews always called me. Mathews and I and Townsend were always together—dined at Greenwich every Sunday regularly. What nights they were! Flows of reasons, and feasts of—eh?—yes, that's what they were.'"

"I must remind you that I never saw him," said she, laughing; "though I'm certain, if I should hereafter, it will not be very hard to recognize him. Now, who is he?"

"He himself says, a grandson of George the Fourth. Less interested biographers call him a son of Foglass and Crattles, who, I believe, were not even coachmakers to royalty. He was a consul at Ezmeroum, or some such place. At least, they showed him the name on a map, and bade him find it out; but he found out something more, it seems—that there was neither pay nor perquisites—neither passports nor peculation; and he has brought back his wisdom once again to besiege the Foreign Office. But how do you happen to ask about him?"

"Some of my friends met him in Germany," said she hesitatingly. She might have blushed, had Jekyl looked at her; but he knew better, and took pains to bestow his glances in another direction.

"It would be kind to tell them that the man is a most prying, inquisitive sort of creature, who, if he only had the sense of hearing, would be as mischievous as Purvis."

"I fancy they will see but little of him," said she, with a saucy toss of the head. "He made their acquaintance by affecting to know *me*. I'm sure I've no recollection of having ever seen *him*."

"Of course you never knew him, Miss Dalton!" replied he, with a subdued horror in his voice as he spoke.

"A letter for you, mademoiselle," said the servant to Kate; "and the man waits for an answer."

Kate broke the seal with sudden trepidation. She had no correspondents nearer than her home, and wondered what this might mean. It was in a strange commotion of spirit that she read the following lines:

"Mrs. Montagu Ricketts presents her respectful compliments to Miss Dalton, and begs to know at what hour to-day Mrs. M. R. may wait upon Miss D., to present a letter which has been committed to Mrs. R.'s hands for personal delivery. It may secure an earlier hour of audience if Mrs. R. mentions that the precious document is from Miss D.'s father."

What could this possibly mean? It was but that very same day the post brought her a letter from Nelly. Why had not her father said what he wished to say, in that? What need of this roundabout, mysterious mode of communicating?

The sight of the servant still in waiting recalled her from these cross-questionings, and she hurried away to consult Lady Hester about the reply.

"It is very shocking, my dear child," said she, as she listened to the explanation. "The Ricketts, they tell me, is something too dreadful; and we have escaped her hitherto. You couldn't be ill, could you?"

"But the letter?" said Kate, half smiling, half provoked.

"Oh, to be sure—the letter! But Buccellini, you know, might take the letter, and leave it, with unbroken seal, near you; you could read it just as well. I'm sure I read everything Sir Stafford said in his without ever opening it. You saw that yourself, Kate, or, with your skepticism, I suppose, you'd not believe it, for you are very skeptical; it is your fault of faults, my dear. D'Esmonde almost shed tears about it, the other day. He told me that you actually refused to believe in the Madonna della Torre, although he showed you the phial with the tears in it!"

"I only said that I had not seen the Virgin shed them," said Kate.

"True, child; but you saw the tears! and you heard D'Esmonde remark, that when you saw the garden of a morning, all soaked with wet, the trees and flowers dripping, you never doubted that it had rained during the night, although you might not have been awake to hear or see it."

Kate was silent; not that she was unprepared with an answer, but dreaded to prolong a discussion so remote from the object of her visit.

"Now, Protestant that I am," said Lady Hester, with the triumphant tone of one who rose above all the slavery of prejudice—"Protestant that I am, I believe in the 'Torre.' The real distinction to make is, between what is above, and what is contrary to, reason, Kate. Do you understand me, child?"

"I'm sure Mrs. Ricketts's visit must be both," said Kate, adroitly bringing back the original theme.

"Very true; and I was forgetting the dear woman altogether. I suppose you

Punch and Palaver.

must receive her, Kate; there's no help for it! Say three o'clock, and I'll sit in the small drawing-room, and, with the gallery and the library between us, I shall not hear her dreadful voice."

"Has she such?" asked Kate, innocently.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Lady Hester, pettishly; "but of course she has! Those dreadful people always have! Make the visit as brief as possible, Kate. Let it not be a pretext for anything after. Use your eyeglass on every occasion, so that you can be shortsighted enough never to know her again. I have seen you very supercilious at times, child—it is precisely the manner for this interview. It was really very wrong of your papa to write in this fashion; or your sister, or whoever it was. Nobody thinks of anything but the post nowadays. Pray tell them so; say it makes me quite nervous; you see I *am* nervous today! There, there! I don't want to fret you, child—but everything has gone wrong to-day, Midchekoff has given away his box, and I have promised mine to the Lucchesini; and that blonde flounce is much too narrow, so Célestine tells me; but I'm sure she has cut a piece off it to make a 'berthe' for herself. And then the flowers are positively odious. They are crimson, instead of cherry-color, although I told Jekyl twice over that they ought to be the very tint of Lady Melgund's nose! There now, good-bye. Remember all I've been saying, and don't forget that this is a 'giorno infelice,' and everything one does will prove unlucky. I hope D'Esmonde will not come to-day. I'm really not equal to controversy this morning. I should like to see Buccellini, however, and have a globule of the Elysian essence. Bye-bye; do think better about the 'Madonna della Torre,' and get rid of that odious Ricketts affair as speedily as may be."

With these injunctions, Kate withdrew to indite her reply to Mrs. Ricketts, appointing three o'clock on that same afternoon for a visit, which she assuredly looked forward to with more of curiosity than pleasure.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A CONVIVIAL EVENING.

It is not necessary that the reader should participate in Kate Dalton's mystification regarding her father's letter, that document being simply a piece of Ricketts's strategy, and obtained to secure an admission to the Mazzarini Palace, which, notwithstanding Lord Norwood's assurances, still remained an impregnable fortress to all her assaults.

Foglass was then commissioned to induce Mr. Dalton to write something—anything, to his daughter, to be transmitted under the Embassy seal—a magnificent mode of conveyance, which was reason enough to call into exercise those powers of penmanship which, since he had ceased to issue promissory notes, had lain in the very rustiest state of disuse. The command to obtain this credential reached Foglass just as he was about to start from Baden; but being desirous, for various little social reasons, to conciliate the Ricketts's esteem, he at once altered his arrangements, and feigning a sudden attack of gout—a right royal malady—he took himself to bed, and sent a few lines to Dalton, detailing his misfortune, and entreating a visit.

Never backward in the cause of good-nature, poor Dalton sallied forth at night, and notwithstanding the cutting blasts of a northwind, and the sharp driftings of the half-frozen snow, held on his way to the "Russie," where, in a very humble chamber for so distinguished a guest, lay Mr. Foglass in the mock agonies of gout.

"How devilish kind of you—how very considerate!" said Foglass, as he gave one finger of his hand to shake. "So like poor Townsend this—Lord Tom we used to call him. Not wet, though, I hope?"

"And if I was, it wouldn't be the first time. But, how are you yourself—where is the pain?"

"You must speak louder; there's a kind of damper on the voice in this room."

"Where's the pain?" screamed Dalton.

"There—there—no need to roar," whispered the other. "The pain is here—over the stomach, round the ribs, the back—everywhere."

"Ah, I know it well," said Dalton, with a wry contortion of the face. "It's the devil entirely when it gets under the short ribs! It begins like a rat nibbling you, as it might be, biting away little bits, with now and then a big slice that makes you sing out; and then the teeth begin to get hot, and he bites quicker, and tears you besides—sure, I know it, this many a year."

To this description, of which Foglass heard nothing, he bowed blandly, and made a sign to Dalton to be seated near him.

"You'd like a little wine and water, I'm sure," said he, with the air of a man who rarely figured as a host, and liked it more rarely still.

"Spirits and water—boiling water—with

sugar and a squeeze of lemon, is what I'll take; and see now, you'd not be worse of the same yourself. I've an elegant receipt for the gout, but whether it's sulphur or saltpetre's in it, I don't well remember; but I know you mix it with treacle, ash-bark, and earthworms, the yolk of four eggs, and a little rosemary. But as you mightn't like the taste of it at first, we'll just begin with a jug of punch."

The waiter had by this time made his appearance, and the order being communicated by a most expressive pantomime of drinking, and a few solitary words of German Dalton possessed, the room assumed a look of sociality, to which Dalton's presence mainly contributed.

In the confidence such a moment of secrecy suggested, Foglass produced an ear-trumpet—a mark of the most unbounded good faith on his part, and which, had Dalton known him better, he would have construed into a proof of implicit reliance on his honor.

"I've been many years at Constantinople," said he, adjusting the instrument, "and the confounded muezzin has made me a little deaf. It's an everlasting calling to prayers, day and night, there."

"How they ever expect to get to heaven by tormentin' and teazin,' is more than I know," said Dalton.

"They're Mohammedans!" said Foglass, with the air of a man uttering a profound sentiment.

"Aye, to be sure," observed Dalton; "it's not like Christians. Now, is it true, they tell me they never eat salt meat?"

"Never!"

"Think of that! Not a bit of corned beef, nor as much as a leg of pork——"

"Wouldn't hear of it," interrupted Foglass. "Wine, too, is forbidden."

"And punch?"

"Of course, punch also. A pipe, a cup of coffee, the bath, and a little opium, are the luxuries of Turkish existence."

"To the devil I fling them all four," cried Dalton, impatiently. "How a man is to be social beside a coffee-pot, or up to his neck in hot water, beats me entirely. Faix! I don't envy the Turks!" And he sipped his glass as he spoke, like one who had fallen upon a happier destiny.

"If you'll mix me a very small glass of that punch, I'd like to propose a toast," said Foglass.

"There, now, that's spoke like a sensible man; pleasant company and social enjoyment are the greatest enemies to the gout. Make your mind easy, and keep your heart light, and the devil a fear but your knees will get limber, and the swellin' will leave your ankles; but weak punch and tiresome people would undermine the best constitution in the world. Taste that."

To judge from Mr. Foglass's face, Dalton had at least provided one element of health for his companion.

"It is very strong—very strong, indeed!" said he, puckering up his eyes.

"It's the fault of the water hereabouts," said Dalton. "It doesn't mix right with the spirits; so that one-half—the first, generally—of your liquor tastes stiff, but the bottom is as mild as milk."

The explanation gave such encouragement to Foglass, that he drank away freely, and it was only when he had finished that he remembered his intention of giving a toast.

"Now, Mr. Dalton," said he, as he sat up with a replenished glass in his hand, "I am going to redeem my pledge, and about to give you the health of the most beautiful girl in Italy—one whose attractions are the theme of every tongue, and whose ambitions may realize any height, or attain any eminence, that she pleases."

"Here's to you, Kate Dalton," broke in the father, "my own sweet child; and if you only come back to me as you went away, the sorrow better I ask, or grander."

"She will be a duchess; she may be a princess if she likes."

"Who knows—who knows?" said Dalton, as he hung down his head, and hammered away with his spoon at the sugar in his glass.

"Every one knows, every one sees it, Mr. Dalton," said Foglass, authoritatively. "From the Archduke Ernest of Austria to the very pages of the court, all are her worshipers and admirers. She'll come back to you with a proud name and a high coronet, Mr. Dalton."

"The devil a better than Dalton ever 'twill be! *that* I can tell you. 'Tisn't yesterday we took it, the same name: there's stones in the churchyard of Ballyhack can show who we are; and if she married the—the—God forgive me, I was going to say the Pope, but I meant the Grand Turk—she wouldn't be better than she is now as Kate Dalton."

"Not better, certainly, but in a more exalted rank; in a position of more recognized distinction," said Foglass, blandly.

"No; nor that neither," cried Dalton, angrily. "The Daltons goes back to the ancient times of all. There's one of our names in the Bible. I'm not sure where, but I believe it's in the Book of Kings, or may be the Psalms; but wherever it is, he

was a real gentleman, living on his own estate, with his livery-servants, and his horses, and everything in good style about him; high on the Grand Jury—maybe the sheriff of the county."

Foglass, who had followed this description but imperfectly, could only bow in a deep acknowledgment of what he did not understand.

"The man that marries Kate Dalton isn't doing a piece of condescension, anyhow! that I can tell him. The dirty acres may slip away from us, but our good blood won't."

"No man has a higher veneration for blood, sir," said Foglass, proudly; "few men have better reason for the feeling."

"Is Fogles an old stock?" asked Dalton, eagerly.

"Foglass, like Fitzroy, sir, may mean more than loyalty would dare to avow. My father, Mr. Dalton——But this is a very sad theme with me, let us change it; let us drink to a better feeling in our native land, when that abominable statute may be erased from our code—when that offspring of suspicion and distrust shall no longer be the offense and opprobrium of Englishmen. Here's to its speedy and everlasting repeal!

The word was talismanic to Dalton, connected, as it was, in his mind with but one subject. He arose at once, and holding up his goblet in the air, cried out,

"Hip! hip! hurrah! three cheers and success to it! Repeal forever!"

Foglass echoed the sentiment with equal enthusiasm, and draining his glass to the bottom, exclaimed:

"Thank you, Dalton! thank you; the heartiness of that cheer tells me we are friends; and although you know not what my feelings are—indeed none can—you can execrate with honest indignation those hateful unions."

"Bad luck to it!" exclaimed Dalton, with energy. "We never had grace nor luck since we saw it!"

"Those petty German sovereigns, with their territories the size of Hyde Park!" said Foglass, with intense contempt.

"Just so. The Hessians!" chimed in Dalton, who had a faint consciousness that the other was alluding to the troops of the Electorate, once quartered in Ireland.

"Let us change the topic, Dalton," said Foglass, pathetically, as he wiped his brow like a man dispelling a dark train of thought. "Here's to that charming young lady I saw last evening, a worthy sister of the beautiful Miss Dalton."

"A better child never breathed," said Dalton, drinking off his glass. "My own poor Nelly," muttered he, below his breath, "'tis better than handsome ye are—true-hearted, and fond of your old father."

"She has accomplishments, sir, that would realize a fortune; that is," said he, perceiving the dark cloud that passed over Dalton's features—"that is, if she were in a rank of life to need it."

"Yes—very true—just so," stammered out Dalton, not quite sure how to accept the speech. "'Tis a fine thing to be able to make money—not that it was ever the gift of the Daltons. We were real gentlemen to the backbone; and there wasn't one of the name for five generations—barring Stephen—that could earn sixpence if he was starving."

"But Stephen, what could he do?" inquired Foglass, curious to hear of this singular exception to the family rule.

"He took to soldiering in the Austrian army, and he's a field-marshal, and I don't know what more besides, this minute. My son Frank's there now."

"And likes it?"

"Troth, he doesn't say a great deal about that. His letter is mighty short, and tells very little more than where he's quartered, how hardworked he is, and that he never gets a minute to himself, poor fellow!"

"Miss Kate, then, has drawn the prize in the lottery of life?" said Foglass, who was anxious to bring the subject back to her.

"Faix! that's as it may be," said the other, thoughtfully. "Her letters is full of high life and great people, grand dances and balls, and the rest of it; but sure, if she's to come back here again and live at home, won't it come mighty strange to her?"

"But in Ireland, when you return there, the society, I conclude, is very good?" asked Foglass, gradually drawing him on to revelations of his future intentions and plans.

"Who knows if I'll ever see it again? The estate has left us. 'Tis them Onslows has it now. It might be in worse hands, no doubt; but they've no more right to it than you have."

"No right to it—how do you mean?"

"I mean what I say—that if every one had their own, sorrow an acre of that property would be theirs. 'Tis a long story, but if you like to hear it, you're welcome. It's more pleasure than pain to me to tell it, though many a man in my situation wouldn't have the heart to go over it."

Foglass pronounced his willingness at once; and, a fresh jorum of punch being

concocted, Dalton commenced that narrative of his marriage, widowhood, and loss of fortune, of which the reader already knows the chief particulars, and with whose details we need not twice inflict him.

The narrative was a very long one; nor was it rendered more succinct by the manner of the narrator, nor the frequent interruptions to which, for explanation's sake, Foglass subjected him. Shall we own, too, that the punch had some share in the intricacy, Dalton's memory and Foglass's perceptions growing gradually more and more nebulous as the evening wore on. Without at all wishing to impugn Dalton's good faith, it must be owned that, what between his occasional reflections, his doubts, guesses, surmises, and suspicions, his speculations as to the reason of this and the cause of that, it was very difficult for a man so deeply versed in punch as Foglass to carry away anything like a clear notion of the eventful occurrences related. The strength of the potation, the hour, the length of the story, the parenthetical interruptions—which, although only by-paths, often looked exactly like the high road—and probably, too, certain inaccuracies in the adjustment of the ear-trumpet, which grew to be very difficult at last—all contributed, more or less, to a mystification which finally resembled nothing so much as a very confused dream.

Had the worthy ex-consul then been put on his oath, he couldn't have said whether or not Sir Stafford had murdered the late Mr. Godfrey, or if that crime should be attributed to Dalton's late wife. Between Sir Guy Stafford and Sir Stafford Onslow, he had a vague suspicion of some Siamese bond of union, but that they were cut asunder late in life, and were now drifting in different currents, he also surmised. But which of them "got the fortune," and which had not—who held the estate at present, and how Dalton came to be there at that moment relating the story—were Chinese puzzles to him.

Murder, matrimony, debts, difficulties, and chancery suits danced an infernal reel through his brain; and, what with the scattered fragments of Irish life thrown in incidentally, of locking dinner-parties in, and barring the sheriff out, of being chased by bailiffs, or hunting *them*—all these "divertisements" ending in a residence abroad, with its manifold discomforts and incongruities—poor Foglass was in a state which, were it only to be permanent, would have presented a spectacle of very lamentable insanity.

The nearest approach to a fact that he could come to was, that Dalton ought to be enormously rich, and that now he hadn't a sixpence; that the wealthy banker was somehow the cause, Count Stephen being not altogether blameless; and that Kate was living a life of extravagance and waste, while her father and sister were waging a hard fight with the very grimmest of poverty.

"L'homme propose," etc., says the adage; and the poet tells us an instance, that "those who came to scoff remained to pray." So in the present case, Mr. Foglass, whose mission was to pump Peter Dalton out of every family secret and circumstance, had opened such an unexpected stream of intelligence upon himself that he was actually carried away in the flood.

"You've been hardly used, Dalton," said he at last. "I may say, infamously treated! Not only your fortune taken away, but your children torn from you!"

"Ay, just so." Dalton liked sympathy too well to cavil about his title to it. "True for you; a harder case than mine you'll not hear of in a summer's day. My elegant fine place, my beautiful domain, the seat of my ancestors—or, if they weren't, they were my wife's, and that's all the same—and to be sitting here, in a foreign country, hundreds of miles away from home! Oh, dear! oh, dear! but that's a change!" For an instant thought overwhelmed him, and he was silent; then, fixing his eyes on Foglass, he added, in a dreamy soliloquy, "Hundreds of miles away from home, drinking bad brandy, with a deaf chap in a red wig for company!"

"I call yours a case of downright oppression, Dalton," resumed the other, who fortunately heard nothing of the last remark. "If you had been residing in Persia or the Caucasus—even in the Danubian provinces—we'd have made you a case for the Foreign Office. You'd have had your compensation, sir. Ay, faith! you'd have had a good round sum for the murder of your father—old what's his name? You'd have had your claim, sir, for the loss of that fine boy the Austrians have taken from you, Mrs. Dalton's wardrobe, and all that sort of thing. I must repeat my conviction, you've been grossly—infamously treated!"

"And just to think of my own flesh and blood—Stephen, my uncle!"

"I can't think of him, sir! I can't bear to think of him!" cried Foglass, with enthusiasm.

"A count of the empire!" resumed Dalton; "a field-marshal, and a something else, with his Maria Teresa!"

"At his age he might give up those habits," said Foglass, who had converted the cross of the empress into a very different relationship.

"And now, there's Kate," said Dalton, who never heard his comment—"there's Kate, my own favorite of them all! thinks no more about us than if we didn't belong to her!"

"Living in splendor!" mumbled Foglass. "Boundless extravagance!"

"Just so! Wasting hundreds—flinging the money about like chaff!"

"I saw a ball-dress of hers myself, at Madame Fanchone's, that was to cost three thousand francs!"

"Three thousand francs! How am I to bear it all?" exclaimed Dalton, fiercely. "Will any man tell me how an Irish gentleman, with an embarrassed estate, and in the present times, can meet such extravagance as that? Three thousand francs! and, maybe, for a flimsy rag, that wouldn't stand a shower of rain! Oh, Fogles! you don't know the man that's sitting before you—hale and stout and hearty as he looks—the trials he has gone through, and the troubles he has faced—just for his children. Denying himself every enjoyment in life!"—here he sipped his glass—"giving up every little comfort he was used to!"—another sip—"all for his family! Look at my coat! feel the wool of it; see my breeches, 'tis like the hide of a bear they are; take notice of my shoes; and there's my purse, with two florins and eight kreutzers in it; and, may I never see glory, if I don't owe a little bill in every shop that will trust me! And for what? Answer me that. For what?"

Although the savage energy with which this question was put would have extorted an answer from the least willing witness, Foglass was unable to reply, and only stared in mute astonishment.

"I'll tell you for what, Fogles," resumed Dalton, with a stroke of his clenched fist upon the table—"I'll tell you for what! To have a son in the hussars, and a daughter in all the height of fashion and fine life! That's it, Fogles. My boy keeping company with all the first people in Austria, hand and glove with—what's his name?—something like Misty or Hazy—I forget it now—dining, driving, and shooting with them. And my girl, Kate—— But you know better than myself what style she's keeping! That's the reason I'm what you see me here!—pining away in solitude and small means! All for my children's sake!"

"It is highly meritorious. It does you honor, Dalton," said the other emphatically.

"Well, I hope it does," said he, with a sigh. "But how few know it, after all!"

"And has this same Sir Stafford never taken any steps towards recompensing you? Has there been nothing like an *amende* for the great losses you've sustained?"

"Oh, indeed, to do him justice, he made me a kind of an offer once; but you see it was hampered with so many conditions and restrictions, and the like, that I rejected it with contempt. 'No,' says I, ''tisn't poverty will ever make me demean the old family! The Daltons won't suffer disgrace from me!'"

"He could have assisted you without such an alternative, Dalton."

"Maybe he could, indeed!" sighed the other.

"I know it well; the man is one of the richest men in England—the head of a great bank besides, making thousands every week."

"I often thought of that," said Dalton. "Sure it would cost him little just to discount a small thing for me at three months. I'd take care to meet it, of course; and he'd never lose a sixpence by me. Indeed, he'd be gaining; for he'd have the commission, and the discount, and the interest, and the devil knows what besides of law expenses——"

Here he stopped abruptly, for he had unwittingly strayed into another and very different hypothesis regarding the fate of his bill. However, he pulled up short, tossed off his punch, and said, "I only wish he'd do it!"

"Why not try him, then?—you ought, at least, to give yourself the chance."

"And, if he refused me, I'd have to call him out," said Dalton, gravely; "and just see all the confusion that would lead to. My daughter on a visit there, myself here, maybe, obliged to go hundreds of miles to meet him, and no end to the expense, taking a friend with me, too. No, no! that would be too selfish entirely."

"What if you were to throw out a hint, when you write to your daughter. Allude to present pressure for money—speak of tenants in arrear—remittances not arrived."

"Oh, faith! there's no need prompting me about these things," said Dalton, with a bitter laugh. "I know them too well already."

"Write a few lines, then; you'll find paper and pens on that table. I've told you that I will send it under my own seal, with the despatches."

Dalton was very little given to letter-

writing at any period, but to encounter the labor at night by candlelight, and after a four hours' carouse, seemed to him quite out of the question. Still, the Embassy seal, whatever that might be, was no common temptation. Perhaps he fancied it to be like one of those portentous appendages which are seen attached to royal grants! Who can tell what amount of wax and ribbon his imagination bestowed upon it! Besides this, there was another motive—never again, perhaps, should he be able to write without Nelly's knowledge. This consideration decided the question at once. Accordingly he put on his spectacles, and seated himself gravely to the work, which proceeded thus:

"Dear Kate:—I'm spending the evening with your friend the ambassador of—I forget where—Fogles is his name—and as pleasant a man as I ever met; and he sends his regards to you and all the family, and transmits this under his own seal. Things is going on bad enough here. Not a shilling out of Crognoborraghan. Healey ran away with the November rent and the crops, and Sweeney's got into the place, and won't give it up to any one without he gets forty pound! I'd give him forty of my teeth as soon, if I had them! Ryan shot Mr. Johnson coming home from work, and will be hanged on Saturday; and that's in our favor, as he was a life in Honan's lease. There's no money in Ireland, Kellet tells me, and there's none here. Where the blazes is it all gone to? Maybe, like the potatoes, 'tis dying out!

"Frank's well sick of soldiering; they chained him up like a dog, with his hand to his leg, the other night for going to the play; and if he wasn't a born gentleman, he says, they'd have given him 'four-and-twenty,' as he calls it, with a stick for impudence. Stephen's no more good to him than an old umbrella—never gave him bit nor sup! Bad luck to the old neygur—I can't speak of him.

"Nelly goes on carving and cutting away as before. There's not a saint in the calendar that she didn't make out of rotten wood this winter, and little Hans buys them all, at a fair price, she says; but I call a Holy Family cheap at ten florins, and 'tis giving the Virgin away to sell her for a Prussian dollar. 'Tis a nice way for one of the Daltons to be living—by her own industry!

"I often wish for you back here; but I'd be sorry, after all, ye'd come, for the place is poorer than ever, and you're in good quarters, and snug where you are.

"Tell me how they treat you—if they're as kind as before—and how is the old man, and is the gout bad with him still? I send you this little bill Martin Cox, of Drumsnagh, enclosed me for sixty-two ten-and-eight. Could you get the old baronet to put his name on it for me? Tell him 'tis as good as the bank paper, that Cox is as respectable a man as any in Leitrim, and an estated gentleman, like myself, and of course that we'll take care to have the cash ready for it when due. This will be a great convenience to me, and Fogles says it will be a pleasure to Sir Stafford, besides extending his connection among Irish gentlemen. If he seems to like the notion, say that your father is well known in Ireland, and can help him to a very lively business in the same way. Indeed, I'd have been a fortune to him myself alone, if he'd had the discounting of me for the last fifteen years.

"Never mind this, however, for bragging is not genteel; but get me his name, and send me the 'bit of stiff' by return of post.

"If he wants to be civil, maybe he'll put it into the bank himself, and send me the money; and if so, let the order be on Hallar and Oelcher, for I've a long account with Kock and Elz, and maybe they'd keep a grip of the cash, and I'd just be where I was before.

"If I can get out of this next spring it would be a great economy, for I owe something to everybody, and a new place always gives courage.

"I'm hesitating whether I'll go to Genoa or New York, but cheapness will decide me, for I only live now for my family.

"With all my affection, believe me your
"fond father,
"Peter Dalton.

"P.S.—If Sir S. would rather have my own acceptance, let him draw for a hundred, at three months, and I'm ready; but don't disappoint me, one way or other. Wood is fifteen florins a 'klafter' here, now, and I've nobody to cut it when it comes home, as Andy took a slice out of his shin on Friday last with the hatchet, and is in bed ever since. Vegetables, too, is dear, and since Frank went, we never see a bit of game.

"2nd P.S.—If you had such a thing as a warm winter cloak that you didn't want, you might send it to Nelly. She goes out in a thing like a bit of brown paper, and the wooden shoes is mighty unhandy with her lameness.

"Mind the bill."

"You are writing a rather lengthy de-

spatch, Dalton," said Foglass, who had twice dozed off to sleep, and woke again, only to see him still occupied with his epistle.

"It's done now," said Dalton, with a sigh; for, without well knowing why, he was not quite satisfied with the performance.

"I wish you'd just add a line to say that Mrs. Ricketts—Mrs. Major-General Ricketts—who resides at Florence, is so desirous to know her. You can mention that she is one of the first people, but so exclusive about acquaintance, that it is almost impossible to get presented to her, but that this coming winter the Embassy will, in all likelihood, open a door to so very desirable an object."

"Lady Hester will know her, of course?" said Dalton, whose sense of proprieties was usually clear enough when selfishness did not interfere, "and I don't see that my daughter should extend her acquaintance through any other channel."

"Oh, very true; it's of no consequence. I only meant it as an attention to Miss Dalton; but your observation is very just," said Foglass, who suddenly felt that he was on dangerous ground.

"Depend upon't, Fogles, my daughter is in the best society of the place, whatever it is. It's not a Dalton would be left out."

Foglass repeated his most implicit conviction in this belief, and did all in his power to efface the memory of the suggestion, but without success. Family pride was a kind of birdlime with old Dalton, and if he but touched, he could not leave it. The consequences, however, went no further than long and intricate dissertation on the Dalton blood for several centuries back, through which Foglass slept just as soundly as the respected individuals there recorded, and was only awoke at last by Dalton rising to take leave—an event at last suggested by the empty decanter.

"And now, Fogles," said he, summing up, "you'll not wonder, that if we're poor, we're proud. I suppose you never heard of a better stock than that since you were born?"

"Never, by Jove! Guelphs, Ghibellines, and Hapsburgs are nothing to them. Good night, good night! I'll take care of your letter. It shall go to-morrow in the Embassy-bag."

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CHAPTER XXXII.

AN INVASION.

To afford the reader the explanation contained in the preceding chapter, we have been obliged to leave Kate Dalton waiting, in mingled anxiety and suspense, for the hour of Mrs. Ricketts's visit. Although her mind principally dwelt upon the letter which had been announced as coming from her father—an event so strange as naturally to cause astonishment—she also occasionally recurred to the awkwardness of receiving persons whom Lady Hester had so scrupulously avoided, and being involved in an acquaintanceship so unequivocally pronounced vulgar. A few short months before, and the incident would have worn a very different aspect to her eyes. She would have dwelt alone on the kindness of one, an utter stranger, addressing her in terms of respectful civility, and proffering the intention of a visit. She would have been grateful for the good-nature that took charge of a communication for her. She would have viewed the whole as a sort of flattering notice, and never dreamed of that long catalogue of "inconveniences" and annoyances, so prolifically associated with the event as it at present stood. She was greatly changed in many respects. She had been daily accustomed to hear the most outrageous moral derelictions lightly treated, or at least but slightly censured. For every fault and failing there was a skillful excuse or a charitable explanation. The errors of the fashionable world were shown to be few, insignificant, and venial; and the code showed no exception to the rule that "well-bred people can do no wrong;" vulgarity alone was criminal; and the sins of the underbred admitted of no palliation. Her sense of justice might have revolted against such judgments, had reason been ever appealed to; but such was not the case. Ridicule alone was the arbiter: whatever could be scoffed at was detestable; and a solecism in dress, accent, or demeanor, was a higher crime than many a grave transgression or glaring iniquity.

The little mimicries of Albert Jekyl, as he described Mrs. Ricketts—the few depreciatory remarks of Lady Hester concerning her—would have outweighed her worth had her character been a cornucopia of goodness. It was, then, in no pleasant flurry of spirits that, just as the clock struck three, Kate heard the heavy door of the palace flung wide, and the sound of wheels echo beneath the vaulted entrance. The next moment a small, one-horse phaeton, driven by a very meagre servant in a tawdry livery, passed into the court-yard, having deposited its company in the hall.

There had been a time, and that not so very far back either, when the sight of that humble equipage, with visitors, would have

made her heart beat to the full as strong, albeit with very different emotions. Now, however, she actually glanced at the windows to see if it had attracted notice, with a kind of terror at the ridicule it would excite. Never did she think an old grey horse could be so ugly—never did wheels make so intolerable a noise before! Why would people dress up their servants like harlequins? What was the meaning of that leopard-skin rug for the feet? It was an odious little vehicle altogether. There was a tawdry, smirking, self-satisfied pretension about its poverty that made one wish for a break-down on looking at it!

"Mrs. Montague Ricketts and Miss Ricketts," said a very demure-looking groom of the chambers; and although his features were immaculate in their expression of respect, Kate felt offended at what she thought was a flippancy in the man's manner.

Although the announcement was thus made, the high and mighty personages were still three rooms off, and visible only in the dim distance, coming slowly forward.

Leaning on her sister's arm, and with a step at once graceful and commanding, Mrs. Ricketts came on. At least, so Kate judged an enormous pyramid of crimson velvet and ermine to be, from the summit of which waved a sufficiency of plumes for a moderate hearse. The size and dignity of this imposing figure almost entirely eclipsed poor Martha, and completely shut out the slender proportions of Mr. Scroope Purvis, who, from being loaded like a sumpter-mule with various articles for the road, was passed over by the groom of the chambers, and believed to be a servant. Slow as was the order of march, Purvis made it still slower, by momentarily dropping some of the articles with which he was charged; and as they comprised a foot-stool, a poodle, two parasols, an album, a smelling-bottle, a lorgnette, with various cushions, shawls and a portable fire-screen, his difficulties may be rather compassionated than censured.

"Scroope, how can you? Martha, do speak to him. It's down again! He'll smash my lorgnette—he'll smother Fidèle. How very awkward—how absurd we shall look!" Such were the *sotto voce* accompaniments that filled up the intervals till they arrived at the great drawing-room where Kate Dalton sat.

If the reader has ever watched a great tragedy queen emerging from the flats, when after a lively dialogue with the prompter and the utterance of a pleasant jest, she issues forth upon the open stage, to vent the sorrows or the wrongs of injured womanhood, he may form some faint idea of the rapid transformation that Mrs. Ricketts underwent as she passed the door-sill. Her first movement was a sudden bound forwards, or, at least, such an approach to a spring as a body so imposing could accomplish, and then, throwing her arms wide, she seemed as if about to enclose Miss Dalton in a fast embrace; and so doubtless had she done if Kate had responded to the sign. A deep and very formal curtsey was, however, her only acknowledgment of this spontaneous burst of feeling, and Mrs. Ricketts, like a skillful general, at once changing her plan of attack, converted her ardor into astonishment, and exclaimed:

"Did you ever see such a resemblance! Could you believe it possible, Martha? A thousand apologies, my dear Miss Dalton, for this rudeness; but you are so wonderfully like our dear, dear friend, Lady Caroline Montressor, that I actually forgot myself. Pray forgive me, and let me present my sister, Miss Ricketts. My brother, Mr. Scroope Purvis, Miss Dalton."

The ceremonial of introduction over, and Mrs. Ricketts being at last seated—a very tedious operation, in which the arrangement of cushions, pillows and footstools played a conspicuous part—that bland lady began, in her very softest of voices:

"This, indeed, repays me—amply, fully repays me!—eh, Martha?"

"Quite so, sister," responded Martha, in a meek whisper.

"A poor invalid as I am, rarely rising from a sofa except to snatch the perfumed odors of a violet in spring, or to listen to the murmurs of a rippling fountain; denied all the excitements of society by a nervous temperament so finely strung as to be jarred by contact, even the remotest, with inferior souls—think of what ecstasy a moment like this affords me!"

As Kate was profoundly ignorant to what happy combination of circumstances this blissful state could be attributed, she could only smile courteously, and mutter some vague expression of her pleasure, satisfaction, and so forth.

"Eve in her own paradise!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, as she turned her eyes from Kate to the gorgeous chamber in which they were seated. "May I ask if the taste of these decorations be yours, Miss Dalton?"

"Lady Hester Onslow's, madam," said Kate, quietly.

"I declare I like these hangings better than 'Gobelins'—they are lighter and more graceful. You remember, Martha, I told

the dear Queen of Saxony that blue velvet would go so well with her small pictures. We discussed the point every morning at breakfast for a week, and the poor dear king at last called us the 'blue devils'—very happy, wasn't it, Miss Dalton? But he speaks English just like one of ourselves."

"These are all Dutch pictures, I perceive," said Purvis, who, with his poodle under his arm, was making a tour of the room, peering into everything, opening books, prying into china jars, and spying into work-boxes, as though in search of some missing article.

"I'm tired of Wou-Wou-Wou——" Here the poodle barked, doubtless in the belief that he was responding to an invitation. "Down, Fidèle! Wou-vermans," gulped out Purvis. "He's always the same."

"But those dear white palfreys, how I love them! I always have a white horse out of regard for Wouvermans."

Kate thought of the poor grey in the courtyard, and said nothing.

"And there is something so touching—so exquisitely touching—in those Flemish interiors, where the good wife is seated reading, and a straggling sunbeam comes slanting in upon the tiled floor. Little peeps of life, as it were, in a class of which we know nothing; for really, Miss Dalton, in our order, sympathies are too much fettered; and I often think it would be better that we knew more of the middle classes! When I say this, of course I do not mean as associates—far less as intimates—but as ingredients in the grand scheme of universal nature."

"'The no-no-noblest study of man-mankind is'—what is it, sister?"

"'Man,' Scroope; but the poet intended to refer to the great aims and objects of our being. Don't you think so, Miss Dalton? It was not man in the little cares of every-day life, in his social relations, but man in his destinies, in his vast future, when he goes beyond 'that bourne——'"

"From which nobody ever got out again," cackled Purvis, in an ecstasy at the readiness of his quotation.

"'From which no traveler returns,' Scroope, is, I believe, the more correct version."

"Then it don't mean pur-pur-pur-purgatory," gulped Scroope, who, as soon as the word was uttered, became shocked at what he said. "I forgot you were a Ro-Ro-Roman, Miss Dalton," said he, blushing.

"You are in error, Scroope," said Mrs. Ricketts. "Miss Dalton is one of ourselves. All the distinguished Irish are of the Reformed faith."

"I am a Catholic, madam," said Kate, not knowing whether to be more amused or annoyed at the turn the conversation had taken.

"I knew it," cried Purvis, in delight. "I tracked your carriage to the D-D-Duomo, and I went in after you, and saw you at the co-co-co-co——"

"Corner," whispered Martha, who, from his agonies, grew afraid of a fit.

"No, not the corner, but the co-co-co-confessional—confessional, where you stayed for an hour and forty minutes by my own watch; and I couldn't help thinking that your pec-pec-pec-peccadilloes were a good long score, by the time it took to—to—to tell them."

"Thanks, sir," said Kate, bowing, and with difficulty restraining her laughter; "thanks for the very kind interest you seem to have taken in my spiritual welfare."

"Would that I might be suffered a participation in that charge, Miss Dalton," cried Mrs. Ricketts, with enthusiasm, "and allowed to hold some converse with you on doctrinal questions."

"Try her with the posers, sister," whispered Purvis.

"Hush, Scroope. Mere opportunities of friendly discussion, nothing more I ask for, Miss Dalton."

"Give her the posers," whispered Purvis, louder.

"Be quiet, Scroope. I have been fortunate enough to resolve the doubts of more than one ere this. That dear angel, the Princess Ethelinda of Cobourg, I believe I may say, owes her present enlightenment to our sweet evenings together."

"Begin with the posers."

"Hush! I say, Scroope."

"May I ask," said Kate, "what is the suggestion Mr. Purvis has been good enough to repeat?"

"That I should give you this little tract, Miss Dalton," said Mrs. Ricketts, as she drew out a miscellaneous assemblage of articles from a deep pocket, and selected from the mass a small blue-covered pamphlet, bearing the title, "Three Posers for Papists, by M. R."

"Montague Ricketts," said Purvis, proudly; "she wrote it herself, and the Pope won't let us into Rome in consequence. It's very droll, too; and the part about the—the—Vir-gin——"

"You will, I'm sure, excuse me, madam," said Kate, "if I beg that this subject be suffered to drop. My thanks for the interest this gentleman and yourself have vouchsafed me will only be more lasting by leaving the impression of them unassociated

with anything unpleasing. You were good enough to say that you had a letter for me?"

"A letter from your father—that dear, fond father, who dotes so distractingly upon you, and who really seems to live but to enjoy your triumphs. Martha, where is the letter?"

"I gave it to Scroope, sister."

"No, you didn't. I never saw——"

"Yes, Scroope, I gave it to you, at the drawing-room fire——"

"Yes, to be sure, and I put it into the ca-ca-ca——"

"Not the candle, I hope," cried Kate, in terror.

"No, into the card-rack; and there it is now."

"How provoking!" cried Mrs. Ricketts; "but you shall have it to-morrow, Miss Dalton. I'll leave it here myself."

"Shall I appear impatient, madam, if I send for it this evening?"

"Of course, not, my dear Miss Dalton; but shall I commit the precious charge to a menial's hand?"

"You may do so with safety, madam," said Kate, not without a slight irritation of manner as she spoke.

"Mr. Foglass, the late minister and envoy at——"

Here a tremendous crash, followed by a terrific yelping noise, broke in upon the colloquy; for it was Fidèle had thrown down a Sèvres jar, and lay, half-buried and howling, under the ruins. There was, of course, a general rising of the company, some to rescue the struggling poodle, and others in vain solicitude to gather up the broken fragments of the once beautiful vase. It was a favorite object with Lady Hester; of singular rarity, both for form and design; and Kate stood speechless, and almost sick with shame and sorrow, at the sight, not heeding one syllable of the excuses and apologies poured in upon her, nor of the equally valueless assurances that it could be easily mended; that Martha was a perfect proficient in such arts, and that, if Scroope would only collect the pieces carefully, the most difficult connoisseur would not be able to detect a flaw in it.

"I've got a head here; but the no-nose is off," cried Purvis.

"Here it is, Scroope. I've found it."

"No, that's a toe," said he; "there's a nail to it."

"I am getting ill—I shall faint," said Mrs. Ricketts, retiring upon a well-cushioned sofa from the calamity.

Martha now flew to the bell-rope and pulled it violently, while Purvis threw open the window, and with such rash haste as to upset a stand of camellias, thereby scattering plants, buds, earth, and crockery over the floor, while poor Kate, thunderstruck at the avalanche of ruin around her, leaned against the wall for support, unable to stir or even speak. As Martha continued to tug away at the bell, the alarm, suggesting the idea of fire, brought three or four servants to the door together.

"Madeira! quick, Madeira!" cried Martha, as she unloosed various articles of dress from her sister's throat, and prepared a plan of operations for resuscitation that showed at least an experienced hand.

"Bring wine," said Kate, faintly, to the astonished butler, who, not noticing Miss Ricketts's order, seemed to await hers.

"Madeira! it must be Madeira!" cried Martha, mildly.

"She don't dislike Mar-Mar-Marco-brunner," whispered Purvis to the servant, "and I'll take a glass too."

Had the irruption been one of veritable housebreakers, had the occasion been what newspapers stereotype as a "daring burglary," Kate Dalton might, in all likelihood, have distinguished herself as a heroine. She would, it is more than probable, have evinced no deficiency either of courage or presence of mind, but in the actual contingency nothing could be more utterly helpless than she proved; and, as she glided into a chair, her pale face and trembling features betrayed more decisive signs of suffering than the massive countenance which Martha was now deluging with eau-de-Cologne and lavender.

The wine soon made its appearance—a very imposing array of restoratives—the ambulatory pharmacopœia of the Ricketts family, was all displayed upon a table. Martha, divested of shawl, bonnet, and gloves, stood ready for action; and thus, everything being in readiness, Mrs. Ricketts, whose consideration never suffered her to take people unawares, now began her nervous attack in all form.

If ague—hysterics—recovery from drowning—tic-doloureux, and an extensive burn, had all sent representatives of their peculiar agonies, with injunctions to struggle for a mastery of expression, the symptoms could scarcely have equaled those now exhibited. There was not a contortion nor convulsion that her countenance did not undergo, while the devil's tattoo, kept up by her heels upon the floor, and her knuckles occasionally on the table, and now and then on Scroope's head, added fearfully to the effect of her screams, which varied from the deep groan of the melodrame to the wildest shrieks of tragedy.

"There's no danger, Miss Dalton," whispered Martha, whose functions of hand-rubbing, temple-bathing, wine-giving, and so forth, were performed with a most jog-trot regularity.

"When she se-se-screams, she's all right," added Purvis; and, certainly, the most anxious friend might have been comforted on the present occasion.

"Shall I not send for a physician?" asked Kate, eagerly.

"On no account, Miss Dalton. We are quite accustomed to these seizures. My dear sister's nerves are so susceptible."

"Yes," said Scroope, who, be it remarked, had already half-finished a bottle of hock, "poor Zoe is all sensibility — the scabbard too sharp for the sword. Won't you have a glass of wine, Miss Dalton?"

"Thanks, sir, I take none. I trust she is better now—she looks easier."

"She is better; but this is a difficult moment," whispered Martha. "Any shock —any sudden impression now might prove fatal."

"What is to be done, then?" said Kate, in terror.

"She must be put to bed at once, the room darkened, and the strictest silence preserved. Can you spare your room?"

"Oh, of course, anything—everything at such a moment," cried the terrified girl, whose reason was now completely mastered by her fears.

"She must be carried. Will you give orders, Miss Dalton? and Scroope, step down to the carriage, and bring up——" Here Miss Ricketts's voice degenerated into an inaudible whisper; but Scroope left the room to obey the command.

Her sympathy for suffering had so thoroughly occupied Kate, that all the train of unpleasant consequences that were to follow this unhappy incident had never once occurred to her; nor did a thought of Lady Hester cross her mind, till, suddenly, the whole flashed upon her, by the appearance of her maid Nina in the drawing-room.

"To your own room, mademoiselle?" asked she, with a look that said far more than any words.

"Yes, Nina," whispered she. "What can I do? She is so ill! They tell me it may be dangerous at any moment, and——"

"Hush, my dear Miss Dalton!" said Martha; "one word may wake her."

"I'd be a butterfly!" whispered the sick lady, in a low, weak treble; while a smile of angelic beatitude beamed on her features.

"Hush! be still!" said Martha, motioning the surrounders to silence.

"What shall I do, Nina? Shall I go and speak to my lady?" asked Kate.

A significant shrug of the shoulders, more negative than affirmative, was the only answer.

"I'd be a gossamer, and you'd be the King of Thebes," said Mrs. Ricketts, addressing a tall footman, who stood ready to assist in carrying her.

"Yes, madam," said he, respectfully.

"She's worse," whispered Martha, gravely.

"And we'll walk on the wall of China by moonlight, with Cleopatra and Mr. Cobden?"

"Certainly, madam," said the man, who felt the question too direct for evasion.

"Has she been working slippers for the planet Ju-Ju-Jupiter yet?" asked Purvis, eagerly, as he entered the room, heated and flushed from the weight of a portentous bag of colored wool.

"No, not yet," whispered Martha. "You may lift her now, gently—very gently, and not a word."

And in strict obedience the servants raised their fair burden, and bore her from the room, after Nina, who led the way with an air that betokened a more than common indifference to human suffering.

"When she gets at Ju-Jupiter," said Purvis to Kate, as they closed the procession, "it's a bad symptom; or when she fancies she's Hec-Hec-Hec-Hec——"

"Hecate?"

"No; not Hec-Hecate, but Hecuba—Hecuba; then it's a month at least before she comes round."

"How dreadful!" said Kate. And certainly there was not a grain of hypocrisy in the fervor with which she uttered it.

"I don't think she'll go beyond the San-Sandwich Islands this time, however," added he, consolingly.

"Hush, Scroope!" said Martha. And now they entered the small and exquisitely furnished dressing-room which was appropriated to Kate's use; within which, and opening upon a small orangery, stood her bedroom.

Nina, who scrupulously obeyed every order of her young mistress, continued the while to exhibit a hundred petty signs of mute rebellion.

"Lady Hester wishes to see Miss Dalton," said a servant at the outer door.

"Can you permit me for a moment?" asked Kate, in a tremor.

"Oh, of course, my dear Miss Dalton; let there be no ceremony with us," said Martha. "Your kindness makes us feel like old friends already."

"I feel myself quite at home," cried Scroope, whose head was not proof against so much wine; and then, turning to one of the servants, he added a mild request for the two bottles that were left on the drawing-room table.

Martha happily, however, overheard and revoked the order. And now the various attendants withdrew, leaving the family to themselves.

It was in no pleasant mood that Kate took her way towards Lady Hester's apartment. The drawing-room, as she passed through it, still exhibited some of the signs of its recent ruin, and the servants were busied in collecting fragments of porcelain and flower-pots. Their murmured comments, hushed as she went by, told her how the occurrence was already the gossip of the household. It was impossible for her not to connect herself with the whole misfortune. "But for her!"——But she could not endure the thought, and it was with deep humiliation and trembling in every limb that she entered Lady Hester's chamber.

"Leave me, Celadon; I want to speak to Miss Dalton," said Lady Hester to the hairdresser, who had just completed one-half of her ladyship's *chevelure*, leaving the other side pinned and rolled up in those various preparatory stages, which have more of promise than picturesque about them. Her cheek was flushed, and her eyes sparkled with an animation that betrayed more passion than pleasure.

"What is this dreadful story I've heard, child, and that the house is full of? Is it possible there can be any truth in it? Have these odious people actually dared to establish themselves here? Tell me, child—speak!"

"Mrs. Ricketts became suddenly ill," said Kate, trembling; "her dog threw down a china jar."

"Not my Sèvres jar—not the large green one with the figures?"

"I grieve to say it was!"

"Go on. What then?" said Lady Hester, dryly.

"Shocked at the incident, and alarmed, besides, by the fall of a flower-stand, she fainted away, and subsequently was seized with what I supposed to be a convulsive attack, but to which her friends seemed perfectly accustomed, and pronounced not dangerous. In this dilemma they asked me if they might occupy my room. Of course I could not refuse, and yet felt, the while, that I had no right to extend the hospitality of this house. I saw the indelicacy of what I was doing. I was shocked and ashamed, and yet——"

"Go on," said Lady Hester once more, and with a stern quietude of manner that Kate felt more acutely than even an angry burst of temper.

"I have little more to say; in fact, I know not what I am saying," cried she, gulping to repress the torrent of suffering that was struggling within her.

"Miss Dalton," began Lady Hester——

"Oh! why not Kate?" broke she in with a choking utterance.

"Miss Dalton," resumed Lady Hester, and as if not hearing the entreaty, "very little knowledge of that world you have lived in for the past three or four months might have taught you some slight self-possession in difficulty. Still less acquaintance with it might have suggested the recollection that these people are no intimates of mine; so that, even were tact wanting, feeling, at least, should have dictated a line of action to you."

"I know I have done wrong. I knew it at the time, and yet, in my inexperience, I could not decide on anything. My memory, too, helped to mislead me, for I bethought me that, although these persons were not of your own rank and station, yet you had stooped lower than to them when you came to visit Nelly and myself."

"Humph!" ejaculated Lady Hester, with a gesture that very unequivocally seemed to say that her having done so was a grievous error. Kate saw it quickly, and as suddenly the blood rushed to her cheek, coloring her throat and neck with the deep crimson of shame. A burst of pride—the old Dalton pride—seemed to have given way within her; and, as she drew herself up to her full height, her look and attitude wore every sign of haughty indignation.

Lady Hester looked at her for a few seconds with a glance of searching import. Perhaps, for a moment, the possibility of a deception struck her, and that this might only be feigned; but as suddenly did she recognize the unerring traits of truth, and said:

"What! child, are you angry with *me?*"

"Oh, no, no!" said Kate, bursting into tears, and kissing the hand that was now extended towards her—"oh, no, no! but I could hate myself for what seems so like ingratitude."

"Come, sit down here at my feet on this stool, and tell me all about it; for, after all, I could forgive them the jar and the camellias, if they'd only have gone away afterwards. And of course the lesson will not be thrown away upon you—not to be easily deceived again."

"How, deceived?" exclaimed Kate. "She was very ill. I saw it myself."

"Nonsense, child. The trick is the very stalest piece of roguery going. Since Toe Morris, as they call him—the man that treads upon people, and by his apologies scrapes acquaintance with them—there is nothing less original. Why, just before we left England, there was old Bankhead got into Slingsby House, merely because the newspapers might announce his death at the Earl of Grindleton's—'On the eighth, of a few days' illness, deeply regretted by the noble lord, with whom he was on a visit.' Now, that dear Ricketts woman would almost consent to take leave of the world for a similar paragraph. I'm sure I should know nothing of such people but that Sir Stafford's relations have somewhat enlightened me. He has a nest of cousins down in Shropshire, not a whit better than your—I was going to call them 'your friends,' the Rickettses."

"It is almost incredible to suppose this could be artifice."

"Why so, child? There is no strategy too deep for people who are always aspiring to some society above them. Besides, after all, I was in a measure prepared for this."

"Prepared for it!"

"Yes; Jekyl told me that, if they once got in, it would be next to impossible to keep them out afterwards. A compromise, he said, was the best thing; to let them have so many days each year, with certain small privileges about showing the house to strangers, cutting bouquets, and so on; or, if we preferred it, let them carry away a Teniers or a Gerard Dow to copy, and take care never to ask for it. He inclined to the latter as the better plan, because, after a certain lapse of time, it can end in a cut."

"But this is inconceivable!" exclaimed Kate.

"And yet, half the absurd and incongruous intimacies one sees in the world have had some such origin; and habit will reconcile one to acquaintance that at first inspired feelings of abhorrence and detestation. I'm sure I don't know one good house in town where there are not certain intimates that have not the slightest pretension, either from rank, wealth, distinction, or social qualities, to be there. And yet, there they are; not merely as supernumeraries, either, but very prominent and foreground figures, giving advice and offering counsel on questions of family policy, and writing their vulgar names on every will, codicil, marriage-settlement, and trust-deed, till they seem to be part of the genealogical tree, to which, after all, they are only attached like fungi. You look very unhappy, my poor Kate, at all this; but, believe me, the system will outlive both of us. And so, now to your room, and dress for dinner. But I forgot; you haven't got a room; so Célestine must give you hers, and you will be close beside me, and we shall be the better able to concert measures about these Ricketts folk, who really resemble those amiable peasants, your father told me of, on his Irish property, and whom he designated as 'squatters. I'm delighted that I haven't forgot the word."

And thus, chatting on, Lady Hester restored Kate's wonted happiness of nature, sadly shaken as it had been by the contrarieties of the morning. Nothing, too, was easier than to make her forget a source of irritation. Ever better satisfied to look on the bright side of life, her inclinations needed but little aid from conviction to turn her from gloomy themes to pleasant ones; and already some of the absurdities of the morning were recurring to her mind, and little traits of Mrs. Ricketts and her brother were involuntarily coming up through all the whirlpool of annoyance and confusion in which they had been submerged.

The coming dinner, too, engrossed some share of her thoughts; for it was a grand entertainment, to which all Lady Hester's most distinguished friends were invited. An archduke and a cardinal were to make part of the company, and Kate looked forward to meeting these great personages with no common interest. It was less the vulgar curiosity of observing the manners and bearing of distinguished characters, than the delight she felt in following out some child-invented narrative of her future life—some fancied story of her own career, wherein princes and prelates were to figure, and scenes of splendor and enjoyment to follow each other in rapid succession.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CONCLUSION OF A "GRAND DINNER."

Lady Hester's dinner of that day was a "grand one,"—that is to say, it was one of those great displays which from time to time are offered up as sacrifices to the opinion of the world. Few of her own peculiar set were present. Some she omitted herself; others had "begged off" on their own

accord. Midchekoff, however, was there; for, however accustomed to the tone and habits of a life of mere dissipation, he possessed every requirement for mixing with general society. It was true he was not fond of meeting "royal highnesses," before whom his own equivocal rank sank into insignificance; nor did he love "cardinals," whose haughty pretensions always overtopped every other nobility. To oblige Lady Hester, however, he did come, and condescended, for "the nonce," to assume his most amiable of moods. The Marchesa Guardoni, an old coquette of the days of the French Empire, but now a rigid devotee, and a most exclusive moralist; a few elderly diplomates, of a quiet and catlike smoothness of manner; with certain notabilities of the court, made up the party. There were no English whatever; Jekyl, who made out the list, well knowing that Florence offered none of a rank sufficiently distinguished, except Norwood, whose temporary absence from the city was rather a boon than the reverse; for the noble viscount, when not "slang," was usually silent, and, by long intercourse with the turf and its followers, had ceased to feel any interest in topics which could not end in a wager.

The entertainment was very splendid. Nothing was wanting which luxury or taste could contribute. The wines were delicious; the cookery perfect. The guests were courteous and pleasing; but all was of the quietest. None of the witty sallies, the piquant anecdotes, the brilliant repartees, which usually pattered like hail around that board. Still less were heard those little histories of private life where delinquencies furnish all the interest. The royal guest imposed a reserve which the presence of the cardinal deepened. The conversation, like the *cuisine*, was flavored for fine palates: both were light, suggestive and of easy digestion. Events were discussed rather than the actors in them. All was ease and simplicity; but it was a stately kind of simplicity, which served to chill those that were unaccustomed to it. So Kate Dalton felt it; and, however sad the confession, we must own that she greatly preferred the free and easy tone of Lady Hester's midnight receptions to the colder solemnity of these distinguished guests.

Even to the cardinal's whist-table everything wore a look of state and solemnity. The players laid down their cards with a measured gravity, and scored their honors with the air of men discharging a high and important function. As for the archduke, he sat upon a sofa beside Lady Hester, suffering himself to be amused by the resources of her small-talk, bowing blandly at times, occasionally condescending to a smile, but rarely uttering even a monosyllable. Even that little social warmth that was kindled by the dinner-table seemed to have been chilled by the drawing-room, where the conversation was maintained in a low, soft tone, that never rose above a murmur. It may be, perhaps, some sort of consolation to little folk to think that princes are generally sad-looking. The impassable barrier of reserve around them, if it protect from all the rubs and frictions of life, equally excludes from much of its genial enjoyment; and all these little pleasantries which grow out of intimacy are denied those who have no equals.

It was in some such meditation as this Kate Dalton sat, roused occasionally to bestow a smile or a passing word of acknowledgment in return for some of those little morsels of compliment and flattery which old courtiers pay as their rightful tribute to a young and handsome woman. She was sufficiently accustomed to this kind of homage to accept it without losing, even for an instant, any train of thought her mind was pursuing. Nor did the entrance of any new guest, a number of whom had been invited for the evening, distract her from her half reverie.

The *salons*, without being crowded, now showed a numerous company, all of whom exhibited in their demeanor that respectful reserve the presence of royalty ever inspires. It seemed, indeed, as though all the conversation that went forward was like a mere "aside" to that more important dialogue which was maintained beside the prince.

A slow but measured tide of persons passed before him, bowing with respectful deference as they went. With some he deigned to speak a few words, others had a smile or a little nod of recognition, and some again one of those cold and vacant stares with which great people are occasionally wont to regard little ones. His royal highness was not one of those accomplished princes whose pride it is to know the name, the family, the pursuits, and predilections of each new presentee; on the contrary, he was absent and forgetful, to a degree scarcely credible; his want of memory betraying him into innumerable mistakes, from which, even had he known, no adroitness of his own could have extricated him. On this evening he had not been peculiarly fortunate; he had complimented a minister who had just received his recall in disgrace —he had felicitated a young lady on her approaching marriage, which had been

broken off; while the burden of his talk to Lady Hester was in disparagement of those foreigners who brought a scandal upon his court by habits and manners which would not be tolerated in their own countries. Divorce, or even separation, met his heavy reprobation; and while his code of morality, on the whole, exhibited very merciful dispositions, he bestowed unmitigated severity upon all that could shock the world's opinion.

To this Lady Hester had to listen as best she might—a task not the less trying and difficult from the ill-suppressed looks of malice and enjoyment she saw on every side. From all these causes put together, the occasion, however flattering to her vanity, was far from being pleasurable to her feelings, and she longed for it to be over. The prince looked wearied enough, but somehow there is nothing like royalty for endurance; their whole lives would seem to teach the lesson, and so he sat on, saying a stray word, bowing with half-closed lids, and looking as though very little more would set him fast asleep.

It was the very culminating point of the whole evening's austerity; one of those little pauses which now and then occur had succeeded to the murmur of conversation. The whist party had been broken up, and the cardinal was slowly advancing up the room, the company, even to the ladies, rising respectfully as he passed, when the folding-doors were thrown wide, and a servant announced Mr. Scroope Purvis.

If the name was unknown to the assembled guests, there was one there at least who heard it with a sensation of actual terror, and poor Kate Dalton sank back into her chair with a kind of instinctive effort at concealment. By this time the door had closed behind him, leaving Mr. Purvis standing with an expression of no small bewilderment at the gorgeous assembly into which he had intruded.

Lady Hester's quick ear had caught the name, even from the farthest end of the room; but, while she attributed it to the mispronunciations of which foreign servants are so liberal, looked out with some curiosity for him who owned it.

Nor had she to look long, for, his first moment of surprise over, Purvis put up his double eyeglass and commenced a tour of the rooms, in that peculiarly scrutinizing way for which he was distinguished. The fact that all the faces were unknown to him seemed to impart additional courage to his investigations, for he stared about with as little concern as he might have done in a theater.

Most men in his situation would have been egoist enough to have thought only of themselves, and the awkwardness of their own position. Purvis, on the contrary, had an eye for everything; from the chandeliers on the walls to the crosses on the dress-coats—from the decorations of the *salons* to the diamonds—he missed nothing; and with such impartial fairness did he bestow his glances, that the cardinal's cheeks grew red as his own stockings as Scroope surveyed him. At last he reached the end of the great drawing-room, and found himself standing in front of the canopied seat where the archduke sat with Lady Hester. Not heeding, if he even remarked, the little circle which etiquette had drawn in front of the prince, Purvis advanced within the charmed precincts and stared steadily at the duke.

"I perceive that one of your friends is most anxious to pay his respects to you, Lady Hester," said the prince, with a very peculiar smile.

"I beg to assure you, sir, that the gentleman is unknown to me; his presence here is an honor for which I am totally unprepared."

"My name is Purvis, madam—Sc-Sc-Scroope Purvis. Miss Dalton knows me; and my sister is Mrs. Ricketts."

"You will find Miss Dalton yonder, sir," said Lady Hester, all whose efforts were barely sufficient to restrain her temper.

"I see her!" cried Purvis, putting his glass up; "but she's trying to escape me. She's got a man with a re-re-red beard before her, but it won't do—I'm too sh-sh-sharp for that."

The archduke laughed, and heartily, too, at this sally; and Purvis, emboldened by the complaisance, edged more closely towards him to point out the lady in question. "She has a droll kind of sc-sc-scarf in her hair. There! don't you see her now? Have you ever seen the pictures in the Pitti Palace?"

The question was a little startling, as the personage to whom it was addressed had his residence there. The archduke, however, merely bowed in acquiescence, and Purvis went on: "My sister Zoe copied one—and I like it better than the Ti-Tit-Titian itself. We smoked it, too, and made it look so brown, you'd never guess it to be mo-mo-mo-modern."

To judge from the bewildered look of the duke, the whole of this speech was pure Chaldee to him; and when he turned to Lady Hester for an explanation, he discovered that she had left her seat. Whether mistaking the motion as an invitation to

be seated, or merely acting by his own impulses, Scroope crossed over and sat down on the sofa with a degree of self-satisfaction that lighted up all his features.

"You're not one of the family, are you?" asked he.

"I have not that honor," said the prince, with a bow.

"I thought not. I suspected that there was a tw-tw-twang in your English that looked foreign, but I know your face quite well."

The duke bowed again.

"Pretty rooms these," said Purvis, with his glass to his eye; "what a d-d-deal of money they must have cost! They're going it fast, these Onslows.'

"Indeed!" said the prince, who only half understood the remark.

"I know it," said Scroope, with a confidential wink. "Their butcher se-se-serves us, and he won't give anything till they have sent their orders; and as for wine, they drink Bordeaux in the servants' hall. I don't know what *you* have, but a d-d-deuced sight better than ever *I* get."

"Good wine, however, can be had here, I hope," said the duke, blandly.

"Yes, if you sm-sm-smuggle it," said Scroope, with a knowing cackle; while, to add poignancy to the remark, he nudged the prince with his elbow. "That's the only way to have it. The st-stupid government sees nothing."

"Is that the case, sir?" asked the prince, with a degree of interest he had not manifested before.

"To be sure it is. My sister Zoe never pays duty on anything, and if you like your c-c-cigars cheap, just t-t-tell me, that's all. The g-g-grand-duke never got a sixpence of my money yet, and if I kn-know myself, he never shall."

"Do you bear him any grudge, sir, that you say this so emphatically?"

"No; not at all. They tell me that he's good-hearted, although somewhat we-weak in the a-a-attic story"—and here Scroope tapped his forehead significantly—"but that's in the family. My sister Zoe could tell you such st-stories about them, you'd die of laughing; and then there's Jekyl takes them off so well! It's c-c-capital fun. He gives a dia-dia-dialogue between the grand-duke and the Pope's nuncio that's better than a farce."

How far Mr. Purvis might have been carried in his zeal to be agreeable there is no saying, when Lady Hester came up with Kate leaning on her arm.

"This gentleman claims acquaintance with you, Miss Dalton," said she haughtily.

"Oh, to be sure, she knows me; and I have a letter from her—her father," said Purvis, drawing forth a packet like a postman's.

"Miss Dalton would prefer being seated, sir," said Lady Hester, while she motioned towards another part of the room.

"Yes, yes, of course; we'll find out a snug co-corner somewhere for a chat; just take my arm, will you? Let us get away from all these great 'dons,' with their stars and crosses." And, without waiting for Kate's reply, he drew her arm within his own, and set out in that little shuffling trot which he always assumed when he fancied he had business on hand.

The ridicule of being associated with such a companion would at any other moment have overwhelmed Kate Dalton with shame, but now, whether from the few words which Lady Hester had whispered in her ear, whether the fact of his unauthorized appearance, or whether it were the dread of some greater disgrace to follow, she actually felt a sense of relief in the continuous flow of twaddle which he kept up as they passed down the room.

"Who was that smiled as we passed?" asked he.

"Prince Midchekoff."

"Oh, that was he, was it? You must introduce me."

"Not now—pray, not now; at any other time," cried she, in perfect terror.

"Well, but don't forget it. Zoe would never forgive me if I told her that I lost the op-op-opportunity; she wants to know him so very much."

"Of course, at another time," said Kate, hurrying him along with increasing speed.

"Who's he?" asked Purvis, as a tall and stately personage bowed blandly to Kate.

"The Austrian minister."

"Not the fellow that st-st-strangled the emperor? Oh, I forgot; he was a Russian, wasn't he? They got him down, and ch-ch-choked him—ha! ha! ha! There's a man with a red mustache, so like the fellow who sells the bou-bou-bouquets at the Cascini."

"A Hungarian magnate," whispered Kate.

"Is he, though? Then let's have an-another look at him. He has as many gold chains about him as a shop on the Ponte Vecchio. Zoe would like him, he's so odd!"

At last, but not without great efforts, Kate succeeded in reaching a small chamber, where two others were seated, and whose figures were undistinguishable in the obscurity of a studiously shaded lamp.

"Isn't it strange she never asked for Zoe?" said Purvis, as he took his seat on a sofa—"not to inquire for a person sick under her own r-r-roof?"

"Lady Hester is not acquainted with Mrs. Ricketts."

"Well, but sh-sh-she ought to be. Zoe made a party for her; a d-d-dinner party; and had Hagg-Haggerstone and Foglass, and the rest of them. And after all, you know, they are only b-bankers, these Onslows, and needn't give themselves airs."

"You have a letter for me, Mr. Purvis? will you pardon my impatience——"

"Yes, to be sure. I've a letter, and an enclosure in it too; at least, it feels crisp like a note—a bank-note; that's the reason you're impatient; perhaps the re-re-remittance was long a-coming, eh?"

Kate made no reply to this speech, but her cheek grew scarlet as she heard it.

Purvis, meanwhile, spread his packet of papers before him, and began his search for Dalton's letter.

"No, that ain't it; that's from Foglass, all about Norwood, and his N-N-Newmarket affair. That's a letter from Lord Gullston's valet, with such a droll ac-account of the whole family. Zoe recommended him; and the poor fellow's very grateful, for he writes about all that goes on in the house. Lady G., it seems, has the temper of a f-f-fiend. Well, don't be im-impatient; I'll find your father's letter in a minute. He writes such a cr-cr-cramp old hand, one should detect it at once. I ta-take it that he's a bit of a character, the old gen-gentleman. I'm sure he is; but what have I done with his letter! Oh! here it is! here it is! and 'with haste' written on the corner, too."

Kate caught the letter impatiently, and, without any thought for Purvis or the place, tore it open at once. In doing so, the enclosure fell to the ground without her perceiving it; and, stranger still, it escaped the attention of Purvis; but that worthy man, not exactly venturing to read over her shoulder, had established himself directly in front, where, with his double eyeglass, he scanned every change in her features during the perusal.

"All well at home, I hope, eh? How she changes color!" muttered he to himself.

"Nobody ill; nobody dead, eh?" asked he, louder. "It must be something serious, though; she's trembling like ague. Let me give you a chair; that is, if I can f-find one in this little den; they've got nothing but d-divans all round it." And he hurried forth into the larger *salon* in search of a seat.

It was not without considerable trouble to himself and inconvenience to various others that he at last succeeded, and returned to the boudoir with a massive arm-chair in his hands; but what was his dismay to find that Miss Dalton had made her escape in the meanwhile! In vain did he seek her through the *salons*, which now were rapidly thinning; the distinguished guests having already departed.

A stray group lingered here and there, conversing in a low tone; and around the fires were gathered little knots of ladies muffled and cloaked, and only waiting for the carriages. It was like a stage, when the performance was over! Scarcely deigning to notice the little man, who, with palpable keenness of scrutiny, pursued his search in every quarter, they gradually moved off, leaving Purvis alone to tread the "banquet-hall deserted." The servants, as they extinguished the lights, passed and repassed him without remark; so that, defeated and disappointed, he was obliged at last to retire, sorrowfully confessing to his own heart how little success had attended his bold enterprise.

As he passed along the galleries and descended the stairs, he made various little efforts to open a conversation with some one or other of ther servants; but these dignified officials responded to his questions in the driest and shortest manner; and it was only as he reached the great gate of the palace that he chanced upon one courteous enough to hear him to the end in his oft-repeated question of, "Who was th-th-that with the large st-st-star on his breast, and a wh-wh-white beard?"

The porter stared at the speaker, and said, respectfully,

"The signor probably means the archduke?"

"Not the Archduke Fr-Fr-Fr——"

"Yes, sir," said the man; and closed the heavy door after him, leaving Purvis in a state of astonishment, and as much shame as his nature permitted him to feel. Neither upon himself, nor his sensations, have we any intention to dwell; and leaving him to pursue his way homeward, we beg to return once more within those walls from which he had just taken his departure.

If Lady Hester's grand company had gone, the business of the evening was by no means over; on the contrary, it was the hour of her night receptions, and now the accustomed guests of those favored precincts came dropping in from theaters, and operas, and late dinners. These men of pleasure looked jaded and tired, as usual; and, except the little tinkling sounds of Jekyl's

small treble, no other voice sounded as they walked along the corridors.

When they entered Lady Hester's boudoir, they found that lady recounting to Midchekoff the whole circumstances of the morning's adventure—a recital which she continued without other interruption than a smile or a nod, or a little gesture of the hand, to each of the new arrivals as he came in. If the lady's manner was devoid of all ceremony, that of the gentlemen was less ceremonious still, for they stretched themselves on divans, rested their legs upon chairs, and stood, back to the fire, with a degree of careless ease that bespoke them thoroughly at home—Jekyl, perhaps, the only one present who mingled with this freedom a certain courteous respect that no familiarity made him ever forget.

"And they are still here?" asked the prince. "Actually in the house at this moment?"

"At this very moment!" responded she, emphatically.

"The whole thing passes belief," exclaimed he.

And now the listless loungers drew their chairs closer to hear the story, and laugh, as men do, who are seldom moved to mirth save when ridicule or malice is the provocative.

"But you haven't heard the worst yet," said Midchekoff. "Pray tell them of your visitor of this evening."

And Lady Hester narrated the appearance of Mr. Purvis, who, having secured his entrance by a visit to his sister, had so unceremoniously presented himself in the drawing-room.

"Heaven knows what he said to his royal highness when I was away. To judge from his face, it must have been something atrocious; and the last thing he said on leaving was, 'I must try and not forget your agreeable friend's name.'"

"You might as well have invited *me*, as have had your 'friend' Purvis, after all," said a young Italian noble, whose political opinions found no favor at court.

"But what do you mean to do, my lady?" asked Midchekoff. "Is the enemy to hold undisputed possession of the fortress?"

"It is precisely on that point I want advice, prince."

"What if we form ourselves into a council of state?" said an Austrian general.

"By all means," said the others, who now formed a semicircle in front of Lady Hester's sofa.

"The youngest officer always speaks first," said the Austrian.

"Then that duty is mine," said a little man of about eighty-two or three, and who had represented France at half the courts of Europe. "I should advise a protocol in the form of protest. It is a palpable invasion of territory, but, followed by an ample apology and a speedy evacuation, may be forgiven. There are historical warrants for such transgressions being accepted as acts almost of compulsion."

"The case of Anspach, for instance," said the Austrian, with a malicious smile.

"Precisely, general—precisely a case in point," rejoined the old diplomate, with a bow and a smile that almost seemed grateful. "The shortest road to victory is ever the best."

"Let's try a fever or a fire; by Jove! the sacrifice of a few chairs and window-curtains would be a cheap alternative," said George Onslow.

"Why not essay a compromise, my lady," interposed a young German secretary of legation: "a mixed garrison, like that of Rastadt?"

"Lady Hester's troops to mount guard alternately with the Ricketts's! Downright treason—base treason!" exclaimed another.

"What would you think of a special mission, my lady?" simpered Jekyl. "It would at least serve to enlighten us as to the views of the enemy. The discussion of the past often throws much light on the future."

"Jekyl wants to earn a decoration," said another, laughing; "he intends to be the envoy himself."

"I'll wager that I know Midchekoff's policy," said a young Sicilian, who always spoke with a frank fearlessness that is most rare with other Italians.

"Well, let us hear it," said the prince, gravely.

"You would counsel the national expedient of retiring before the enemy, and making the country too cold to hold them?"

"How absurd!" said Lady Hester, half angrily; "give up one's house to a set of people who have had the impertinence to intrude themselves unasked?"

"And yet Giasconi is right," said the prince. "It is the best suggestion we have heard yet. Hostilities imply, to a certain extent, equality; negotiation is an acknowledgment of acquaintanceship; a dignified retreat, however, avoids either difficulty."

"In that case, let's starve them out," said George. "Suffer no supplies to be thrown into the place, and exact the most humble terms of submission."

"Then, where to go to? that's another question," said Lady Hester.

"His eminence expects to see you in Rome," whispered the abbé, who had waited for an opportunity for the suggestion. "I believe he relies on a promise."

"Very true; but not just yet. Besides, the season is almost over," said Lady Hester, with a slight degree of confusion.

"Don't be frightened, abbé," whispered Jekyl in D'Esmonde's ear. "Her ladyship is assuredly 'going to Rome' later on."

The priest smiled, with an expression that told how fully he comprehended the phrase.

"There's a little villa of mine, on the Lake of Como, very much at your service," said Midchekoff, with the easy indifference of one suggesting something perfectly indifferent to him.

"Do you mean La Rocca, prince?" added the Sicilian.

"Yes. They tell me it is prettily situated, but I've never seen it. The empress passed a few weeks there last year, and liked it," said Midchekoff, languidly.

"Really, prince, if I don't know how to accept, I am still more at a loss for power to refuse your offer."

"When will you go?" said he, dryly, and taking out his memorandum book to write.

"What says Mr. Jekyl?" said Lady Hester, turning to that bland personage, who, without apparently attending to what went forward, had heard every syllable of it.

"This is Tuesday," said Jekyl. "There's not much to be done; the villa wants for nothing: I know it perfectly."

"Ah! it's comfortable, then?" said the prince, with a slight degree of animation.

"La Rocca is all that Conterete's taste could make it," replied Jekyl.

"Poor Contarete! he was an excellent maître d'hôtel," said Midchekoff. "He's still with me, somewhere I believe in Tartary, just now."

"Your ladyship may leave this on Thursday," said Jekyl; who well knew that he was paying the most flattering complement to Midchekoff in naming the shortest possible time for preparation.

"Will this be inconvenient, prince?" asked Lady Hester.

"No; not in the least. If Jekyl will precede you by a couple of hours, I trust all will be ready."

"With your permission, then, we will say Thursday," said she, who, with her habitual delight in novelty, was already wild with pleasure at the whole scheme.

"Perhaps I'll come and visit you," said Midchekoff. "I shall have to go to Vienna soon."

Lady Hester bowed and smiled her acknowledgments for this not over-gracious speech.

"May we follow you too, Lady Hester?" asked the Sicilian.

"We expect that much from your loyalty, gentlemen. Our exile will test your fidelity."

"There's something or other inconvenient about the stables," said Midchekoff, "but I forget what it is; they are up a mountain, or down in a valley. I don't remember it, but the emperor said it was wrong, and should be changed."

"They are on the opposite side of the lake, prince," interposed Jekyl, "and you must cross over to your carriage by boat."

"Oh, delightful, quite delightful!" exclaimed Lady Hester, with childish joy, at the novelty.

"La Rocca is on a little promontory," said Jekyl, "only approachable from the water, for the mountain is quite inaccessible."

"You shall have a road made, if you wish it," said the prince, languidly.

"On no account. I wouldn't for the world destroy the isolation of the spot."

"Do you happen to remember, Mr. Jekyl, if there be any pictures there?"

"There are some perfect gems, by Greuze."

"Oh! that's where they are, is it? I could never call to mind where they were left."

The conversation now became general, in discussing Lady Hester's change of abode, the life they should all lead when on the lake, and the innumerable stories that would be circulated to account for her sudden departure. This same mystery was not the least agreeable feature of the whole, and Lady Hester never wearied in talking of all the speculations her new step was certain to originate; and although some of the company regretted the approaching closure of a house which formed the resource of every evening, others were not sorry at the prospect of anything which offered a change to the monotony of their lives.

"You'll come to breakfast to-morrow, Mr. Jekyl," said Lady Hester, as he followed the departing guests. "I shall want you the whole day."

He bowed with his hand to his heart, and never did features of like mould evince a deeper aspect of devotion.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JEKYL'S COUNSELS.

One of the most striking characteristics of our present age is the singular mixture of frivolity and seriousness—the almost absurd contrast between grave inquiry and reckless dissipation, which pervades the well-to-do classes. Never was there a period when merely sensual gratification was more highly prized and paid for; and never, perhaps, a time, when every rank in life was more eager in the pursuit of knowledge. To produce this state of things a certain compromise was necessary; and while the mere man of pleasure affected a taste for literature and politics, the really active-minded either sought his relaxation, or extended his influence, by mingling in scenes of frivolity and amusement.

The age which made dandies philosophers, made lord chancellors droll, and bishops eccentric. A paradoxical spirit was abroad, and it seemed to be a matter of pride with every one to do something out of his station. The whole temper of society, and the tone of conversation, exhibited this new taste.

Lady Hester Onslow was not a bad specimen of the prevailing mania. There was by nature a certain fidgety, capricious volatility about her, that defied anything like a regular pursuit, or a continued purpose. With a reasonably quick apprehension and no judgment, in being everything, she became nothing. Always mistaking sympathies for convictions, it was quite sufficient to interest her imagination to secure her adhesion—not, indeed, that it was worth much when obtained, seeing that she was but a feeble ally at the best. Her employment of the day was a type of herself. The mornings were passed in mesmeric experiences with her doctor, or what she fancied were theological discussions with the Abbé D'Esmonde. It would be difficult to say in which the imaginative exaltation more predominated. All the authentic and incredible phenomena of the one, all the miraculous pretensions of the other, were too little for a credulity that stopped at nothing. Of second sight, remote sympathy, and saintly miracles, she never could hear enough. "Give me facts," she would say; by which she meant narratives. "I will have no theories, doctor." "Don't bear me down with arguments, Monsieur l'Abbé." "Facts, and facts alone, have any influence with *me*."

Now, such facts as she asked for were easily obtainable, and the greatest miser need not have grudged her an ample meal of them. Many of the facts, too, possessed the pleasing feature of being personal in their interest. One day, it was a charming young patient of the doctor, who, having touched a tress of Lady Hester's hair, made the most astonishing revelations of her ladyship's disposition; telling facts of her feelings, her nature, and even her affections, that "she knew were only confided to her own heart." Various little incidents of her daily life were foretold, even to such minute matters as the purchase of articles of jewelry, which she had not even seen at the time, and only met her eyes by accident afterwards. The abbé, with equal success, assured her of the intense interest taken in her by the Church. Beautifully bound and richly illustrated books were offered to her, with the flattering addition that prayers were then being uttered at many a shrine for her enlightenment in their perusal. Less asked to conform herself to a new belief than to reconcile the faith to her own notions, she was given the very wildest latitude to her opinions. If she grew impatient at argument, a subtle illustration, an apt metaphor, or sometimes a happy *mot*, settled the question. The abbé was a clever talker, and varied his subjects with all the skill of a master. He knew how to invoke to his aid all that poetry, art, and romance could contribute. The theme was a grand one when the imagination was to be interested, and really deserved a better listener, for, save when the miraculous interposition of saints, or the gaudy ceremonials of the church were spoken of, she heard the subject with indifference, if not apathy. The consideration of self could, however, always bring her back; and it was ever a successful flattery to assure her how fervently such a cardinal prayed for her "right-mindedness," and how eagerly even his Holiness looked forward to the moment of counting her among his children.

Her very tastes—those same tastes that ascetic Protestantism was always caviling at—were beautifully Roman. The Church liked display. Witness her magnificence and splendor, her glorious cathedrals, the pomp and grandeur of her ceremonial! As to music, the choir of the "Duomo" was seraphic, and needed not the association of the dim, vaulted aisles, the distant altar, and the chequered rays of stained-glass windows, to wrap the soul in a fervor of enthusiasm. Even beauty was cherished by the Church, and the fair Madonnas were types of an admiring love that was beautifully catholic in its worship.

With all this, the work of conversion was a Penelope's web, that must each day be begun anew, for, as the hour of the Cascini drew nigh, Lady Hester's carriage drew up, and mesmerism, miracles, and all, gave way to the fresher interests of courtly loungers, chit-chat, and "bouquets of camellias."

For the next hour or so, her mind was occupied with the gossiping stories of Florentine life, its surface details all recounted by the simpering dandies who gathered around her carriage; its deeper—not unfrequently darker—histories being the province of Mr. Albert Jekyl. Then home to luncheon, for, as Haggerstone related, she dined always after the opera, and it was then, somewhere verging on midnight, that she really began to live. Then, in all the blaze of dress and jewels, with beauty little impaired by years, and a manner the perfection of that peculiar school to which she attached herself, she was indeed a most attractive person.

Kate Dalton's life was, of course, precisely the same. Except the few hours given to controversial topics, and which she passed in reading, and the occasional change from driving to riding in the Cascini, Kate's day was exactly that of her friend. Not, however, with the same results; for, while one was wearied with the tame routine of unvarying pleasure, tired of the monotonous circle of amusement, the other became each day more and more enamored of a life so unchanging in its happiness. What was uniformity to Lady Hester, imparted a sense of security to Kate. It was not alone the splendor that surrounded her, the thousand objects of taste and elegance that seemed to multiply around them, that captivated her so much; it was the absence of all care, the freedom from every thought that this state was a mere passing one. This Kate felt to be the very highest of enjoyments, and when at night she whispered to herself, "To-morrow will be like to-day," she had said everything that could brighten anticipation.

Her father's letter was the first shock to this delightful illusion. Her own false position of splendor, in contrast to his poverty, now came up palpably before her, and in place of those blissful reveries in which she often passed hours, there rose to her mind the bitter self-accusings of a penitent spirit. She never slept during the night; the greater part of it she spent in tears. Her absence from home, brief as it was, was quite enough to make her forget much of its daily life. She could, it is true, recall the penury and the privation, but not the feelings that grew out of them. "How changed must he have become to stoop to this!" was the exclamation that she uttered again and again. "Where was all that Dalton pride they used to boast of? What became of that family dignity which once was their bulwark against every blow of fortune?"

To these thoughts succeeded the sadder one, of, what course remained for her to adopt? A difficulty the greater, since she but half understood what was required of her. He spoke of a bill, and yet the letter contained none: before she broke the seal, it felt as though there was an enclosure, yet she found none; and if there were, of what use would it be? It was perfectly impossible that she could approach Sir Stafford with such a request; every sense of shame, delicacy, and self-respect, revolted at the very thought. Still less could she apply to Lady Hester, whose extravagant and wasteful habits always placed her in want of money; and yet to refuse her father on grounds which he would deem purely selfish was equally out of the question. She well knew that in a moment of anger and impatience—stung by what he would call the ingratitude of his children—he would probably himself write to Sir Stafford, narrating every circumstance that drove him to the step. Oh, that she had never left him—never ceased to live the life of want and hardship to which time had accustomed her! all the poverty she had ever known brought no such humiliation as this! Poor Nelly's lot now was a hundred-fold superior to hers. She saw, too, that, reserve once broken on such a theme, her father would not scruple to renew the application as often as he needed money. It was clear enough that he saw no embarrassment, nor any difficulty for her in the matter; that it neither could offend her feelings, nor compromise her position. Could she descend to an evasive or equivocal reply, his temper would as certainly boil over, and an insulting letter would at once be addressed to Sir Stafford. Were she to make the request and fail, he would order her home, and under what circumstances should she leave the house of her benefactors! And yet all this was better than success.

In such harassing reflections warring and jarring in her mind, the long hours of the night were passed. She wept, too; the bitterest tears are those that are wrung from shame and sorrow mingled. Many a generous resolve, many a thought of self-devotion and sacrifice, rose to her mind; at moments, she would have submitted herself to any wound to self-esteem to have

obtained her father's kind word; and at others, all the indignity of a false position overwhelmed her; and she cried as if her very heart were bursting.

Wearied and fevered, she arose and went into the garden. It was one of the brilliant mornings which—for a week or ten days, in Italy—represent the whole season of spring. Although still early, the sun was hot, and the flowers and shrubs, refreshed by the heavy dew, were bursting out into renewed luxuriancy in the warm glow. The fountains sparkled, and the birds were singing, and all seemed animated by that joyous spirit which seems the very breath of early morning. All save poor Kate, who, with bent-down head and slow step, loitered along the walks, lost in her gloomiest thoughts.

To return home again was the only issue she could see to her difficulties, to share the humble fortunes of her father and sister, away from a world in which she had no pretension to live! And this, too, just when that same world had cast its fascinations round her—just when its blandishments had gained possession of her heart, and made her feel that all without its pale was ignoble and unworthy. No other course seemed, however, to offer itself, and she had just determined on its adoption, when the short, quick step of some one following her made her turn her head. As she did so, her name was pronounced, and Mr. Albert Jekyl, with his hat courteously removed, advanced towards her.

"I see with what care Miss Dalton protects the roses of her cheeks," said he, smiling; "and yet how few there are that know this simple secret."

"You give me a credit I have no claim to, Mr. Jekyl. I have almost forgotten the sight of a rising sun, but this morning I did not feel quite well—a headache—a sleepless night——"

"Perhaps caused by anxiety," interposed he, quietly. "I wish I had discovered your loss in time, but I only detected that it must be yours when I reached home."

"I don't comprehend you," said she, with some hesitation.

"Is not this yours, Miss Dalton?" said he, producing the bill, which had fallen unseen from her father's letter. "I found it on the floor of the small boudoir, and not paying much attention to it at the time, did not perceive the signature, which would at once have betrayed the ownership."

"It must have dropped from a letter I was reading," said Kate, whose cheek was now scarlet, for she knew Jekyl well enough to be certain that her whole secret was by that time in his hands. Slighter materials than this would have sufficed for his intelligence to construct a theory upon. Nothing in his manner, however, evinced this knowledge, for he handed her the paper with an air of most impassive quietude; while, as if to turn her thoughts from any unpleasantness of the incident, he said:

"You haven't yet heard, I suppose, of Lady Hester's sudden resolve to quit Florence?"

"Leave Florence! and for where?" asked she, hurriedly.

"For Midchekoff's villa at Como. We discussed it all last night after you left, and in twenty-four hours we are to be on the road."

"What is the reason of this hurried departure?"

"The Ricketts invasion gives the pretext; but of course you know better than I do what a share the novelty of the scheme lends to its attractions."

"And we are to leave this to-morrow?" said Kate, rather to herself than for her companion.

Jekyl marked well the tone and the expression of the speaker, but said not a word.

Kate stood for a few seconds lost in thought. Her difficulties were thickening around her, and not a gleam of light shone through the gloomy future before her. At last, as it were, overpowered by the torturing anxieties of her situation, she covered her face with her hands to hide the tears that would gush forth in spite of her.

"Miss Dalton will forgive me," said Jekyl, speaking in a low and most respectful voice, "if I step for once from the humble path I have tracked for myself in life, and offer my poor services as her adviser."

Nothing could be more deferential than the speech, or the way in which it was uttered, and yet Kate heard it with a sense of pain. She felt that her personal independence was already in peril, and that the meek and bashful Mr. Jekyl had gained a mastery over her. He saw all this, he read each struggle of her mind, and, were retreat practicable, he would have retreated; but, the step once taken, the only course was "forwards."

"Miss Dalton may reject my counsels, but she will not despise the devotion in which they are proffered. A mere accident"—here he glanced at the paper which she still held in her fingers—"a mere accident has shown me that you have a difficulty; one for which neither your habits

nor knowledge of life can suggest the solution." He paused, and a very slight nod from Kate emboldened him to proceed. "Were it not so, Miss Dalton—were the case one for which your own exquisite tact could suffice, I never would have ventured on the liberty. I, who have watched you with wondering admiration, directing and guiding your course amid shoals, and reefs, and quicksands, where the most skillful might have found shipwreck, it would have been hardihood indeed for *me* to have offered my pilotage. But here, if I err not greatly, here is a new and unknown sea, and here I may be of service to you."

"Is it so plain, then, what all this means?" said Kate, holding out the bill towards Jekyl.

"Alas! Miss Dalton," said he, with a faint smile, "these are no enigmas to us who mix in all the worries and cares of life."

"Then, how do you read the riddle?" said she, almost laughing at the easy flippancy of his tone.

"Mr. Dalton, being an Irish gentleman of a kind disposition and facile temper, suffers his tenantry to run most grievously into arrear. They won't pay, and he won't make them; his own creditors, having no sympathy with such proceedings, become pressing and importunate; Mr. Dalton grows angry, and they grow irritable; he makes his agent write to *them*, they 'instruct' their attorney to write to *him*. Mr. D. is puzzled, and were it not that ——But, may I go on?"

"Of course; proceed," said she, smiling.

"You'll not be offended, though?" said he, "because, if I have not the privilege of being frank, I shall be worthless to you."

"There is no serious offense without intention."

"Very true; but I do not wish there should be even a trivial transgression."

"I'm not afraid. Go on," said she, nodding her head.

"Where was I, then? Oh! I remember. I said that Mr. Dalton, seeing difficulties thickening and troubles gathering, suddenly bethinks him that he has a daughter, a young lady of such attractions that, in a society where wealth and splendor and rank hold highest place, her beauty has already established a dominion which nothing, save her gentleness, prevents being a despotism."

"Mr. Jekyl mistakes the part of a friend when he becomes flatterer."

"There is no flattery in a plain, unadorned truth," said he, hastily.

"And were it all as you say," rejoined she, speaking with a heightened color and a flashing eye, "how could such circumstances be linked with those you spoke of?"

"Easily enough, if I did but dare to tell it," was his reply.

"It is too late for reserve; go on freely," said she, with a faint sigh.

Jekyl resumed:

"Mr. Dalton knows—there are thousands could have told him so—that his daughter may be a princess to-morrow if she wishes it. She has but to choose her rank and her nationality, and there is not a land in Europe in whose peerage she may not inscribe her name. It is too late for reserve," said he, quickly, "and consequently too late for resentment. You must not be angry with me now: I am but speaking in your presence what all the world says behind your back. Hearing this, and believing it, as all believe it, what is there more natural than that he should address himself to her at whose disposal lies all that wealth can compass? The sun bestows many a gleam of warmth and brightness before he reaches the zenith. Do not mistake me. This request was scarcely fair; it was ill-advised. Your freedom should never have been jeoparded for such a mere trifle. Had your father but seen with his own eyes your position here, he would never have done this; but, being done, there is no harm in it."

"But what am I to do?" said Kate, trembling with embarrassment and vexation together.

"Send the money, of course," said he, coolly.

"But how—from what source?"

"Your own benevolence—none other," said he, as calmly. "There is no question of a favor; no stooping to an obligation necessary. You will simply give your promise to repay it at some future day, not specifying when; and I will find a banker but too happy to treat with you."

"But what prospect have I of such ability to pay? what resources can I reckon upon?"

"You will be angry if I repeat myself," said Jekyl, with deep humility.

"I am already angry with myself that I should have listened to your proposal so indulgently; my troubles must, indeed, have affected me deeply when I so far forget myself."

Jekyl dropped his head forward on his breast, and looked a picture of sorrow; after a while he said:

"Sir Stafford Onslow would, I well know,

but be honored by your asking him the slight favor; but I could not counsel you to do so. Your feelings would have to pay too severe a sacrifice, and hence I advise making it a mere business matter; depositing some ornament—a necklace you were tired of, a bracelet, anything—in fact, a nothing—and thus there is neither a difficulty nor a disclosure."

"I have scarcely anything," said Kate; "and what I have, have been all presents from Lady Hester."

"Morlache would be quite content with your word," said Jekyl, blandly.

"And if I should be unable to acquit the debt, will these few things I possess be sufficient to do it?"

"I should say double the amount, as a mere guess."

"Can I—dare I take your counsel?" cried she, in an accent of intense anxiety.

"Can you reject it, when refusal will be so bitter?"

Kate gave a slight shudder, as though that pang was greater than all the rest.

"There is fortunately no difficulty in the matter whatever," said Jekyl, speaking rapidly. "You will, of course, have many things to purchase before you leave this. Well; take the carriage and your maid, and drive to the Ponte Vecchio. The last shop on the right-hand side of the bridge is Morlache's. It is unpromising enough outside, but there is wealth within to subsidize a kingdom. I will be in waiting to receive you, and in a few minutes the whole will be concluded; and if you have your letter ready, you can enclose the sum, and post it at once."

If there were many things in this arrangement which shocked Kate, and revolted against her sense of delic icy and propriety, there was one counterpoise more than enough to outweigh them all: she should be enabled to serve her father—she, who alone of all his children had never contributed, save by affection, to his comfort, should now materially assist him. She knew too well the sufferings and anxieties his straitened fortune cost him—she witnessed but too often the half-desperation in which he would pass days, borne down and almost broken-hearted; and she had witnessed that outbreak of joy he would indulge in when an unexpected help had suddenly lifted him from the depth of his poverty. To be the messenger of such good tidings—to be associated in his mind with this assistance—to win his fervent "God bless you!"—she would have put life itself in peril; and when Jekyl placed so palpably before her the promptitude with which the act could be accomplished, all hesitation ceased, and she promised to be punctual at the appointed place by three o'clock that same afternoon.

"It is too early to expect to see Lady Hester," said Jekyl; "indeed, my real business here this morning was with yourself, so that now I shall drive out to Midchekoff's and make all the arrangements about the villa. Till three, then, good-bye!"

"Good-bye," said Kate, for the first time disposed to feel warmly to the little man, and half reproach herself with some of the prejudices she used to entertain regarding him.

Jekyl now took his way to the stables, and ordering a brougham to be got ready for him, sauntered into the house, and took his coffee while he waited.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

RACCA MORLACHE.

There is something of mediæval look and air about the Ponte Vecchio in Florence, which gives it a peculiar interest to the traveler. The quaint little low shops on either side, all glittering with gold and gems—the gorgeous tiaras of diamonds—the richly-enameled cups and vases aside of the grotesque ornaments of peasant costume—the cumbrous earrings of stamped gold—the old-fashioned clasps and buckles of massive make—the chains fashioned after long-forgotten models—the strings of Oriental pearls, costly and rare enough for queens to wear—are all thrown about in a rich profusion, curiously in contrast to the humble sheds—for they are little more—that hold them.

The incessant roll of equipages—the crowd and movement of a great city—the lingering peasant, gazing with rapturous eyes at the glittering wares—the dark, Israelitish face that peers from within—the ever-flowing tide of population of every rank and age and country, giving a bustle and animation to the scene, so beautifully relieved by the view that opens on the center of the bridge, and where, in a vacant space, the Arno is seen wending peacefully along, and scattering its circling eddies beneath the graceful arches of the "Santa Trinitá;" that little glimpse of hill, and vineyard, and river, the cypress-clad heights of San Miniato, and the distant mountain of Valombrosa, more beautiful far than all the gold Pactolus ever rolled,

or all the gems that ever glittered on crown or coronet.

There was one stall at the end of the bridge, so humble-looking, and so scantily provided, that no stranger was seen to linger beside it. A few coral ornaments for peasant wear, some stamped medals for pious use, and some of those little silver tokens hung up by devout hands as votive offerings at a holy shrine, were all that appeared, while, as if to confirm the impression of the scanty traffic that went on, the massive door was barred and bolted like the portal of a prison; an almost erased inscription, unrenewed for nigh half a century, told that this was the shop of "Racca Morlache."

There may have been much of exaggeration in the stories that went of the Jew's enormous wealth; doubtless, many of the accounts were purely fabulous; but one fact is certain, that from that lowly roof went forth sums sufficient to maintain the credit of many a tottering state, or support the cost of warlike struggles to replace a dynasty. To him came the heads of despotic governments—the leaders of rebellious democracy—the Russian and the Circassian—the Carlist and the Cristino. To the proud champion of divine right, or the fearless promulgator of equality, to all he was accessible; solvency and his profit were requirements he could not dispense with; but, for the rest, in what channel of future good and evil his wealth was to flow, whether to maintain a throne, or sap its foundation—to uphold a faith, or to desecrate its altars—to liberate a people, or to bind their fetters more closely, were cares that sat lightly on his heart.

He might, with his vast means, have supported a style like royalty itself. There was no splendor nor magnificence he need have denied himself; nor, as the world goes, any society from which he should be debarred—gold is the picklock to the doors of palaces as of prisons; but he preferred this small and miserable habitation, which for above two centuries had never borne any other name than the "Casa Morlache."

Various reasons were given out for a choice so singular; among others, it was said that the grand duke was accustomed to visit the Jew by means of a secret passage from the "Pitti," while some alleged that the secret frequenters of Morlache's abode all came by water, and that, in the dark night, many a boat skimmed the Arno, and directed its course to the last arch of the Ponte Vecchio. With these rumors we have no concern, nor with Morlache himself have we more than a passing business.

When Kate Dalton had driven up to the door, she had all but determined to abandon her intention. The arguments, which in the morning had taken her by surprise, seemed now weak and futile, and she was shocked with herself for even the momentary yielding to Jekyl's counsels. Her only doubt was whether to drive on without further halt, or leave some short message, to the effect that she had called, but could not delay there. This seemed the better and more courteous proceeding; and while she was yet speaking to the dark-eyed, hook-nosed boy who appeared at the door, Jekyl came up.

"Be quick, Miss Dalton! Don't lose an instant," said he. "Morlache is going to the palace, and we shall miss him."

"But I have changed my mind. I have resolved not to accept this assistance. It is better—far better, that I should not."

"It is too late to think of that now," said he, interrupting, and speaking with some slight degree of irritation.

"How too late? What do you mean?"

"That I have already told Morlache the whole story, and obtained his promise for the loan."

"Oh, sir! why have you done this?" cried she, in a voice of anguish.

"I had your free permission for it, Miss Dalton. When we parted this morning the matter was fully agreed on between us; but still, if you desire to retract, your secret is in safe keeping. Morlache never betrays a confidence."

"And he has heard my name!" cried she, in a broken, sobbing tone.

"Not for the first time, be assured. Even Crœsus looked up from his ingots to ask if it were 'la belle Dalton;' and when I said 'Yes,' 'That's enough,' replied he; 'would that all my money had so safe investment!' But stay; there is Purvis yonder. He is pretending to examine an eyeglass in that shop opposite, but I see well that he is there only *en vedette*."

"What shall I do?" exclaimed the poor girl, now torn by impulses and emotions the most opposite.

"One thing you must do at once," said Jekyl; "get out of the carriage and visit two or three of the shops, as if in quest of some article of jewelry. His anxiety to learn the precise object of your search will soon draw him from his 'lair.'"

The decision of this counsel, almost like a command, so far imposed upon Kate that she at once descended, and took Jekyl's arm along the bridge. They had not gone many yards, when the short, little, shuffling step of Purvis was heard behind them.

Lingering to gaze at some of the splendid objects exposed for sale, they at last reached a very splendid stall, where diamonds, pearls, and rubies lay in heaps of gorgeous profusion. And now Purvis had stationed himself exactly behind them, with his head most artistically adjusted to hear everything that passed between them.

Jekyl seemed to feel his presence as if by an instinct, and, without ever turning his eye from the glass-case, said, in a voice of some disparagement:

"All modern settings!—very lustrous—very brilliant, but not at all what we are looking for."

Kate made no reply; for, while she had scruples about abetting a mere scheme, she was not the less eager to be free of the presence of the "Great Inquisitor."

"That, perhaps," said Jekyl, pointing to a magnificent cross of brilliants, "would not go ill with the necklace, although the stones are smaller. Say something—anything," added he, in a lower tone; "the spell is working."

"That is very handsome," said Kate, pointing at a venture to an object before her.

"So it is," said Jekyl, quickly. "Let us see what value they place upon it. Oh, here is Mr. Purvis—how fortunate! perhaps in all Florence there is not one so conversant with all that concerns taste and elegance, and, as an old resident, happily exempt from all the arts and wiles played off upon our countrymen."

"How d'ye do—d'ye do?" cried Purvis, shaking hands with both. "You heard of the bl-bl-blunder I made last night about the ar-archduke?"

"Not a word of it," replied Jekyl.

"I told him he was a-a-a fool," cried Purvis, with a scream and a cackle that very constantly followed any confession of an impertinence.

"Meno male!" exclaimed Jekyl. "Even princes ought to hear truth sometimes; but you can help us here. Mr. Purvis, do you see that châtelaine yonder, with a large emerald pendant? Could you ascertain the price of it for Miss Dalton? They'll not attempt to extortionate upon *you*, which they would, assuredly, if *she* entered the shop."

"To be sure; I'll do it with pl-pleasure. Who is it for?"

"That's a secret, Mr. Purvis; but *you* shall hear it afterwards."

"I guess al-ready," said Scroope, with a cunning leer. "You're going to be m-m-m-married, ain't you?"

"Mr. Purvis, Mr. Purvis, I must call you to order," said Jekyl, who saw that very little more would make the scene unendurable to Kate.

"I hope it's not an It-It-Italian fellow; for they're all as poor as Laza-Laza-Laza——"

"Yes, yes, of course; we know that: your discretion is invaluable," said Jekyl; "but pray step in, and ask this question for us."

"I'll tell who'll do better," said Purvis, who, once full of a theme, never paid any attention to what was said by others. "Midche-Midche-Midche-k-k-off! he owns half of——"

"Never mind what he owns, but remember that Miss Dalton is waiting all this time," said Jekyl, who very rarely so far lost command of his temper; and at last Purvis yielded and entered the shop.

"Come now," said Jekyl to his companion; "it will take him full five minutes to say 'châtelaine,' and before that we shall be safely housed." And with these words he hurried her along, laughing, in spite of all her anxieties, at the absurdity of the adventure. "He'll see the carriage when he comes out," added he, "and so I'll tell the coachman to drive slowly on towards the Pitti." And thus, without asking her consent, he assumed the full guidance at once, and, ere she well knew how or why, she found herself within the dark and dusky precincts of Morlache's shop.

Jekyl never gave Kate much time for hesitation, but hurried her along through a narrow passage, from which a winding flight of stone steps led downwards to a considerable distance, and at last opened upon a neat little chamber on the level of the Arno, the window opening on the stream, and only separated from it by a little terrace, covered with geraniums in full flower. There was a strange, undulating motion that seemed communicated from the stream to the apartment, which Jekyl at once explained to his companion as a contrivance for elevating and depressing the chamber with the changes in the current of the river, otherwise the room must have been under water for a considerable portion of the year. While he descanted on the ingenuity of the mechanism, and pointed attention to the portraits along the walls—the kings and kaisers with whom Morlache had held moneyed relations—the minutes slipped on, and Jekyl's powers as a talker were called upon to speak against time, the fidgety nervousness of his manner, and the frequent glances he bestowed at the timepiece, showing how impatiently he longed for the Jew's arrival. To all Kate's scruples he opposed some plausible

pretext, assuring her that, if she desired it, no mention should be made of the loan; that the visit might be as one of mere curiosity, to see some of those wonderful gems which had once graced the crowns of royalty; and that, in any case, the brief delay would disembarrass them on the score of Purvis, whose spirit of inquiry would have called him off in some other direction. At last, when now upwards of half an hour had elapsed, and no sound nor sight bore token of the Jew's coming, Jekyl resolved to go in search of him, and, requesting Kate to wait patiently for a few minutes, he left the room.

At first, when she found herself alone, every noise startled and terrified her; the minutes, as she watched the clock, seemed drawn out to hours; she listened with an aching anxiety for Jekyl's return, while, with a sorrowing heart, she reproached herself for ever having come there. To this state of almost feverish excitement succeeded a low and melancholy depression, in which the time passed without her consciousness; the half-dulled sounds of the city, the monotonous plash of the stream as it flowed past, the distant cries of the boatmen as they guided their swift barks down the strong current, aiding and increasing a feeling that was almost lethargic. Already the sun had sunk below the hills, and the tall palaces were throwing their giant shadows across the river, the presage of approaching night, and still she sat there all alone. Jekyl had never returned, nor had any one descended the stairs since his departure. Twice had she shaken off the dreamy stupor that was over her, and tried to find the door of the chamber, but, concealed in the wainscoting, it defied her efforts; and now, worn out with anxiety, and disappointed, she sat down beside the window, gazing listlessly at the water, and wondering when and how her captivity was to end.

The lamps were now being lighted on the quays, and long columns of light streaked the dark river. Across these a black object was seen to glide, and as it passed, Kate could perceive it was a boat that advanced slowly against the current, and headed up the stream. As she watched, it came nearer and nearer; and now she could hear distinctly the sound of voices talking in French. What, however, was her surprise when, instead of making for the center arches of the bridge, the boat was vigorously impelled across the river, and its course directed towards the very place where she sat.

However painful her situation before, now it became downright agony. It was clear there were persons coming; in another moment she would be discovered, unable to explain by what course of events she had come there, and thus, exposed to every surmise and suspicion that chance or calumny might originate. In that brief, but terrible moment, what self-accusings, what reproaches of Jekyl crossed her mind; and yet all these were as nothing to the misery which coming events seemed full of. For a second or two she stood irresolute, and then, with something like an instinct of escape, she stepped out upon the little terrace that supported the flowers, and, trembling with fear, took her stand beneath the shadow of one of the great buttresses of the bridge. The frail and half-rotten timbers creaked and bent beneath her weight, and close under her feet rolled along the dark river, with a low and sullen sound like moaning. Meanwhile the boat came nearer, and slowly gliding along, was at last brought up at the window. Two figures passed into the chamber, and the boatmen, as if performing a long-accustomed task, rowed out a few lengths into the stream to wait.

From the window, which still remained open, a stream of light now issued, and Kate's quick hearing could detect the rustling sound of papers on the table.

"There they are," said a voice, the first accents of which she knew to belong to the Abbé D'Esmonde. "There they are, Signor Morlache. We have no concealments nor reserve with you. Examine them for yourself. You will find reports from nearly every part of the kingdom, some more, some less, favorable in their bearings, but all agreeing in the main fact, that the cause is a great one, and the success all but certain."

"I have told you before," said the Jew, speaking in a thick, guttural utterance, "that *my* sympathies never lead me into expense. Every solvent cause is good, every bankrupt one the reverse, in my estimation."

"Even upon that ground I am ready to meet you. The committee——"

"Ay, who are the committee?" interrupted the Jew, hastily.

"The committee contains some of the first Catholic names of Ireland; men of landed fortune and great territorial influence, together with several of the higher clergy."

"The bishops?"

"The bishops almost to a man are with us in heart; but their peculiar position requires the most careful and delicate con-

duct. No turn of fortune must implicate *them*, or our cause is lost forever."

"If your cause be all you say it is—if the nationality be so strong, and the energies so powerful as you describe—why not try the issue, as the Italians and the Hungarians are about to do?" said Morlache. "I can understand a loan for a defined and real object; the purchase of military stores and equipment, to provide arms and ammunition; and I can understand how the lender, too, could calculate his risk of profit or loss on the issue of the struggle; but here, you want half a million sterling, and for what?"

"To win a kingdom!" cried D'Esmonde, enthusiastically. "To bring back to the fold of the Church the long-lost sheep; and make Ireland, as she once was, the center of holy zeal and piety!"

"I am not a pope, nor a cardinal—not even a monsignore," said Morlache, with a bitter laugh. "You must try other arguments with *me;* and once more I say, why not join that party who already are willing to risk their lives in the venture?"

"Have I not told you what and who they are who form this party?" said D'Esmonde, passionately. "Read those papers before you. Study the secret reports sent from nearly every parish in the kingdom. In some you will find the sworn depositions of men on their death-beds—the last words their lips have uttered on earth—all concurring to show that Ireland has no hope save in the Church. The men who now stir up the land to revolt are not devoid of courage or capacity. They are bold, and they are able, but they are infidel! They would call upon their countrymen in the name of past associations—the wrongs of bygone centuries; they would move the heart by appeals, touching enough, heaven knows, to the galling sores of serfdom, but they will not light one fire upon the altar—they will not carry the only banner that should float in the van of an Irish army. Their bold denouncings may warn some, their poetry will, perhaps, move others; but their prose and verse, like themselves, will be forgotten in a few years, and, save a few grassy mounds in a village churchyard, or a prisoner's plaint sent over the sea from a land of banishment, nothing will remain of Ireland's patriots."

"England is too powerful for such assailants," said the Jew.

"Very true; but remember that the stout three-decker that never struck to an enemy has crumbled to ruin beneath the dry-rot," said D'Esmonde, with a savage energy of manner. "Such is the case now. All is rot and corruption within her; pauperism at home, rebellion abroad. The nobles more intolerant as the commonalty grows more ambitious; resources diminishing as taxation increases: disaffection everywhere—in the towns where they read, in the rural districts where they brood over their poverty; and lastly, but greatest of all, schism in the Church, a mutiny in that disorderly mass that never was disciplined to obedience. Are these the evidences of strength, or are they sure signs of coming ruin? Mark me," said he, hurriedly, "I do not mean for all this that such puny revolt as we are now to see can shake power like that of England. These men will have the same fate as Tone and Emmett, without the sympathy that followed them! They will fail, and fail egregiously; but it is exactly upon this failure that our hopes of success are based. Not a priest will join them. On the contrary, their scheme will be denounced from our altars; our flocks warned to stand aloof from their evil influence. Our bishops will be in close communication with the heads of the government; all the little coquetries of confidence and frankness will be played off; and our loyalty—that's the phrase—our loyalty stand high in public esteem. The very jeers and insults of our enemies will give fresh luster to our bright example, and our calm and dignified demeanor form the contrast to that rampant intolerance that assails us."

"But for all this classic dignity," said Morlache, sneeringly, "you need no money; such nobility of soul is, after all, the cheapest of luxuries."

"You are mistaken—mistaken egregiously," broke in D'Esmonde. "It is precisely at that moment that we shall require a strong friend behind us. The 'press' is all-powerful in England. If it does not actually guide, it is the embodiment of public opinion, without which men would never clothe their sentiments in fitting phrase, or invest them with those short and pithy apophthegms that form the watch-words of party. Happily, if it be great, it is venal; and although the price be a princely ransom, the bargain is worth the money. Fifty, or a hundred thousand pounds, at that nick, would gain our cause. We shall need many advocates; some, in assumed self-gratulation over their own prescience, in supporting our claims in time past, and reiterating the worn assertion of our attachment to the throne and the constitution; others, to contrast our bearing with the obtrusive loyalty of Orange-

ism; and others, again, going further than either, to proclaim that, but for us, Ireland would have been lost to England; and had not our allegiance stood in the breach, the cause of rebellion would have triumphed."

"And is this character for loyalty worth so much money?" said the Jew, slowly.

"Not as a mere empty name—not as a vain boast," replied D'Esmonde, quickly; "but if the tree be stunted, its fruits are above price. Our martyrdom will not go unrewarded. The moment of peril over, the season of concessions will begin. How I once hated the word!—how I used to despise those who were satisfied with these crumbs from the table of the rich man, not knowing that the time would come when we should sit at the board ourselves. Concession!—the vocabulary has no one word I'd change for it—it is conquest, dominion, sovereignty, all together. By concession, we may be all we strive for, but never could wrest by force. Now, my good Signor Morlache, these slow and sententious English are a most impulsive people, and are often betrayed into the strangest excesses of forgiveness and forgetfulness; insomuch, that I feel assured that nothing will be refused us, if we but play our game prudently."

"And what is the game?" said the Jew, with impatience; "for it seems to me that you are not about to strike for freedom, like the Hungarians or the Lombards. What, then, is the prize you strive for?"

"The Catholicism of Ireland, and then of England—the subjugation of the haughtiest rebel to the faith—the only one whose disaffection menaces our Holy Church; for the Lutheranism of the German is scarce worth the name of enemy. England once Catholic, the world is our own!"

The enthusiasm of his manner, and the excited tones of his round, full voice, seemed to check the Jew, whose cold, sarcastic features were turned towards the priest with an expression of wonderment.

"Let us come back from all this speculation to matter of plain fact," said Morlache, after a long pause. "What securities are offered for the repayment of this sum?—for, although the theme be full of interest to you, to me it has but the character of a commercial enterprise."

"But it ought not," said D'Esmonde, passionately. "The downfall of the tyranny of England is *your* case as much as *ours*. What Genoa and Venice were in times past, they may become again. The supremacy of the seas once wrested from that haughty power, the long-slumbering energies of Southern Europe will awaken; the great trading communities of the Levant will resume their ancient place, and the rich argosies of the East once more float over the waters of the tideless sea."

"Not in our time, abbé—not in our time," said the Jew smiling.

"But are we only to build for ourselves?" said D'Esmonde. "Was it thus your great forefathers raised the glorious Temple?"

The allusion called up but a cold sneer on the Israelite's dark countenance, and D'Esmonde knew better than to repeat a blow that showed itself to be powerless.

A tap at the door here broke in upon the colloquy, and Jekyl's voice was heard on the outside.

"Say you are engaged—that you cannot admit him," whispered D'Esmonde. "I do not wish that he should see me here."

"A thousand pardons, Morlache," said Jekyl, from without; "but when I followed you to the 'Pitti,' I left a young lady here—has she gone away, or is she still here?"

"I never saw her," said Morlache. "She must have left before I returned."

"Thanks—good-bye," said Jekyl; and his quick foot was heard ascending the stairs again.

"The night air grows chilly," said the abbé, as he arose and shut the window; and the boatmen, mistaking the sound for a summons to approach, pulled up to the spot.

With a sudden spring, Kate bounded into the boat, while yet some distance off, and hurriedly said, "To the stairs beside the Santa Trinitá."

The clink of money, as she took out her purse, made the brief command intelligible, and they shot down the stream with speed.

"Do not speak of me," said she, covering her face with her kerchief as she stepped from the boat; and a gold napoleon enforced the caution.

It was now night, the lamps were all lighted, and the streets crowded by that bustling throng of population whose hours of business or pleasure commence when day has closed. A thin drizzling rain was falling, and the footway was wet and muddy. Dressed in the height of fashion—all her attire suited to a carriage—Kate set out to walk homeward, with a heart sinking from terror. Many a time in her condition of poverty, with patched and threadbare cloak, had she traveled the dark road from Lichtenthal to Baden after night-

fall, fearless and undismayed, no dread of danger nor of insult occurring to her happy spirit, the "Gute nacht" of some homeward-bound peasant the only sound that saluted her; but now she was no longer in the secluded valley of the great Vaterland; her way led through the crowded thoroughfares of a great city, with all its crash, and noise, and movement.

If, in her wild confusion, she had no thought for each incident of the morning, her mind was full of "self-accusings." How explain to Lady Hester her long absence, and her return alone, and on foot? Her very maid, Nina, might arraign her conduct, and regard her with distrust and suspicion. How should she appear in Jekyl's eyes, who already knew her secret; and, lastly, what answer return to her poor father's letter—that letter which was the cause of all her misfortunes?

"I will tell him everything," said she to herself, as she went along. "I will detail the whole events of this morning, and he shall see that my failure has not come of lukewarmness. I will also strive to show him the nature of my position, and let him know the full extent of the sacrifice he would exact from me. If he persist, what then? Is it better to go back and share the poverty I cannot alleviate? But what alternative have I? Jekyl's flatteries are but fictions. Would I wish them to be otherwise? Alas! I cannot tell; I do not even know my own heart now! Oh, for one true-hearted friend to guide and counsel me!" She thought of George Onslow—rash, impetuous, and ardent; she thought of the priest, D'Esmonde—but the last scene in which he figured made her shrink with terror from the man of dark intrigues and secret wiles; she even thought of poor Hanserl, whom, in all the simplicity of his nature, she wished to have that moment beside her. "But *he* would say, 'Go back—return to the humble home you quitted—put away all the glittering gauds that are clinging to and grasping your very heart. Take, once more, your lowly place at hearth and board, and forget the bright dream of pleasure you have passed through.' But how forget it? Has it not become my hope, my very existence? How easy for those who have not tasted the intoxicating cup to say, 'Be cool of heart and head'! Nor am I what I was. How then go back to be that which I have ceased to be? Would that I had never left it! Would that I could live again in the dreamland of the poets that we loved so well, and wander with dearest Nellie through those forest glades, peopled with the creations of Uhland, Tieck, and Chamisso! What a glorious world is theirs, and how unlike the real one!"

Thus lost in thoughts conflicting and jarring with each other—mingling the long past with the distant future—hoping and fearing—now, seeking self-persuasion here; now, controverting her own opinions there—she walked hurriedly on, unconscious of the time, the place, and even the rude glances bestowed upon her by many who gazed at her with an insolent admiration. What an armor is innocence! how proof against the venomed dart of malice! Kate never knew the ordeal through which she was passing. She neither saw the looks nor heard the comments of those that passed. If her mind ever turned from the throng of thoughts that oppressed it, it was when some momentary difficulty of the way recalled her to herself, for, as she escaped from the smaller streets, the crowd and crash increased, and she found herself borne along as in a strong current.

"Does this lead to the Piazza Annunziata?" asked she of a woman at a fruit-stall.

"Tell her, Giacomo," said the woman to a youth, who, with a water-melon in his hand, lay at full length on the pavement.

"*Per Baccho!* but she's handsome!" said he, holding up the paper lantern to gaze at her. And Kate hurried on in terror.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STREET RENCONTER.

Lady Hester Onslow had passed a day of martyrdom. There was scarcely a single contrariety in the long catalogue of annoyances which had not fallen to her share. Her servants, habitually disciplined to perfection, had admitted every bore of her acquaintance, while, to the few she really wished to see, admittance had been denied. The rumor of an approaching departure had got wind through the servants, and the hall and the courtyard were crowded with creditors, duns, and begging impostors of every age, and class, and country. It seemed as if every one with a petition, or a bill, an unsatisfied complaint, or an unsettled balance, had given each other a general rendezvous that morning at the Mazzarini Palace.

It is well known how the most obsequious tradespeople grow peremptory when passports are signed and post-horses are harnessed. The bland courteousness with

which they receive "your ladyship's orders" undergoes a terrible change. Departure is the next thing to death. Another country sounds like another world. The deferential bashfulness that could not hint at the mention of money, now talks boldly of his debt. The solvent creditor, who said always "at your own convenience," has suddenly a most pressing call "to make up a large sum by Saturday."

All the little cajoleries and coquetries, all the little seductions and temptations of trade, are given up. The invitations to buy are converted into suggestions for "cash payment." It is very provoking, and very disenchanting! From a liberal and generous patron, you suddenly discover yourself transformed into a dubious debtor. All the halo that has surrounded your taste is changed for a chill atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. The tradesfolk, whose respectful voices never rose above a whisper in the hall, now grew clamorous in the antechamber; and more than once did they actually obtrude themselves in person within those charmed precincts inhabited by Lady Hester.

What had become of Miss Dalton?—where could she be all this while? Had not Mr. Jekyl called? What was he about that he had not "arranged" with all these "tiresome creatures"? Was there no one who knew what to do? Was not Captain Onslow, even, to be found? It was quite impossible that these people could be telling the truth; the greater number, if not all of them, must have been paid already, for she had spent a world of money latterly—"somehow." Célestine was charged with a message to this effect, which had a result the very opposite to what it was intended; and now the noisy tongues and angry accents grew bolder and louder. Still none came to her rescue; and she was left alone to listen to the rebellious threatenings that murmured in the court-yard, or to read the ill-spelled impertinences of such as preferred to epistolize their complaints.

The visitors who found their way to the drawing-room had to pass through this motley and clamorous host; and, at each opening of the door, the sounds swelled loudly out.

More than once she bethought her of Sir Stafford; but shame opposed the resolution. His liberality, indeed, was boundless; and therein lay the whole difficulty. Were the matter one for discussion or angry remonstrance, she could have adventured it without a dread. She could easily have brought herself to confront a struggle, but was quite unequal to an act of submission. Among the numerous visitors who now thronged the *salons*, Lord Norwood, who had just returned from his shooting excursion in the Maremma, was the only one with whom she had anything like intimacy.

"I am but a poor counselor in such a case," said he, laughing. "I was never dunned in my life—personally, I mean—for I always take care not to be found; and as to written applications, I know a creditor's seal and superscription as well as though I had seen him affix them. The very postmark is peculiar."

"This levity is very unfeeling at such a moment," said Lady Hester, angrily; "and when you see me so utterly deserted, too!"

"But where's Jekyl? He ought to know how to manage this!

"He has never been here since morning. His conduct is inexcusable!"

"And George?"

"Out the whole day!"

"And the 'Dalton,' for she has rather a good head, if I don't mistake her."

"She took the carriage into town, and has not returned."

"By Jove! I'd write a line to Sir Stafford; I'd tell him that I was going for change of air, and all that sort of thing, to Como for a week or two, and that these people were so pestering, and pressing, and all that; that, in fact, you were worried to death about it; and finding that your means were so very limited——"

"But he has been most liberal. His generosity has been without bounds."

"So much the better; he'll come down all the readier now."

"I feel shame at such a course," said she, in a weak, faint voice.

"As I don't precisely know what that sensation is, I can't advise against it; but it must needs be a very powerful emotion, if it prevent you accepting money."

"Can you think of nothing else, Norwood?"

"To be sure I can — there are twenty ways to do the thing. Close the shutters, and send for Buccellini; be ill—dangerously ill—and leave this to-morrow, at daybreak; or give a ball like Dashwood, and start when the company are at supper. You lose the spoons and forks, to be sure; but that can't be helped. You might try and bully them, too — though perhaps it's late for *that;* and lastly — and, I believe, best of all—raise a few hundreds, and pay them each something."

"But how or where raise the money?"

"Leave that to *me*, if it must be done. The great benefactor of mankind was the

fellow that invented bills. The glorious philanthropist that first devised the bright expedient of living by paper, when bullion failed, was a grand and original genius. How many a poor fellow might have been rescued from the Serpentine, by a few words scrawled over a five-shilling stamp! What a turn to a man's whole earthly career has been often given, as his pen glided over the imaginative phrase, 'I promise to pay'!"

Lady Hester paid no attention to the viscount's moralizings. Shame—indignant shame, monopolized all her feelings.

"Well," said she, at last, "I believe it must be so. I cannot endure this any longer. Jekyl has behaved shamefully; and George I'll never forgive. They ought to have taken care of all this. And now, Norwood, to procure the money, what is to be done?"

"Here's the patent treasury for pocket use—the 'Young Man's best Companion,'" said he, taking out of a black morocco-case three or four blank bill-stamps, together with a mass of acceptances of various kinds, the proceeds of various play debts, the majority of which he well knew to be valueless. "What amount will be sufficient—how much shall we draw for?" said he, seating himself, pen in hand, at the table.

"I cannot even guess," said she, trembling with embarrassment and confusion. "There are all these people's accounts and letters. I suppose they are all horrid cheats. I'm sure I never got half the things, and that the rest are already paid for. But no matter now; let us have done with them at any cost."

"'Morlandi, coachmaker'—pretty well for Signor Morlandi!" said Norwood—"eleven hundred scudi for repairs to carriages—for destroying your patent axles, and replacing English varnish by the lacquer of a tea-tray—something less than two hundred and fifty pounds!"

"He is an obliging creature," said Lady Hester, "and always punctual."

"In that case we'll deal generously with him. He shall have half his money, if he give a receipt in full."

"'Legendre, coiffeur; eight thousand francs.' Pas mal, Monsieur Legendre!—kid gloves and perfumes, madonna bands and Macassar oil, are costly things to deal in."

"That is really iniquitous," said Lady Hester. "I see every bouquet is put down at a hundred francs!"

"A conservatory, at that rate, is better property than a coal-mine. Shall we say one thousand francs for this honest coiffeur?"

"Impossible. He would scorn such an offer."

"Pardon me. I know these people somewhat better and longer than you do; and so far even from suffering in his estimation—if that were a matter of any consequence—you will rise in his good opinion. An Italian always despises a dupe, but entertains a sincere respect for all who detect knavery. I'll set him down for one thousand, to be increased to fifteen hundred if he'll tell me how to cut down his neighbor, Guercini."

"What of Guercini? How much is his claim?"

"A trifle under five thousand crowns."

"Nearly one thousand pounds!" exclaimed she.

"Say rather eleven hundred and upwards," said Norwood.

"It is incredible how little I've had from him; a few trifling rings and brooches; some insignificant alterations and new settings; one or two little presents to Kate; and, I really believe, nothing more."

"We are getting deeper and deeper," said Norwood, turning over the bills. "Contardo, the wine-merchant, and Frisani, table-decker, are both large claimants. If pine-apples were the daily food of the servants' hall, they could scarcely cut a more formidable figure in the reckoning—indeed, if the whole establishment did nothing but munch them during all their leisure hours, the score need not be greater. Do you know, Hester, that the rogueries of the continent are a far heavier infliction than the income-tax; and that the boasted economy of a foreign residence is sensibly diminished by the unfortunate fact, that one honest tradesman is not to be found from Naples to the north pole? They are Spartans in deceit, and only disgraced whenever the rascality is detected. Now, it is quite absurd to read such an item as this: 'Bonbons and dried fruits, three hundred and seventy crowns!' Why, if your guests were stuffed with *marrons glacés*, this would an exaggeration."

"You are very tiresome, Norwood," said she, peevishly. "I don't want to be told that these people are all knaves; their character for honesty is no affair of mine; if it were, Buccellini could easily mesmerize any of them and learn all his secrets. I only wish to get rid of them—it's very distressing to hear their dreadful voices, and see their more dreadful selves in the court beneath."

"The task is somewhat more difficult than I bargained for," said Norwood, thoughtfully. "I fancied a few 'hundreds'

would suffice, but we must read 'thousands,' instead. In any case, I'll hold a conference with them, and see what can be done."

"Do so, then, and lose no time, for I see Midchekoff's chasseur below, and I'm sure the prince is coming."

Norwood gave her a look which made her suddenly become scarlet, and then left the room without speaking.

If he had not been himself a debtor with the greater number of those who waited below, few could have acquitted themselves more adroitly in such a mission. He was an adept in that clever game by which duns are foiled and tradesmen mollified; he knew every little menace and every flattery to apply to them, when to soothe and when to snub them. All these arts he was both ready and willing to exercise, were it not for the unpleasant difficulty that his own embarrassments rendered him a somewhat dubious ambassador. In fact, as he himself phrased it, "it was playing advocate with one leg in the dock."

He lingered a little, therefore, as he went; he stopped on the landing of the stairs to peep out on the tumultuous assemblage beneath, like a general surveying the enemy's line before the engagement; nor was he overpleased to remark that little Purvis was bustling about among the crowd, note-book and pencil in hand, palpably taking evidence and storing up facts for future mention. As he was still looking, the great gate was thrown open with a crash, and a calèche, dirty and travel-stained, was whirled into the court by three steaming and panting posters. After a brief delay, a short, thick-set figure, enveloped in traveling gear, descended, and putting, as it seemed, a few questions as to the meaning of the assembled throng, entered the house.

Curious to learn who, what and whence the new arrival came, Norwood hurried downstairs, but all that he could learn from the postilion was, that the stranger had posted from Genoa, using the greatest speed all the way, and never halting, save a few minutes for refreshment. The traveler was not accompanied by a servant, and his luggage bore neither name nor crest to give any clue as to his identity. That he was English, and that he had gone direct to Sir Stafford's apartments, was the whole sum of the viscount's knowledge; but even this seemed so worthy of remark, that he hastened back with the tidings to Lady Hester, instead of proceeding on his errand. She treated the announcement with less interest. It might be Proctor—Sir Stafford's man. Was he tall, and black-whiskered? No, he was short; and, so far as Norwood saw, he thought him fair-haired. "She knew of nobody to bear that description. It might be an English physician from Genoa—there was one there. or in Nice, she forgot exactly which, who was celebrated for treating gout, or sore eyes—she could not remember precisely, but it was certainly one or the other. On recollection, however, it was probably gout, because he had attended Lord Hugmore, who was blind."

"In that case," said Norwood, "Onslow would seem to be worse."

"Yes, poor man, much worse. George sat up with him the night before last, and said he suffered terribly. His mind used to wander at intervals, too, and he spoke as if he was very unhappy."

"Unhappy—a man with upwards of thirty thousand a year—unhappy!" said Norwood, clasping his hands over his head as he spoke.

"You forget, my lord, that there are other considerations than moneyed ones which weigh at least with *some* persons; and if Onslow's fortune be a princely one, he may still feel compunctious regrets for his detestable conduct to *me!*"

"Oh, I forgot *that!*" said Norwood, with a most laudable air of seriousness.

"It was very kind of you, my lord—very considerate and very kind indeed, to forget it. Yet I should have fancied it was the very sentiment uppermost in the mind of any one entering this chamber—witnessing the solitary seclusion of my daily life—beholding the resources by which the weary hours are beguiled—not to speak of the ravages which sorrow has left upon these features."

"On that score, at least, I can contradict you, Hester," said he, with a smile of flattering meaning. "It is now above eight years since first——"

"How can you be so tiresome?" said she, pettishly.

"Prince Midchekoff, my lady, presents his compliments," said a servant, "and wishes to know if your ladyship will receive him at dinner to-day, and at what hour?"

"How provoking! Yes—say, 'Yes, at eight o'clock,'" said she, walking up and down the room with impatience. "You'll stay and meet him, Norwood; I know you're not great friends; but no matter, George is so uncertain—he left us t'other day to entertain the prince alone—Kate and myself—only fancy; and, as he takes half-hour fits of silence, and Kate occasionally won't

speak for a whole evening together, my part was a pleasant one."

"How Florence wrongs you both!" said Norwood; "they say that no one is more agreeable to your ladyship than the Midchekoff," said he, slowly and pointedly.

"As Miss Dalton's admirer—I hope rumor adds that," said she, hastily.

"What? Are you really serious? Has the Dalton pretensions?"

"Perhaps not; but the prince has," interrupted Lady Hester; "but you are forgetting these people all the while. Do pray, do something—anything with them; and don't forget us at eight o'clock." And with this Lady Hester hurried from the room, as if admonished by her watch of the lateness of the hour; but really anxious to escape further interrogatory from the viscount.

When Norwood reached the court, he was surprised to find it empty—not one of the eager creditors remained; but all was still and silent.

"What has become of these good people?" asked he of the porter.

"The stranger who arrived in the calèche a while ago spoke a few words to them, and they went."

This was all that he knew, and being a porter—one of that privileged caste, whose prerogative it is never to reveal what takes place before their eyes—his present communication was remarkable.

"Would that the good genius had remembered *me* in his moment of generous abandonment!" muttered Norwood, as he took his road homeward to dress for dinner.

Little scrupulous about the means of getting out of a difficulty, provided it were only successful, Norwood scarcely bestowed another thought upon the whole matter, and lounged along the streets as forgetful of the late scene as though it had passed twenty years before.

As the viscount strolled along towards his lodgings, Kate Dalton, with trembling limbs and palpitating heart, threaded her way through the thronged streets now wet and slippery from a thin rain that was falling. So long as her road lay through the less-frequented thoroughfares, her appearance excited little or no attention in the passers-by; but when she entered the Piazza Santa Trinitá, all ablaze with gas-lamps, and the reflected lights from brilliant shops, many stopped, turned, and gazed at the strange sight of a young and beautiful girl, attired in the very height of fashion, being alone and afoot at such an hour. Unaccountable even to mystery, as it seemed, there was something in her gait and carriage that at once repelled the possibility of a disparaging impression, and many touched or removed their hats respectfully as they made way for her to pass. To avoid the carriages, which whirled past in every direction and at tremendous speed, she passed close along by the houses, and, in doing so, came within that brilliant glare of light that poured from the glass doors of the great café of the Piazza. It was exactly the hour when the idle loungers of Florence society—that listless class who form the staple of our club life in England—were swarming to talk of the plans of the evening, what resources of pleasure were available, and what receptions were open. The drizzling rain, and the cold, raw feeling of the air, prevented their being seated, as their custom was, before the doors, where in every attitude of graceful languor they habitually smoked their cigars and discussed the passers-by, in all the plenitude of recreative indolence. The group consisted of men of every age and country.

There were princes, and blacklegs, and adventurers: some with real rank and fortune; others as destitute of character as of means. Many owned names great and renowned in history; others bore designations only chronicled in the records of criminal jurisprudence. All were well dressed, and, so far as cursory notice could detect, possessed the ease and bearing of men familiar with the habits of good society. Although mixing in very distinct circles, here, at least, they met every day on terms of familiar equality, discussing the politics of the hour and the events of the world with seeming frankness and candor.

From a small chamber at the back of the café a little tide of loungers seemed to ebb and flow, while the sharp rattling sound of a dice-box indicated the nature of the occupation that went forward there. The small apartment was thronged with spectators of the game, and even around the door several were standing, content to hear the tidings of a contest they could not witness.

"To sit upon the Ponte Carraja, and chuck rouleaux of gold into the Arno, would be to the full as amusing, and not a more costly pastime," said a sharp, ringing voice, which, once heard, there was no difficulty in recognizing as Haggerstone's.

"But Onslow plays well," said another.

"When he's in luck, sir," said the colonel. "Let him always have the winning horse to ride, and I don't say he'll lose the saddle; but Maraffi would win on a donkey."

"Is he a Russian?" asked one.

"No, sir, he's worse; he's a Greek. I know everything about him. His mother was a Finlander, and the father a Cephalonian. I don't think Satan himself would ask a better parentage."

"What luck! By Jove! I never saw such luck!" said a voice from within the door. "Onslow has no chance with him."

"Nor will you, sir, if you persist in expressing your opinion in English," said Haggerstone. "Maraffi speaks every language, plays every game, and knows the use of every weapon, from a jereed to a Joe Manton."

"I'll not test his abilities at any of them," said the other, laughing.

"*Per Baccho!* there goes something new," said a young Italian, from the window that looked into the street. "Who's she?"

"*Diantre!*" said the old Duc de Parivaux. "That is something very exquisite indeed. She was splashed by that carriage that passed, and I just saw her foot."

"She's the prima donna from Milan."

"She's the Cipriani. I know her figure perfectly."

"She's very like the Princesse de Raoule."

"Taller and younger."

"And fifty times handsomer. What eyes! By Jove! I wish that drosky would never more on! She is regularly imprisoned there."

"You are very ungallant, gentlemen, I must say," said the young Count de Guilmard, the French secretary of legation, who, having finished his coffee and liqueur, coolly arranged his curls beneath his hat before the glass—"very ungallant indeed, not to offer an arm to an unprotected princess. We Frenchmen understand our 'devoirs' differently." And, so saying, he passed out into the street, while the rest pressed up closer to the window to observe his proceedings.

"Cleverly done, Guilmard!" cried one. "See how he affects to have protected her from the pole of that carriage."

"She'll not notice him."—"She will."—"She has."—"She hasn't."—"She is moving his way!"—"Not at all."—"She's speaking!"—"There, I told you he'd succeed."—"But he hasn't, though." Amid all these phrases, which rattled on more rapidly than we can write them, Onslow joined the party, one heavy venture on a single card having involved him in a tremendous loss.

"Is that a countrywoman of yours, Onslow?" asked a young Russian noble. "If so, the *entente cordiale* with France seems scarcely so secure as statesmen tell us."

Onslow gave one glance through the window, and dashed into the street with a bound like the spring of a wild animal. He threw himself between Guilmard and Kate. The Frenchman lifted his cane, and the same instant he fell backwards upon the pavement, rather hurled than struck down by the strong arm of the young Guardsman. Before the lookers-on could hasten out, George had hailed a carriage, and, assisting Kate in, took his seat beside her, and drove off.

So sudden was the whole incident, and so engrossing the terror of poor Kate's mind, that she saw nothing of what passed, and was merely conscious that by George's opportune coming she was rescued from the insolent attentions of the stranger.

"Did he speak to you? Did he dare to address you?" asked Onslow, in a voice which boiling passion rendered almost unintelligible.

"If he did, I know not," said she, as she covered her face with shame, and struggled against the emotion that almost choked her.

"He took your arm—he certainly laid hold of your hand!"

"It was all so rapid that I can tell nothing," said she, sobbing; "and although my courage never failed me till you came, *then* I thought I should have fainted."

"But how came you alone and on foot, and at such an hour, too? Where had you been?"

These questions he put with a sort of stern resolution that showed no evasive answer would rescue her.

"Did you leave home without a carriage, or even a servant?" asked he again, as no answer was returned to his former question.

"I did take a carriage in the morning; and—and——"

"Sent it away again," continued George, impetuously. "And where did you drive to—where pass the day?"

Kate hung her head in silence, while her heart felt as if it would burst from very agony.

"This is no idle curiosity of mine, Miss Dalton," said he, speaking with a slow and measured utterance. "The society you have mixed with here is not above any reproach, nor beneath any suspicion. I insist upon knowing where you have been, and with whom? So, then, you refuse to speak—you will not tell. If it be Lady Hester's secret——"

"No, no! The secret is mine, and mine onl[illegible] [illegible]wear to you, by all we both be

lieve in, that it has no concern with any one save myself."

"And can you not confide it to me? Have I no right to ask for the confidence, Kate?" said he, with tenderness. "Know you any one more deeply and sincerely your friend than I am—more ready to aid, protect, or counsel you?"

"But this I cannot—must not tell you," said she, in accents broken by sobbing.

"Let me know, at least, enough to refute the insolence of an imputation upon your conduct. I cannot tamely sit by and hear the slanderous stories that, to-morrow or next day, will gain currency through the town."

"I cannot—I cannot," was all that she could utter.

"If not me, then, choose some other defender. Unprotected and undefended you must not be."

"I need none, sir; none will asperse me!" said she, haughtily.

"What! you say this, while scarce five minutes since I saw you outraged—insulted in the open street?"

A burst of tears, long repressed, here broke from Kate, and for some minutes her sobs alone were heard in the silence.

"I will ask but one question more, Miss Dalton," said George, slowly, as the carriage passed under the arched gateway of the palace, "and then this incident is sealed to me forever. Is this secret—whatever it be—in your own sole keeping; or is your confidence shared in by another?"

"It is," murmured Kate, below her breath.

"You mean that it is shared?" asked he, eagerly.

"Yes: Mr. Jekyl at least knows——"

"Jekyl!" cried George, passionately; "and is Alfred Jekyl your adviser and your confidant? Enough, you have told me quite enough," said he, dashing open the door of the carriage as it drew up to the house. He gave his hand to Kate to alight, and then, turning away, left her, without even a "good-bye," while Kate hurried to her room, her heart almost breaking with agony.

"I shall be late, Nina," said she, affecting an air and voice of unconcern, as she entered her room; "you must dress me rapidly."

"Mademoiselle must have been too pleasantly engaged to remember the hour," said the other, with an easy pertness quite different from her ordinary manner.

More struck by the tone than by the words themselves, Kate turned a look of surprise on the speaker.

"It is so easy to forget one's self at Morlache's, they say," added the girl, with a saucy smile; and, although stung by the impertinence, Kate took no notice of the speech. "Mademoiselle will of course never wear that dress again," said Nina, as she contemptuously threw from her the mud-stained and rain-spotted dress she had worn that morning. "We have a Basque proverb, mademoiselle, about those who go out in a carriage and come back on foot."

"Nina, what do you mean by these strange words, and this still more strange manner?" asked Kate, with a haughtiness she had never before assumed towards the girl.

"I do not pretend to say that mademoiselle has not the right to choose her confidantes, but the Principessa de San Martello and the Duchessa di Rivoli did not think me beneath their notice."

"Nina, you are more unintelligible than ever," cried Kate, who still, through all the dark mystery of her words, saw the lowering storm of coming peril.

"I may speak too plainly—too bluntly, mademoiselle, but I can scarcely be reproached with equivocating; and, I repeat, that my former mistresses honored me with their secret confidence, and they did wisely, too, for I should have discovered everything of myself, and my discretion would not have been fettered by a compact."

"But if I have no secrets," said Kate, drawing herself up with proud disdain, "and if I have no need either of the counsels or the discretion of my waiting-woman?"

"In that case," said Nina, quietly, "mademoiselle has only periled herself for nothing. The young lady who leaves her carriage and her maid to pass three hours at Morlache's, and returns thence, on foot, after nightfall, may truly say she has no secrets—at least so far as the city of Florence is concerned."

"This is insolence that you never permitted yourself before," said Kate, passionately.

"And yet, if I were mademoiselle's friend instead of her servant, I should counsel her to bear it."

"But I will not," cried Kate, indignantly. "Lady Hester shall know of your conduct this very instant."

"One moment, mademoiselle—just one moment," said Nina, interposing herself between Kate and the door. "My tongue is oftentimes too ready, and I say things for which I am deeply sorry afterwards; forgive me, I beg and beseech you, if I have offended; reject my counsels, disdain

my assistance, if you will, but do not endanger yourself in an instant of anger. If you have but little control over your temper, *I* have even less over mine; pass out of that door as my enemy, and I am yours to the last hour of my life."

There was a strange and almost incongruous mixture of feeling in the way she uttered these words; at one moment abject in submission, and at the next hurling a defiance as haughty as though she were an injured equal. The conflict of the girl's passion, which first flushed, now left her pale as death, and trembling in every limb. Her emotion bespoke the most intense feeling, and Kate stood like one spellbound before her. Her anger had already passed away, and she looked with almost a sense of compassion at the excited features and heaving bosom of the Spanish girl.

"You wrong yourself and me, too, Nina," said Kate Dalton, at last. "I have every trust in your fidelity, but I have no occasion to test it."

"Be it so, mademoiselle," replied the other, with a curtsey.

"Then all is forgotten," said Kate, affecting a gayety she could not feel; "and now let me hasten downstairs, for I am already late."

"The prince will have thought it an hour, mademoiselle," said the girl; the quiet demureness of her manner depriving the words of any semblance of impertinence. If Kate looked gravely, perhaps some little secret source of pleasure lay hid within her heart, and in the glance she gave at her glass, there was an air of conscious triumph that did not escape the lynx-eyed Nina.

"My lady is waiting dinner, Miss Dalton," said a servant, as he tapped at the door; and Kate, with many a trouble warring in her breast, hastened downstairs, in all the pride of a loveliness that never was more conspicuous.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PROPOSALS.

KATE found Lady Hester, the prince, and Mr. Jekyl awaiting her as she entered the drawing-room, all looking even more bored and out of sorts than people usually do who have been kept waiting for their dinner.

"Everybody has sworn to be as tiresome and disagreeable as possible to-day," said Lady Hester. "George said he'd dine here, and is not coming; Lord Norwood promised, and now writes me word that an unavoidable delay detains him; and here comes Miss Dalton—the mirror of punctuality when all else are late—a full half-hour after the time. There, dear—no excuses nor explanations about all you have been doing—the thousand calls you've made, and shops you've ransacked. I'm certain you've had a miserable day of it."

Kate blushed deeply, and dreaded to meet Jekyl's eye; but when she did, that little glassy orb was as blandly meaningless as any that ever rattled in the head of a Dutch doll. Even as he gave his arm to lead her in to dine, nothing in his manner or look betrayed anything like a secret understanding between them. A bystander might have deemed him a new acquaintance.

"Petits dîners" have, generally, the prerogative of agreeability—they are the chosen réunions of a few intimates, who would not dilute their pleasantry even by a single bore. They are also the bright occasions for those little culinary triumphs which never can be attempted in a wider sphere. Epigrams, whether of lamb or language, require a select and special jury to try them; but just in the same proportion as the success of such small parties is greater, so is their utter failure when by any mischance there happens a break-down in the good spirits or good humor of the company.

We have said enough to show that the ladies, at least, might be excused for not displaying those thousand attractions of conversation which all center on the one great quality—ease of mind. The prince was more than usual out of sorts, a number of irritating circumstances having occurred to him during the morning. A great sovereign—on whom he had lavished the most profuse attention—had written him a letter of thanks, through his private secretary, enclosing a snuff-box, instead of sending him an autograph, and the first class of the national order. His glover, in Paris, had forgotten to make his right hand larger than the left, and a huge packet that had just arrived was consequently useless. His *chef* had eked out a salmi of ortolans by a thrush; and it was exactly that unlucky morsel the cardinal had helped himself to at breakfast, and immediately sent his plate away in disappointment. Rubion, too, his ninth secretary, had flatly refused to marry a little *danseuse* that had just come out in the ballet—a piece of insolence and rebellion on his part not to be tolerated; and when we add to these griefs

an uncomfortable neckcloth, and the tidings of an insurrection in a Russian province where he owned immense property in mines, his state of irritability may be leniently considered.

Jekyl, if truth were told, had as many troubles of his own to confront as any of the rest. If the ocean he sailed in was not a great Atlantic, his bark was still but a cockle-shell—his course in life required consummate skill and cleverness, and yet never could be safe even with that. Notwithstanding all this, he alone was easy, natural, and agreeable—not as many an inferior artist would have been agreeable, by any over-effort to compensate for the lack of co-operation in others, and thus make their silence and constraint but more palpable—his pleasantry was tinged with the tone of the company, and all his little smartnesses were rather insinuated than spoken. Quite satisfied if the prince listened or Lady Hester smiled—more than rewarded when they once both laughed at one of his sallies—he rattled on about the court and the town-talk, the little scandals of daily history, and the petty defections of those dear friends they nightly invited to their houses. While thus, as it were, devoting himself to the amusement of the others, his real occupation was an intense study of their thoughts, what was uppermost in their minds, and in what train their speculations were following. He had long suspected the prince of being attracted by Kate Dalton—now he was certain of it. Accustomed almost from childhood to be flattered on every hand, and to receive the blandest smiles of beauty everywhere, Midchekoff's native distrust armed him strongly against such seductions, and had Kate followed the path of others, and exerted herself to please him, her failure would have been certain. It was her actual indifference—her perfect carelessness on the subject—was the charm to his eyes, and he felt it quite a new and agreeable sensation not to be made love to.

Too proud of her own Dalton blood to feel any elevation by the marked notice of the great Russian, she merely accorded him so much of her favor as his personal agreeability seemed to warrant; perhaps no designed flattery could have been so successful! Another feeling, also, enhanced his admiration of her. It was a part of that barbaric instinct which seemed to sway all his actions, to desire the possession of whatever was *unique* in life. Those forms or fancies of which nature stamps but one, and breaks the die—these were a passion with him. To possess a bluer turquoise than any king or Kaiser—to own an Arab of some color never seen before—to have a picture by some artist who never painted but one; but whether it were a gem, a vase, a weapon, a diamond, or a dog, its value had but one test—that it had none its exact equal. Now, Kate Dalton realized these conditions more than any one he had ever met. Her very beauty was peculiar; combining, with much of feminine softness and delicacy, a degree of determination and vigor of character, that to Midchekoff smacked of queenly domination. There was a species of *fierté* about her that distinguished her among other women. All that he had seen done by an illustrious title and a diamond tiara, she seemed capable of effecting in the simplest costume and without an effort. All these were wonderful attractions to his eyes; and if he did not fall in love, it was simply because he did not know how. He, however, did what to him served as substitute for the passion: he coveted an object which should form one of the greatest rarities of his collection, and the possession of which would give him another title to that envy—the most delicious tribute the world could render him.

There were some drawbacks to his admiration; her birth was not sufficiently illustrious; his own origin was too recent to make an alliance of this kind desirable, and he wished that she had been a princess—even "*de la main gauche*" of some royal house. Jekyl had done his best, by sundry allusions to Irish greatness, and the blood of various monarchs of Munster and Connaught, in times past; but the prince was incredulous as to Hibernian greatness; probably the remembrance of an Irish diamond, once offered him for sale, had tinged his mind with this sense of disparagement as to all Irish magnificence. Still Kate rose above every detracting influence, and he thought of the pride in which he should parade her through Europe as his own.

Had she been a barb or a bracelet, an antique cup or a Sèvres jar, he never would have hesitated about the acquisition. Marriage, however, was a more solemn engagement: and he did not quite fancy any purchase that cost more than mere money. Nothing but the possibility of losing her altogether could have overcome this cautious scruple; and Jekyl had artfully insinuated such a conjecture. "George Onslow's attentions were," he said, "quite palpable: and although up to this Miss Dalton did not seem to give encouragement, who could tell what time and daily intercourse might effect? There was Norwood, too, with the rank of peeress in his

gift; there was no saying how an ambitious girl might be tempted by that bait." In fact, the prince had no time to lose; and, although nothing less accorded with his tastes than what imposed haste, he was obliged to bestir himself on this occasion.

If we have dwelt thus long upon the secret thoughts of the company, it is because their conversation was too broken and unconnected for recording. They talked little, and that little was discursive. An occasional allusion to some social topic—a chance mention of their approaching departure from Florence—some reference to Como and its scenery—formed the whole; and then, in spite of Jekyl, whose functions of "fly-wheel" could not keep the machine a-moving, long pauses would intervene, and each lapse into a silence, apparently more congenial than conversation. All this while Jekyl seemed to be reading the complex scheme of doubt, irresolution, and determination that filled Midchekoff's mind. The stealthy glances of the Russian's eye towards Kate—the almost painful anxiety of his manner, to see if she noticed him while speaking—his watchful observance of her, in her every accent and gesture—told Jekyl the struggle that was then passing within him. He had seen each of these symptoms before, though in a less degree, when the coveted object was a horse or a picture, and he well knew how nothing but the dread of a competition for the prize would rouse him from this state of doubt and uncertainty.

The evening dragged slowly over, and it was now late, when Lord Norwood made his appearance. With a brief apology for not coming to dinner, he drew Jekyl to one side, and slipping an arm within his, led him into an adjoining room.

"I say, Jekyl," whispered he, as they retired out of earshot of the others, "here's a pretty mess Onslow's got in. There has been a *fracas* in the street about Miss Dalton. How she came there at such a time, and alone, is another matter; and George has struck Guilmard—knocked him down, by Jove, and no mistake; and they're to meet to-morrow morning. Of course, there was nothing else for it; a blow has but one reparation—George will have to stand the fire of the first shot in Europe."

Jekyl hated a duel. Had he been a member of the Peace Congress, he could not have detested the arbitrament of arms more heartily. It involved partisanship, it severed intimacies, it barred general intercourse, and often closed up for a whole season the pleasantest houses of a town. The announcement of a strict blockade never struck a mercantile community with more terror. To Norwood, the prospect was directly the opposite. Not only an adept in all the etiquette and ceremonial of such meetings, he liked to see his name circulated in these affairs as a kind of guarantee of his readiness to seek a similar reparation for injury. He had trusted for many a year on his dexterity at twelve paces, and he never missed an opportunity of sustaining the prestige of a "dead shot."

It was, then, with an ardor of amateurship that he narrated the various little preliminary steps which had already been taken. Merkheim, the Austrian secretary, had called on him, on the part of Guilmard; and as, in a case so clear, there was little to arrange, the only difficulty lay in the choice of weapons.

"The Frenchman claims the sword," said Norwood; "and it is always awkward to decline that proposition for a soldier. But I suppose George has about as much chance with one weapon as the other."

"You think he'll kill him, my lord?"

"I think so. If the offense had been less flagrant or less public, possibly not. But a blow! to be struck down in the open street! I don't see how he can do less."

"What a break-up it will cause here!" said Jekyl, with a nod of his head in the direction of the drawing-room.

"It will send them all back to England, I suppose."

"I suppose it will," added Jekyl, mournfully.

"What a bore! It's particularly unpleasant for me, for I hold some half-dozen of George's acceptances, not due yet; and, of course, the governor will never think of acquitting them."

"I conclude it is inevitable—the meeting I mean?" said Jekyl.

"To be sure it is. Onslow took care of that! By the way, Jekyl, how came she there at such an hour, and alone, too?"

"She had been shopping, I fancy, and missed the carriage. There was some blunder, I have heard, about the coachman drawing up at the wrong door."

"No go, Master Jekyl. Don't try it on with me, old fellow. You know all about it, if you like to tell."

"I assure you, my lord, you give me a credit I don't deserve."

"You know the whole story from beginning to end, Jekyl. I'd back you against the field, my boy."

The other shook his head with an air of supreme innocence.

"Then George knows it?" added Nor-

wood, half asserting, half asking the question.

"He may, my lord, for aught I can tell."

"If so, he's treating me unfairly," said Norwood, rising and pacing the room. "As his friend in this affair, there should be no reserve or concealment with me. You can surely say that much, Jekyl, eh? What a close fellow you are!"

"It is so easy not to blab when one has nothing to tell," said Jekyl, smiling.

"Come, there is something you *can* tell me. Where does that small corridor behind George's apartment lead to? There is a door at the end of it, and, I fancy, a stair beyond it."

"That, if I mistake not, leads up to Lady Hester——No, I remember now; it leads to Miss Dalton's room."

"Just so; I could have sworn it."

"Why so, my lord?" asked Jekyl, whose curiosity was now excited to the utmost.

"That's *my* secret, Master Jekyl."

"But the door is always locked and bolted from within," said Jekyl, "and there is no keyhole on the outside."

"I'll not stand pumping, Jekyl. If you had been frank with *me*, perhaps I should have been as open with *you*."

For an instant Jekyl hesitated what course to follow. It might be that Norwood really knew something of great importance. It might be that his discovery was valueless. And yet, if it concerned Kate in any way, the information would be all-important, his great game being to make her a princess, and yet preserve such an ascendency over her as would render her his own slave.

"She's a strange girl, that Dalton," said Norwood. "I wish she had about forty thousand pounds."

"She may have more than that yet, my lord," said Jekyl, dryly.

"How do you mean, Jekyl? Is there any truth in that story about the Irish property? Has she really a claim on the estate? Tell me all you know, old fellow, and I'll be on the square with you throughout."

Jekyl, who in his remark had darkly alluded to the prospect of Kate's marriage with Midchekoff, now saw that Norwood had totally misconceived his meaning, and, like a shrewd tactician, determined to prfit by the blunder.

"Come, Jekyl, be frank and aboveboard. What *are* her prospects?"

"Better than I have told you, my lord," replied he, coolly. "If I cannot—for I am not at liberty to explain why—I am quite ready to pledge my word of honor to the truth of what I say, or, what your lordship will think more of, to back my opinion by a bet."

"By Jove! that *is* news!" said the viscount, leaning his head on the chimney to reflect. "You are such a slippery dog, Master Jekyl, you have so many turnings and windings in you, one is never quite sure with you; but supposing now, for argument's sake, that one thought of making this fair damsel a peeress, is there no hitch in the affair—no screw loose that one ought to look to?"

"In her birth, my lord?"

"No; d—n her birth. I mean about the tin."

"I believe, my lord, that I can save you all speculation on the subject when I say that pursuit would be hopeless there. The Midchekoff has gained the start, and must win in a canter."

"That Tartar fellow! nonsense, man; I know better than that. He'll never marry anything under royalty; the fellow's mother was a serf, and he must wash that spot out of his blood whenever he can."

"You are mistaken, my lord. He only waits to be certain of being accepted, to offer himself."

"Refuse him!" said Norwood, laughing, "there's not the girl in Europe would refuse him. If every decoration he wore on his breast were a stripe of the knout upon his back, his wealth would cover all."

"The prince would give half his fortune to be assured of all you say, my lord," said Jekyl, gravely.

"By Jove! one might make a good thing of it, even that way," said Norwood, half aloud. "I say, Jekyl," added he, louder, "how much are you to have?—nay, nay, man, there's no impertinence in the question, we are both too much men of the world for that. It's quite clear that this is *your* scheme. Now, what's the damage?"

"My lord, you are as flattering to my abilities as unjust to my character."

"We'll suppose all that said," broke in Norwood, impatiently; "and now we come back to the original question—whether I cannot afford to be as liberal as the Russian. Only be explicit, and let us understand each other."

"My lord, I will not insult myself by believing I comprehend you," said Jekyl, calmly.

And before Norwood could detain him, he left the room.

"Jekyl, come back, man! just hear me out—you've mistaken me! Confound the cur," muttered the viscount, "with his

hypocritical affectation—as if I did not know his *métier* as well as I know my bootmaker's."

Norwood walked noiselessly to the door of the *salon* and peeped in. Lady Hester, the prince, and Jekyl were in earnest conversation in one quarter, while Kate sat apart, apparently engaged with her embroidery frame, but, in reality, too deeply sunk in thought to notice the bright tints before her. Norwood entered listlessly, and, strolling across the room, took a place beside her. She moved slightly as he drew forward his chair, and then, as she drew back her flounce, Norwood saw that it was of deep black lace. He coolly took out his pocketbook, wherein he had deposited the torn fragment, and regarding it with attention, saw that it perfectly corresponded with the dress. So leisurely, and with such circumspection did he proceed, that several minutes elapsed before he looked up.

"You are meditative, my lord, tonight," said Kate, at last, making an effort to relieve an awkward situation; "what are you thinking of, pray?"

"Admiring your dress, Miss Dalton, which strikes me as singularly beautiful and becoming."

"Great praise this, from such an acknowledged judge as Lord Norwood," said she, smiling.

"I prefer it to antique lace, which in general is too heavy and cumbrous for my taste; I like these fine and delicate tissues, so frail and gossamer-like—not but their frailty, like all other frailty, incurs occasionally a heavy penalty; as here, for instance, you see this has been torn."

"So it has," said Kate, with confusion, "and I never noticed it. What a quick eye you must have, my lord!"

"And a sharp ear, too, Miss Dalton," said he, significantly; "in fact, I am one of those people whose everyday faculties do duty for what in others goes by the name of cleverness. It's a great pity," said he, looking down at the dress; "you see, Miss Dalton, what a false step can do."

"And yet I cannot remember when this occurred," said she, assuming to misunderstand his equivocal expression.

"Not recall it—not a clue to the mishap?" asked he, shrewdly.

"None," said she, blushing at the pertinacity with which he clung to the theme; "but it's of no consequence."

"Would Miss Dalton think it very singular if I should be able to assist her memory? Would she accept the service as kindly as it was proffered too?"

"Really, my lord, you begin to speak in riddles," said she, more than ever piqued at his persistence.

"And yet," said he, following out the thread of his own thoughts, "I am assuredly as safe a counselor as Albert Jekyl."

Kate grew deadly pale, but never replied to this speech.

"And certainly," resumed he, "the man who speaks in his own name should ever take precedence of an envoy."

"My lord," said she, firmly, "the very little which I can understand of your words implies a pretension to knowledge and influence over me, which I disdain to accept; but still I cannot believe that you seriously mean to insult me."

"Of course not," said he; "I have come on a very different errand. If I did passingly allude to bygones, it was to show you that you can afford to be candid when I am frank. We two, united, would walk over the course, and no mistake—that's what I was coming to. I don't mean to say that the Russian is not richer—egad! there's no disputing that—still, as to rank, a peer of Great Britain, I take it, is the equal of any man. Not to remind you of the old adage about 'a bird in the hand'—I speak frankly, because you are your own mistress."

"Kate,. if Lord Norwood will excuse you, come to me for one instant," cried Lady Hester.

"Just say yes, before you go—or, if not yes, tell me that I have ground for hope," whispered Norwood. But she arose without speaking.

"I'll not stand a 'hedge' by Jove!" said Norwood, sulkily; "play or pay—nothing else for me."

"Allow me to pass you, my lord," said Kate, courteously.

"One word—off or on—Miss Dalton," said he, rising, and affecting to make way, while he still barred the passage. A proud, disdainful smile was all the reply she vouchsafed.

"All right,' said he, insolently; "only remember how we stand, Miss Dalton, and whenever you want to repair the mischance of your lace flounce, don't forget the piece is in my keeping;" and he opened the pocketbook as he spoke, and exhibited the fragment before her. Sick with a terror she could neither explain or realize, she lay back again in her chair unable to move, while Norwood glided quietly away and left the room.

"Dear Kate, have you forgotten me all this time?" said Lady Hester, who Kate now perceived was alone on the sofa; Midchekoff and Jekyl having retired into an

adjoining gallery, where they walked slowly along side by side, deep in conversation.

"You shouldn't have suffered Norwood to engross your attention in that manner, my dear. The prince has been quite put out by it, and at such a moment, too—and how flushed you are! What has he been saying?"

"I can scarcely remember," said Kate, confusedly.

"Well, it's of no consequence, dear, because I have got something to tell you that would speedily make you forget it. You know, Kate, how I always prophesied wonderful things for you, just as I did before for poor Georgina Elderton, and she married a Rajah afterwards, and died Begum of something ending in 'bad.' Indeed, I might say it ended in bad for herself, poor dear, for I believe she was poisoned. But, to come back, I always said that you, also, would have astonishing luck. I told Sir Stafford so. The first day I saw you, 'She'll be like Georgina," I said. 'You'll see that girl in a wonderful position one of these days.' It is not that men care for their wives more than formerly—I rather fancy the reverse—but they have got a most intense passion just now for beauty. Wealth and good blood were once the only requisites, but they are both disregarded now, in comparison with good looks. I suppose the fashion won't last—it would be very absurd if it should—but, while it is the mode, one ought to profit by it. Just as I am wearing all those horrid old brocades of my great grandaunt's, with odious flowers of crimson and yellow, now that the taste in dress is 'rococo,' but of course in a year or two people will recover their senses again, and pretty girls without portion be left for subalterns in the line, as Providence intended they should. Don't you think so, dear?"

The brief question at the end of this long, rambling speech would possibly have puzzled Kate to reply to, had not Lady Hester been far too much occupied in her own speculations to care for a rejoinder.

"You'll hear people talk a deal of nonsense about unequal marriages, and they'll quote heaven knows what instances of girls, generally Irish ones, picking up princes and royal dukes, and all ending unhappily. Don't believe a word of it, dearest; there's never misery where there's large fortune. The people who cry in velvet always shed rose-water tears, that don't hurt the skin or spoil the complexion. Not that I can say so for myself," added she, with a deep sigh; "but I am a creature apart. I fervently trust nature does not often form similar ones. Buccellini told me that I had a fifth pair of nerves—I assure you he did. It was a very shocking thing, and probably he ought never to have mentioned it to me; but it perfectly explains the excessive sensibility of my whole nature—doesn't it, dear?"

Kate smiled assent, and Lady Hester went on:

"Then, as to religion, my dear, I'm afraid, indeed, we all think too little about it. I'm sure I'm quite shocked at what I see in society. It was only the other night Lady Grace Morton kept her seat when the cardinal was speaking to her. I apologized to him for it afterwards, and he said, with such a sweet smile, 'If these Protestants would only give us back our churches, we'd forgive their keeping their chairs.' The 'mot' was very pretty, in French, and well turned—wasn't it? Of course, then, you'll make no obstacle about the Greek Church, which I believe is exactly like your own, only that the priest has a beard, which *I* think more becoming. It looks affectionate, too; it always gives one the idea of devotion, a girl changing her faith for her husband; and really, in this tiresome age we live in, a new religion is the only new thing one ever hears of. Your excellent family—that sweet sister and the dear old papa—will probably make a fuss about it; but you know, after all, how absurd that is; and if you were to marry a Chinese, there's no saying what strange creatures you'd have to pray to. You'll have to go to Russia, but only for presentation; that over, the prince will obtain a renewal of his permission to reside abroad; still, if you have to pass a winter at St. Petersburg, it will be far from disagreeable. The women are too fond of caviare and high play; but they dress just as well as in Paris, and wear better diamonds. Midchekoff's jewels are unequaled; and, now that I think of it, there's one thing I've set my heart on, and you must positively promise to give me—a little stiletto with an emerald hilt and handle. I have pined for it—there's no other word—these three years. He wore it in London, and I have never had it out of my thoughts since. You can afford to be very generous, dearest. How I envy you that pleasure! and the delight you'll feel in providing for poor papa and Mary—no, Elizabeth, I mean—how absurd! I should say Ellen. It was something about that tale of Elizabeth, the Exile of Siberia, was running in my mind. The prince will do whatever you suggest, and, indeed, he has already hinted about your brother Frank joining the Russian service. He'll have him named an officer in the emperor's guard. You must insist, too, upon La Rocca being your

own—settled upon yourself. They tell me it's the sweetest spot in the world; and I'll always live there when you don't want it. I mention this about the settlement, because there's no saying how men will behave. I'm sure I never could have anticipated such a return as I have met with from Sir Stafford. And then, you know, with a Russian one cannot be too guarded. Don't you agree with me? Well, never mind, you'll perhaps come round to my opinion later. But here comes the prince, and it will be as well you should retire, dearest. I'll see you in your dressing-room, and tell you everything."

And with this assurance Kate retired, with a head and heart as full as ever young lady's felt.

Kate was hastening to her room, when a short, quick step behind her made her turn round, and she saw Purvis endeavoring to overtake her.

"Oh, I have you at last," said he, puffing for breath; "and what a ch-chase I've had for it; I've been in five rooms already, and nearly had a f-f-fight with that Frenchwoman of Lady Hester's. She's a regular t-t-tartar, she is, and almost boxed my ears for looking into a small case where my lady's r-ringlets are kept; ha! ha! ha! I saw them though—two long and two short, and a pl-pl-plait for the back of the head. How she m-m-makes up at night!"

"I must say that you have the strangest mode of requiting hospitality," said Kate, haughtily.

"It's all very well to talk of hospi-hospi-hospi——" Here a fit of gaping brought on coughing, which, after a violent struggle, ended in the forced utterance of the last syllable of the word, but with such fatigue and exhaustion that he seemed scarcely able to continue; at last, however, he did resume: "It's all very well to talk of that, but we got in here by our own cl-cl-cleverness; at least by Zoe's."

"Less good-natured persons would find another word for it, Mr. Purvis."

"So they would. Haggerstone called it a Ricketty stratagem. No matter; *we*'re in—ha! ha! ha!—and *he*'s out. The pr-pr-proof of the pu-pu-pudding——"

"Will you excuse me, sir, if I say I must leave you?"

"Don't go, don't go; I've something very important to—to tell you. And first, Zoe—my sister Zoe—wants to see you. The cook has been most im-im-impertinent to her. She says it was ginger he put in the maca-maca-maca-roni instead of P-P-Parmesan; all his truffles are only Piedmontese. That isn't all; don't be in such a h-hurry. They've changed the wine, too. We had Ch-Ch-Chambertin yesterday, and they've given us P-Pomard to-day. How is that to be borne?"

"I really see but one remedy for it, sir," said Kate, scornfully.

"So Zoe said; that's exactly her opinion. They must be sent away. Zoe knows a very ti-ti-tidy cook. He's not a—a—top-sawyer, you know, but he can r-roast a bit of beef, and makes a c-capital rice-pudding, and he'll come for six dollars a month. Wouldn't that be a sa-saving? Zoe told him to c-call to-day and speak to La-Lady Hester."

"He will find that difficult, sir," said Kate, dryly.

"And as for the b-butler, such a j-j-jackanapes I never saw; and Zoe would advise you to take little Pierretto—the fellow you see every day at the Pergola; he sells the tickets outside the door. He looks r-r-ragged enough now, but when he's dressed——"

"You must see, sir," interposed Kate, "that these are all details in which it would be both indelicate and impertinent for me to intrude an opinion about."

"Not when you li-live in the house; not when you're dome-dome-domes-ticated with the family. We're all in the same bo-boat now; and Zoe says somebody must steer it. Now Lizetta, Zoe's maid, would keep the k-keys herself."

"Pray remember, sir, this is Lady Hester Onslow's house."

"Egad! it w-won't be long so, if she goes on as she's d-doing. Martha saw the meat-cart come in this morning, and I had a p-p-peep into the servants' hall when the fl-flunkeys were feeding, and such w-w-waste, such re-reckless——"

"Good evening, Mr. Purvis; I cannot stay longer," said Kate. And, before he could interpose a word, she hastened from the spot, and, passing rapidly up the stairs, gained her own room, leaving Purvis to bethink him over the mass of things he had not touched upon, and on which he had mainly intended to debate.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN ARRIVAL.

Let us go back a few hours in our history, and follow the short and burly figure which, emerging from the traveling-carriage in the court-yard of the palace, pushed his way through the noisy throng of duns and entered the house.

"How are you, Proctor—how is your master?" said he, as he threw off his great-coat and unrolled a capacious muffler from his throat. "How is Sir Stafford?"

"Oh, Doctor Grounsell, glad you've come, sir. It will be a real pleasure to my master to see you again, sir."

"How is he, man—how's the gout?"

"Poorly—very poorly, sir. Things have gone badly here, doctor, since you left us," said he, with a sigh.

"Yes, yes; I know it all; I have heard all about that. But his health—tell me of his health?"

"Greatly broken, sir. No sleep o' nights without opium, and no real rest even with that."

"And his spirits?"

"Broken, too, sir. He's not what you remember him, sir, nor anything like it. No pleasant joke, sir, when anything goes amiss, as it used to be; no turning it off with his merry laugh! He's fretful and impatient about the merest trifles; and he that never wanted attendance is now always complaining that he's neglected and deserted, and forsaken by all the world."

"Does the captain come often to see and sit with him?"

"Every day, sir; but these visits do rather harm than good. Sir Stafford is vexed at what goes on in the house; and Master George—I don't know how it is—but he don't calm him down, and they have oftentimes angry words together; not but my master is frequently in the wrong, and taxes the young gentleman with what he can't help; for, you see, sir, my lady——"

"D—n——! I mean, tell me about Sir Stafford; it is of him I want to hear. Does he read?"

"He makes me read to him every day, sir, all about the money-market and railroad shares; sometimes twice over, indeed; and when I ask if he wouldn't like to hear about what goes on in politics, he always says, 'No, Proctor, let's have the city article again.'"

"And his letters—doesn't he read them?"

"The captain reads them for him, sir; and now and then writes the answers, for he can't hold a pen himself! Oh, you'll not know him when you see him! He that was so large and fine a man, I lift him in and out of bed as if he were a baby."

"Has he no acquaintance here?"

"None, sir."

"Are there no inquiries after his health?"

"Yes, sir; there's plenty of people he used to give money to when he was up and about—poor actors, and painters, and the like—they come every day to know how he is. Some of them leave begging letters, which I never give him; but most go away without a word."

"And his countrymen here: are there none who ask after him?"

"No, sir. The only English we ever see visit my lady, and never come to this side of the house at all."

"Does Miss Dalton come to inquire for him?"

"Every morning, and every night, too, sir. I suppose it must be without my lady's orders, or even knowledge; for once, when Sir Stafford was sitting up in his dressing-room, and I asked her if she wouldn't like to come in and sit a few minutes with him, she turned away without speaking; and I saw, from her manner, that she was crying."

"What are all these people outside—who are they?"

"My lady's tradespeople, sir. They've heard she's going for a few weeks to Como, and they've come with all their bills, as if she was a runaway."

"Go and tell them to leave this—send them away, Proctor. It would do your master great injury were he to overhear them. Say that everything shall be paid in a day or two; that Sir Stafford remains here, and is responsible for all."

Proctor hastened out on his errand, and the doctor sat down and covered his face with his hands.

"Poor Stafford! is all your trustful affection come to this? Is it thus that your unbounded generosity, your noble hospitality, are requited?"

When Proctor returned, he proceeded to detail, for the doctor's information, the various events which had occurred during his absence. With most, Grounsell was already acquainted, and listened to the particulars without surprise or emotion.

"So it is—so it is," muttered he to himself; "there may be more cant of virtue, a greater share of hypocrisy in our English morals, but, assuredly, these things do not happen with us as we see them here. There would seem a something enervating in the very air of the land, that a man like him should have sunk down into this besotted apathy! When can I see him, Proctor?"

"He's dozing just now, sir, but about midnight he wakes up and asks for his draught. If that won't be too late for you——"

"Too late for me! Why, what else have I traveled for, night and day, without intermission? Be cautious, however, about how you announce me; perhaps it would be better I should see the captain first."

"You'll scarcely find him at home, sir, at this hour; he generally comes in between three and four."

"Show me to his room. I'll write a few lines for him in case we don't meet."

Proctor accompanied the doctor across the court-yard, and, guiding him up a small stair, reached the terrace off which George Onslow's apartment opened. The window-shutters of the room were not closed, nor the curtains drawn; and in the bright light of several candles that shone within, Grounsell saw two figures seated at a table, and busily engaged in examining the details of a case of pistols which lay before them.

"That will do, Proctor," said Grounsell; "you may leave me now. I'll be with you at twelve." And thus saying, he gently pushed him towards the door of the terrace, which he closed and bolted after him, and then noiselessly returned to his former place.

There were few things less congenial to Grounsell's nature than playing the spy. It was a part he thoroughly detested, nor did he think that it admitted of defense or palliation; still, the whole habit of his mind through life had impressed him with a disparaging opinion of himself. The limited sphere of his duties, the humble routine of his daily walk, and the very few friendships he had inspired, all tended to increase this impression, till at last he looked upon himself as one who could only be useful by the sacrifice of personal feeling and the abnegation of all self-esteem; and thus he would have declined to know another man for what he deemed of no consequence in himself. His fault was not thinking too well of others, but thinking too meanly of himself.

The scene before him now was enough to suggest deep anxiety. Notes and letters littered the floor and the table; the embers of a large fire of papers lay on the hearth; open drawers and boxes stood on every side; all betokening preparation, the object of which the pistol-case sufficiently indicated. As they sat with their backs to the window, Grounsell could not recognize the figures; but the voice of one proclaimed him to be George Onslow.

"And where is this place—on the way to Arezzo?" asked he.

"No; on the opposite side of the city, off the high road to Bologna. It is a little park, surrounding a summer palace of the grand-duke, they call Pratolino," said the other. "They all agree that it is the best spot to be found; no molestation, nor interference of any kind; and a capital breakfast of fresh trout to be had at the inn."

"An interesting consideration for such as have good appetites," said Onslow, laughing.

"I never saw a Frenchman who had not, on such an occasion," rejoined the other, snapping the pistol as he spoke. "I like these straight stocks; you are almost always certain of your man, with a stiff arm and a low aim."

"I don't know that I've forgotten anything, Norwood," said Onslow, rising and pacing the room with folded arms.

"You've written to the governor?"

"Yes; and mentioned those acceptances," said Onslow, with a sneering severity that the other never seemed to notice. "You're quite safe, whatever happens."

"Hang it, man, I wasn't thinking of that; curse the money, it never entered my thoughts."

"My father will pay it," said George, dryly, and continued his walk.

"As you have alluded to it, I hope you spoke of it as a loan—anything like a play transaction suggests a mess of scandal and stories."

"I have called it a debt, and that is quite sufficient."

"All right—whatever you like. And now about this girl. Do you intend to let this mystery continue, or do you think that, under the circumstances, Lady Hester should still retain her as a friend and companion?"

"I know of nothing to her disparagement, nor have I yet met one who does. That there are circumstances which she does not deem fitting to entrust to my keeping is no just cause of allegation against her."

"You are very honorable to say so, George; but I must confess it is more than she deserves at your hands."

"How do you mean?"

"That she means to take the Russian, that's all."

"Well, and why not? Would not such a match be a brilliant one for a girl of much higher rank and pretension?"

"What's the use of all this fencing, man?" said Norwood, half angrily, "*I* know better how matters stand. Do you remember the night you lost so heavily at Macao? Well, I was lying stretched on the sofa, yonder, by the light of the fire only, when the door opened, and she stepped gently in."

"What, Kate Dalton?"

"Yes, Kate Dalton. Oh! impossible, if you like—deny it as much as you please, but *she* has not equal hardihood, that I can

tell you; and if she had, here is the proof that could condemn her—this fragment of her lace flounce was caught in the door as she banged it in her escape; and this very evening I compared it with the dress in question; ay, and showed her the rent from which it came."

Twice did George compel Norwood to repeat over this story; and then sat down, overwhelmed with sorrow and shame.

"You swear to me, then, Onslow, that you never saw her here—never knew of her coming?" said he, after a long silence between them.

"Never I swear!" said the other solemnly.

"Then, some other is the fortunate man, that's all. How good if it should turn out to be Jekyl!" And he laughed heartily at the absurdity of the conceit.

"No more of this," said Onslow, passionately. "The tone of the society we live in here would seem to warrant any, or every imputation, even on those whose lives are spotless; and I know of no greater degradation than the facility of our belief in them. In this instance, however, my conscience is at ease; and I reject, with contempt, the possibility of a stain upon that girl's honor."

"The sentiment does more credit to your chivalry than your shrewdness, George," said the viscount, sarcastically. "But, as you are about to stake your life on the issue, I cannot impugn your sincerity."

A hasty movement of George towards the window here alarmed Grounsell, and he noiselessly withdrew, and descended the stairs again.

"A precious mess of trouble do I find ready for me," muttered he, as he passed across the court-yard. "Debt, dueling, and sickness—such are the pleasures that welcome me; and these not the worst, perhaps, if the causes of them were to be made known."

"My lady has just heard of your arrival, doctor, and begs you will have the kindness to step up to her room," said Proctor, coming to meet him.

"I'm tired—I'm fatigued. Say I'm in bed," said Grounsell, angrily.

"Her maid has just seen you, sir," suggested Proctor mildly.

"No matter; give the answer I tell you; or, stay—perhaps it would be better to see her. Yes, Proctor, show me the way." And muttering to himself, "The meeting will not be a whit pleasanter for *her* than *me*," he followed the servant up the stairs.

Well habituated to Lady Hester's extravagant and costly tastes, Grounsell was yet unprepared for the gorgeous decorations and splendid ornaments of the chambers through which he passed, and he stopped from time to time in amazement to contemplate a magnificence which was probably rather heightened than diminished by the uncertain light of the candles the servant carried. He peered at the china vases; he passed his hand across the malachite and jasper tables; he narrowly inspected the rich mosaics, as though doubtful of their being genuine; and then, with a deep sigh—almost deep enough to be a groan—he moved on in sadness. A bust of Kate Dalton, the work of a great sculptor, and an admirable likeness, caught his eye, and he gazed at it with signs of strong emotion. There was much beauty in it, and of a character all her own; but still the cold marble had caught up, in traits sterner than those of life, the ambitious bearing of the head, and the proud elevation of the brow.

"And she has become this already!" said he, half aloud. "Oh, how unlike poor Nelly's model!—how different from the simple and beauteous innocence of those saint-like features!"

"My lady will see you, sir," said Céleste, breaking in upon his musings. And he followed her into the chamber, where, seated in a deeply-cushioned chair, Lady Hester reclined, dressed in all the perfection of an elegant *déshabillé*.

Grounsell was, assuredly, not the man to be most taken by such attractions, yet he could not remain entirely insensible to them; and he felt a most awkward sense of admiration as he surveyed her. With all a woman's quickness, her ladyship saw the effect she had produced, and languidly extending her hand, she vouchsafed the nearest approach to a smile with which she had ever favored him. As if suddenly recalling all his old antipathies and prejudices, Grounsell was himself in a moment, and, scarcely touching the taper and jeweled fingers, he bowed ceremoniously, and took his seat at a little distance off.

"This is a very unexpected pleasure indeed," sighed Lady Hester; "you only arrived to-night?"

"Half an hour ago, madam; and but for your ladyship's summons I should have been in bed."

"How do you find Sir Stafford looking—poorly, I fear?"

"I haven't yet seen him, madam, but I am prepared for a great change."

"I fear so," sighed she, plaintively; "George says, quite a break-up, and Buc-

cellini calls it 'Gotta Affievolita,' and says it is very fatal with elderly people."

"The vulgar phrase of a 'broken heart' is more expressive, madam, and perhaps quite as pathological."

Lady Hester drew proudly up, and seemed preparing herself for a coming encounter. They were old antagonists, and well knew each other's mode of attack. On the present occasion, however, Grounsell did not seek a contest, and was satisfied by a single shot at the enemy, as if trying the range of his gun.

"You will probably advise a change of air and scene, Doctor Grounsell," said she, calmly, and as though inviting pacific intercourse.

"It is precisely what I have come for, madam," answered he, in a short, dry voice. "Sir Stafford's affairs require his immediate return to England. The vicissitudes that attend on great commercial enterprises threaten him with large, very large, losses."

Lady Hester fell back in her chair, and this time, at least, her pale cheek and her powerless attitude were not feigned nor counterfeited; but Grounsell merely handed her a smelling-bottle from the table, and went on:

"The exact extent of his liabilities cannot be ascertained at once, but they must be considerable. He will be fortunate if there remain to him one-fourth of his property."

Lady Hester's head fell heavily back, and she fainted away.

The doctor rose and sprinkled her forehead with water, and then patiently sat down with his finger on her wrist to watch the returning tide of circulation. Assured at length of her restored consciousness, he went on:

"A small establishment, strict economy, a watchful supervision of every domestic arrangement, together with the proceeds of the sale of all the useless trumpery by which he is at present surrounded, will do much; but he must be seconded, madam—seconded and aided, not thwarted and opposed. George can exchange into a regiment in India; the proper steps have been already taken for that purpose."

"Have you been thoughtful enough, sir, in your general care of this family, to engage a small house for us at Brighton?"

"I have seen one at Ramsgate, madam," replied he, dryly; "but the rent is more than we ought to give."

"Are *we* so very poor as that, sir?" said she, sarcastically, laying emphasis on the pronoun.

"Many excellent and worthy persons, madam, contrive to live respectably on less."

"Is Miss Onslow to go out as a governess, doctor? I am afraid you have forgotten her share in these transactions."

"I have a letter from her in my pocket, madam, would show that she herself is not guilty of this forgetfulness, wherein she makes the very proposition you allude to."

"And *me?* Have you no sphere of self-denial and duty—have you no degrading station, no menial servitude, adapted to *my* habits?"

"I know of none, madam," said Grounsell, sternly. "Varnish will no more make a picture, than fine manners prove a substitute for skill or industry."

"This is really too much, sir," said she, rising, her face now crimson with anger; "and even if all you have said prove true, reverse of fortune can bring no heavier infliction than the prospect of *your* intimacy and obtrusive counsels."

"You may not need them, madam. In adversity," said Grounsell, with a smile, "healthy stomachs get on very well without bitters." And so saying, he bowed and left the room.

For a few moments Lady Hester sat overwhelmed by the tidings she had just heard, and then, suddenly rising, she rang the bell for her maid.

"Send Miss Dalton to me, Célestine; say I wish to speak to her immediately," said she. "This may be the last time we shall speak to each other ere we invert our positions," muttered she to herself. And in the working of her features might be read all the agony of the reflection.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PRATOLINO.

How like the great world is every little section of it! How full of all its passions and interests, its warring jealousies, and its selfish struggles! Within the Mazzarini Palace that night were at work every emotion and sentiment which sway the wide communities of men; and hope and fear, the yearnings of ambition, and the gloomy forebodings of despair, sat beside the pillows of those who, in vain, sought sleep and forgetfulness!

Before that long night ended, Sir Stafford had learned his ruin—for it was little less. Kate had yielded, to the pressing entreaties of Lady Hester, her consent to accept Midchekoff; and, just as day was

breaking, George Onslow stole to his father's bedside to see him once more, perhaps for the last time! It would be difficult to say in which of those three hearts the darkest sorrow brooded! With noiseless step and cautious gesture, George crossed the little sitting-room, and entered his father's chamber; and, without awaking the servant, who kept watch habitually without, but now had dropped off to sleep, he gained the bedside, and sat down.

The terrible tidings he had just heard were evidently working on Sir Stafford's brain, and, despite all the influence of his opiate, still engaged his faculties; for his lips continued to move rapidly, and short broken sentences fell from him incessantly. "Poor George! poor George!" he muttered from time to time, and the tears rolled down the young man's cheek as he heard them.

"How unworthy of him have I been!" thought he; "how shamefully unworthy and forgetful! Here should have been my place, for those hours which I have spent in noisy dissipation and debauch; and now I come for the first time and probably the last! Oh, my poor father! How will you bear up against the shock that is preparing for you? for, with all my faults, I know how you have loved me!" A heavy tear dropped from him on the old man's cheek as he said this, and gently brushing it off with his hand, Sir Stafford opened his eyes and awoke. A mild and gentle smile broke over his features as he saw his son beside him, and he drew him towards him and kissed him.

"Have you been long here, George?" said he, affectionately.

"But a few minutes. I am so sorry to have disturbed you," muttered the other, in confusion.

"Have you seen Grounsell yet? Has he told you?" asked Sir Stafford.

"Grounsell?—no, sir. I did not even hear of his arrival. What are his tidings?"

"The saddest, perhaps, one friend can bring another," sighed Onslow, as he covered his eyes with his hand. "Nay, nay—I am wrong," said he, rapidly. "So long as Sydney and yourself are spared to me, I have no right to say this; still, George, it is a terrible blow that strikes a man down from affluence to poverty, and, in place of wealth and power, leaves him nothing but insignificance and ruin!"

"Good heavens, father! is your brain wandering? What fancies are these that are flitting across your mind?"

"Sad and stern truths, my poor boy," replied the old man, grasping his son's hand in his fevered palm. "A few weeks more will see the great house of Onslow bankrupt. These things cannot be told too briefly, George," said he, speaking with a tremulous and eager rapidity. "One should hear misfortune early, to gain more time for future measures. A great crash has fallen upon the moneyed interest of England. The vast speculations in railways have overreached themselves; failures of great houses abroad have added to the difficulty. The correspondents whose solvency we never doubted are tottering to ruin. Every post brings tidings of some new failure; and from Odessa, from Hamburg, and from the ports of the Baltic to the distant shores of the New World, there is nothing but bankruptcy."

"But you have large estates, sir; you possess property of various kinds beyond the reach of these casualties."

"I own nothing to which my creditors have not a just right, nor, if I did, could I exercise the privilege of retaining it, George," said the old man. "From what Grounsell tells me, there will be sufficient to meet every claim, but no more. There will remain nothing after! Lady Hester's settlement will, of course, secure to her a moderate competence; and we—you and I—must look about, and see how we can face this same world we have been feasting so long. My time in it will needs be brief; but you, who may look forward with hope to long years of life, must bethink you at once of the new path before you. Arouse yourself, then, to the task, and I do not know but I may be prouder of you yet, buffeting the wild waves of adversity, and fighting the manful part of a bold, courageous spirit, than I have ever been in seeing you in the brilliant circle of all your high and titled acquaintances. Ay, George, the English merchant never died out in my heart, for all the aristocratic leaven which accident mixed up with my fortunes. I never ceased to glory in the pride of wealth accumulated by generous enterprises and honorable toil. I loved the life of labor that disciplined the faculties, and exercised not alone intelligence, but turned to use the gentler charities of life, linking man to man, as brethren journeying the same road, with different burdens, perhaps, but with the same goal. For myself, therefore, I have few cares. It remains with you to make them even fewer."

"Tell me what you propose for me, sir," said George, in a low, weak voice.

"First of all, George, you ought to leave the army. Grounsell, I must tell you, is

not of this opinion; he advises an exchange into a regiment in India, but I think differently. To repair, if it be possible, the shattered wreck of our fortunes, you must address yourself to business life and habits. You'll have to visit the West Indies, and, probably, the East. We still possess property, in Ceylon, of value; and our coffee plantations there, as yet only in their infancy, need nothing but good management to ensure success. Grounsell laughed at my suggesting you for such duties, but I know you better, George, far better than *he* does. The English pluck that storms a breach or heads a charge is the very same quality that sustains a man on the long, dark road of adverse fortune. I have often told Grounsell that the stuff was in you, George."

The young man squeezed his father's hand, but was obliged to turn away his head to hide the tears which filled his eyes; for what a terrible deception was he practicing at that very moment, and what duplicity was there even in the silence with which he heard him!

For a few seconds Sir Stafford seemed to revel in all the bright visions of a warm fancy. The prospect his imagination had conjured up appeared to have momentarily lifted him above the reach of sorrow. He thought of his son engaged in the active business of life, and displaying in this new career the energies and resources of a bold and courageous spirit. He imagined the high-principled youth becoming the British merchant, and making the name of "Onslow" great and respected in the old arena of all their victories—the City of London. Could this but come to pass—were this dream to be realized—and he would bless the hour that wrecked his fortune, and thus made his poverty the foundation of future greatness.

"I confess, George," said he, "that I have a pride in thinking that I knew you better than others did, and that I read in the very wayward caprices of your disposition the impatience of an active mind, and not the *ennui* of an indolent one." From this the old man branched off into his plans for the future; and, as if the emergency had suggested energy, talked well and clearly of all that was to be done. They were to start for England at once. Sir Stafford felt as if he were able to set out that very day. Some weeks would elapse before the crash came, and in the interval every preparation might be taken. "I hope," said he, feelingly, "that I have few enemies; I am not sanguine enough to say, none; but such as they are, they will not seek to humiliate me, I trust, by any unnecessary publicity." The theme was a very painful one, and for a few seconds he could not go on. At last he resumed: "The extravagance of this household, George, will give much and just offense. It must be retrenched, and from this very day, from this very hour. You will look to this. It must not be said of us that, with ruin before us, we continued these habits of wasteful excess. Let these troops of idle servants be discharged at once. Except Lady Hester's carriage, sell off all equipage. Take no heed of what will be the town-talk; such a downfall as ours can never be kept a secret. Let us only take care that we fall with dignity. Grounsell will remain here after us to settle everything, and our departure ought to be as speedy as may be. But you are not listening, George; do you hear me?"

It was quite true George heeded little of what his father spoke; for, with bent-down head, he was trying to catch the sounds of what seemed a long, low whistle from the court without. As he listened, the whistle was repeated; he knew now that it was Norwood's signal, and that "his time was up."

"I must leave you, my dear father," said he, assuming all that he could of calmness. "I have an appointment this morning, and one that I cannot well shake off. Norwood and I have promised to meet some friends at Pratolino."

"It was of that same Norwood I wished to speak to you, George. The sophistry of thinking him 'no worse than his set' will serve no longer. Such men are not fitting acquaintances for one whose character must be above reproach. Norwood is a most unworthy friend for you."

"I scarcely ever thought of him in that light. We are intimate, it is true; but such intimacy is not friendship."

"The greater the pollution of such acquaintanceship, then," said the old man, gravely. "To see the dark side of such a nature, and yet live under its baneful shadow, is infinitely worse, George, than all the self-deception of a rash confidence. Keep your promise to-day, but I beseech you let it be for the last time in such company."

Again the whistle was heard, and with it the sharp crack of a whip, denoting impatience; and, fearful that some accident might betray his secret, George clasped the old man's hand fervidly within his own, and hurried away without a word.

"Is that George?" cried Norwood, as he stood beside a calessino ready harnessed and with lamps lighted, for the morning

was still dark—"is that George? Why, where have you been loitering this half-hour, man? Our time is six sharp, and it is now considerably past five, and the way lies all up-hill."

"I have often done the distance in half an hour," said George, angrily.

"Perhaps the errand was a pleasanter one," rejoined Norwood, laughing; "but jump in, for I feel certain the others are before us."

George Onslow was in no mood for talking as he took his seat beside his companion; the late scene with his father and the approaching event were enough to occupy him, even had his feeling for Norwood been different from what it was, but in reality never had he experienced the same dislike for the viscount. All the flippant ease, all the cool indifference he displayed, were only so many offenses to one whose thoughts were traversing the whole current of his life, from earliest boyhood down to that very moment. A few hours hence he might be no more! And thence arose to his mind the judgments men would pass upon him, the few who would speak charitably, the still fewer who would regret him. "What a career," thought he; "what use to have made of fortune, station, health, and vigor—to have lived in dissipation, and die for a street brawl! And poor Kate! to what unfeeling scandal will this unhappy meeting expose *you?* how impossible to expect that truth will ever penetrate through that dark atmosphere of mystery and malevolence the world will throw over the event!"

Norwood was provoked at the silence, and tried in various ways to break it. He spoke of the road, the weather, the horse's trotting action, the scenery—over which the breaking day now threw fitful and uncertain lights—but all in vain; and, at last, piqued by non-success, he spitefully pointed attention to a little valley beside the road, and said, "Do you see that spot yonder, near the pine-trees?—that's where Harry Mathews was shot. Malzahn sent the bullet through the brain at forty paces. They were both first-rate pistol-shots, and the only question was who should fire first. Harry determined to reserve his shot, and he carried the privilege into the other world with him. Malzahn knew he might trust his skill, and fired the very instant he took his ground. The moral of which is—always try and have first fire with a foreigner."

"I hear the sound of wheels behind us; who are they?" said George, not heeding either the story or the counsel.

"The doctor, I suspect. I ordered a calessino to wait for him at the door of the palace, and bring him up as fast as possible."

"If Guilmard be equal to his reputation, we shall not want his services," said Onslow, with a faint smile.

"Who can tell? We'll put you up at a short distance, and there's nothing shakes the nerve of your practiced pistol-shot more than ten or twelve paces."

The road here became so steep that they were obliged to get down and walk for some distance, while the horse toiled slowly up behind them. As they went, Norwood continued to talk on incessantly of this, that, and t'other, as though bound to occupy the attention of his companion, while George, with half-closed eyes, strolled onward, deep in his own thoughts.

"We're not far off the place now, George," said Norwood at last, "and I wish you'd throw off that look of care and abstraction. These foreign fellows will be quite ready to misinterpret it. Seem at your ease, man, and take the thing as I have seen you take it before—as rather good fun than otherwise."

"But that is precisely what I do not feel it," said George, smiling quietly. "Twenty-four hours ago, when life had every possible advantage to bestow on me, with the prospect of an ample fortune before me, I was perfectly ready to turn out with any man who had the right to ask me; and now that I'm ruined——"

"Ruined!" broke in Norwood; "what do you mean? You have not lost to that Greek fellow so largely as that?"

"Now that my father is on the verge of utter ruin," repeated George slowly—"the news came last night—I never felt the desire for life so strong within me. A few days or weeks more will make it public gossip, so I may tell you that we have not escaped the torrent that is sweeping away so many of the richest houses in Europe; and what between our immense liabilities and my father's scrupulous sense of honor, the chances are we shall be utterly beggared!"

"The devil!" exclaimed Norwood, whose thoughts at once reverted to his own claims on George, and the unpaid acceptances he still held of his.

"That's what I feel so strange," said George, now speaking with a degree of warmth and interest, "that it should be exactly when life ceases to give promise that I should care for it; and I own to you, I'd give anything that this meeting was not before me."

Norwood started, and turned his keen

eyes on the other; but in the calm, unmoved features, he saw no traces of fear, or even agitation; and it was in his habitually calm voice Onslow resumed:

"Yes, I wish the count's hand would shake a little, Norwood. I'd be most grateful to the bullet that would take to the right or the left of me."

"Come, come, George, no more of this. We are alone here, it's true; but if you talk this way now, you may chance to look like it, by and by."

"And if I do not, my looks will strangely belie my sentiments, that I can tell you," said Onslow, with a quiet laugh. "I don't care how you read the confession, Norwood, but I tell you frankly, that if the insult in this instance admitted of an apology—if there were any way to come off consistent with honor—I'd take it, and not fight this Frenchman."

"Have you forgotten his reputation as a shot?" asked Norwood, hastily.

"I was not thinking of it. My mind was dwelling merely on myself and my own interests—how far my life, if preserved, could be made useful to others, and in what way my death might occasion detriment and injury."

"A most mercantile estimate of profit and loss, by Jove!" said Norwood, laughing; "and perhaps it is fortunate for you there is no 'amende' possible; for, if Guilmard should miss you——"

"As to these acceptances," said George, not paying attention to what the other said, "I'd prefer that they should not be presented to my father under our actual circumstances. My horses and carriages, and some other trumpery of mine, when sold, will more than meet them, and I have given orders to that end."

"Come, old fellow, it's not gone that far yet," said Norwood, affecting a tone of friendship, suggested by the self-satisfaction the promise of payment afforded him. "But hush! There they are, all together. Let us talk no more of these matters; and now, George, for heaven's sake, be cool."

Norwood drew the other's arm within his own as he said this, and advanced to where a group of some half-dozen persons were standing, beside a low balcony, overlooking the Val d'Arno and the graceful valley in which Florence stands. Norwood quitted his friend's arm as he came forward, and saluted the company. Nothing could possibly be more easy and unconstrained than the tone of their conversation, as they chatted away about the prospect beneath, and over which, like a gauzy veil, the grey shadow of dawn was hanging. With the exception of an Italian or two, they were all French—the young fashionables who were the loungers of the *salons* and *cafés* of the city.

"Have you breakfasted, my lord?" said one. "If not, let me recommend some excellent cutlets, which are not too cold, even yet."

"And the best chocolate I ever tasted out of Paris,"," cried another.

"Thanks," said Norwood. "We'll profit by the good counsel." And, taking a cigar from his case, he lighted it from Guilmard's, as, with hands in his paletot, he sat negligently on the wall, surveying the scene below him.

"Come, George, let's have something," whispered Norwood, eagerly, for the vacant and unoccupied stare of Onslow continued to cause the viscount the most intense anxiety. "These fellows are affecting to be devilish cool. Let us not be behindhand." And, rather by force than mere persuasion, he dragged Onslow along, and entered the little parlor of the inn.

A large table, covered with the remains of an ample breakfast, stood in the middle of the room, and a dish of cutlets was placed to keep hot before the stove. Several loose sheets of paper lay scattered about the table, on which were scrawled absurd and ill-drawn caricatures of duels, in which attitudes of extravagant fear and terror predominated. Norwood glanced at them for a moment, and then contemptuously threw them into the fire.

"Sit down, George," said he, placing a chair for the other, "and if you cannot eat, at least take a 'nip' of brandy. Jekyl will be up, I suppose, in a few minutes. I told him to come with the doctor."

"I never felt an appetite at this early hour," said Onslow; "and perhaps the present is not the time to suggest one."

"Did you remark Guilmard?" said Norwood, as he helped himself to a cutlet, and prepared his plate most artistically for a savory meal. "Did you observe him, George?"

"No; I never looked that way."

"By Jove! he has got a tremendous scar on his cheek—the whole length, from the eye to the corner of his mouth. English knuckles do not certainly improve French physiognomy. A left-hander, eh?"

"I remember nothing about it," said Onslow, carelessly.

"Well, you've left him a memorandum of the transaction, any way," said the

viscount, as he ate on. "And you were talking about an apology a while ago?"

"I was wishing that the case admitted of one," said Onslow, calmly.

Norwood gave a sidelong glance at the speaker, and, although he said nothing, a gesture of angry impatience revealed what was passing within him.

"Do try that brandy. Well, then, take a glass of curaçoa," said he, pushing the bottle towards him.

"Something, anything, in fact, you would say, Norwood, that might serve to make my courage 'carry the bead;' but you are altogether mistaken in me. It is not of myself I am thinking; my anxieties are——But what could you care, or even understand, about my motives? Finish your breakfast, and let us make an end of this affair."

"In one minute more I'm your man; but if I have a weakness, it is for a plain roast truffle, with butter. It was a first love of mine, and, as the adage says, 'on y revient toujours.' Were I in your shoes, this morning, George, I'd not leave one on the dish."

"On what principle, pray?" asked Onslow, smiling.

"On that of the old cardinal, who, when his doctors pronounced his case hopeless, immediately ordered a supper of ortolans with olives. It was a grand opportunity to indulge without the terror of an indigestion: and *à propos* to such themes, where can our worthy doctor be all this time? The calessino was close up with us all the way."

Leaving Norwood to continue his meal, George strolled out in quest of the surgeon, but none had seen nor knew anything of him. An empty calessino was standing on the roadside, but the driver only knew that the gentleman who came with him had got out there, and entered the park.

"Then we shall find him near the little lake," said Norwood, coolly, as George returned disappointed. "But it's strange, too, that he should be alone. Jekyl was to have been with him. These foreigners ever insist upon two seconds on either side. Like the gambler that always is calling for fresh cards, it looks very like a suspicion of foul play. Go back, George, and see if the fellow knows nothing of Jekyl. You've only to name him, for every cab, cad, and barcaruolo of Florence is acquainted with Master Albert."

George returned to the spot, but without any success. The man stated that he took his stand, as he was desired, at the gate of the palace, and that a little man, apparently somewhat elderly, came out, and asked which way the others had gone, and how long before they had started. "'See that you pick them up, then,' said he, 'but don't pass them.' He talked incessantly," added the man, "the whole way, but in such bad Italian that I could make nothing of it, and so I answered at random. If I were tired of *him*, I fancy he was sick of *me;* and when he got out yonder, and passed into the park, it was a relief to us both."

George was just turning away, when his eye caught a glimpse of the glorious landscape beneath, on which a freshly-risen sun was shedding all its splendor. There are few scenes, even in Italy, more striking than the Val d'Arno around Florence. The beautiful city itself, capped with many a dome and tower, the gigantic castle of the Bargello, the graceful arch of the Baptistery, the massive façade of the Pitti, all, even to the lone tower on the hill where Galileo watched, rich in their storied memories; while on the gentle slope of the mountain stood hundreds of beauteous villas, whose very names are like spells to the imagination, and the Dante, the Alfieri, the Boccaccio, vie in interest with the sterner realities of the Medici, the Pazzi, the Salviati, and the Strozzi. What a flood of memory pours over the mind, to think how every orange-grove and terrace, how each clump of olives, or each alley of cedars, has witnessed the most intense passions, or the most glorious triumphs of man's intellect or ambition, and that every spot we see has its own claim to immortality.

Not in such mood as this, however, did Onslow survey the scene. It was in the rapt admiration of its picturesque beauty. The glittering river now seen and lost again, the waving tree-tops, the parterres of bright flowers, the stately palaces, whose terraces were shadowed by the magnolia, the oleander, and the fig, all made up a picture of rich and beautiful effect, and he longed to throw himself on the deep grass and gaze on it for hours. As he stood thus, unable to tear himself away, he heard the sharp cracking of a postilion's whip immediately beneath him, and, on looking down, saw two heavily laden traveling-carriages, which all the power of eight horses to each could barely drag along against the steep ascent. A mounted courier in advance proclaimed that the travelers were persons of condition, and everything about the equipages themselves indicated wealth and station. As Onslow knew all who moved in a certain class in society, he was

curious to see who was journeying northward so early in the year, and stepping into a little copse beside the road, he waited for the carriages to pass.

They came slowly forward—now halting to "breathe" the weary horses, now struggling for a brief space against the hill—and at last, turning a sharp angle of the way, the first carriage drew short up, directly in front of where he stood. The panels bore the flaunting and pretentious arms of Prince Midchekoff, with many an armorial emblem, which, however tolerated in the rest of Europe, the Czar would not suffer within his own dominions. As George glanced at these, he started, for a well-known voice caught his ear, and forgetting his desire for concealment, he leaned forward to listen. It was Kate was speaking; he could not hear the words, but the accents were her own. "Oh, for one look at her for the last time!" thought he; and dashed headlong through the copse towards where, by another bend, the road made a rapid turn upwards.

Already the horses had regained their wind and were away at a brisk trot, as George tore onward through the closely interwoven branches and thick underwood of the grove. There was no path, nor, once out of sight or sound of the road, anything to guide him; but he dashed on, in the direction he supposed the carriage must take. At every step the way grew more intricate and difficult; the pits the peasants dig for chestnut leaves, the little heaps collected for firewood, intercepted him at each moment. With torn clothes and bleeding hands he still rushed madly, resolutely bent upon his object; and, with many a bruise and many a scar, at last gained the open country, just in time to see the second carriage crowning the peak of the mountain above his head, while he could hear the sharp, clanking sound of the drag as they fastened it to the leading carriage. Any attempt to overtake them on the hill must now be hopeless. He well knew the pace at which a continental postilion descends a mountain, and how the steepest galleries of Alps and Apennines are often galloped down at speed. For miles below him he could see the winding zigzags of the road, and at each turning he fancied how he might catch sight of her. The mountain itself was terraced with vineyards from base to summit; but, from the steepness of its side, these terraces were but narrow strips of ground, barely sufficient for the vine-dresser to pass when tending his plants, or gathering in their produce. To look down on this giant stair—for such it seemed—was a giddy sensation, and few could have surveyed the precipitous descent without a sense of danger. Onslow's thoughts, however, had but one object—to see Kate once, and for the last time. By a straight descent of the mountain, leaping from terrace to terrace, it was possible for him to reach the bottom before the carriages could traverse the winding course of the road; and no sooner was the thought conceived than he proceeded to execute it. It is difficult to convey to those who had never seen these terraced flights of earth a true notion of the peril of such an undertaking; but they who have beheld them will acknowledge that little short of utter recklessness could dare it. Less leaping than dropping from height to height, the slightest impulse will carry the footsteps beyond the edge of the terrace, and then all self-control is lost, and destruction, to every appearance, inevitable.

The youth whose nerves have been trained by the sports of fox-hunting and deer-stalking, however, is seldom unprepared for sudden danger; and George never hesitated, when once the undertaking seemed practicable. By sidelong leaps he descended the first three or four terraces well and safely. Impressed with the risk of the exploit, he never turned his eyes from the spot whereon he meant to alight, and measured every bound with accuracy. Suddenly, however, his attention was caught by the postilion's bugle sounding, several hundred feet below him, and, in a bend of the road, he saw the dust left by the fast-descending carriage. Forgetful of safety—of everything save his object—he leaped at random, and with a tremendous bound cleared one terrace completely, and alighted on the one beneath it. The impulse drove him forwards, and ere he could recover, he was on the very verge of the cliff. Even yet his presence of mind might have rescued him, when the loose masonry gave way, and carried him down with it. He fell forwards, and headlong; the force of the descent carried him on, and now, half-falling, half-struggling, he bounded from height to height, till, shattered, maimed, and bleeding, he rolled, an unconscious heap of clay, in the long grass of the valley.

Not fifty yards from where he lay, the carriages passed, and Kate even leaned from the window to gaze upon the winding glen, little thinking how terrible an interest that quiet scene was filled with. And so the equipages held their speed, and pressed onwards; while, with a faint breathing, poor George lay, sleeping that dream-

less slumber that seems a counterfeit of death.

CHAPTER XL.

A MORNING OF MISADVENTURES.

"Well, my lord, are we to pass the day here," said Count Trouville, the second of the opposite party, as Norwood returned from a fruitless search of George Onslow, "or are we to understand that this is the English mode of settling such matters?"

"I am perfectly ready, Monsieur le Comte, to prove the contrary, so far as my own poor abilities extend," said Norwood, calmly.

"But your friend has disappeared, sir. You are left alone here."

"Which is, perhaps, the reason of your having dared to insult me," rejoined the other, "that being, perhaps, the French custom in such affairs."

"Come, come, gentlemen," interposed an old cavalry officer, who acted as second friend to Guilmard, "you must both see that all discussion of this kind is irregular and unseemly. We have come here this morning for one specific purpose—to obtain reparation for a great injury. The gentleman who should have offered us the amende has suddenly withdrawn himself. I offer no opinion on the fact that he came out accompanied by only one friend; we might, perhaps, have devised means to obviate this difficulty. For his own absence we have no remedy. I would therefore ask what you have to propose to us in this emergency?"

"A little patience—nothing more. My friend must have lost his way; some accident or other has detained him, and I expect to see him here every instant."

"Shall we say half an hour longer, my lord?" rejoined the other, taking out his watch. "That will bring us to eight o'clock."

"Which, considering that our time was named 'sharp six,'" interposed Trouville, "is a very reasonable 'grace.'"

"Your expression is an impertinence, monsieur," said Norwood, fiercely.

"And yet I don't intend to apologize for it," said the other, smiling.

"I'm glad of it, sir. It's the only thing you have said to-day with either good sense or spirit."

"Enough, quite enough, my lord," replied the Frenchman, gayly. "Dans la bonne société, on ne dit jamais de trop. Where shall it be, and when?"

"Here, and now," said Norwood, "if I can only find any one who will act for me."

"Pray, my lord, don't go in search of him," said Trouville, "or we shall despair of seeing you here again."

"I will give a bail for my reappearance, sir, that you cannot doubt of," cried Norwood, advancing towards the other with his cane elevated.

A perfect burst of horror broke from the Frenchmen at this threat, and three or four immediately threw themselves between the contending parties.

"But for this, my lord," said the old officer, "I should have offered you my services."

"And I should have declined them, sir," said Norwood, promptly.

"The first peasant I meet with will suffice;" and, so saying, he hurried from the spot, his heart almost bursting with passion. With many a malediction of George—with curses deep and cutting on every one whose misconduct had served to place him in his present position—he took his way towards the high road.

"What could have happened?" muttered he; "what confounded fit of poltroonery has seized him—a fellow that never wanted pluck in his life? Is it possible that he can have failed now? And this to occur at the very moment they are beggared! Had they been rich, as they were a few months back, I'd have made the thing pay. Ay, by Jove! I'd have 'coined my blood,' as the fellow says in the play, and written a swingeing cheque with red ink! And now I have had a bad quarrel, and nothing to come of it! And so to walk the high roads in search of some one who can load a pistol."

A stray peasant or two, jogging along to Florence—a postilion with return horses—a shabbily-dressed curate, or a friar with a sack behind him, were all that he saw for miles of distance, and he returned once more to interrogate the calessino driver as to the stranger who accompanied him from the city.

Any one whose misfortune it may have been to make inquiries from an Italian vetturino of any fact, no matter how insignificant or unimportant, will sympathize with Norwood's impatience at the evasive and distrustful replies that now met his questions. Although the fact could have no possible concern or interest for him, he prevaricated and contradicted himself half a dozen times over, as to the stranger's age, country, and appearance, so that, utterly baffled and provoked, the viscount turned away and entered the park.

"I, too, shall be reported missing, I suppose," said he, bitterly, as he walked along a little path that skirted a piece of ornamental water. "By Jupiter! this is a pleasant morning's work, and must have its reparation one day or other."

A hearty sneeze suddenly startled him as he spoke; he turned hastily about, but could see no one, and yet his hearing was not to be deceived! He searched the spot eagerly, he examined the little boat-shed—the copse—the underwood—everything, in fact, but not a trace of living being was to be seen; at last, a slight rustling sound seemed to issue from a piece of rustic shell-work, representing a river god reclining on his urn, and, on approaching, he distinctly detected the glitter of a pair of eyes within the sockets of the figure.

"Here's goes for a brace of balls into him," cried Norwood, adjusting a cap on his pistol. "A piece of stone-work that sneezes is far too like a man to be trusted."

Scarcely was the threat uttered, when a tremulous scream issued from within, and a voice, broken with terror, called out:

"D-don't fire, my lord. You'll m-m-murder me. I'm Purvis—Sc-Sc-Scroope Purvis."

"How did you come to be there, then?" asked Norwood, half-angrily.

"I'll tell you when I get out!" was the answer; and he disappeared from the loophole at which he carried on the conversation for some seconds. Norwood began to fancy that the whole was some mystification of his brain, for no trace of him was to be had, when he emerged from the boat-house with his hat stripped of the brim, and his clothes in tatters, his scratched face and hands attesting that his transit had not been of the easiest. "It's like a r-r-rat-hole," cried he, puffing for breath.

"And what the devil brought you there?" asked Norwood, rudely.

"I ca-came out to see the fight!" cried he, "and when you're inside there you have a view of the whole park, and are quite safe, too."

"Then it was you who drove out in the calessino meant for the doctor?" said Norwood, with the air of a man who would not brook an equivocation.

"Yes; that was a d-d-dodge of mine to get out here," said he, chuckling.

"Well, Master Purvis," said Norwood, drawing his arm within his own, "if you can't be the 'doctor,' you shall at least be the 'second.' This is a dodge of mine; so come along, and no more about it."

"But I ca-can't; I never was—I never could be a se-se-second."

"You shall begin to-day, then, or my name's not Norwood. You've been the cause of a whole series of mishaps and misfortunes; and, by Jove! if the penalty were a heavier one, you should pay it."

"I tell you, I n-never saw a duel—I—never f-fought one; I never will fight one; I don't even know how they g-go about it."

"You shall learn, sir, that's all," said Norwood, as he hastened along, dragging the miserable Purvis at his side. "But for you, sir," continued he, in a voice thick with passion—"but for you, sir, and your inveterate taste for prying into what does not concern you, we should have experienced no delay nor disappointment this morning. The consequences are, that I shall have to stand where another ought to have stood, and take to myself a quarrel in which I have had no share."

"H-how is that? Do—do—do tell me all about it!" cried Purvis, eagerly.

"I'll tell you nothing, sir; not a syllable. Your personal adventures on this morning must be the subject of your revelations when you get back to Florence, if ever you do get back."

"Why, I—I'm—I'm not going to fight anybody!" exclaimed he, in terror.

"No, sir, but *I* am; and, in the event of any disastrous incident, *your* position may be unpleasant. If Trouville falls, you'll have to make for Lombardy, and cross over into Switzerland; if he shoots me, you can take my passport; it is *visé* for the Tyrol. As they know me at Innspruck, you'd better keep to the south'ard—some of the smaller places about Botzen or Brixen."

"But I don't know Bo-Bo-Botzen on the map! and I don't see why I'm to sk-sk-skulk about the continent like a refu-refu-refugee Pole!"

"Take your own time, then; and, perhaps, ten years in a fortress may make you wiser. It's no affair of mine, you know; and I merely gave you the advice, as I'm a little more up to these things than you are."

"But, supposing that I'll have no-nothing to do with the matter—that I'll not be present—that I refuse to see——"

"You shall and you must, sir; and if I hear another word of objection out of your mouth, or if you expose me, by any show of your own poltroonery, to the ribald insolence of these Frenchmen, by heaven! I'll hold your hand in my own when I fire at Count Trouville."

"And I may be mu-mu-murdered!" screamed Purvis. "An innocent man's bl-blood shed, all for nothing!"

"Bluebeard treated his wives to the same penalty for the same crime, Master Purvis. And now listen to me, sir, and mark well my words. With the causes which have led to this affair you have no concern whatever; your only business here is in the capacity of my second. Be present when the pistols are loaded; stand by as they step the ground; and, if you can do no more, try at least to look as if you were not going to be shot at." Neither the counsel, nor the tone it was delivered in, was very reassuring; and Purvis went along with his head down and his hands in his pockets, reflecting on all the "accidents by fire-arms" he had read of in the newspapers, together with the more terrible paragraphs about fatal duels and criminal proceedings against all concerned in them."

The Frenchmen were seated in the garden at a table, and smoking their cigars, as Norwood came up, and, in a few words, explained that a countryman of his own, whom he had met by chance, would undertake the duties of his friend.

"I have only to say, gentlemen," he added, "that he has never even witnessed an affair of this kind; and I have but to address myself to the loyal good faith of Frenchmen to supply any deficiencies in his knowledge. Mr. Purvis, messieurs."

The old colonel, having courteously saluted him, took him to a short distance aside, and spoke eagerly for a few minutes, while Norwood, burning with anxiety and uneasiness, tried to smoke his cigar with every semblance of unconcern.

"I'm sure, if you think so," cried Scroope, aloud, "I'm not the m-man to gainsay the opinion. A miss is as g-g-good as a m-mile; and as he didn't strike him——"

"Tonnerre de Dieu! sir—strike him!" screamed the old soldier. "Did you say strike him?"

"No, I didn't—I couldn't have meant that," broke in Purvis. "I meant to remark that, as there was no mischief done——"

"And who will venture to say that, sir?" interposed the other. "Is it nothing that a Frenchman should have been menaced?"

"That's a gr-great deal—a tremendous deal. It's as much as beating another man; I know that," muttered poor Purvis, deprecatingly.

"Is this a sneer, sir?" asked the colonel, drawing himself up to his full height.

"No, no, it ain't; no, upon my soul I'm quite serious. I never was less disposed for a jest in my life."

"You could never have selected a less opportune moment for one, sir," rejoined the other, gravely. "Am I to conclude, sir," resumed he, after a second's interval, "that we have no difference of opinion on this affair?"

"None whatever. I agree with you in everything you have s-said, and everything you in-intend to say."

"Your friend will then apologize?" resumed the colonel.

"He shall—he must."

"Simply expressing his regret that an unguarded action should have occasioned a misconception, and that in lifting his arm he neither intended the gesture as a menace nor an insult. Isn't that your meaning?"

"Just so; and that if he *had* struck he wouldn't have hurt him."

"Feu d'enfer! sir, what *are* you saying; or do you mean this for a mockery of us?" screamed the colonel, in a fit of passion.

"You terrify me so," cried Purvis; "you are so impe-impe-impetuous, I don't know what I'm saying."

The Frenchman measured him with a glance of strange meaning. It was evident that such a character was somewhat new to him, and it required all his skill and acuteness to comprehend it. "Very well, sir," said he, at last, "I leave the details entirely to yourself; speak to your friend, arrange the matter between you, and let us finish the affair as speedily as may be."

"What is all this delay about?" muttered Norwood, angrily, as the other joined him; "is there any difficulty in stepping twelve or twenty paces?"

"None; but we've hit upon a b-better plan, and you've only to say that you're sorry for it all—that you didn't m-mean anything—and that you never did b-b-beat a Frenchman—nor will you ever do so in future."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Norwood in astonishment.

"That we'll all go back and lunch at the 'Luna;' for there's no-nothing to fight about."

Norwood pushed by him contemptuously, and, with hurried steps, walked up to where the old colonel stood. "You are a French officer, sir," said he, "and I rely upon your honor that, whether from the ignorance or inaptitude of that gentleman, no blame may attach itself to me in this business. I have no apology to offer, nor any amende, save one."

"Very well, sir, we are ready," said the colonel. "I will ask one of my country-

men to act for you, for I see you are in very indifferent hands."

And now, like men who were well accustomed to the task, they set about the details of the duel, while Purvis, being at full liberty, slipped from the spot, and retired into the wood.

"You've won the first fire, my lord," said a young Frenchman to Norwood; "the conditions are twelve paces—back to back—to turn at the word, and fire."

Norwood bowed, and, without speaking, followed the other to the spot where he was to stand. As he waited thus, pistol in hand, he was directly opposite to the place wherein Purvis had taken refuge, and who, seeing Norwood in front of him, with a cocked pistol, and his finger on the trigger, uttered a scream of terror, and fell flat on the ground. Before the rest could discover the cause of the outcry, a shout from outside of "the police!" "the gendarmes!" was heard, and Doctor Grounsell rushed into the garden, followed by several dismounted dragoons. In an instant all were away; Norwood sprang over a low balcony into a vineyard, while in various directions the others scampered off, leaving Purvis alone upon the field.

But too happy to have fallen into the safe keeping of the authorities, Purvis accepted his captivity with a most placid contentment.

"Where's Captain Onslow? Have you seen him, sir?" whispered Grounsell to him.

"I have seen everybody, but I don't re-remember anything. It's all a dr-dr-dream to me."

"There was no duel? They hadn't fought?" asked Grounsell.

"I—I—I think not; pro-pro-probably not," said Purvis, whose faculties were still very cloudy.

Grounsell turned away from him in disdain, and entered the house. To all his inquiries from the waiters of the inn the answers were vague and insufficient, nor could the doctor discover either what had occurred, or the reasons of the long delay on the ground. Meanwhile, the "carabinieri," stimulated by liberal promises of reward, were searching the park in every quarter, and scouring the country around to arrest the fugitives; and the peasantry, enlisted in the pursuit, hastened hither and thither to aid them. Whether really unable to come up with them, or, as is more probable, concurring in the escape through bribery, the dragoons returned to the inn after about an hour's absence, without the capture of a single prisoner.

Grounsell cursed their Italian indolence, and reviled every institution of their lazy land. How he raved about foreign falsehood and rascality, and wished for a London detective and a magistrate, of Bow-street! Never did Lord Palmerston so thirst to implant British institutions in a foreign soil, as did he to teach these "macaroni rascals what a good police meant." What honest indignation did he not vent upon English residents abroad, who, for sake of a mild climate and lax morality, could exchange their native country for the continent; and at last, fairly worn out with his denunciations, he sat down on a bench, tired and exhausted.

"Will you t-t-tell them to let me go?" cried Purvis. "I've done nothing. I never do anything. My name is Purvis—Sc-Sc-Scroope Purvis—bro-brother to Mrs. Ricketts, of the Villino Zoe."

"Matters which have no possible interest for *me*, sir," growled out Grounsell; "nor am I a corporal of gendarmes, to give orders for your liberation."

"But they'll take me to—to prison!" cried Purvis.

"With all my heart, sir, so that I be not your fellow captive," rejoined the doctor, angrily, and left the spot, while the police, taking as many precautions for securing Purvis as though he had been a murderer or a housebreaker, assisted him into a calèche, and seated one on either side of him, with their carbines unslung, set out for Florence.

"They'll take me for Fr-Fr-Fra Diavolo, if I enter the city in this fashion," cried Purvis; but certainly his rueful expression might have belied the imputation.

Grounsell sat down upon a grassy bench beside the road, overcome with fatigue and disappointment. From the hour of his arrival in Florence he had not enjoyed one moment of rest. On leaving Lady Hester's chamber he had betaken himself to Sir Stafford's apartment, and there till nigh daybreak he sat, breaking the sad tidings of ruin to his old friend, and recounting the terrible story of disasters which were to crush him into poverty. Thence he hastened to George Onslow's room; but he was already gone. A few minutes before he had started with Norwood for Pratolino, and all that remained for Grounsell was to inform the police of the intended meeting, while he himself, wisely suspecting that nothing could go forward in Florence unknown to Jekyl, repaired to that gentleman's residence at once.

Without the ceremony of announcement, Grounsell mounted the stairs, and opened

the door of Jekyl's apartment, just as its owner had commenced the preparations for his breakfast. There was an almost Spartan simplicity in the arrangements, which might have made less composed spirits somewhat abashed and ill at ease. The little wooden platter of macaroni, the small coffee-pot of discolored hue and dinged proportions, the bread of Æthiopian complexion, and the bunch of shriveled grapes, offered a meal irreproachable on the score of either costliness or epicurism. But Jekyl, far from feeling disconcerted at their exposure to a stranger's eyes, seemed to behold them with sincere satisfaction, and with a most courteous smile, welcomed the doctor to Florence, and thanked him for the very polite attention of so early a visit.

"I believe I ought to apologize for the unseasonable hour, sir," blundered out Grounsell, who was completely thrown off his balance by this excessive urbanity; "but the cause must plead for me."

"Any cause which has conferred the honor on me is sure of being satisfactory. Pray come nearer the table. You'll find that macaroni eat better than it looks. The old Duke de Montmartre always recommended macaroni to be served on wood. His maxim was, 'Keep the "plat d'argent" for a mayonnaise or a galantine.'"

"Excuse me if I cannot join you, sir. Nothing but a matter of extreme importance could warrant my present intrusion. I only reached this city a few hours back, and I find everything at the Mazzarini Palace in a state of discord and confusion. Some are questions for time and consideration; others are more immediately pressing. One of these is this affair of George Onslow's. Whom is he about to meet, and for what?"

"His antagonist is a very agreeable young man, quite a gentleman, I assure you, attached to the French mission here, and related to the Morignys, whom you must have met at Madame Parivaux's formerly."

"Never heard of one of them, sir. But what's the quarrel?"

"It originated, I believe, in some form of disputation—an altercation," simpered Jekyl, as he sweetened and sipped his coffee.

"A play transaction—a gambling affair, eh?"

"I fancy not; Count Guilmard does not play."

"So far, so good," said Grounsell. "Now, sir, how is it to be arranged?—what settlement can be effected? I speak to you frankly, perhaps bluntly, Mr. Jekyl, for my nature has few sympathies with courteous ambiguities. Can this business be accommodated without a meeting?"

Jekyl shook his head, and gave a soft, plaintive little sigh.

"Is friendly interference out of the question, sir?"

Another shake of the head, and a sigh.

"Is there any law in the country? Can the police do nothing?"

"The frontiers are always easily accessible," simpered Jekyl, as he stole a look at his watch.

"Ay, to be sure," broke in Grounsell, indignantly; "the very geography of the continent assists this profligacy, and five paces over an imaginary boundary give immunity in a case of murder! Well, sir, come along with me to the place of meeting. It it just possible that we may be of some service even yet."

"Nothing could be more agreeable to me than the opportunity of cultivating your acquaintance, Doctor Grounsell, but I have already sent off a few lines to Lord Norwood, to apologize for my absence—a previous engagement."

"What! at this hour of the morning, sir?" burst out Grounsell.

"Even at this early hour, doctor, our cares commence," said Jekyl, blandly.

"Upon this occasion they must give way to duties, then," said Grounsell, sternly. "The word may sound strangely in your ears, sir, but I use it advisedly. You have been well received and hospitably entertained by this family. They have shown you many marks of kindness and attention. Now is the opportunity to make some sort of requital. Come, then, and see if this young man cannot be rescued from peril."

"You touch my feelings in the very tenderest spot," said Jekyl, softly. "When gratitude is mentioned, I am a child—a mere child."

"Be a man, then, for once, sir; put on your hat and accompany me," cried Grounsell.

"Would you have me break an appointment, doctor?"

"Ay, to be sure I would, sir—at least, such an appointment as I suspect yours to be. This may be a case of life or death."

"How very dreadful!" said Jekyl, settling his curls in the glass. "Pascal compares men to thin glass phials, with an explosive powder within them, and really one sees the force of the similitude every day; but Jean Paul improves upon it by saying that we are all burning-glasses of various degrees of density, so that our passions ignite at different grades of heat."

"Mine are not very far from the focal

'istance at this moment," said Grounsell, with savage energy; "so fetch your hat, sir, at once, or——"

"Unless I prefer a cap, you were going to add," interposed Jekyl, with a sweet smile.

"We must use speed, sir, or we shall be too late," rejoined the doctor.

"I flatter myself few men understand a rapid toilet better," said Jekyl, rising from the table; "so if you'll amuse yourself with *Bell's Life, Punch*, or Jules Janin, for five minutes, I'm your man."

"I can be company for myself for that space, sir," said the other, gruffly, and turned to the window, while Jekyl, disappearing behind the drapery that filled the doorway, was heard humming an opera air from within.

Grounsell was in no superlative mood of good temper with the world, nor would he have extended to the section of it he best knew the well-known eulogy on the "Bayards." "Swindlers," "Rakes," and "Vagabonds," were about the mildest terms of the vocabulary he kept muttering to himself, while a grumbling thunder-growl of malediction followed each. The very aspect of the little chamber seemed to offer food for his anger: the pretentious style of its decoration jarred and irritated him, and he felt a wish to smash bronzes, and brackets, and statues into one common ruin.

The very visiting cards which lay scattered over a Sèvres dish offended him; the names of all that were most distinguished in rank and station, with here and there some little civility inscribed on the corner, "Thanks," "Come, if possible," or "Of course we expect you," showing the social request in which Jekyl stood.

"Ay," muttered he to himself, "here is one that can neither give dinners nor balls, get places or pensions or orders, lend money or lose it, and yet the world wants him and cannot get on without him. The indolence of profligacy seeks the aid of his stimulating activity, and the palled appetite of sensualism has to borrow the relish from vice that gives all its piquancy. Without him as the fly-wheel, the whole machinery of mischief would stand still. His boast is, that, without a sou, no millionaire is richer than he; and that every boon of fortune is at his beck. He might add that, in his comprehensive view of wickedness, he realizes within himself all the vice of this good capital. I'd send such a fellow to the tread-mill—I'd transport him for life—I'd sentence him to hunt kangaroos for the rest of his days—I'd——" He stopped short in his violent tirade, for he suddenly bethought him how he himself was at that very moment seeking aid and assistance at his hands, and somewhat abashed by the recollection, he called out, "Mr. Jekyl, are you ready yet?"

No answer was returned to this question, and Grounsell repeated it in a louder voice. All was silent, and not even the dulcet sounds of the air from "Lucia" broke the stillness; and now the doctor, losing all patience, drew aside the curtain and looked in. The chamber was empty, and Jekyl was gone! His little portmanteau and his still smaller carpet-bag, his hat-case, his canes—every article of his *personnel*, were away; and while Grounsell stood cursing the "little rascal," he himself was pleasantly seated opposite Lady Hester and Kate in the traveling-carriage, and convulsing them with laughter at his admirable imitation of the poor doctor.

Great as was Grounsell's anger at this trickery, it was still greater when he discovered that he had been locked in. He quite forgot the course of time passed in his meditations, and could not believe it possible that there was sufficient interval to have effected all these arrangements so speedily.

Too indignant to brook delay, he dashed his foot through the door and passed out. The noise at once summoned the people of the house to the spot, and, to Grounsell's surprise, with a police-officer amongst them, who, in all the pomp of office, now barred the passage with a drawn sword.

"What is it?—what's this?" cried he, in astonishment.

"Effraction by force in case of debt is punishable by the 127th section of the 'Code,'" said a dirty little man, who, with the air of a shoeblack, was still a leading member of the Florence bar.

"I owe nothing here—not a farthing, sir; let me pass," cried Grounsell.

"'Fathers for sons of nonage or over that period, domiciliated in the same house,'" began the advocate, reading out of a volume in his hand, "'are also responsible.'"

"What balderdash, sir! I have no son; I never was married in my life; and as for this Mr. Jekyl, if you mean to father him on me, I'll resist to the last drop of my blood."

"'Denunciation and menace, with show of arms or without,'" began the lawyer again, "'are punishable by fine and imprisonment.'"

Gounsell was now so worked up by fury, that he attempted to force a passage by

main strength; but a general brandishing of knives by all the family, from seven years of age upwards, warned him that the attempt might be too serious, while a wild chorus of abusive language arose from various sympathizers who poured in from the street to witness the scene.

A father who would not pay for his own son; an "assassin," who had no bowels for his kindred; a "Birbante," a "Briccone," and a dozen similar epithets, rattled on him like hail, till Grounsell, supposing that the "bite" might be in proportion to the "bark," retreated into a small chamber, and proposed terms of accommodation. Few men take pleasure in acquitting their own debts, fewer still like to pay those of their neighbors, and Grounsell set about the task in anything but a pleasant manner. There was one redeeming feature, however, in the affair. Jekyl's schedule could not have extracted a rebuke from the severest commissioner of bankruptcy. His household charges were framed on the most moderate scale of expenditure. A few crowns for his house-rent, a few "pauls" for his eatables, and a few "grazie" for his washing, comprised the whole charge of his establishment, and not even Hume would have sought to cut down the "estimates." Doubtless more than one-half of the demands were unjust and extortionate, and many were perhaps already acquitted; but as all the rogueries were but homœopathic iniquities after all, their doses might be endured with patience. His haste to conclude the arrangements had, however, a very different tendency. The more yielding he became, the greater grew their exactions, and several times the treaty threatened to open hostilities again; and at last it was full an hour after Jekyl's departure that Grounsell escaped from durance, and was free to follow George Onslow to Pratolino.

With his adventures in the interval the reader is sufficiently well acquainted; and we now come back to that moment where, bewildered and lost, he sat down upon the bench beside the high road.

CHAPTER XLI.

A SAD HOUSEHOLD.

It was already past noon when Grounsell reached Florence. He was delayed at the gate by the authorities examining a peasant's cart in front of him—a process which appeared to take a most unusual degree of care and scrutiny—and thus gave the doctor another occasion for inveighing against the "stupid ignorance of foreigners, who throw every possible impediment in the way of traffic and intercourse."

"What have they discovered now?" cried he, testily, as in a crowd of vehicles, of all sorts and sizes, he was jammed up like a coal vessel in the river. "Is the peasant a revolutionary general in disguise; or has he got Bibles or British cutlery under the straw of his baroccino?"

"No, Eccellenza." (Every one in a passion in Italy is styled Eccellenza, as an "anodyne.") "It's a sick man, and they don't know what to do with him."

"Is there a duty on ague or nervous fever?" asked he, angrily.

"They suspect he's dead, Eccellenza, and, if so, there's no use in bringing him to the city to bring him out again by and by."

"And don't they know if a man be dead or alive?"

"Not when he's a foreigner, Illustrissimo; and such is the case here."

"Ah! very true, said Grounsell, dryly, as if acquiescing in the truth of the remark. "Let me have a look at him; perhaps I can assist their judgment." And with this he descended, and made his way through the crowd, who, in all the eagerness of curiosity, thronged around the cart. A peasant's great-coat was drawn over the figure, and even the face of the sick man, as he lay at full length on the mat flooring of the baroccino; and on his chest some pious hand had deposited a rosary and a wooden crucifix.

Grounsell hastily drew back the covering, and then clutching an arm of those at either side of him, he uttered a faint cry, for the pale and death-like features before him were those of George Onslow. The instincts of the doctor, however, soon rose above every other feeling, and his hand seized the wrist and felt for the pulse. Its beatings were slow, labored and irregular, denoting the brain as the seat of injury. Grounsell, therefore, proceeded to examine the head, which, covered with clogged and matted blood, presented a terrific appearance; yet neither there nor elsewhere was there any trace of injury by fire-arms. The history of discovery was soon told. A shepherd had detected the body as he passed the spot, and hailing some peasants on their way to Florence, advised their taking charge of it to the city where they would be surely recompensed. The natural suggestion of Grounsell's mind was that, in making his escape from the gendarmes, Onslow had

fallen over a cliff. To convey him home, and get him to bed, if possible, before Sir Stafford should hear of the misfortune, was his first care; and in this he succeeded. It was the time when Sir Stafford usually slept; and Grounsell was able to examine his patient and satisfy himself that no fatal injury was done, long before the old baronet awoke.

"Sir Stafford wishes to see you, sir; he asked for you repeatedly to-day," said Proctor.

"Has he heard—does he know anything of this?" said Grounsell, with a gesture to the bed where George lay.

"Not a word, sir. He was very cheerful all the morning, but wondering where you could have gone, and what Mister George was doing."

"Now for it, then," muttered Grounsell to himself, as with clasped hands and knitted brows he walked along; his mind suffering the very same anxieties as had oftentimes beset him on the eve of some painful operation in his art.

"Well, Grounsell," said the old man with a smile, as he entered, "is it to give me a foretaste of my altered condition that you all desert me to-day? You have never come near me, nor George either, so far as I can learn."

"We've had a busy morning of it, Stafford," said the doctor, sitting down on the bed, and laying his finger on the pulse. "You are better—much better to-day. Your hand is like itself, and your eye is free from fever."

"I feel it, Grounsell—I feel as if, with some twenty years less upon my back, I could like to begin my tussle with the world, and try issue with the best."

"You're young enough, and active enough yet, for what is before you, Stafford. Yesterday I told you of everything in colors perhaps gloomier than reality. The papers of to-day are somewhat more cheery in their tidings. The hurricane may pass over and leave us still afloat; but there is another trial for you, my old friend, and you must take heart to bear it well and manfully."

Sir Stafford sat up in his bed, and, grasping Grounsell by either shoulder, cried out, Go on—tell it quickly."

"Be calm, Stafford; be yourself, my old friend," said Grounsell, terrified at the degree of emotion he had called up. "Your own courageous spirit will not desert you now."

"I know it," said the old man, as, relaxing his grasp, he fell back upon the pillow, and then, turning on his face, he uttered a deep groan. "I know your tidings now," cried he, in a burst of agony. "Oh, Grounsell, what is all other disgrace compared to this!"

"I'm speaking of George—of your son," interposed Grounsell, hastily, and seizing with avidity the opportunity to reveal all at once. "He left this for Pratolino this morning to fight a duel, but by some mischance has fallen over a cliff, and is severely injured."

"He's dead—you would tell me he's dead!" said the old man, in a faint, thrilling whisper.

"Far from it. Alive, and like to live, but still sorely crushed and wounded."

"Oh, God!" cried the old man, in a burst of emotion, "what worldliness is in my heart when I am thankful for such tidings as this! When it is a relief to me to know that my child, my only son, lies maimed and broken on a sick-bed, instead of—instead of——" A gush of tears here broke in upon his utterance, and he wept bitterly.

Grounsell knew too well the relief such paroxysms afford to interfere with their course, while, to avoid any recurrence, even in thought, to the cause, he hurriedly told all that he knew of George's intended meeting with the Frenchman, and his own share in disturbing the rendezvous.

Sir Stafford never spoke during this recital. The terrible shock seemed to have left its stunning influence on his faculties, and he appeared scarcely able to take in with clearness the details into which the other entered.

"She's gone to Como, then," were the first words he uttered—"to this villa the prince has lent her?"

"So I understand; and, from what Proctor says, the Russian is going to marry the Dalton girl."

"Miss Dalton is along with Lady Hester?"

"To be sure; they travel together, and George was to have followed them."

"Even scandal, Grounsell, can make nothing of this. What say you, man?"

"You may defy it on that score, Stafford; but let us talk of what is more imminent—of George."

"I must see him, Grounsell; I must see my poor boy," said he, rising and making an effort to get out of bed; but weakness and mental excitement together overcame him, and he sank back again, fainting and exhausted. To this a deep, heavy sleep succeeded, and Grounsell stole away, relieved in mind by having acquitted himself of his painful task, and free to address his thoughts to other cares.

"Lord Norwood wishes to see you, sir," said a servant to the doctor, as he at last seated himself for a moment's rest in his chamber; and before Grounsell could reply, the noble viscount entered.

"Excuse this abrupt visit, sir; but I have just heard of poor Onslow's accident. Is there any danger in his condition?"

"Great and imminent danger, my lord."

"By Jove!—sorry for it. You don't happen to know how it occurred?"

"A fall evidently was the cause, but how incurred I cannot even guess."

"In the event of his coming about again, when might we expect to see him all right, speaking loosely, of course?"

"Should he recover, it will take a month, or perhaps two, before he convalesces."

"The devil it will! These Frenchmen can't be made to understand the thing at all; and as Guilmard received a gross personal outrage, he is perfectly out of his mind at the delay in obtaining satisfaction. What is to be done?"

"I am a poor adviser in such cases, my lord; nor do I see that the matter demands any attention from us whatever."

"Not from *you*, perhaps," said Norwood, insolently; "but I had the misfortune to go out as his friend! My position is a most painful and critical one."

"I should suppose that no one will understand how to deal with such embarrassments better than your lordship."

"Thanks for the good opinion; the speech I take to be a compliment, however you meant it. I believe I am not altogether unskilled in such affairs, and it is precisely because such is the case that I am here now. Onslow, in other hands than mine, is a ruined man. The story, tell it how you will, comes to this: that, having gone out to meet a man he had grossly insulted, he wanders away from the rendezvous, and is found some hours after at the foot of a cliff, insensible. He may have fallen, he may have been waylaid—though everything controverts this notion—or, lastly, he may have done the act himself. There will be advocates for each view of the case; but it is essential, for his honor and reputation, that one story should be authenticated. Now, I am quite ready to stand godfather to such a version, taking all the consequences, however serious, on myself."

"This is very kind, very generous, indeed, my lord," said Grounsell, suddenly warming into an admiration of one he was always prejudiced against.

"Oh, I'm a regular John Bull!" said the viscount, at once assuming the burden of that canticle, which helped him in all moments of hypocrisy. "Always stand by the old stock—nothing like them, sir. The Anglo-Saxon blood will carry all before it yet; never suffer a rascally foreigner to put his foot on one of your countrymen. Have him out, sir; parade the fellow at once; that's my plan.

"I like your spirit!" cried Grounsell, enthusiastically.

"To be sure you do, old cock!" exclaimed Norwood, clapping him familiarly on the shoulder. "Depend upon it, *I'll* pull George through this. *I'll* manage the matter cleverly. There must be no mistake about it—no room for doubt or equivocation, you know. All straightforward, open, and manly: John Bull every inch of it. That's *my* notion, at least—I hope it's yours?"

"Perfectly—thoroughly so!"

"Well, then, just hand that note to Sir Stafford." Here he placed a sealed letter in Grounsell's hand. "Tell him what I've just told you. Let him fairly understand the whole question, and let me have the contents this evening at the *café* in the Santa Trinitá—say about nine o'clock—not later than that. These fellows always gather about that hour."

"I'll take care of it," said Grounsell.

"All right!" cried Norwood, gayly, as he arose and adjusted the curls beneath his hat. "My compliments to the old gent, and tell George not to make himself uneasy. He's in safe hands. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, my lord, good-bye," said Grounsell, who, as he looked after him, felt, as it were, unconsciously recurring to all his former prejudices and dislikes of the noble viscount. "Those fellows," muttered he, "are as inexplicable to me as a new malady, of which I neither know the stages nor the symptoms! The signs I take for those of health may be precisely the indications of corruption; and what I deem unsound, may turn out to be exactly the opposite." And so he fell into a musing fit, in which certainly his estimate of Lord Norwood continued to steadily fall lower and lower the longer he thought of him. "He must be a rogue!—he must be a scoundrel! Nature makes all its blackguards plausible, just as poison berries are always brilliant to look at. They are both intended to be the correctives of rash impressions, and I was only a fool ever to be deceived by him. Out of this at all hazards—that's the first thing!" muttered Grounsell to himself, as he walked hastily up and down the room. "The place is like a plague district, and we must not carry an infected rag away from it! Glorious Italy, forsooth! There's more

true enlightenment, there's a higher purpose, and a nobler view of life, in the humblest English village, than in the proudest halls of their Eternal City!"

In such pleasant reflections on national character he entered Sir Stafford's room, and found his friend seated at a table covered with newly-arrived letters; the seals were all unbroken, and the sick man was turning them over, and gazing at the different handwritings with a sad and listless apathy.

"I'm glad you've come, Grounsell. I have not courage for this," said he, pointing to the mass of letters before him.

"Begging impostors, one-half of them, I'll be sworn!" said Grounsell, seating himself to the work. "Was I not right? Here's a cabinet minister suing for your vote on an Irish question, and entreating your speedy return to England, 'where, he trusts, the object you are both interested in may be satisfactorily arranged.' Evasive rascal! Couldn't he say, 'You shall have the peerage for your support'? Wouldn't it be more frank, and more intelligible, to declare, 'We take you at your price'? These," said he, throwing half a dozen contemptuously from him, "are all from your constituents. The 'independent borough' contains seventy electors, and, if you owned the patronage of the two services, with a fair share of the public offices and India, you couldn't content them. I'd tell them fairly, 'I have bought you already; the article is paid for and sent home. Let us hear no more about it!' This is more cheering. Shoenhals, of Riga, stands firm, and the Rotterdam house will weather the gale. That's good news, Onslow!" said he, grasping the old man's hand. "This is from Calcutta. Prospects are brightening a little in that quarter, too. Come, come; there's some blue in the sky. Who knows what good weather's in store for us?"

Onslow's lip trembled, and he passed his hand over his eyes without speaking.

"This is from Como," said Grounsell, half angrily, tossing away a highly-perfumed little three-cornered note.

"Give it to me—let me see it," said Onslow, eagerly, while, with trembling fingers, he adjusted his spectacles to read. Grounsell handed him the epistle, and walked to the window.

"She's quite well," read Sir Stafford, aloud; "they had delightful weather on the road, and found Como in full beauty on their arrival." Grounsell grumbled some angry mutterings between his teeth, and shrugged up his shoulders disdainfully. "She inquires most kindly after me, and wishes me to join them, there, for Kate Dalton's betrothal."

"Yet she never took the trouble to visit you when living under the same roof!" cried Grounsell, indignantly.

The old man laid down the letter, and seemed to ponder for some moments.

"What's the amount—how much is the sum?" asked Grounsell, bluntly.

"The amount!—the sum!—of what?" inquired Sir Stafford.

"I ask, what demand is she making, that it is prefaced thus?"

"By heaven! if you were not a friend of more than fifty years' standing, you should never address me as such again," cried Onslow, passionately. "Has ill-nature so absorbed your faculties that you have not a good thought or good feeling left you?"

"My stock of them decreases every day—ay, every hour, Onslow," said he, with a deeper emotion than he had yet displayed. "It is, indeed, a sorry compromise that, if age is to make us wiser, it should make us less amiable also!"

"You are not angry with me—not offended, Grounsell?" said Onslow, grasping his hand in both his own.

"Not a bit of it. But, as to temperament, *I* can no more help *my* distrust, than *you* can conquer *your* credulity, which is a happier philosophy, after all."

"Then come, read that letter, Grounsell," said Onslow, smiling pleasantly; "put your prejudices aside for once, and be just, if not generous."

Grounsell took the note, and walked to the window to read it. The note was just what he expected—a prettily-turned inquiry after her husband's health, interwoven with various little pleasantries of traveling, incidents of the road, and so forth. The invitation was a mere suggestion, and Grounsell was half angry at how little there was to find fault with; for, even to the "Very sincerely yours, Hester Onslow," all was as commonplace as need be. Accidentally turning over the page, however, he found a small slip of silver paper—a bank cheque for five hundred pounds, only wanting Onslow's signature. Grounsell crushed it convulsively in his palm, and handed the note back to Onslow, without a word.

"Well, are you convinced?—are you satisfied now?" asked Onslow, triumphantly.

"I am perfectly so!" said Grounsell, with a deep sigh. "You must write, and tell her that business requires your immediate presence in England, and that George's

condition will necessitate a return by sea. Caution her that the Daltons should be consulted about this marriage—which, so far as I know, they have not been; and I would advise, also, seeing that there may be some interval before you can write again, that you should send her a cheque—say for five hundred pounds."

"So you *can* be equitable, Grounsell," cried the other, joyously.

"And here is a letter from Lord Norwood," said Grounsell, not heeding the remark, and breaking the seal as he spoke. "Laconic, certainly. 'Let me have the enclosed by this evening.—N.' The enclosed are five acceptances for two hundred each; the 'value received' being his lordship's services in upholding your son's honor. Now here at least, Onslow, I'll have my own way." And, with these words, he seated himself at a table, and wrote:

"My Lord:—Living in a land where assassination is cheap, and even men of small fortune can keep a bravo, I beg to return your lordship's bills, without submitting them to my friend for endorsement, your price being considerably above the tariff of the country, and more calculated to your own exigencies than the occasion which it was meant to remunerate.

"I am, yours,

"Paul Grounsell."

"What have you said there, Grounsell? You look so self-satisfied, it can scarcely be over-civil."

"There—'To the Viscount Norwood,'" said Grounsell, as he sealed and addressed the note. "We are getting through our work rapidly. In a week, or even less, if George's symptoms show nothing worse, we shall get away from this; and even on the sea one feels half as though it were England."

We need not follow Grounsell through the busy days which ensued, nor track him in his various negotiations with tradespeople, bankers, house-agents, and that legionary class which are called "commissionnaires;" enough if we say, that, in arranging for the departure of his friends, his impressions of Italian roguery received many an additional confirmation; and that, when the last day of their sojourn arrived, his firm conviction was that none but a millionnaire could afford to live in this the very cheapest capital of Europe!

And now they are gone, steaming calmly away across the Gulf of Genoa. They have closed the little episode of their life in Italy, and, with heavy hearts, are turning homeward. The great Mazzarini Palace looks sad and forlorn, nor do we mean to linger much longer on a scene whence the actors have departed.

CHAPTER XLII.

A LAST SCENE.

One last glance at the Mazzarini Palace, and we leave it forever.

Seated in the drawing-room, where Lady Hester once held sway, in the very chair around which swarmed her devoted courtiers and admirers, Mrs. Ricketts now reclined, pretty much on the same terms, and with probably some of the same sentiments, as Louis Blanc, or his friend Albert, might have experienced on finding themselves domesticated within the Palace of the Luxembourg. They were, so to say, parallel circumstances. There had been a great reverse of fortune, an abdication, and a flight. The sycophants of the day before were the masters now, and none disputed the pretensions of any bold enough to assume dictation. To be sure, Mrs. Ricketts's rule, like Ledru Rollin's, was but a provisional government; for, already, the bills for an approaching sale of everything were posted over the front of the palace, and Racca Morlache's people were cataloguing every article with a searching accuracy, very tormenting to the beholders.

From some confused impression that they were friends of Lady Hester, and that Mrs. Ricketts's health was in a precarious condition, Sir Stafford gave orders that they should not be molested in any way, but permitted to prolong their stay to the latest period compatible with the arrangements for sale. A sense of gratitude, too, mingled with these feelings; for Mrs. Ricketts had never ceased to indite euphuistic notes of inquiry after George himself—send presents of impracticable compounds of paste and preserves, together with bottles of mixtures, lotions, embrocations, and liniments—one tithe of which would have invalided a regiment. Grounsell, it is true, received these civilities in a most unworthy spirit; called her "an old humbug," with a very impolite expletive annexed to it; and all but hurled the pharmacopœia at the head of the messenger. Still, he had other cares too pressing to suffer his mind to dwell on such trifles; and when Onslow expressed a wish that the family should not be disturbed in their occupancy, he merely muttered, "Let

them stay and be d—d;" and thought no more of them.

Now, although the palace was, so to speak, dismantled, the servants discharged, the horses sent to livery for sale, the mere residence was convenient for Mrs. Ricketts. It afforded a favorable opportunity for a general "doing up" of the Villino Zoe—a moment for which all her late ingenuity had not been able to provide. It opened a convenient occasion, too, for supplying her own garden with a very choice collection of flowers from the Mazzarini—fuchsias, geraniums, and orchidæ, being far beyond all the inventorial science of Morlache's men; and lastly, it conferred the pleasing honor of dating all her dispatches to her hundred correspondents from the Palazzo Mazzarini, where, to oblige her dear Lady Hester, she was still lingering—"*Se sacrificando*," as she delighted to express it, "*ai doveri dell' amicizia*." To these cares she had now vowed herself a martyr. The general believed in her sorrows; Martha would have sworn to them; and not a whit the less sincerely, that she spent hours in secreting tulip roots and hyacinths, while a deeper scheme was in perpetration—no less than to substitute a copy of a Gerard Dow for the original, and thus transmit the genius of the Ricketts family to a late posterity. Poor Martha would have assisted in a murder at her bidding, and not had a suspicion of its being a crime!

It was an evening "at home to her few most intimate friends," when Mrs. Ricketts, using the privilege of an invalid, descended to the drawing-room in a costume which united an ingenious compromise between the habit of waking and sleeping. A short tunic, a kind of female monkey-jacket, of faded yellow satin edged with swansdown, and a cap of the same material, whose shape was borrowed from that worn by the beefeaters, formed the upper portion of a dress, to which wide fur boots, with gold tassels, and a great hanging pocket, like a sabertasche, gave a false air of a military costume. "It was singular," she would remark, with a bland smile, "but very becoming!" Besides, it suited every clime. She used to come down to breakfast in it at Windsor Castle: "The queen liked it;" the Bey of Tripoli loved it; and the Hospodar of Wallachia had one made for himself exactly from the pattern. Her guests were the same party we have already introduced to our reader in the Villino Zoe—Haggerstone, the Pole, and Foglass, being the privileged few admitted into her august presence, and who came to make up her whist-table, and offer their respectful homage on her convalescence.

The Carnival was just over, the dull season of Lent had begun, and the Ricketts's tea-table was a resource when nothing else offered. Such was the argument of Haggerstone as he took a cheap dinner with Foglass at the Luna.

"She's an infernal bore, sir—that I know fully as well as you can inform me—but please to tell me who isn't a bore?" Then he added, in a lower voice, "Certainly it ain't *you!*"

"Yes, yes—I agree with you," said Foglass; "she has reason to be sore about the Onslows' treatment."

"I say a bore, sir—not sore," screamed out Haggerstone.

"Ha!" replied the other, not understanding the correction. "I remember one day, when Townsend——"

"D—n Townsend!" said Haggerstone.

"No, not Dan—Tom Townsend. That fellow who was always with Mathews."

"Walk a little quicker, and you may talk as much balderdash as you please," said the other, buttoning up his coat, and resolving not to pay the slightest attention to his companion's agreeability.

"Who is here?" asked Haggerstone, as he followed the servant up the stairs.

"Nobody but Count Petrolaffsky, sir."

"Un Comte à bon compte," muttered Haggerstone to himself, always pleased when he could be sarcastic, even in soliloquy. "They'll find it no easy matter to get a tenant for this house nowadays. Florence is going down, sir, and will soon be little better than Boulogne-sur-Mer."

"Very pleasant, indeed, for a month in summer," responded Foglass, who had only caught up the last word. "Do you think of going there?"

"Going there!" shouted out the other, in a voice that made misconception impossible. "About as soon as I should take lodgings in Wapping for country air!"

This speech brought them to the door of the drawing-room, into which Haggerstone now entered, with that peculiar step which struck him as combining the jaunty slide of a man of fashion with the martial tread of an old soldier.

"Ha! my old adherents—all my faithful ones!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, giving a hand to each to kiss; and then, in a voice of deep emotion, she said, "Bless you both! May peace and happiness be beneath your roof-trees! joy sit beside your hearth!"

Haggerstone reddened a little; for, however alive to the ludicrous in his neighbors, he was marvelously sensitive as to having a part in the piece himself.

"You are looking quite yourself again," said he, bluntly.

"The soul, indeed, is unchanged; the spirit——"

"What's become of Purvis?" broke in Haggerstone, who never gave any quarter to these poetic flights.

"You'll see him presently. He has been so much fatigued and exhausted by this horrid police investigation, that he never gets up till late. I've put him on a course of dandelion and aconite, too; the first effect of which is always unpleasant."

Leaving Foglass in conclave with the hostess, Haggerstone now approached the count, who had four several times performed his toilet operation of running his hands through his hair, in expectation of being addressed.

"How d'ye do—any piquet lately?" asked the colonel, half cavalierly.

"As if I was tinking of piquet, wid my country in shains! How you can aske me dat?"

"What did you do with Norwood t'other night?" resumed the other, in a voice somewhat lower.

"Won four hundred and fifty—but he no pay!"

"Nor ever will."

"What you say?—not pay me what I wins!"

"Not a sou of it."

"And dis you call English noblemans—pair d'Angleterre!"

"Hush! Don't be carried away by your feelings. Some men Norwood won't pay, because he doesn't know them. There are others he treats the same way, because he *does* know them—very equitable, eh?"

The observation seemed more intelligible to the Pole than polite, for he bit his lip and was silent, while Haggerstone went on:

"He's gone, and that, at least, is a point gained; and now that these Onslows have left this, and that cur Jekyl, we may expect a little quietness for a while at least; but here comes Purvis." And that worthy individual was led in on Martha's arm, a large green shade over his eyes, and his face plentifully sprinkled with flour.

"What's the matter with you, man? You're 'got up' like a ghost in a melodrama."

"They've taken all the cuti-cuti-cuti—"

"Call it skin, sir, and go on."

"Sk-skin off my face with a lin-liniment," cried he, "and I could sc-scream out with pain whenever I speak!"

"Balm of marigolds, with the essential oil of crab-apple," said Martha. "I made it myself."

"I wish to hea-heaven you had tr-tried it too," whispered he.

"Brother Scroope, you are ungrateful," said Mrs. Ricketts, with the air of a judge, charging. "The vicissitudes of temperature, here, require the use of astringents. The excessive heat of that police-court——"

"By the way, how has that affair ended?" asked Haggerstone.

"I'll tell you!" screamed out Purvis, in a burst of eagerness. "They've fi-fi-fined me a hundred and f-f-fifty scudi for being w-where I never was, and fighting somebody I n-never saw."

"You got off cheaply, sir. I've known a man sentenced to the galleys for less; and with a better character to boot," muttered he to himself.

"Lord Norwood and the rest said that I was a pr-pr-principal, and he swore that he found me hiding in a cave."

"And did he so?"

"Yes; but it was only out of curi-curi-curi——"

"Curiosity, sir, like other luxuries, must be paid for; and, as you seem a glutton, your appetite may be expensive to you."

"The mystery remains unsolved as to young Onslow, colonel?" said Mrs. Ricketts, half in question.

"I believe not, madam. The explanation is very simple. The gallant Guardsman, having heard of Guilmard's skill, preferred to be reported 'missing' to 'killed,' having previously arranged with Norwood to take his place. The price was, I fancy, a smart one—some say five thousand, some call it ten. Whatever the amount, it has not been paid, and Norwood is furious."

"But the accident?"

"As for that, madam, nothing more natural than to crack your skull when you lose your head." And Haggerstone drew himself up with the proud consciousness of his own smartness.

"Then, of course, the poor young man is ruined?" observed Martha.

"I should say so, madam—utterly ruined. He may figure on the committee of a Polish ball, but any other society would of course reject him." This was said to obtain a sneer at Petrolaffsky, without his being able to guess why. "I believe I may say, without much fear of contradiction, that these Onslows were all humbugs! The old banker's wealth, my lady's refinement, the Guardsman's spirit, were all in the same category—downright humbugs!"

"How he hates us—how he detests the aristocracy!" said Mrs. Ricketts, in a whisper, to the Pole.

"And de Dalton—what of her?—is she millionnaire?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"The father is a small shopkeeper in Baden, sir; children's toys, nut-crackers, and paper knives being the staple of his riches. Foglass can tell you all about it. He wants to hear about those Daltons," screamed he into the deaf man's ear.

"Poor as Job—hasn't sixpence—lives 'three-pair back,' and dines for a 'zwanziger.' Lame daughter makes something by cutting heads for canes and umbrellas. He picks up a trifle about the hotels."

"Ach Gott! and I was so near be in loaf wid de sister!" muttered the Pole.

"She is likely to d-d-do better, count," cackled in Purvis. "She's caught her Tartar—ha! ha! ha!"

"Midchekoff doesn't mean marriage, sir, depend upon it," said Haggerstone.

"Martha, leave the room, my dear," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling. "He could no more relish a pleasure without a vice, than he could dine without caviare."

"But they are be-be-betrothed," cried Purvis. "I saw a letter with an account of the ceremony. Mid-chekoff fitted up a beautiful chapel at his villa, and there was a Greek priest came sp-special from M-M-M-Moscow——"

"I thought you were going to say from the moon, sir; and it would be almost as plausible," croaked Haggerstone.

"I saw the letter. It wasn't shown to me, but I saw it; and it was that woman from Breslau gave her away."

"What! old Madame Heidendorf? She has assisted at a great many similar ceremonies before, sir."

"It was the emperor sent her on purpose!" cried Purvis, very angry at the disparagement of his history.

"In this unbelieving age, sir, I must say that your fresh innocence is charming; but permit me to tell you that I know old Caroline Meersburg—she was sister of the fellow that stole the Archduke Michael's dress-sword at the court ball given for his birthday. I have known her five-and-thirty years. You must have met her, madam, at Lubetskoy's, when he was minister at Naples, the year after the battle of Marengo."

"I was wearing trousers with frills to them, and hunting butterflies at that time," said Mrs. Ricketts, with a great effort at a smile.

"I haven't a doubt of it, madam." And then muttered to himself, "And if childishness mean youth, she will enjoy a perpetual spring!"

"The ceremony," resumed Purvis, very eager to relate his story, "was dr-droll enough; they cut off a—a—a lock of her hair, and tied it up with one of his."

"A good wig spoiled!" croaked Haggerstone.

"They then brought a b-b-b——"

"A baby, sir?"

"No, not a b-baby—a b-basin—a silver basin—and they poured water over both their hands."

"A ceremony by no means in accordance with Russian prejudices," chimed in Haggerstone. "They know far more of train oil and bears' fat than of Brown Windsor!"

"Not the higher nobility, colonel—not the people of rank," objected Mrs. Ricketts.

"There are none such, madam. I have lived in intimacy with them all, from Alexander downwards. You may dress them how you please, but the Cossack is in the blood. Raw beef and red breeches are more than instincts with them; and, except the Poles, they are the dirtiest nation of Europe."

"What you say of Polen?" asked Petrolaffsky.

"That if oil could smooth down the acrimony of politics, you ought to be a happy people yet, sir."

"And we are a great people dis minet. Haven't we Urednfrskioctsch, de best general in de world; and Krakouventkay, de greatest poet; and Valdoritski, de most distinguish pianist?"

"Keep them, sir, with all their consonants; and heaven give you luck with them," said Haggerstone, turning away.

"On Tuesday — no — We-Wednesday next, they are to set out for St. P-P-Petersburg. And when the emperor's leave is gr-granted, then Midchekoff is to follow; but not before."

"An de tyrant no grant de leave," said the Pole, gnashing his teeth and grasping an imaginary dagger in his wrath. "More like he send her to work in shains, wid my beautiful sisters and my faders."

"He'll have more important matters to think of soon, sir," said Haggerstone, authoritatively. "Europe is on the eve of a great convulsion. Some kings and Kaisers will accept the Chiltern Hundreds before the year's out."

"Shall we be safe, colonel, here? Ought Martha and I——"

"Have no fears, madam; age commands respect, even from Huns and Croats. And were it otherwise, madam, where would you fly to? France will have her own troubles, England has the income-tax, and Germany will rake up some old grievance of the Hohenstaufen, or the

Emperor Conrad, and make it a charge against Prince Metternich and the Diet! It's a very rascally world altogether, and out of Tattersall's yard I never expect to hear of honesty or good principles; and, *à propos* to nothing, let us have some piquet, count."

The table was soon got ready, and the players had just seated themselves when the sound of carriage-wheels in the court attracted their attention.

"What can it mean, Scroope? Are you quite certain that you said I wouldn't receive to-night?"

"Yes; I told them what you b-bade me; that if the archduke called——"

"There, you needn't repeat it," broke in Mrs. Ricketts, for certain indications around Haggerstone's mouth showed the sense of ridicule that was working within him.

"I suppose, madam, you feel somewhat like poor Pauline, when she said that she was so beset with kings and Kaisers she had never a moment left for good society?"

"You must say positively, Scroope, that I admit no one this evening."

"The Signor Morlache wishes to see you, madam," said a servant. And close behind him, as he spoke, followed that bland personage, bowing gracefully to each as he entered.

"Sorry—most sorry—madam, to intrude upon your presence; but the Prince Midchekoff desires to have a glance at the pictures and decorations before he goes away from Florence."

"Will you mention to him that to-morrow, in the afternoon, about five or——"

"He leaves this to-morrow morning, madam; and if you could——"

Before the Jew could finish his request the door was flung wide, and the great Midchekoff entered, with his hands in his coat-pockets, and his glass in one eye. He sauntered into the room with a most profound unconsciousness that there were people in it. Not a glance did he even bestow on the living figures of the scene, nor did a trait of his manner evince any knowledge of their presence. Ranging his eyes over the walls and the ceilings, he neither noticed the martial attitude of Haggerstone, or the graceful undulations by which Mrs. Ricketts was, as it were, rehearsing a curtsey before him.

"Originals, but all poor things, Morlache," said the prince. And really, the observation seemed as though uttered of the company rather than the pictures.

"Mrs. Ricketts has been good enough, your highness——" began the Jew.

"Give her a napoleon," said he, listlessly, and turned away.

"My sister, Mrs. Ricketts—Mrs. M-M-Montague Ricketts," began Scroope, whose habitual timidity gave way under the extremity of the provocation. And the prince turned slowly round, and surveyed the speaker and the imposing form that loomed behind him.

"Tell them I don't mean to keep any establishment here, Morlache." And with this he strolled on, and passed into another room, while, like as in a tableau, the others stood speechless with rage and indignation.

"He took you for the housekeeper, ma'am," said Haggerstone, standing up with his back to the fire—"and a housekeeper out of place!"

"Martha, where is the general? Where is he, I say?" cried Mrs. Ricketts, furious with passion.

"He went to bed at nine," whispered Martha. "He thought, by rising early to-morrow, to finish the attack on Utrecht before night."

"You are as great a fool as himself. Scroope, come here. You must follow that Russian. You must tell him the gross rudeness——"

"I'll be ha-ha-hanged if I do. I've had enough of rows, for one winter at least. I'll not get into another sc-scrape, if I can help it."

"I'm sorry, madam, that I cannot offer you my services," said Haggerstone; "but I never meddle in a quarrel which can be made a subject of ridicule. Mr. Foglass, I'm certain, has no such scruple."

"The prince appears a very agreeable man," said the ex-consul, who, not having the slightest notion of what was passing, merely followed his instincts of praising the person of high rank.

"De shains of my enslaved country is on my hands. I'm tied like one galerien!" said Petrolaffsky, in a voice guttural with emotion.

"Your pardon once more, madam," said Morlache, slipping into the chamber, and noiselessly approaching Mrs. Ricketts's chair. "The prince will take everything—pictures, plate, china and books. I hope to-morrow, at noon, will not inconvenience you to leave this——"

"To-morrow! Impossible, sir. Perfectly impossible."

"In that case, madam, we must make some arrangement as to rent. His highness leaves all to me, and I will endeavor to meet your wishes in every respect. Shall we say two thousand francs a month for the present?" Without waiting for any reply,

he turned to the Pole, and whispered, "He'll take you back again. He wants a chasseur to send to St. Petersburg. Come over to me in the morning, about ten. Mr. Foglass," cried he, in a loud voice, "when you write to London, will you mention that the varnish on the prince's drosky doesn't stand the cold of Russia, and that they must try some other plan with the barouche. Your brother is an ingenious fellow, and he'll hit upon something. Colonel Haggerstone, the prince didn't return your call. He says you will guess the reason when he says that he was in Palermo in a certain year you know of. I wish the honorable company good night," said he, bowing with a deference almost submissive, and backing out of the room as he spoke.

And with him we also take our leave of them. They were like the chance passengers we meet on the road of a journey, with whom we converse when near, and forget when we separate from. Were we not more interested for the actors than the scenes on which they "strut their hour," we might yet linger a few moments on the spot so bound up with our memory of Kate Dalton—the terrace where she sat, the little orangery where she loitered of a morning, the window where she read, and dreamed of that bright future, so much nearer to her grasp than she knew of! There they were all!—destined to feel new influences and know other footsteps, for she had left them forever and gone forth upon her "path" in life.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

It was a bright, clear morning in May. A somewhat late spring had retarded vegetation, and the blossoming fruit-trees now added their gorgeous beauty to the warmer tints of coming summer. We are once more in Baden; but how different is it from what we saw it last! The frozen fountains now plash, and hiss, and sparkle in the sun. The trim alleys are flanked by the yellow crocus and the daffodil; the spray-like foliage of the ash is flecking the sunlight on the merry river, along whose banks the cheering sound of pleasant voices mingles with the carol of a thousand birds. The windows are open, and gay balconies are spreading, and orange-trees unfolding their sweetness to the breezy air. All is life, and motion, and joy, for the winter is passed, and nothing remains of it save the snow-peaks on some distant mountains, and even they are glowing in brilliant contrast with the deep blue sky beyond them.

Lovely as the valley is in summer or autumn, it is only in spring its perfect beauty appears. The sudden burst of vegetation—the rapid transition from the frost-bound durance of winter to the life and lightness of the young season, have a most exciting and exhilarating effect. This seemed conspicuous enough in the inhabitants as they chatted merrily in the streets, or met each other with pleasant greetings. It was the hour of the post arriving, and around the little window of the office were gathered the chief celebrities of the village—the principal hotel-keepers, curious to learn what tidings their correspondents gave of the prospects of the coming summer. Everything appeared to smile on that happy moment, for, as the various letters were opened, each had some good news to tell his neighbors—now, of some great English lord; now, of some Hungarian magnate, or Russian prince, that was to make Baden his residence for the summer. "The Cour de Bade is all taken," said one; "There will not be a room free in all the Adler;" "The Swan must refuse the Queen of Naples"—such were the rumors that fell from lip to lip as in hearty congratulation they talked over their good fortune.

One figure only of the assembled group seemed excepted from the general joy. He was a large elderly man, who, in a patched and threadbare surtout, with a coarse scarlet muffler round his throat, appeared either distrustful of the mild season, or unprovided with any change of costume to enjoy it. Seated on a stone bench in front of the window of the post-office, with an arm on each knee, and his head bent heavily forward, he never seemed to notice what went forwards, nor hear one syllable of the joyous recognitions about him.

The crowd at last dispersed, the happy recipients of good news were turning homewards, and only one or two still lingered around the spot, when the old man arose and approached the window. There was something almost of shame in the way he slouched his hat over his eyes as he drew nigh and knocked timidly at the closed pane.

His summons was unheard, and yet for some time he did not repeat it—perhaps he loved better to feed his hope even these short few moments than again fall back into the dark gloom of his despair! At last, and with a deep, hollow sigh, he tapped again.

"Have you anything for the name of Dalton—Peter Dalton?" asked he, in a voice wherein scarcely an accent revealed the once high-hearted nature.

"Nothing," was the curt rejoinder. And the window was slammed to with impatience.

He grasped the iron railing with a convulsive grip, as though a sudden pang had shot through him, and then, by a great effort, he drew himself up to his full height; his pale and haggard face grew paler as he turned it upwards, and his bloodless lips trembled as they muttered some indistinct syllables; then turning about, he brushed abruptly past the few who stood around, and walked away.

He had not gone many paces when a boy overtook him, saying, "Come back, sir; the postmaster has two letters for you."

Dalton looked stealthily at either side, to be sure that the speech was addressed to him, and, with a fierceness that startled the boy, said: "You're certain they're for me?"

"Yes, yes; all right—here they are," cried the postmaster from the window. "One, a soldier's letter from Munich, and free. The other is a heavier packet, and costs four florins and twelve kreutzers."

"I must be satisfied with this one, then," said Dalton, "till I go back for money. I brought no change out with me."

"No matter; you can send it," said the other.

"Maybe it's not so easy as you think," muttered Dalton to himself; while he added, aloud, "Very well, I'll do so, and thank you." And he clutched the two letters and pressed them to his bosom.

With hurried steps he now paced homewards, but, stopping at every instant, he drew forth the packets to gaze on them, and be certain that no self-deception was over him, and that his possession was real and tangible. His gait grew more firm as he went, and his tread, as he mounted the stair, sounded assured and steady.

"You have a letter, father dearest," cried Nelly, as she flung wide the door. "I saw you crossing the Platz, and I know, from your walk, that you've got one."

"No, but better, Nelly—I've two. That's from Frank; and here's Kate's, and a bulky one—four florins twelve—devil a less."

"Oh, give it to me! Let me hear of her—let me feel beside her once again!" cried Nelly. And with bursting eagerness she tore open the envelope, from which two or three sealed notes fell out. "This is from Lady Hester," said she; "and this, a hand I do not know, but addressed to you; and here are bills or money-orders for a large sum. What can all this mean?"

"Can't you read what she says?" said Dalton, reddening, and suddenly remembering that Nelly was not aware of his having written to Kate. "Give it to me; I'll read it myself." And he snatched the letter from her fingers. "There's Frank's for you."

"Oh, father, father!" cried Nelly, in a burst of grief, as she tore open Lady Hester's letter; "it is as I feared. Kate is about to be married—if she be not already married."

"Without my leave—without asking my consent!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Am I nobody at all? Am I the head of the family, or am I not? Is this the way to treat her father? May I never see light if I won't have him 'out,' if he was a prince of the blood! Oh, the ungrateful girl! Leave off crying there, and tell me all about it. Read me her own letter, I say—if God will give me patience to listen to it."

With a bosom almost bursting, and a lip quivering with emotion, Ellen began:

"La Rocca, Lake of Como.

"DEAREST FATHER AND SISTER:—Oh, that I could throw myself at your feet, and pour out all that my heart is full of—tell you what I feel and hope and fear, and ask your counsel and your blessing. I know not if the last few days be real; my poor head is turning amid the scenes I've passed through and the emotions I have felt. I had no friend but Lady Hester—no adviser but she! She has been a mother to me—not as you would have been, Nelly—not to warn and restrain, when perhaps both were needed, but to encourage and feed my hopes. I yielded to her counsels——"

"I don't understand one word of this," cried Dalton, impatiently. "What did she do?"

Nelly's eyes ran rapidly over the lines without speaking, and then, in a low, but distinct voice, she said:

"It is as I said; she is betrothed to this great Russian prince."

"That fellow, they say, owns half Moscow. Fogles told us about him."

"Prince Midchekoff."

"That's the name. Well, it's a fine match—there's no denying it. How did it come about? and why didn't he come here and ask my consent? What's the meaning of doing it all in this hurry?"

"The marriage can only take place in St. Petersburg, and in presence of the emperor; and she is merely betrothed at present, to enable her to accompany the

lady, Madame de Heidendorf, to Russia, where the prince will follow in a few weeks."

"That bangs Banagher! Why couldn't they get a priest where they are? Be gorra! they've scruples about everything but *me!* I'm the only one that's not considered! What the devil is the emperor to her—sure *he* isn't her father? Well, well, go on."

"She would seem to have yielded to persuasion," said Nelly, feelingly. "The prince, with all his greatness, appears not to have won her heart. See how she dwells upon his immense wealth, and the splendor of his position."

"Let us hear about that," cried Dalton, eagerly.

"'My heart is nigh to bursting when I think of you and dearest Nelly living with me, in all the enjoyment that riches can bestow, nothing denied you that you can fancy, and free to indulge every taste and every wish. To know that I can at last repay, in some sort, all your affection—that poor, worthless Kate can minister to your pleasure and your comfort—would make me dare a rasher destiny than this. And he is so generous, Nelly. The whole of yesterday was like a page from the 'Arabian Nights,' as I sat surrounded with gorgeous articles of gold and gems—diamonds such as a queen might wear, and rubies larger than the glass-drops I used to deck my hair with long ago! And yet they tell me I have seen nothing as yet, and that the treasures of the Vladovitch Palace I hear of at every moment are greater than most royal houses. Lady Hester is kinder than ever, and the Heidendorf also; but she is cold and reserved—too stately for my taste—and I cannot overcome my awe of her. Is not this like a confession of my unfitness for the station I am to occupy?—are not these signs of inferiority? How little Hans would stare at the objects of taste and art by which I am surrounded, and of which I never tire in admiring!

"There have been great changes in this family since I wrote, and some mysterious circumstance is now hanging over them; but Lady Hester has not told me anything, nor do I care to repeat rumors which reach me through others. I only know that Sir Stafford is about to proceed to England as soon as Captain Onslow's health will permit; he, poor fellow, met with an accident on the day we left Florence, and my maid, who sat in the rumble, saw the mishap without knowing or suspecting the victim! I have done everything to obtain leave to visit you before I set out, or even to see you on my way; but Madame de Heidendorf is absolute, and she has so much important business in hand—such deep political affairs to transact at Vienna and Dresden—that I find it is impossible.

"The prince has promised to write at once about Frank. He says it will be better to obtain his promotion in the Austrian service before he enters the Russian; and that this shall take place immediately. I could see that on this point he was acutely alive to the fact of our humble position; but he knows from Lady Hester all about our family, and that the Daltons acknowledge nothing superior to them in birth. This, however, is always a difficulty to a foreigner; they have no idea of untitled nobility; and I saw his chagrin the other day when I told him to address papa as plain monsieur. Since yesterday morning I am called princess; and I cannot conceal from you the throb of delight the sound still gives me! I often stop to ask myself if this be all a dream, and shall I awake beside the fire and see dearest Nelly bending over some little group, and Hans with wondering eyes staring over her shoulder!

"The prince only intends to spend one winter in Russia. Madame de Heidendorf says that he will be named ambassador at Paris; but I hope and trust not: I feel too acutely my inferiority for such a position. This she laughs at, and merely says, '*Nous verrons.*' Of course, wherever I am, you will both be with me; meanwhile, what would you wish to do? I told Monsieur Rubion, the prince's secretary, that I wanted money, and he gave me these bills, so he called them, on Baden and Carlsruhe, as easily negotiable in that neighborhood; pray, say if they be serviceable. The prince intends to visit you at Baden; and I suppose you will like to see him. His manners are perfect, and except a degree of constraint in first acquaintance, he is generally thought very agreeable. Such preparations as they are making for my journey, you'd fancy I was a queen at the very least. All my *trousseau* is to come from Paris direct; and up to this I have merely what Madame de H. calls the strictly 'indispensable;' which, shall I own, contrives to fill two large fourgons and a heavy traveling-carriage. Nina is in a perfect ecstasy at everything, and is eternally 'draping' me in Brussels and Chantilly; so that, even while I write, these flimsy tissues are floating around me; while caskets of jewels and precious gems dazzle my eyes wherever I turn them.

"The whole is like a gorgeous vision; would that it might remain ever thus, for I almost tremble to take a step further! Are these unworthy fears? I hope they are." Nelly paused, and laid down the letter on her knee.

"Well, may I never see grace, if that letter isn't enough to confuse a bench of bishops!" cried Dalton. "She's marrying the first man in Europe—be the other who he will—and she has as many crotchets and misgivings about it as if it was little Hans, there, below! And he is a prince! a real prince!—devil a doubt of it—that scatters the money about like chaff! Here's an order at sight for nine hundred gulden; and here's a bill at ten days—a nice date—for fourteen hundred and eighty-six Prussian dollars; and this is nearly as much more. Kate, my beauty, I knew you'd do it! I never looked at you, in your old clogs and the worsted cloak, that I didn't think of the day I'd see you in satin and velvet! Faix! it's the best bottle of claret in the Adler I'll drink your health in, this day. Nelly, whom will we ask in to dinner?"

"Don't you think, papa, it were better we should not speak of this——"

"Why, better? Are we ashamed of it?"

"I mean, more prudent as regards ourselves, and more respectful to the prince."

"Respectful—to my son-in-law!—that's 'more of it.' Upon my conscience I'll have to go to school again in my old days. I know nothing of life at all, at all! Respect, indeed!"

"I would but suggest, papa, that for Kate's sake——"

"There—there—don't provoke me. I never set my heart on a thing yet—big or little—that I wasn't met with a caution about this, or a warning about that, till at last I got so tutored, and corrected, and trained, that, as Billy Morris used to say at whist, 'I dread a good hand more than a bad one.'"

"Far be it from me, dearest father," said Nelly, smiling, "to throw a shadow over a bright moment. If it will give you pleasure——"

"Sure I said it would—sure I told you 'tis what I'd like. A fine dinner at the 'Schwan'—four gulden a head, without wine—a dozen of champagne in ice—hock for them that can drink it—and port and Lafitte for Peter Dalton and men of his own sentiments. There's the programme, Nelly, and you'll see if I can't fill up the details."

"Well, but we have yet much to do; here are several letters—here is Frank's. Let us learn how the dear fellow fares."

Dalton sat down without speaking: there was, indeed, more of resignation than curiosity in his features, as he crossed his arms and listened.

"DEAREST NELLY:—I only heard a few days ago that my two last letters had been stopped; they were not, as they should have been, submitted to my captain to read, and hence they were arrested and suppressed. This goes by a private hand—a friend of mine—a pedlar from Donaueschingen——"

"A what?—a pedlar is it?" broke in Dalton, angrily.

"Yes, papa; remember that poor Frank is still in the ranks."

"Well, God give me patience with you all!" burst out the old man, in a torrent of passion. "Does he know that he's a Dalton?—does he feel blood in his veins? Why the blazes must he seek out a thieving blackguard with a pack full of damaged cambric to make a friend of? Is this the way the family's getting up in the world?"

"Adolf Brawer, by name," read on Nelly, in a low and subdued voice. "You will be surprised when I tell you that I owe all his kindness and good-nature to you—yes, to your own dear self. On his way through the Tyrol he had bought two wooden statuettes—one, a young soldier asleep beside a well; the other, a girl leaning from a window to hear the bugles of a departing regiment. Can you guess whose they were? And when he came to know that I was the brother of the little N. D. that was sculptured, half-hid in a corner, and that I was the original of the tired, wayworn recruit on the roadside, I thought he would have cried with enthusiasm."

"Didn't I often say it?" broke in Dalton, as, wringing his hands in despair, he paced the room with hasty strides. "Didn't I warn you a thousand times about them blasted images, and tell you that, sooner or later, it would get about who made them? Didn't I caution you about the disgrace you'd bring on us? The fear of this was over me this many a day. I had it like a dream on my mind, and I used to say to myself, 'It will all come out yet.'"

Nelly covered her face with her apron as these bitter words were spoken; but not a syllable, nor a sigh, did she reply to them; still the frail garment shook with an emotion that showed how intensely she suffered.

"A Virgin sold here—an Angel Gabriel there; now it was Hamlet—another time Goötz with the iron hand. All the balderdash that ever came into your head scattered over the world to bring shame on us! And then to think of Kate!"

"Yes, dearest father, do think of her," cried Nelly, passionately; "she is, indeed, an honor and a credit to you."

"And so might you have been too, Nelly," rejoined he, half sorry for his burst of anger. "I'm sure I never made any difference between you. I treated you all alike, God knows." And truly, if an indiscriminating selfishness could plead for him, the apology was admirable.

"Yes, papa; but nature was less generous," said Nelly, smiling through her tears; and she again turned to the letter before her. As if fearful to revive the unhappy discussion, she passed rapidly over Frank's account of his friend's ecstasy, nor did she read aloud till she came to the boy's narrative of his own fortunes:

"You ask me about Count Stephen, and the answer is a short one. I have seen him only once. Our battalion, which was stationed at Laybach, only arrived in Vienna about three weeks ago, but feeling it a duty to wait on our relative, I obtained leave one evening to go and pay my respects. Adolf, who knew of my connection with the field-marshal, had lent me two hundred florins; and this, too, I was anxious to pay off—another reason for this visit.

"Well, I dressed myself in my best cadet cloth and silk sword-knot, Nelly—none of your 'commissaire' toggery, but all fine and smart-looking, as a gentleman-cadet ought to be, and then, calling a fiacre, I ordered the man to drive to the 'Koertnor Thor,' to the Field-Marshal von Auersberg's quarters. I'm not sure if I didn't say to my uncle's. Away we went gayly, and soon drew up in an old-fashioned courtyard, from which a great stair led up four stories high, at the top of which the 'Feld'—so they called him—resided. This was somewhat of a come-down to my high-flown expectations, but nothing to what I felt as the door was opened by an old Jäger with one leg, instead of, as I looked for, a lackey in a grand livery.

"'What is't, cadet?' said he, in a tone of the coolest familiarity.

"'The Field-Marshal von Auersberg lives here?' said I.

"He nodded.

"'I wish to see him.'

"He shook his head gravely, and scanning me from head to foot, said, 'Not at this hour, cadet—not at this hour.'

"'Let him see this card,' said I, giving one with my name. 'I'm certain he'll receive me.'

"I believe if I had presented a pistol at him, the old fellow would have been less startled, as he exclaimed, 'A cadet with a visiting card! This would serve you little with the Feld, younker,' cried he, handing it back to me; 'he likes to see a soldier a soldier.'

"'Tell him my name, then,' said I, angrily; 'say that his grand-nephew, Frank Dalton, has been standing at his door in full parley with a servant for ten minutes.'

"The announcement created little of the astonishment I calculated on, and the old soldier merely replied, 'All under field-officer's rank come before eight of a morning. You cannot expect to have the privilege of an archduke.' He was about to close the door in my face as he spoke, but I placed my shoulder against it and forced it back, thus securing an entrance within the forbidden precincts.

"'Right about, quick march!' cried he, pointing to the door, while his whole frame trembled with passion.

"'Not till you have delivered my message,' said I, calmly.

"'Then Bey'm Blitzen I will deliver it, and see how you'll like it,' cried he, as he stumped away down a passage and entered a room at the end of it. I could soon hear the sound of voices, and for a moment I was almost determined to beat a retreat, when suddenly the old Jäger came out and beckoned me forward. There was a grin of most diabolical delight on the old fellow's features as I passed into the room and closed the door behind me.

"As well as I could see in the imperfect light, for it was after sunset, the apartment was large and low-ceilinged, with bookshelves round the walls, and stands for weapons and military equipments here and there through it. At the stove, and busily engaged in watching a coffee-pot, sat the Feld himself, a loose grey overcoat covering his figure, and concealing all of him but two immense jack-boots that peeped out beneath. He wore a Mütze, a kind of Hungarian cap, and a long pipe depended from his mouth, the bowl resting on the carpet. The most conspicuous feature of all was, however, his enormous mustache, which, white as snow, touched his collar-bone at either side.

"He never spoke a word as I entered, but stared at me steadfastly and sternly for full three or four minutes. Half abashed by this scrutiny, and indignant besides at the reception, I was about to advance towards him, when he called out, as if on parade, 'Halt! What regiment, cadet?'

"'Franz Carl Infantry, third battalion,' said I, instantly saluting with my hand.

"'Your name?'

"'Frank Dalton.'

"'Your business?'

"'To visit my grand-uncle, the Field-Marshal von Auersberg.'

"'And is it thus, younker,' cried he, rising, and drawing himself up to his full height, 'that you dare to present yourself before a feldzeugmeister of the imperial army? Have they not taught you even the commonest rules of discipline? Have they left you in the native barbarism of your own savage country, that you dare, against my orders, present yourself before me?'

"'I thought the claim of kindred——' began I.

"'What know I of kindred, sirrah? What have kith and kin availed *me*? I have stood alone in the world. It was not to kindred I owed my life on the field of Rosbach; nor was it a relative stanched my bleeding wounds at Wagram!'

"'The name of Dalton——'

"'I have won a prouder one, sir, and would not be reminded by you from what I've started. Where's your character-certificate?'

"'I have not brought it with me, Herr General. I scarcely thought it would be the first question my father's uncle would put to me.'

"'There was prudence in the omission, too, sir,' said he, not heeding my remark. 'But I have it here.' And he drew from a portfolio on the table a small slip of paper, and read: '"Cadet Dalton, second company of the third battalion, Franz Carl Regiment. Smart on service, and quick in discipline, but forward and petulant with those above him in rank. Disposed to pride himself on birth and fortune, and not sufficiently submissive to orders. Twice in arrest, once, Kurzgeschlossen." A creditable character, sir! Twice in arrest, and once in irons! And with this you claim kindred with a count of the empire, and an imperial field-marshal! On the fifth of last month you entertained a party at dinner at the Wilde Man—most of them men of high rank and large fortune. On the eighteenth you drove through Maria Tell with a team of four horses, and passed the drawbridge and the moat in full gallop. So late as Wednesday last you hoisted a green flag on the steeple of the village church, on pretense of honoring your father's birthday. I know each incident of your career, sir, and have watched you with shame and regret. Tell your father, when you write to him, that all the favor of my august master would not endure the test of two such protégés. And now, back to your quarters.'

"He motioned me to retire with a gesture, and I fell back, almost glad at any cost to escape. I had just reached the stair, when the Jäger called me back to his presence.

"'Art an only son?" asked the count, for the first time addressing me in the second person.

"I bowed.

"'And hast three sisters?'

"'Two, Herr General.'

"'Older or younger than thyself?'

"'Both older, sir.'

"'How have they been brought up? Have they learned thrift and housecraft, or are they wasteful and reckless, as their native country and their name would bespeak them?'

"'Our humble fortune is the best answe to that question, sir.'

"'It is not, sirrah!' cried he, angrily. 'The spendthrift habit survives every remnant of the state that gave it birth, and the beggar can be as improvident as the prince. Go; thou hast as much to learn of the world as of thy duty. Head erect, sir; shoulders back; the right thumb more forwards. If the rest of the battalion be like thee, I'll give them some work on the prater ere long.'

"A haughty wave of his hand now finished our interview, and, once outside the door, I descended the stairs, a whole flight at every bound, in terror lest anything should induce him to recall me.

"And this is uncle Stephen, Nelly—this the great protector we used to build our hopes upon, and flatter ourselves would be a second father to us!

"When I came out into the street, I knew not which way to turn. I dreaded the very sight of a comrade, lest he should ask me about our meeting, what pocket-money he had given me, and how soon I should be an officer. It was only when I saw Adolf coming towards me that I remembered all about my debt to him, of which I had not spoken one word to my uncle. I ought to have told him so, frankly. Yes, Nelly, I can hear the murmured displeasure with which you read my confession, 'that I couldn't do it.' I was unequal to the effort, and could not bring myself to destroy that whole fabric of fictitious interest in which I had wrapped myself. What would Adolf have thought of me when I said, I have neither wealth, nor station, nor prospect—as humble a soldier as the sentry you see yonder? What would become of that romance of life in which we have so often spent hours reveling in a brilliant future, every incident of which

grew up in our united fancies, and seemed to assume reality as we discussed it? Where—oh, Nelly! to you I must reveal all—every weakness, every littleness of my nature—where would be the homage of respect the poor Bursche was wont to show the nephew of a field-marshal? No, it was above my strength; and so I took his arm and talked away heedlessly about our meeting, avoiding, where I could, all mention of my uncle, and but jocularly affecting to think him an original, whose strange, old-fashioned manner almost concealed the strong traits of family affection.

"'What of thy promotion, Frank?' asked Adolf.

"'It will come in its own good time,' said I, carelessly. 'Nothing causes more dissatisfaction than the rapid advancement of cadets of noble family.'

"'But they could make thee a corporal, at least?'

"I laughed scornfully at the remark, and merely said, 'They may skip over the whole sous-officier grade, and only remember me when I'm to be made a lieutenant.'

"'Thou hast grown haughtier, Frank,' said he, half reproachfully, 'since thy meeting with the "Feld." Mayhap in a day or two thou wilt not like to be seen in company with a "Wander-Bursche?"'

"I was bursting to throw my arms round his neck, and say, 'Never, whatever fortune have in store for me; thy friendship is like a brother's, and can never be forgotten;' but pride—yes, Nelly, the cursed pride against which you used to warn me—sealed my lips; and when I spoke, it was something so cold, so meaningless, and so unworthy, that he left me. I know not how! No sooner was I alone, Nelly, than I burst into tears. I cried for very shame; and if agony could expiate my fault, mine should have done so. What humiliation before my friend could equal that I now felt before my own heart! I thought of all your teachings, dearest Nelly; of the lessons you gave me over and over against this besetting sin of my nature! I thought of our home, where poor Hanserl was treated by us as a friend! I thought of our last parting, and the words you spoke to me in warning against this very pride, ignoble and mean as it is; and, oh! what would I have given to have thrown myself into Adolf's arms, and told him everything! I have never seen him since; he wrote to me a few lines, saying that he should pass through Baden on his way to Frankfort, and offering to carry a letter for me; but not once did he allude to my debt, nor was there the slightest hint of its existence. On this I wrote an acknowledgment of the loan, and a pressing entreaty that he would come and see me; but he pretended one thing and another; affected engagements at the only hours I was free; and at last abruptly sent for my letter just when I was writing it. I had much more to tell you, Nelly, of myself, of the service, and of my daily life here; but my thoughts are now disturbed and scattered; and I feel, too, how your shame for my shortcoming will take away interest from what I say. You, Nelly, will have courage to be just; tell him all that I have been weak enough to conceal; let him know what suffering my unworthy shame has cost me; and above all, that I am not ungrateful.

"It seems like a dream all that you tell me of Kate. Is she still in Italy, and where? Would she write to me? I am ashamed to ask the question of herself. They spoke of our brigade being sent to Lombardy; but even there I might be far away from her; and if near, in the very same city, our stations would separate us still more widely. Oh, Nelly! is it worth all the success ever ambition the most successful won, thus to tear up the ties of family, and make brothers and sisters strangers? Would that I were back again with you, and dearest Kate, too! I see no future here; the dull round of daily discipline, teaching nothing but obedience, shuts out speculation and hope! Where are the glorious enterprises, the splendid chances I often dreamed of? My happiest moments now are recalling the past; the long winter evenings beside the hearth, while Hans was reading out to us. There are rumors of great changes in the world of Europe; but to us they are only the thunderings of a distant storm, to break out in what quarter we know not. Oh, Nelly! if it should lead to war! if some glorious struggle were to break in upon this sluggish apathy!

"Adolf has sent again for this letter, so I must close it. He will not, he says, pass through Baden, but will post this in Munich—so good-bye, dearest sister. Tell papa all that you dare to tell of me, and farewell.

"Frank Dalton.

"When you write, it must be under cover to the 'Herr Hauptman von Gauss, 2ten Compagnie, 3 Linien Bataillon, Franz Carl Infanterie.' Don't forget this long address, nor to add a line to the captain himself, who is a good-looking fellow, but somewhat conceited.

"I have just heard old Auersberg is to have a command again. I'm heartily sorry for it. So much for family influence!"

If the reader's patience has lasted through this long letter of Frank's, it was more than Peter Dalton's did. For what between his ecstasy at Kate's good fortune, his own rambling speculations on all that should follow from it, and, above all, what from the slurring, monotonous tone in which Nelly passed over such portions as she did not wish him to hear, he grew gradually more abstracted and dreamy, and at last fell off into a deep and most happy slumber. Not a syllable did he hear of the old Feld's reception of Frank, nor did he even awake as little Hans stumped into the room, with a staff in either hand—aids, that, since his accident, he could never dispense with.

"I heard that you had letters, fräulein," said he; "do they bring good tidings?"

"Some would call them so, Hanserl," said she, with a sigh. "Kate is about to be married."

Hanserl made no reply, but sat slowly down, and crossed his arms before him.

"The great Russian Prince Midchekoff, of whom you may have heard."

"I have seen him, fräulein; he was here in Baden, three years ago."

"Oh, then, tell me, Hanserl, what is he like? Is he young and frank-looking? Seems he one that should have won a maiden's heart so suddenly, that—that——"

"No, not that she couldn't have written to her sister and asked for counsel, fräulein," said Hans, continuing her sentence. "The prince is a cold, austere man, proud to his equals, I believe, but familiar enough to such as me. I remember how he asked me of my life, where I came from, and how I lived. He seemed curious to hear about the train of thoughts suggested by living amid objects of such childish interest, and asked me, 'If I did not often fancy that this mock world around me was the real one?' 'You are right, Herr Printz,' said I; 'but, after all, here, at least, we are equals.' 'How so?' said he. 'That *your* real world is as great a mockery as mine.' 'Thou art right, dwarf,' said he, thoughtfully, and fell a-musing. He should not have called me dwarf, for men know me as Hans Roeckle—and this is your sister's husband!"

"Is he mild and gentle-mannered?" asked Nelly, eagerly.

"The great are always so, so far as I have seen; none but base metal rings loudly, maiden. It is part of their pride to counterfeit humility."

"And his features, Hans?"

"Like one of those portraits in the gallery at Würtzburg. One who had passions and a temper for a feudal age, and was condemned to the slavery of our civilization."

"He is much older than Kate?" asked she again.

"I have seen too few like him even to guess at his age; besides, men of his stamp begin life with old temperaments, and time wears them but little."

"Oh, Hanserl, this seems not to promise well. Kate's own nature is frank, generous and impulsive; how will it consort with the cold traits of his?"

"She marries not for happiness, but for ambition, maiden. They who ascend the mountain-top to look down upon the scene below them, must not expect the sheltering softness of the valley at their feet. The fräulein Kate is beautiful, and she would have the homage that is paid to beauty. She has chosen her road in life: let us at least hope she knows how to tread it!"

There was a tone of almost sternness in Hanserl's manner that Nelly well knew boded deep and intense feeling, and she forbore to question him further for some time.

"You will leave this, then, fräulein?" said he at last; "you will quit the humble valley for the great world?"

"I know not, Hanserl, what my father may decide. Kate speaks of our joining her in Russia; but the long journey in his infirm state, not to speak of other reasons, may prevent this. Shall I tell you of Frank? Here is a long letter from him." And, almost without waiting for his reply, she read out the greater portion of the epistle.

"I like the old Feld!" cried Hans, enthusiastically. "He would teach the boy submission, and self-reliance, too—lessons that, however wide apart they seem, go ever hand in hand—an old warrior that has trained his bold nature to habits of obedience in many a year of trial and injustice, unfriended and alone, with nothing but his stout heart and good sword to sustain him. I like that Feld, and would gladly pledge him in a glass of Steinberger!"

"And you shall, my little man," said Dalton, waking up, and catching the last words of Hanserl's speech. "The old count was kind to Frank, and I'll drink his health this night, with all the honors. Read him the letter, Nelly. Show him how old Stephen received the boy. That's blood for you!—a true Dalton!"

Hanserl stared from father to daughter, and back again, without speaking; while Nelly, blushing deeply, held down her head, without a word.

"His letter to us was dry enough. But

what matter for that? He never wrote a line—maybe, didn't speak a word of English for upwards of forty years. You can't expect a man to have the 'Elegant Correspondent' at his fingers' ends after that space of time. But the heart!—that's the main point, Hans. The heart is in the right place. Read that bit over again, Nelly; I forget the words he said."

"Oh, no, papa. Hans has just heard it all, from beginning to end; and you know we have so much to do. Here's Lady Hester's note, and here's one from the prince, still unopened."

"Ay, to be sure. I'm certain you'll excuse me, Hans," said Dalton, putting on his spectacles, while he assumed a manner of condescending urbanity very puzzling to the poor dwarf. "Why, Nelly dear, this is French. Give me that note of Lady Hester's, and do you take this. Oh! by my conscience, I'm no better off now! The devil such writing as this ever I seen! It's all 'm's' and 'w's,' every bit of it. You'll keep them both for the evening, my dear. Hans will dine with us, and I'll go out to look for a bit of fish, and see if I can find another pleasant fellow to round off the table with us. God be with old Kilmurray M'Mahon, where I could have had twenty as easy as two, and each of them a good warrant for four bottles besides! Isn't it a droll world?" muttered he, as he took down his hat and descended the stairs. "A good dinner, and only a cripple for company! Faix! I'm like the chap in the Bible that had to ask the beggars and the blackguards when he couldn't get better." And with this very wise reflection, Peter Dalton hummed a jig to himself as he took his way to the fish-market.

CHAPTER XLIV.

HAPPY DAY FOR PETER DALTON.

A YOUTHFUL heir never experienced a more glorious burst of delight on the morning of his twenty-first birthday than did Peter Dalton feel as he sauntered down the principal street of Baden. It was with a step almost elastic, and his head high, that he went along, not humbly returning the "Good-day" of the bowing shopkeeper, but condescendingly calling his worthy creditors—for such nearly all of them were—by their Christian names. he gave them to believe that he was still, as ever, their kind and generous patron!

There was scarcely a shop or a stall he did not linger beside for a minute or two. Everywhere there was something not only which he liked, but actually needed. Never did wants accumulate so rapidly! With a comprehensive grasp they extended to every branch of trade and merchandise—ranging from jewelry to gin, and taking in all, from fur slippers to sausages.

His first visit was to Abel Kraus, the banker and money-lender—a little den, which often before he had entered with a craven heart and a sinking spirit, for Abel was a shrewd old Israelite, and seemed to read the very schedule of a man's debts in the wrinkles around his mouth. Dalton now unbarred the half door and stalked in, as if he would carry the place by storm.

The man of money was munching his breakfast of hard eggs and black bread—the regulation full diet of misers in all Germany—when Peter cavalierly touched his hat and sat down. Not a word did Abel speak. No courtesies about the season or the weather, the funds or the money-market, were worth bestowing on so poor a client, and so he ate on, scarcely deigning even a glance towards him.

"When you've done with the garlic, old boy, I've some work for you," said Dalton, crossing his arms pretentiously.

"But what if I do not accept your work? What, if I tell you that we shall have no more dealings together? The two last bills——"

"They'll be paid, Abel—they'll be paid. Don't put yourself in a passion. Times is improving—Ireland's looking up, man."

"I think she is," muttered the Jew, insolently; "she is looking up like the beggar that asks for alms, yonder."

"Tear and ages!" cried Dalton, with a stroke of his fist upon the table that made every wooden bowl of gold and silver coin jump and ring again—"tear and ages! take care what you say. By the soul in my body, if you say a syllable against the old country, I'll smash every stick in the place, and your own bones besides! Ye miserable ould heathen! that hasn't a thought above sweating a guinea—how dare you do it?"

"Why do you come into my counting-house to insult me, saar? Why you come where no one ask you?"

"Is it waiting for an invitation I'd be, Abel; is it expecting a card with ould Kraus's compliments?" said Dalton, laughing. "Sure, isn't the place open like the fish-market, or the ball-room, or the chapel, or any place of divarsion? There, now; keep your temper, old boy, I tell ye, there's luck before ye! What d'ye think of

that?" and, as he spoke, he drew forth one of the bills, and handed it across the counter; and then, after gloating as it were over the changed expression of the Jew's features, he handed a second and a third.

"These are good papers, Herr von Dalton; no better! The exchange, too, is in your favor; we are giving—let me see—ten and three-eighths 'convenzions-gelt.'"

"To the devil I fling your three-eighths!" cried Dalton. "I never forgot the old song at school that says, 'Fractions drives me mad.'"

"Ah, always droll—always merry!" cackled out Abel. "How will you have these moneys?"

"In a bag—a good strong canvas-bag!"

"Yes, to be sure, in a bag; but I was asking how you'd have them. I mean, in what coin—in what for 'gelt.'"

"Oh, that's it!" cried Dalton. "Well, give me a little of everything. Let me have 'louis' to spend, and 'groschen' to give the beggars. Bank-notes, too, I like; one feels no regret in parting with the dirty paper, that neither jingles nor shines: and a few crown pieces, Abel; the ring of them on a table is like a brass band!"

"So you shall—so you shall, Herr von Dalton. Ha! ha! ha! You are the only man ever make me laugh!"

"By my conscience, then, it's more than you deserve, Abel; for you've very often nearly made *me* cry," said Dalton, with a little sigh over the past, as he recalled it to his memory.

The Jew did not either heed or hear the remark; for, having put away the remnant of his frugal breakfast, he now began a very intricate series of calculations respecting interest, and exchange, and commission, at which poor Dalton gazed in a most complete mystification.

"Fourteen hundred and sixty-three, at ten three-eighths—less cost of commission; I will not charge you the one per cent.——"

"Charge all that's fair, and no favor, old boy."

"I mean that I will not treat the Herr von Dalton like a stranger——"

"I was going to say, treat me like a Christian," said Dalton, laughing; "but maybe that's the most expensive thing going."

"Always droll—always have his jest," cackled Abel. "Now, there's an agio on gold, you pay five kreutzers for every louis."

"By George! I'll take a shipload of them at the same price."

"Ha! I mean you pay that over the value," said the Jew.

"Faix! I often promised to pay more," said Dalton, sighing; "and what's worse, on stamped paper, too!"

As the Jew grew deeper in his figures, Dalton rambled on about Ireland and her prospects, for he wished it to be supposed that his present affluence was the long-expected remittance from his estates. "We'll get right yet," muttered he, "if they'll only give us time; but ye see, this is the way it is: we're like an overloaded beast that can't pull his cart through the mud, and then the English comes up, and thrashes us. By course, we get weaker and weaker—licking and abusing never made any one strong yet. At last down we come on our knees with a smash. Well, ye'd think, then, that anybody with a grain of sense would say, 'Take some of the load off the poor devil's back—ease him a bit till he gets strength.' Nothing of the kind. All they do is to tell us that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for falling—that every other people was doing well but ourselves—that it's a way we have of lying down, just to get somebody to pick us up, and such like. And the blackguard newspapers raises the cry against us, and devil a thief, or a housebreaker, or a highway robber they take that they don't put him down in the police reports as a 'hulking Irishman,' or a 'native of the Emerald Isle.' 'Paddy Fitzsimons, or Peter O'Shea, was brought up this mornin' for cutting off his wife's head with a trowel.' 'Molly Maguire was indicted for scraping her baby to death with an oyster-shell.' That's the best word they have for us! 'Ain't ye the plague of our lives?' they're always saying. 'Do ye ever give us a moment's peace?' And why the blazes don't ye send us adrift, then? Why don't ye let us take our own road? We don't want your company—faix! we never found it too agreeable. It's come to that now, that it would better be a Hottentot or a Chinese than an Irishman! Oh dear, oh dear, but we're hardly treated!"

"Will you run your eye over that paper, Herr von Dalton, and see if it be all correct?" said Abel, handing him a very complex-looking array of figures.

"'Tis little the wiser I'll be when I do," muttered Dalton to himself, as he put on his spectacles and affected to consider the statement. "Fourteen hundred and sixty-three—I wish they were pounds, but they're only florins—and two thousand eight hundred and twenty-one—five and two is seven and nine is fifteen. No, seven and nine is —I wish Nelly was here. Bad luck to the multiplication-table. I used to be licked for it every day when I was a boy, and it's

been a curse to me since I was a man. Seven and nine is fourteen, or thereabouts —a figure wouldn't signify much, one way or t'other. Interest at three-quarters for twenty-one days—there, I'm done complete! Out of the four first rules in Gough I'm a child, and indeed, to tell the truth, I'm no great things after subtraction."

"You will perceive that I make the charges for postage, commission, and any other expenses, in one sum. This little claim of fifty-eight florins covers all."

"Well, and reasonable it is, that I must say," cried Dalton, who, looking at the whole as a lucky windfall, was by no means indisposed to see others share in the good fortune. "How much is coming to me, Abel?"

"Your total balance is four thousand two hundred and twenty-seven florins eight kreutzers, Müntze," said Abel, giving the sum a resonance of voice highly imposing and impressive.

"How many pounds is that, now?" asked Peter.

"Something over three hundred and fifty pounds sterling, sir."

"Is it? Faith! a neat little sum. Not but I often got rid of as much of an evening at blind-hookey, with old Carters, of the Queen's Bays. Ye don't know Carters? Faix! and ye'd be the very man he would know, if ye were in the same neighborhood. I wish he was here to-day; and that reminds me that I must go over to the market, and see what's to be had. Ye don't happen to know if there's any fish to-day?"

Abel could not answer this important question, but offered to send his servant to inquire; but Dalton, declining the attention, strolled out into the street, jingling his napoleons in his pocket as he went, and feeling all the importance and self-respect that a well-filled purse confers on him who has long known the penniless straits of poverty. He owed something on every side of him; but he could bear to face his creditors now: he was neither obliged to be occupied with a letter, or sunk in a fit of abstraction as he passed them; nay, he was even jocular and familiar, and ventured to criticise the wares for which, once, he was almost grateful.

"Send your boy down to the house for some money—ye needn't mind the bill; but I'll give you fifty florins. There's a trifle on account. Put them ten naps. to my credit; that will wipe off some of our scores; it's good for forty crowns." Such were the brief sentences that he addressed to the amazed shopkeepers as he passed along; for Peter, like Louis Philippe, couldn't bear the sight of an account, and always paid something in liquidation. It was with great reluctance that he abstained from inviting each of them to dinner; nothing but his fear of displeasing Nelly could have restrained him. He would have asked the whole village if he dared, ay, and made them drunk too, if they'd have let him. "She's so high in her notions," he kept muttering to himself; "that confounded pride about family, and the like! Well, thank God! I never had that failing. If I knew we were better than other people, it never made me unneighborly; I was always free and affable; my worst enemy couldn't say other of me. I'd like to have these poor fellows to dinner, and give them a skinful for once in their lives, just to drink Kate's health, and Frank's; they'd think of the Daltons for many a long year to come—the good old Dalton blood, that never mixed with the puddle! What a heavenly day it is! and an elegant fine market. There's a bit of roasting beef would feed a dozen; and maybe that isn't a fine trout! Well, well, but them's cauliflowers! Chickens and ducks—chickens and ducks—a whole street of them! And there's a wild turkey—mighty good eating, too! and venison!—ah! but it hasn't the flavor, nor the fat! Faix! and not bad either, a neck of mutton with onions, if one had a tumbler of whisky-punch afterwards."

Thus communing with himself, he passed along, totally inattentive to the solicitations of those who usually supplied the humble wants of his household, and who now sought to tempt him by morsels whose merits lay rather in frugality than good cheer.

As Dalton drew near his own door, he heard the sounds of a stranger's voice from within. Many a time a similar warning had apprised him that some troublesome dun had gained admittance, and was torturing poor Nelly with his importunities; and on these occasions Peter was wont, with more cunning than kindness, to steal noiselessly downstairs again, and wait till the enemy had evacuated the fortress. Now, however, a change had come over his fortunes, and with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly in his pockets, he kicked open the door with his foot, and entered.

Nelly was seated near the stove, in conversation with a man, who, in evident respect, had taken his place near the door, and from which he rose, to salute Dalton

as he came in. The traveler—for such his "blouse" or traveling-frock showed him to be, as well as the knapsack and stick at his feet—was a hale, fresh-looking man of about thirty; his appearance denoting an humble walk in life, but with nothing that bordered on poverty.

"Herr Brawer, papa—Adolf Brawer," said Nelly, whispering the last words, to remind him more quickly of the name.

"Servant, sir," said Dalton, condescendingly; for the profound deference of the stranger's manner at once suggested to him their relative conditions.

"I kiss your hand," said Adolf, with the respectful salutation of a thorough Austrian, while he bowed again with even deeper humility.

"The worthy man who was so kind to Frank, papa," said Nelly, in deep confusion, as she saw the scrutinizing and almost depreciating look with which Dalton regarded him.

"Oh, the pedlar!" said Dalton, at last, as the remembrance flashed on him. "This is the pedlar, then?"

"Yes, papa. He came out of his way, from Durlach, just to tell us about Frank; to say how tall he had grown—taller than himself, he says—and so good-looking, too. It was so kind in him."

"Oh, very kind, no doubt of it—very kind, indeed!" said Dalton, with a laugh of most dubious expression. "Did he say nothing of Frank's debt to him? Hasn't that I O U you were talking to me about anything to say to this visit?"

"He never spoke of it—never alluded to it," cried she, eagerly.

"Maybe he won't be so delicate with *me*," said Dalton. "Sit down, Mr. Brawer; make no ceremony here. We're stopping in this little place till our house is got ready for us. So you saw Frank, and he's looking well?"

"The finest youth in the regiment. They know him through all Vienna as the 'Handsome Cadet.'"

"And so gentle-mannered and unaffected," cried Nelly.

"Kind and civil to his inferiors?" said Dalton; "I hope he's that."

"He condescended to know *me*," said Brawer, "and call me his friend."

"Well, and maybe ye were," said Peter, with a majestic wave of the hand. "A real-born gentleman, as Frank is, may take a beggar off the streets and be intimate with him. Them's my sentiments. Mark what I say, Mr. Brawer, and you'll find, as you go through life, if it isn't true: good blood may mix with the puddle every day of the year, and not be the worse of it!"

"Frank is so grateful to you," broke in Nelly, eagerly: "and we are so grateful for all your kindness to him!"

"What an honor to *me* that he should so speak of me!" said the pedlar, feelingly—"I, who had no claim upon his memory!"

"There was a trifle of money between you, I think," said Dalton, ostentatiously; "have you any notion of what it is?"

"I came not here to collect a debt, Herr von Dalton," said Adolf, rising, and assuming a look of almost fierceness in his pride.

"Very well, very well, just as you please," said Dalton, carelessly; "it will come with his other accounts in the half-year; for, no matter how liberal a man is to his boys, he'll be pestered with bills after all! There's blackguards will be lending them money, and teachin' them extiagance, just out of devilment, I believe. I know well how it used to be with myself when I was in old 'Trinity,' long ago. There was a little chap of the name of Foley, and, by the same token, a pedlar, too——"

"Oh, papa, he's going away, and you haven't thanked him yet!" cried Nelly, feelingly.

"What a hurry he's in!" said Dalton, as he watched the eager haste with which the pedlar was now arranging the straps of his knapsack.

"Would you not ask him to stay—to dine with us?" faltered Nelly, in a low, faint whisper.

"The pedlar—to dine?" asked Dalton, with a look of astonishment.

"Frank's only friend!" sighed she, mournfully.

"By my conscience, sometimes I don't know if I'm standing on my head or my heels," cried Dalton, as he wiped his brows, with a look of utter bewilderment. "A pedlar to dinner! There now—that's it—more haste worse speed: he's broke that strap in his hurry."

"Shall I sew it for you?" said Nelly, stooping down and taking out her needle as she spoke.

"Oh, fräulein, how good of you!" cried Adolf; and his whole face beamed with an expression of delight. "How dearly shall I value this old pack hereafter!"

These last words, scarcely muttered above his breath, were overheard by Nelly, and a deep blush covered her cheeks as she bent over the work.

"Where's your own maid? Couldn't one of the women do it as well?" cried Dalton, impatiently. "Ye'd not believe,

Mr. Brawer, that we have the house full of servants this minute; a set of devils feasting and fattening at one's expense."

"Thanks, fräulein," said the pedlar, as she finished; "you little know how I shall treasure this hereafter."

"Ask him to stay, papa, whispered Nelly once more.

"Sure he's a pedlar!" muttered Dalton, indignantly.

"At least thank him. Tell him you are grateful to him."

"He'd rather I'd buy ten yards of damaged calico—that's the flattery *he'd* understand best," said Dalton, with a grin.

"Farewell, Herr von Dalton. Farewell, fräulein!" said Adolf. And with a bow of deep respect he slowly retired from the room, while Nelly turned to the window to conceal her shame and sorrow together.

"It was this very morning," muttered Dalton, angrily, "when I spoke of giving a little dinner party, you did nothing but turn up your nose at this, that, and t'other. There was nobody good enough, forsooth! There was Monsieur Ratteau, the 'croupier' of the tables there, a very nice man, with elegant manners, and the finest shirt-studs ever I seen, and you wouldn't hear of him."

Nelly heard little of this reproachful speech, for, sunk in the recess of the window, she was following with her eyes the retiring figure of Adolf Brawer. He had just crossed the Platz, and ere he turned into a side street he stopped, wheeled round, and made a gesture of farewell towards the spot where, unseen by him, Nelly was still standing.

"He is gone!" muttered she, half-aloud.

"Well, God speed him!" rejoined Dalton, testily. "I never could abide a pedlar."

CHAPTER XLV.

MADAME DE HEIDENDORF.

Kate Dalton's was a heavy heart as, seated beside her new friend, she whirled along the road to Vienna. The scenery possessed every attraction of historic interest and beauty. The season was the glorious one of an Italian spring. There were ancient cities whose very names were like spells to memory. There were the spots of earth that genius has consecrated to immortality. There were the scenes where poetry caught its inspiration, and around which, even yet, the mind-created images of fancy seem to linger, all to interest, charm, and amuse her, and yet she passed them without pleasure, almost without notice.

The splendid equipage in which she traveled—the hundred appliances of ease and luxury around her—the obsequious, almost servile, devotion of her attendants, recalled but one stern fact—that she had sold herself for all these things; that, for them, she had bartered her warm affections—her love of father, and sister, and brother—the ties of home and of kindred—even to the faith at whose altar she had bent her knees in infancy. She had given all for greatness.

In all her castle-buildings of a future, her own family had formed figures in the picture. To render her poor father happy—to surround his old age with the comforts he pined after—to open to dear Nelly sources of enjoyment in the pursuit she loved—to afford Frank the means of associating with his comrades of rank—to mix in that society for which he longed—these were her objects, and for them she was willing to pay dearly. But now she was not to witness the happiness of those she loved! Already the hard conditions of her contract were to be imposed. Banishment, first, then, isolation; who could say what after?

Her traveling companion was scarcely well calculated to smooth down the difficulties of this conflict in her mind. Madame de Heidendorf was the very reverse of Lady Hester. Without the slightest pretension to good looks herself, she assumed to despise everything like beauty in others, constantly associating its possession with the vanity of weak intellects; she threw a kind of ridicule over these "poor, pretty things," as she loved to call them, which actually seemed to make beauty and folly convertible terms. Political intrigue, or, to speak more fairly, mischief-making in state affairs, was her great and only passion. By dint of time, patience, considerable cunning, and a very keen insight into character, she had succeeded in obtaining the intimacy of many of the first statesmen of Europe. Many had trusted her with the conduct of little matters which the dignity of diplomacy could not stoop to. She had negotiated several little transactions, opened the way to reconciliations, smoothed the road to briberies, and allayed the petty qualms of struggling morality, where any other than a feminine influence would have been coarse and indelicate.

As a good monarchist, she was always well received at the Austrian court, and in St. Petersburg was accustomed to be treated with peculiar honor.

By what amount of compensation, or in what shape administered, Midchekoff had secured her present services, this true history is unable to record; but that Kate was eminently fortunate, drawing such a prize in the lottery of life, as to enter the world under *her* auspices, were facts that she dwelt upon without ceasing.

Frankness and candor are very charming things; they are the very soul of true friendship, and the spirit of all affectionate interest; but they can be made very disagreeable elements of mere acquaintanceship. Such was Madame de Heidendorf's. She freely told Kate that, of all the great Midchekoff's unaccountable freaks, his intended marriage with herself was the very strangest, and that to unite his vast fortune and high position with mere beauty was something almost incredible. There was a landgravine of Hohenhöckingen—an archduchess—a "*main gauche*" of the Austrian house itself—there was a granddaughter of the Empress Catherine—with any of whom she could easily have opened negotiations for him—all of them alliances rich in political influences. Indeed, there was another party—she was not at liberty to mention the name—and though, to be sure, she was "blind and almost idiotic," a union with her would eventually have made him a "serene highness." "So you see, my dear," said she, in winding up, "what you have cost him! Not," added she, after a few seconds' pause—"not but I have known such marriages turn out remarkably well. There was that Prince Adalbert of Bohemia, who married the singing woman—what's her name?—that young creature that made such a sensation at the 'Scala'—'La Biondina' they called her. Well, it is true, he only lived with her during the Carnival, but there she is now, with her handsome house in the Bastey, and the prettiest equipage in the Prater. I know several similar cases. The Archduke Max and Prince Ravitzkay—though, perhaps, not him, for I believe he sent that poor thing away to the mines."

"His wife—to the mines!" gasped Kate, in terror.

"Don't be frightened, my dear child," said madam, smiling; "be a good girl, and you shall have everything you like. Meanwhile, try and unlearn all those 'gaucheries' you picked up with that strange Lady Hester. It was a shocking school of manners. All those eccentric, out-of-the-way people, who lounged in and lounged out, talking of nothing but each other, utterly ignorant of the great interests that are at stake in Europe at this moment. Try, therefore, and forget that silly coterie altogether. When we arrive at Vienna, you will be presented to the Archduchess Louisa."

"And I shall see dear—dear Frank!" burst out Kate, with an irrepressible delight.

"And who is Frank, madam?" said the other, proudly drawing herself up.

"My brother—my only brother—who is in the Austrian service."

"Is he on the emperor's staff?"

"I know nothing of his position, only that he is a cadet."

"A cadet, child! Why, do you know that that means a common soldier—a creature that mounts guard with a musket, or carries a bread-bag over its shoulder through the streets in a fatigue-jacket?"

"I care nothing for all that. He may be all you say, and twice as humble, but he is my brother Frank still—the playfellow with whom I passed the days when—when I was happy—as I shall never be again!—the fond, kind brother, whom we were all so proud of!"

An expression of scornful compassion on Madame de Heidendorf's features at once stopped Kate, and she covered her face with her hands to hide her shame.

"Madame la Princesse," began the countess—for whenever she peculiarly desired to impress Kate with her duties, she always prefaced the lesson by her new title—"the past must be forgotten, or you will find yourself totally unable to compete with the difficulties of your station. There is but one way to make the prince's *mésalliance* pardonable, which is by as seldom as possible parading its details. If, then, you insist upon seeing your brother during our stay at Vienna, it must be in secret. You said something, I think, of an old field-marshal—a connection?"

"My father's uncle, madam."

"Very true. Well, your brother can come with some letter or message from him; or, if Nina, your maid, has no objection, he might pass for a lover of hers."

"Madam!" cried Kate, indignantly.

"I said, if Nina made no objection," said Madame de Heidendorf, as though answering the indignant exclamation. "But these are matters of *my* consideration, madam—at least, if I understand the spirit of the prince's instructions."

Some such scene as this, usually closing with a similar peroration, formed the conversation of the road; and hour by hour Kate's courage fell lower, as she contemplated all that her elevation had cost her. And what a mockery was it after all! It

was true that she journeyed in a carriage with all the emblazonry of royalty; that a group of uncovered lackeys attended her as she descended; that she was ever addressed by a proud title; a respectful, submissive devotion surrounding her at every instant. But, amid all this, there was not one look, one word of kindness; nothing of interest or sympathy with her solitary grandeur. It mattered little that the bars of her cell were of gold: it was a prison still.

With what eagerness did she turn from the present, with all its splendor, to think of her former life, when, wandering among the hills of Baden, she had listened to little Hans, or watched dear Nelly, as the first gleams of her intentions began to manifest themselves on a sculptured group! With what rapture had she heard passages that seemed akin to something she had felt but could not express! How had she loved the changeful effects of light and shade on a landscape where every tree, or rock, or cliff, was familiar to her! Oh! if she could but be back again, hopeful, ardent, and trusting, as she once was! Oh! if the brief past could be but a dream, and she were once more beside her father and Nelly, knowing nothing of that world which, in so short a space, had revealed so much before her! Even to those who so lately had supplied the place of family to her, all were gone, and she was utterly alone!

She did not dare to think of George Onslow. It seemed to her like a treason to recall his memory; and, if his image did rise at times before her fancy, a burning blush would cover her cheek, and a sense of shame would send a throb like agony through her heart. The plans and projects for her future life she heard of without interest; a vague and confused impression of a long journey—halting here and there, to be presented to certain great and distinguished persons—and finally of her arrival at St. Petersburg, were all that she knew. That the prince was to join her there, and then, with the emperor's permission, return with her to the south of Europe—such were the outlines of a career, over which a sinking heart threw a gloomy shadow.

Madame de Heidendorf was too occupied with her own thoughts to notice this despondency; besides that, she was incessantly teaching Kate some one requisite or other of that rigid etiquette which prevailed in the society she was about to enter; the precise titles by which she was to address this or that personage; how many curtseys to give here, how many reverences there—little educational exercises that were always accompanied by some warning admonition of their importance to one who, like herself, had never seen anything like good society, and whose breaches of good breeding would be certain of being severely commented on.

"Think of the prince, madam," she would say; "think of what he will suffer when they repeat any of your transgressions. I am afraid there are many humiliations in store for him! And what a step to take at such a moment, with these horrible socialist doctrines abroad—these leveling theories of equality, and so forth. I hope his majesty the emperor will pardon him—I hope he will forgive *you.*"

This was a favorite speech of hers, and so often repeated, that Kate at last began to look on herself as a great criminal, and even speculated on what destiny should befall her if the emperor proved unmerciful.

These were sorry resources to shorten the weariness of the journey, and Kate felt a throb of pleasure—the first she had expeienced—when the towers of St. Stephen in the far distance announced the approach to Vienna.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AT VIENNA.

The gossiping world of Vienna had a new subject for speculation and interest, as a guard of honor was seen standing at a large palace near the "Hoff," and the only information to explain the mystery was, that some great diplomatist had arrived the evening before, and heaven knew what wonderful events were in his charge and keeping. A gigantic chasseur in green and gold, who lounged about the portal, followed by a great dog—a "fang-hund," whese silver collar was embossed with many a quartering—had engaged the attention of a very considerable crowd, which opened from time to time to permit the passage of some royal or princely equipage. As they thus fell back, a chance look would be directed upwards to the windows of the first floor, and there, passingly, they caught glimpses of one whose beauty soon formed the theme of every tongue. This was Kate Dalton, who, now rested from the fatigue of her journey, and dressed in the most becoming fashion, walked up and down a splendid saloon, watching to catch every sound, or gazing earnestly from the window to catch any sight, that might betoken her brother's coming. At Madame de Heidendorf's suggestion she had written a few

lines that morning early to the Field-Marshal von Dalton, entreating, as a great favor, that he would procure leave for Frank to come to her, and pass as much of his time as possible with her during her stay in Vienna. The note, brief as it was, cost her some trouble; she felt that much explanation might be necessary to state her present position—even who she was—and yet this was a subject she had no heart to enter into. Some expressions of affectionate interest towards himself would also have been fitting, but she could not find time for them. Frank, and Frank alone, was in her thoughts, and she left everything to the old general's ingenuity, as she concluded her note by subscribing herself, "Your affectionate niece, Kate Dalton, affianced Princesse de Midchekoff."

It was the first time that she had written the words—the first time that she had ever impressed that massive seal of many quarterings, so royal-looking as it seemed! It was, also, the first time she had ever given an order to one of her servants; and the obsequious bows of the groom of the chamber, as he withdrew, were all separate and distinct sensations—low, but clear knockings of vanity at her heart, to which every object around contributed its aid. The apartment was splendid: not in that gorgeous taste of modern decoration of which she had seen so much already, but in a more stately fashion, recalling the grandeur of a past age, and exhibiting traces of a long line of princely occupants. The very portraits along the walls had a proud and haughty bearing, and the massive chairs glittered in all the blaze of heraldry. If she looked out, it was the towers of the "Hoff Bourg"—the home of the Hapsburgs—met her eye. If she listened, it was the clank of a soldier's salute broke the stillness; while the dull roll of wheels beneath the arched gateway told of the tide of visitors who came to pay their homage.

If Kate's heart had been less bound up with anxiety to see her brother, the scene beneath her window would have afforded her some interest, as equipage after equipage succeeded—now, the quiet splendor of a court chariot; now, the more glaring magnificence of a cardinal's carriage. Here came the lumbering old vehicle of an archbishop, the reverential salute of the crowd indicating the rank of its occupant. Then the quick "present arms" of the sentry told of some general officer; while, at intervals, the "turn out" of the whole guard denoted the arrival of a royal prince. Ambassadors and ministers, chamberlains and chancelors, the dignitaries of the realm, the "Hautes Charges" of the court—all came in crowds to present their respects to the Gräfin, for by this brief designation was she known from one end of Europe to the other. Madame de Heidendorf held a levee, and none would absent themselves from so interesting an occasion.

It was the eve of a wonderful moment in Europe—it was the little lull that preceded the most terrific storm that ever overturned thrones and scattered dynasties—as these illustrious personages were met together to interchange compliments, to lisp soft phrases of flattery, and discuss the high claims of some aspirant for a ribbon or a cross, a "Red Eagle" or a "Black" one. A few, more far-sighted than the rest, saw the cloud not bigger than a man's hand in the distance—a few could hear the low rumblings that denoted the brooding hurricane; but even they thought "the thing would last their time," and thus, with many a pleasant jest, they chatted over the events of the hour, praised the wisdom of kings, and laughed to scorn those vulgar teachers whose democratic theories were just beginning to be whispered about. Some were young, buoyant, and hopeful, ready to shed the last drop for the principles they professed; others were old grey-headed men, tried servants of monarchy for half a century. But all were like-minded, and selfgratulation and compliment was the order of the day. Leaving them thus to such pleasant converse, where the clank of jeweled swords or the tap of a diamond snuffbox formed meet accompaniments of the themes, we turn once more to her in whose fate we are more deeply interested.

Twice had she rung the bell to ask if the messenger had not returned. At last he came; but there was "no answer to her note!" Her impatience became extreme. She ordered the servant who carried the note to appear before her; questioned him closely as to whether he had taken it, and the reply he had received. A soldier had said, "Gut!" and shut the door. Poor Kate! It was her first lesson in "soldier laconics," and, to say truly, she did not take it well. The Princesse de Midchekoff might have been treated with more deference. She was passing a mirror as the thought struck her, and her mien and air gave support to the belief; nor could she restrain the sense of admiration, halftinged with shame, her own beauty evoked.

"There is a soldier here, madam," said a servant, "who has a letter he will not deliver except into your own hands."

"Admit him—at once," said she, impatiently; and as she spoke the soldier stepped

forward, and, drawing himself up, carried his hand to the salute, while, presenting a letter, he said, "from the Field-Marshal von Auersberg."

Kate scarcely looked at the bearer, but hastily tore open the square-shaped epistle.

"You need not wait," said she to the servant; and then turning to the letter, read:

"'MADAME LA PRINCESSE AND BELOVED NIECE:—It was with—to me of late years—a rare satisfaction that I read the not the less affectionate that they were polite lines you vouchsafed to inscribe to me, an old and useless, but not forgotten, servant of an imperial master. Immediately on perusing the aforesaid so-called note, I despatched my adjutant to the headquarters of the Franz Carl, to obtain—no service rules to the contrary forbidding, nor any defaults punition in any wise preventing—a day's furlough for the Cadet von Dalton—'

"What regiment is yours?" said Kate, hastily, to the soldier.

"Frans Carl Infanterie, highness," said the youth, respectfully, using the title he had heard assumed by the servant.

"Do you know many of your comrades—among the cadets, I mean?"

"There are but seven in the battalion, highness, and I know them all."

"Is Von Dalton an acquaintance of yours?"

"I am Von Dalton, highness," said the youth, while a flush of surprise and pleasure lighted up his handsome features.

"Frank! Frank!" cried she, springing towards him with open arms; and ere he could recognize her, clasping him round the neck.

"Is this real? Is this a dream? Are you my own sister Kate?" cried the boy, almost choked with emotion. "And how are you here? and how thus?" and he touched the robe of costly velvet as he spoke.

"You shall know all, dear, dear Frank: you shall hear everything when the joy of this meeting will let me speak."

"They called you highness: and how handsome you've grown!"

"Have I, Frank?" said she, pressing him down to a seat beside her, while, with hands interclasped, they sat gazing on each other.

"I am only beginning to remember you," said he, slowly. "You never used to wear your hair in long ringlets thus. Even your figure is changed; you are taller, Kate."

"It is the mere difference of dress, Frank," said she, blushing with conscious pride.

"No, no: you are quite changed. Even as I sit here beside you, I feel I know not what of shame at my daring to be so near——"

"So great a lady, you would say, dear Frank," said she, laughing. "Poor boy, if you knew——" She stopped, and then, throwing her arms round his neck, went on rapidly: "But, my own dear brother, tell me of yourself: are you happy—do you like the service—are they kind to you—is uncle Stephen as we hoped he should be?"

"My story is soon told, Kate," said he; "I am where I was the day I entered the army. I should have been made a corporal——"

"A corporal!" cried Kate, laughing.

"A good thing it is, too," said the youth. "No guards to mount; no fatigue duty; neither night patrol, nor watch, and four kreutzers extra pay."

"Poor dear boy!" cried she, kissing his forehead, while she gazed on him with a compassionate affection that spoke a whole world of emotion.

"But tell me of yourself, Kate. Why do they call you the princess?"

"Because I am married, Frank—that is, I am betrothed—and will soon be married."

"And when did this occur? Tell me everything," cried he, impatiently.

"You shall know all, dearest Frank. You have heard how Lady Hester Onslow carried me away with her to Italy. Nelly has told you how we were living in Florence—in what splendor and festivity. Our palace frequented by all the great and distinguished of every country—French and German, and Spanish and Russian."

"I hate the Russians; but go on," said the boy, hastily.

"But why hate the Russians, Frank?" asked she, reddening as she spoke.

"They are false-hearted and treacherous. See how they have driven the Circassians into a war, to massacre them; look how they are goading on the Poles to insurrection. Ay, they say that they have emissaries at this moment in Hungary on the same errand. I detest them."

"This may be their state policy, Frank, but individually——"

"They are no better; Walstein knows them well."

"And who is Walstein, Frank?"

"The finest fellow in the service; the one I would have wished you married to, Kate, above all the world. Think of a colonel of hussars at eight-and-twenty, so

handsome, so brave, and such a rider. You shall see him, Kate!"

"But it's too late, Frank," said she, laughing; "you forget it's too late!"

"Ah! so it is," sighed the boy, seriously. "I often feared this," muttered he, after a pause. "Nelly's letters told me as much and I said to myself, 'It will be too late.'"

"Then Nelly has told you all, perhaps?" said she.

"Not everything, nor, indeed, anything at all very distinctly. I could only make out what seemed to be her own impressions, for they appeared mere surmises."

"And of what sort were they?" asked Kate, curiously.

"Just what you would suspect from her. Everlasting fears about temptations and trials and so forth, continually praying that your heart might resist all the flatteries about you. The old story about humility. I thought to myself, 'If the lesson be not more needful to Kate than to *me*, she runs no great risk after all!' for *I* was also warned about the seductions of the world! a poor cadet, with a few kreutzers a day, told not to be a Sybarite! Returning wet-through from a five hours' patrol, to burnish accoutrements in a cold, damp barrack, and then exhorted against the contamination of low society, when all around me were cursing the hardships they lived in and execrating the slavery of the service!"

"Our dearest Nelly knows so little of the world," said Kate, as she threw a passing glance at herself in the mirror, and arranged the fall of a deep fringe of gold lace which was fastened in her hair.

"She knows nothing of it," said the boy, adjusting his sword-knot. "She thought our hussars wore white dolmans and carried straight swords like the cuirassiers."

"And the dear, simple creature asked me, in one of her letters, if I ever wore wild-flowers in my hair now, as I used to do, long ago," said Kate, stealing another glance at the glass. "Flowers are pretty things in the hair when rubies make the pinks and the dewdrops are all diamonds."

Frank looked at her as she said this, and for the first time saw the proud elation her features assumed when excited by a theme of vanity.

"You are greatly changed, dearest Kate," said he, thoughtfully.

"Is it for the worse, Frank?" said she, half coquettishly.

"Oh! as to beauty, you are a thousand times handsomer," cried the boy, with enthusiasm. "I know not how, but every expression seems heightened, every feature more elevated; your air and gesture, your very voice, that once I thought was music itself, is far sweeter and softer."

"What a flatterer!" said she, patting his cheek.

"But then, Kate," said he, more gravely, "have these fascinations cost nothing? Is your heart as simple? Are your affections as pure? Ah! you sigh—and what a heavy sigh, too! Poor, poor Kate!"

And she laid her head upon his shoulder, while the heaving swell of her bosom told what sorrow the moment was costing her.

"Nelly, then, told you of my betrothal?" whispered she, in a weak, faint voice.

"No; I knew nothing of that. She told me all about the life you were leading; the great people with whom you were intimate; and, bit by bit, a hint, some little allusion, would creep out as to the state of your heart. Perhaps she never meant it, or did not know it, but I remarked, in reading her letters over and over—they were the solace of many a weary hour—that one name recurred so often in connection with yours, you must have frequently referred to him yourself, for in each extract from your letters I saw the name."

"This was strange. It must have been through inadvertence," said she, musingly. "I thought I had scarcely spoken of him."

"See how your hand told truth, even against your consciousness," said he, smiling.

Kate made no reply, but sat deep in thought.

"And is he here? When shall I see him?" asked Frank, impatiently.

"No, Frank. He is in Italy; he was detained there by business of importance. Besides, it is not etiquette that we should travel together. When the emperor's permission has been obtained——"

"What emperor?" asked Frank, in astonishment.

"Our emperor—the Czar."

"What have you, an English girl born, to do with the Czar?"

"The prince, my future husband, is his subject."

"Why, there is no end to this mystification," cried the boy, impatiently. "How can an English soldier be a Russian prince?"

"I don't understand you, Frank. Prince Midchekoff is a Russian by birth."

"So that you are married to a Russian," said he, in a voice of deep emotion, "and all this time I have been fancying my brother-in-law an Englishman. I thought it was this same George—George Onslow."

A heavy, dull sound startled him as he said this. It was Kate, who had fallen

back, fainting, on the sofa. It was long before, with all Frank's efforts at restoration, that she came to herself; and, even when consciousness returned, tears flowed from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks copiously, as she lay speechless and motionless.

"My own poor Kate, my poor, dear sister!" was all that Frank could say, as he held her cold, clammy hand within his own; and, with an almost breaking heart, gazed on her pale features. It was so like death! "And might not death be better?" thought he, as he traveled over in his mind the story, of whose secret he was now possessed. How differently did he judge all Nelly's counsels *now!* In what a changed spirit did he think of that wisdom which, but a few minutes back, he had sneered at! "And so it is," muttered he. "If we, who are born to humble fortunes, would cherish ambition, we must pay for it with our heart's blood. Nelly was right; she often said so. Over and over again did she tell me, 'Goodness is the only safe road to greatness.' Oh, that one so beautiful as this should have missed the path!" And, sobbing violently, he kissed her hand, and watered it with his tears.

"Frank, you are with me—you'll not leave me," said she, faintly, as she opened her eyes and stared in bewilderment around her. "I remember everything now—everything," said she, with an emphasis on the last word. "This is Vienna: I recollect all. Ring that bell, Frank: let Nina come to me, but don't go away; be sure not to go."

Nina soon made her appearance, and, with a look of half surprise, half admiration at the handsome soldier, assisted Kate to arise.

"I'll be back presently, Frank," said she, with a faint smile, and left the room. And the youth, overcome by emotion, sat down and buried his face in his hands.

CHAPTER XLVII.

PRIESTLY COUNSELS.

Frank was so full of his own reflections, that he almost forgot his sister's absence; nor did he notice how the time went over, when he heard the sound of voices and the noise of a door closing; and, on looking up, perceived a handsome man, something short of middle-aged, who, dressed in the deep black of a priest, wore a species of blue silk collar, the mark of a religious order. His features were perfectly regular, and their expression the most bland and courteous it was possible to imagine. There was a serene dignity, too, in his gait, as he came forward, that showed how thoroughly at home he felt on the soft carpet and in the perfumed atmosphere of a drawing-room.

Bowing twice to Frank, he saluted him with a smile, so gentle and so winning, that the boy almost felt as if they had been already acquainted.

"I have come," said the priest, "to pay my respects to the Princesse de Midchekoff, and, if my eyesight is not playing me false, I have the honor to recognize her brother."

Frank blushed with pleasure as he bowed an assent.

"May I anticipate the kindness—which your sister would not refuse me"—continued he, "and introduce myself. You may, perhaps, have heard of the Abbé D'Esmonde?"

"Repeatedly," cried Frank, taking the proffered hand in his own. "Nelly spoke of you in almost every letter. You were always so kind to Kate in Italy."

"How amply am I recompensed, were not the pleasure of knowing Miss Dalton a sufficient reward in itself. It is rare to find that combination of excellence which can command all the homage of fashion, and yet win the approbation of a poor priest."

There was a humility, deep enough to be almost painful, in the tone in which these words were uttered; but Frank had little time to dwell on them, for already the abbé had taken a seat on the sofa beside him, and was deep in the discussion of all Kate's attractions and merits.

There was a sincerity, an ardor of admiration, chastened only by the temper of his sacred character, that delighted the boy. If allusion were made to her beauty, it was only to heighten the praise he bestowed on her other gifts, and display the regulated action of a mind proof against every access of vanity. Her correct judgment, her intuitive refinement, the extreme delicacy of her sensibilities—these were the themes he dwelt upon, and Frank felt that they must be rare gifts indeed, when the very description of them could be so pleasurable.

From what the abbé said, so far from her marriage with the great Russian being a piece of fortune, she had but to choose her position amid the first houses of Europe. "It was true," he added, 'that the Midchekoff's wealth was like royalty, and as

he united to immense fortune great claims of personal merit, the alliance had everything to recommend it."

"And this is so?" cried Frank, eagerly. "The prince is a fine fellow?"

"Generous and munificent to an extent almost fabulous," said D'Esmonde, who seemed rather to resume his own train of thought than reply to Frank's question. "The splendor of his life has already canonized a proverb."

"But his temper—his manner—his disposition?"

"Like all his countrymen, he is reserved, almost cold to strangers; his intimates, however, talk of him as frankness and candor itself. Even on political themes, where Russians are usually most guarded, he gives his opinions freely and manfully, and, strange enough too, with a liberality which, though common enough in our country, must be very rare indeed in his."

"That is strange!" said Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes," said D'Esmonde, dropping into the tone of one who insensibly poured out his inmost thoughts in soliloquizing—"yes! he feels what we all do—that this state of things cannot last—disparity of condition may become too palpable and too striking. The contrast between affluence and misery may display itself too offensively! Men may one day or other refuse to sign a renewal of the bond of servitude, and then—and then——"

"A civil war, I suppose," cried Frank, quietly; "but the troops will always give them a lesson."

"Do you think so, my dear young friend?" said the abbé, affectionately; "do you not rather think that soldiers will begin to learn that they are citizens, and that, when forging fetters for others, the metal can be fashioned into chains for themselves?"

"But they have an oath," said the boy; "they've sworn to their allegiance."

"Very true, so they have; but what is the oath—the one-half of a compact, which cannot be supposed binding when the other half be broken? Let the social policy of a government fail in its great object—the happiness of a people; let a whole nation gradually cease to enjoy the advantages, for the sake of which they assumed the responsibilities and ties of family; let them day by day fall lower in the scale of civilization and comfort, and after surrendering this privilege to-day, and that tomorrow, at last take their stand on the very verge of the precipice, with nothing but abject slavery beneath—what would you say of the order to charge them with the bayonet, even though the formality of a recruiting oath should seem to warant the obedience?"

"I'd do it, if I was ordered," said Frank, sternly.

"I don't think you would," said D'Esmonde, smiling. "I read your nature differently. I can trace, even in the very flashing of your eye this instant, the ambition of a bold and energetic spirit, and that when the moment came you would embrace the losing cause, with all its perils, rather than stand by tyranny, in all its strength. Besides, remember, this is not the compact under which you entered the service, although it might, under certain peculiar circumstances, appeal to your sense of duty. An army is not—at least it ought not to be—a 'gendarmerie.' Go forth to battle against the enemies of your country—carry the flag of your Vaterland into the plains of France—plant the double eagle once more in the Place du Carrousel—even aggressive war has its glorious compensations in deeds of chivalry and heroism——But, here is the princess," said the abbé, rising, and advancing courteously towards her.

"The Abbé D'Esmonde!" cried Kate, with an expression of delight, as she held out her hand, which the priest pressed to his lips with all the gallantry of a courtier. "How pleasant to see the face of a friend in this strange land!" said she. "Abbé, this is my brother Frank, of whom you have heard me talk so often."

"We are acquaintances already," said D'Esmonde, passing his arm within the soldier's; "and, albeit our coats are not of the same color, I think many of our principles are."

A few moments saw him seated between the brother and sister on the sofa, recounting the circumstances of his journey, and detailing, for Kate's amusement, the latest news of Florence.

"Lady Hester is much better in health and spirits, too," said the abbé; "the disastrous circumstances of fortune would seem to have taken a better turn; at least, it is probable that Sir Stafford's losses will be comparatively slight. I believe her satisfaction on this head arises entirely from feeling that no imputation of altered position can now be alleged as the reason for her change of religion."

"And has she done this?" asked Kate, with a degree of anxiety; for she well knew on what feeble grounds Lady Hester's convictions were usually built.

"Not publicly; she waits for her arrival at Rome, to make her confession at the

shrine of St. John of Lateran. Her doubts, however, have all been solved—her reconciliation is perfect."

"Is she happy? Has she found peace of mind at last?" asked Kate, timidly.

"On this point I can speak with confidence," said D'Esmonde, warmly; and at once entered into a description of the pleasurable impulse a new train of thoughts and impressions had given to the exhausted energies of a "fine lady's" life. It was so far true, indeed, that for some days back she had never known a moment of *ennui.* Surrounded by sacred emblems and a hundred devices of religious association, she appeared to herself as if acting a little poem of life, wherein a mass of amiable qualities, of which she knew nothing before, were all developing themselves before her! And what between meritorious charities, saintly intercessions, visits to shrines, and decorations of altars, she had not an instant unoccupied; it was one unceasing round of employment; and with prayers, bouquets, lamps, confessions, candles, and penances, the day was even too short for its duties.

The little villa of La Rocca was now a holy edifice. The drawing-room had become an oratory; a hollow-cheeked "Seminariste," from Como, had taken the place of the maestro di casa. The pages wore a robe like acolytes; and even Albert Jekyl began to fear that a costume was in preparation for himself from certain measurements that he had observed taken with regard to his figure.

"My time is up," said Frank, hastily, as he arose to go away.

"You are not about to leave me, Frank?" said Kate.

"Yes, I must; my leave was only till four o'clock, as the field-marshal's note might have shown you; but I believe you threw it into the fire before you finished it."

"Did I, really? I remember nothing of that. But, stay, and I will write to him. I'll say that I have detained you."

"But the service, Kate dearest! My sergeant—my over-lieutenant—my captain—what will they say? I may have to pass three days in irons for the disobedience."

"Modern chivalry has a dash of the treadmill through it," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically; and the boy's cheek flushed as he heard it. The priest, however, had already turned away, and, walking into the recess of a window, left the brother and sister free to talk unmolested.

"I scarcely like him, Kate," whispered Frank.

"You scarcely know him yet," said she with a smile. "But when can you come again to me—to-morrow, early?"

"I fear not. We have a parade and a field-inspection, and then 'rapport' at noon."

"Leave it to me, then, dear Frank," said she, kissing him; "I must try if I cannot succeed with 'the field' better than you have done."

"There's the recall-bugle," cried the boy, in terror; and, snatching up his cap, he bounded from the room at once.

"A severe service—at least one of rigid discipline," said D'Esmonde, with a compassionating expression of voice; "it is hard to say whether it works for good or evil, repressing the development of every generous impulse, as certainly as it restrains the impetuous passions of youth."

"True," said Kate, pointedly; "there would seem something of priestcraft in their régime. The individual is nothing, the service everything."

"Your simile lacks the great element—force of resemblance, madam," said D'Esmonde, with a half smile. "The soldier has not, like the priest, a grand sustaining hope—a glorious object before him. He knows little or nothing of the cause in which his sword is drawn—his sympathies may even be against his duty. The very boy who has just left us—noble-hearted fellow that he is—what strange wild notions of liberty has he imbibed! how opposite are all his speculations to the stern calls of the duty he has sworn to discharge!"

"And does he dare——"

"Nay, madam, there was no indiscretion on his part; my humble walk in life has taught me that, if I am excluded from all participation in the emotions which sway my fellow-men, I may at least study them as they arise, watch them in their infancy, and trace them to their fruit of good or evil. Do not fancy, dear lady, that it is behind the grating of the confessional only that we read men's secrets. As the physician gains his knowledge of anatomy from the lifeless body, so do we learn the complex structure of the human heart in the death-like stillness of the cell, with the penitent before us! But yet all the knowledge thus gained is but a step to something further. It is while reading the tangled story of the heart—its struggles—its efforts—the striving after good, here—the inevitable fall back to evil, there—the poor, weak attempt at virtue—the vigorous energy of vice—it is hearing this sad tale from day to day—learning in what are called the purest natures, how deep the

well of corruption lies, and that not one generous thought, one noble aspiration, or one holy desire rises unalloyed by some base admixture of worldly motive. It is thus armed we go forth into the world, to fight against the wiles and seductions of life! How can *we* be deceived by the blandishments that seduce others? What avail to us those pretentious displays of self-devotion—those sacrifices of wealth—those proud acts of munificence which astonish the world, but with whose secret springs we are conversant? What wonder, then, if I have read the artless nature of a boy like that, or see in him the springs of an ambition he knows not of himself? Nay, it would be no rash boast to say that I have deciphered more complicated inscriptions than those upon his heart. I have traced some upon his sister's!" The last three words he uttered with a slow and deep enunciation, leaving a pause between each, and bending on her a look of intense meaning.

Kate's cheek became scarlet, then pale, and a second time she flushed, till neck and shoulders grew crimson together.

"You have no confidences to make me, my dear, dear child," said D'Esmonde, as, taking her hand, he pressed her down on a sofa beside him. "Your faltering lips have nothing to articulate—no self-repinings, no sorrows to utter; for I know them all!" He paused for a few seconds, and then resumed: "Nor have you to fear me as a stern or merciless judge. Where there is a sacrifice, there is a blessing!"

Kate held down her head, but her bosom heaved, and her frame trembled with emotion.

"Your motives," resumed he, "would dignify even a rasher course. I know the price at which you have bartered happiness—not your own only, but another's with it!"

She sobbed violently, and pressed her hands over her face.

"Poor, poor fellow," cried he, as if borne away by an impulse of candor that would brook no concealment, "how I grieved to see him, separated, as we were, by the wide and yawning gulf between us, giving himself up to the very recklessness of despair, now cursing the heartless dissipation in which his life was lost, now accusing himself of golden opportunities neglected, bright moments squandered, petty misunderstandings exaggerated into dislikes, the passing coldness of the moment exalted into a studied disdain! We were almost strangers to each other before—nay, I half fancied that he kept aloof from me. Probably"—here D'Esmonde smiled with a bland dignity—"probably he called me a 'Jesuit'—that name so full of terror to good Protestant ears; but, on his sick-bed, as he lay suffering and in solitude, his faculties threw off the deceptive influences of prejudice; he read me then more justly; he saw that I was his friend. Hours upon hours have we passed talking of you; the theme seemed to give a spring to an existence from which, till then, all zest of life had been withdrawn. I never before saw as much of passion, with a temper so just and so forgiving. He needed no aid of mine to read your motives truly. 'It is not for herself that she has done this,' were words that he never ceased to utter. He knew well the claims that family would make on you, the heartrending appeals from those you could not but listen to! 'Oh! if I could but think that she will not forget me; that some memory of me will still linger in her mind!' this was his burning prayer, syllabled by lips parched by the heat of fever; and when I told him to write to you——"

"To write to me!" cried she, catching his arm, while her cheeks trembled with intense agony, "you did not give such counsel?"

"Not alone that," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "but promised that I would myself deliver the letter into your hands. Is martyrdom less glorious that a cry of agony escapes the victim, or that his limbs writhe as the flame wraps round them? Is self-sacrifice to be denied the sorrowful satisfaction to tell its woes? I bade him write, because it would be good for him and for you alike."

She stared eagerly, as if to ask his meaning.

"Good for both," repeated he, slowly. "Love will be, to him, a guide-star through life, leading him by paths of high and honorable ambition; to you, it will be the consolation of hours that even splendor will not enliven. Believe me"—here he raised his voice to a tone of command and authority—"believe me that negation is the lot of all. Happiest they who only suffer in their affections! And what is the purest of all love? Is it not that the devotee feels for his protecting saint—that sense of ever-present care—that consciousness of a watching, unceasing affection, that neither slumbers nor wearies, following us in our joy, beside us in our afflictions? Some humble effigy, some frail representation, is enough to embody this conception, but its essence lies in the heart of hearts! Such a love as this—pure, truthful, and enduring—may elevate the humblest life into heroism, and throw a sun-gleam over the dreari-

est path of destiny. The holy bond that unites the groveling nature below with glory above, has its humble type on earth in those who, separated by fate, are together in affection! I bade him write to you a few lines; he was too weak for more; indeed, his emotion almost made the last impossible. I pressed him, however, to do it, and pledged myself to place them in your hands; my journey hither had no other object." As he spoke, he took forth a small sealed packet, and gave it to Kate, whose hands trembled as she took it.

"I shall spend some days in Vienna," said he, rising to take leave; "pray let me have a part of each of them with you. I have much to say to you, and of other matters than those we have now spoken." And kissing her hand with a respectful devotion, the abbé withdrew, without ever once raising his eyes towards her.

Sick with sorrow and humiliation, for such she acutely felt—Kate Dalton rose and retired to her room. "Tell Madame de Heidendorf, Nina," said she, "that I feel tired to-day, and beg she will excuse my not appearing at dinner."

Nina curtseyed her obedience, but it was easy to see that the explanation by no means satisfied her, and that she was determined to know something more of the origin of her young mistress's indisposition.

"Madam knows that the archduke is to dine here."

"I know it," said Kate, peevishly, and as if desirous of being left in quiet.

Nina again curtseyed, but in the brilliant flashing of her dark eyes it was plain to mark the consciousness that some secret was withheld from her. The "soubrette" class are instinctive readers of motives—"their only books are '*ladies*' looks"—but they con them to perfection. It was then with a studied pertinacity that Nina proceeded to arrange drawers and fold dresses, and fifty other similar duties, the discharge of which she saw was torturing her mistress.

"I should wish to be alone, Nina, and undisturbed," said Kate, at last, her patience being entirely exhausted.

Nina made her very deepest reverence, and withdrew.

Kate waited for a few seconds, till all sound of her retiring steps had died away, then arose and locked the door.

She was alone; the packet which the abbé had delivered lay on the table before her; she bent down over it, and wept. The utter misery of sorrow is only felt where self-reproach mingles with our regrets. All the pangs of other misfortunes are light in comparison with this. The irrevocable past was own work; she knew it, and cried, till her very heart seemed bursting.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

SECRETS OF HEAD AND HEART.

I MUST ask of my reader to leave this chamber, where, overwhelmed by her sorrows, poor Kate poured out her grief in tears, and follow me to a small but brilliantly-lighted apartment, in which a little party of four persons was seated, discussing their wine, and enjoying the luxury of their cigars. Be not surprised when we say that one of the number was a lady. Madame de Heidendorf, however, puffed her weed with all the zest of a smoker; the others were the Archduke Ernest, a plain, easy-tempered-looking man, in the grey undress of an Austrian general; the Foreign Minister, Count Nörinberg; and our old acquaintance, the Abbé D'Esmonde.

The table, beside the usual ornaments of a handsome dessert, was covered with letters, journals, and pamphlets, with here and there a colored print in caricature of some well-known political personage. Nothing could be more easy and unconstrained than the air and bearing of the guests. The archduke sat with his uniform coat unbuttoned, and resting one leg upon a chair before him; the minister tossed over the books, and brushed off the ashes of his cigar against the richly-damasked tablecloth; while even the abbé seemed to have relaxed the smooth urbanity of his face into a look of easy enjoyment. Up to this moment the conversation had been general, the principal topics being the incidents of the world of fashion, the flaws and frivolities, the mishaps and misadventures of those whose names were familiar to his imperial highness, and in whose vicissitudes he took the most lively interest. These, and a stray anecdote of the turf in England, were the only subjects he cared for, hating politics and state affairs with a most cordial detestation. His presence, however, was a compliment that the court always paid the countess, and he submitted to his turn of duty manfully.

Deeply involved in the clouds of his cigar-smoke, and even more enveloped in the misty regions of his own reveries, he sipped his wine in silence, and heard nothing of the conversation about him. The minister was then perfectly free to discuss the themes most interesting to him, and learn

whatever he could of the state of public opinion in Italy.

"You are quite right, abbé," said he, with a sage shake of the head. "Small concessions, pretty glimpses of liberty, only give a zest for more enlarged privileges. There is nothing like a good flood of popular anarchy for creating a wholesome disgust to freedom. There must be excesses!"

"Precisely so, sir," said the abbé. "There can be no question of an antidote if there has been no poisoning."

"Ay; but may not this system be pushed too far? Is not his Holiness already doing so?"

"Some are disposed to think so, but I am not of the number," said D'Esmonde. "It is necessary that he should himself be convinced that the system is a bad one; and there is no mode of conviction so palpable as by a personal experience. Now, this he will soon have. As yet, he does not see that every step in political freedom is an advance towards the fatal heresy that never ceases its persecutions of the Church. Not that our Revolutionists care for Protestantism or the Bible either; but, by making common cause with those who do, see what a large party in England becomes interested for their success. The right of judgment conceded in religious matters, how can you withhold it in political ones? The men who brave the Church will not tremble before a cabinet. Now the Pope sees nothing of this; he even mistakes the flatteries offered to himself for testimonies of attachment to the faith, and all those kneeling hypocrites who implore his blessing he fancies are faithful children of Rome. He must be awakened from this delusion; but yet none save himself can dispel it. He is obstinate and honest."

"If the penalty were to be his own alone, it were not so much matter," said the minister; "but it will cost a revolution."

"Of course it will; but there is time enough to prepare for it."

"The state of the 'Milanais' is far from satisfactory," said the minister, gravely.

'I know that; but a revolt of a prison always excuses double irons," said D'Esmonde, sarcastically.

"Tell him of Sardinia, abbé," said Madame de Heidendorf.

"Your real danger is from that quarter," said D'Esmonde. "There is a growing spirit of independence there—a serious desire for free institutions, wide apart from the wild democracy of the rest of Italy. This is a spirit you cannot crush; but you can do better—you can corrupt it. Genoa is a hotbed of Socialist doctrine; the wildest fanaticism of the 'Reds' is there triumphant, and our priests are manfully aiding the spread of such opinions. They have received orders to further these notions; and it is thus, and by the excesses consequent on this, you will succeed in trampling down that moderated liberty which is the curse that England is destined to disseminate amongst us. It is easy enough to make an excited people commit an act of indiscretion, and then, with public opinion on your side——"

"How I detest that phrase!" said Madame de Heidendorf; "it is the lowest cant of the day."

"The thing it represents is not to be despised, madam," said the abbé.

"These are English notions," said she, sneeringly.

"They will be Russian ones, yet, depend upon it, madam."

"I'd rather know what a few men of vast fortune, like Midchekoff, for instance, think, than have the suffrages of half the greasy mobs of Europe."

"By the way," said the minister, "what is he doing? Is it true that he is coquetting with Liberals and Fourierists, and all that?"

"For the moment he is," said Madame de Heidendorf; "and two or three of the popularity-seeking sovereigns have sent him their decorations, and if he does not behave better he will be ordered home."

"He is of great use in Italy," said the minister.

"True; but he must not abuse his position."

"He is just vain enough to lend himself to a movement," said D'Esmonde; "but he shall be watched."

These last words were very significantly uttered.

"You know the princess, abbé?" asked the minister, with a smile; and another smile, as full of meaning, replied to the question.

"She's pretty, ain't she?" asked the archduke.

"Beautiful is the word, sir; but if your imperial highness would like to pass judgment personally, I'll beg of her to come down to the drawing-room."

"Of all things, most kind of you to make the offer," said he, rising and arranging his coat and sword-knot into some semblance of propriety, while Madame de Heidendorf rang the bell, and despatched a messenger to Kate with the request.

Nina was overjoyed at the commission entrusted to her. Since Kate's peremptory order, she had not ventured to intrude her-

self upon her; but now, armed with a message, she never hesitated about invading the precincts of that silent chamber, at whose door she often stood in doubt and speculation.

She tapped gently at the door: there was no answer. A second summons was alike unreplied to, and Nina bent down her head to listen. There were long-drawn breathings, like sleep, but a heavy sigh told that the moments were those of waking sorrow. Cautiously turning the handle of the door, without noise, she opened it and passed in. The room was shrouded in a dim half-light, and it was not till after the lapse of some seconds that Nina could distinguish the form of her young mistress, as with her head buried in her hands she sat before a table on which lay an open letter.

So absorbed was Kate in grief that she heard nothing, and Nina approached her, slowly, till at last she stood directly behind her, fixedly regarding the heaving figure, the disheveled hair, and the trembling hands, that seemed to clutch with eagerness some object within their grasp. Kate suddenly started, and pushing back her hair from her eyes, seemed as if trying to collect her wandering thoughts. Then, unclasping a case, she placed a miniature before her, and contemplated it attentively. Nina bent over her till she almost touched her in her eagerness. Had any one been there to have seen her features at the moment, they would have perceived the traits of intense and varied passion, surprise, rage, and jealousy, all struggling for the mastery. Her dark skin grew almost livid, and her black eyes glowed with anger, while, with a force like convulsion, she pressed her hands to her heart, as if to calm its beatings. A sea of stormy passions was warring within her, and in her changeful expression might be seen the conflict of her resolves. At last she appeared to have decided, for, with noiseless steps, she gradually retreated towards the door, her eyes all the while steadily fixed on her mistress.

It seemed to require no slight effort to repress the torrent of rage within her, for even at the door she stood irresolute for a moment, and then, softly opening it, withdrew. Once outside, her pent-up passions found vent, and she sobbed violently. Her mood was, however, more of anger than of sorrow, and there was an air of almost insolent pride in the way she now knocked, and then, without waiting for a reply, entered the room.

"Madame de Heidendorf requests that the princess will appear in the drawing-room," said she, abruptly, and confronting Kate's look of confusion with a steadfast stare.

"Say that I am indisposed, Nina—that I feel tired and unwell," said Kate, timidly.

"There is an archduke, madam."

"What care I for an archduke, Nina?" said Kate, trying to smile away the awkwardness of her own disturbed manner.

"I have always believed that great folk liked each other," said Nina, sarcastically.

"Then I must lack one element of that condition, Nina," said Kate, good-humoredly; "but pray make my excuses — say anything you like, so that I may be left in quiet."

"How delightful madam's reveries must be when she attaches such value to them!"

"Can you doubt it, Nina?" replied Kate, with a forced gayety. "A betrothed bride ought to be happy; you are always telling me so. I hear of nothing from morn till night but of rich caskets of gems and jewels; you seem to think that diamonds would throw a luster over any gloom."

"And would they not?" cried Nina, passionately. "Has not the brow nobler and higher thoughts when encircled by a coronet like this? Does not the heart beat with greater transport beneath gems like these?" And she opened case after case of sparkling jewels as she spoke, and spread them before Kate on the table.

"And yet I have learned to look on them calmly," said Kate, with an expression of proud indifference.

"Does not that dazzle you?" said Nina, holding up a cross of rose diamonds.

"No!" said Kate, shaking her head.

"Nor that?" cried Nina, displaying a gorgeous necklace.

"Nor even that, Nina."

"Is madam's heart so steeled against womanly vanities," said Nina, quickly, while she threw masses of costly articles before her, "that not one throb, not one flush of pleasure, is called up at sight of these?"

"You see, Nina, that I can look on them calmly."

"Then this, perchance, may move you!" cried Nina; and with a bound she sprang to the table at which Kate was seated, and, dashing the handkerchief away, seized the miniature, and held it up.

Kate uttered a shrill cry and fell back fainting. Nina gazed at her for a second or so with a look of haughty disdain, and, sprinkling the pale features with a few drops of water, she turned away. With calm composure she replaced each precious

gem within its case, laid the miniature once more beneath the handkerchief, and then left the room.

"Your princess will not honor us, it seems, with her company," said the archduke, half in pique, as the messenger returned with Kate's excuses; "and yet I looked for her coming to get rid of all the farrago of politics that you wise folk will insist upon talking."

The countess and the minister exchanged most significant glances at this speech, while D'Esmonde politely assented to the remark, by adding something about the relaxation necessary to overwrought minds, and the need that princes should enjoy some repose as well as those of lower degree. "I can, however, assure your imperial highness," said he, "that this is no caprice of the young princess. She is really far from well, and was even unable to receive her own relative this afternoon, the Count von Dalton."

"What, is old Auersberg a relative of hers?"

"An uncle, or a grand-uncle—I forget which, sir."

"Then that wild youth in the Franz Carl must be a connection, too?"

"The cadet is her brother, sir."

"Indeed! What an extravagant fellow it is! They say that, counting on being Auersberg's heir, he spends money in every possible fashion; and, as the tradespeople take the succession on trust, his debts are already considerable. It was only yesterday his colonel spoke to me of sending him to the Banat, or some such place. His family must be rich, I suppose?"

"I believe quite the reverse, sir. Poor to indigence. Their entire hope is on the Count von Auersberg."

"He held a frontier command for many years, and must have saved money. But will he like to see it in hands like these?"

"I believe—at least so the story goes," said D'Esmonde, dropping his voice to a whisper, "that the boy's arguments have scarcely assisted his object in that respect. They say that he told the count that in times like these no man's fortune was worth a year's purchase; that, when monarchs were tottering and thrones rocking, it were better to spend one's means freely than to tempt pillage by hoarding it."

"Are these his notions?" cried the archduke, in amazement.

"Yes; the wildest doctrines of socialism are his creed—opinions, I grieve to say, more widely spread than any one supposes."

"How is this, then? I see the private regimental reports of every corps—I read the conduct-rolls of almost every company, and yet no hint of this disaffection has reached me."

"A priest could reveal more than an adjutant, sir," said the abbé, smiling. "These youths who fancy themselves neglected—who think their claims disregarded—who, in a word, imagine that some small pretension, on the score of family, should be the spring of their promotion, are easily seduced into extravagant ideas about freedom and so forth."

"Austria is scarce the land for such fruit to ripen in," said the archduke, laughing. "Let him try France, or the United States."

"Very true, your highness," chimed in the abbé; "but such boys ought to be watched—their conduct inquired strictly into."

"Or, better still, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the archduke, sternly, "dismissed the service. I see no profit in retaining amongst us the seeds of this French malady."

"I believe your highness takes the true view of the difficulty," said D'Esmonde, as though reflecting over it. "And yet you will be asked to make an officer of him in a day or two."

"An officer of this boy! and why, or by whom?"

"The princess, his sister, will make the request: probably through Von Auersberg."

"But when I tell the 'Feld'——"

"Ah, your imperial highness could not betray a confidence!" said D'Esmonde. "I have ventured to disclose to you what has come to my knowledge by means only accessible to myself; I therefore rely on your highness not to divulge, however you may use it."

"He shall not continue to wear our cloth; that you may certainly rely on, Monsieur Abbé," said the archduke, sternly.

"In any case, wait for his sister's departure, sir," said D'Esmonde, anxiously; "a few days or hours. As soon as this silly old lady has made up that budget of gossip and scandal she fancies to be political news, we'll see her leave this, and then he can be dealt with as you think proper."

The archduke made no reply—not seeming either to assent to or reject the counsel. "It would break the old marshal's heart," said he, at last. "That gallant old soldier would never survive it."

"A treason might, indeed, kill him," said D'Esmonde. "But your highness will anticipate exposure by dismissal—dismissal, peremptory and unexplained."

Again the archduke was silent, but his lowering brow and dark expression told

that the subject was giving him deep and serious thought. "I paid no attention to your conversation this evening, abbé," said he, at last; "but it struck me, from a chance word, here and there, that you suspect these same 'liberal' notions are gaining ground."

"Heresies against the faith, sir, have begotten their natural offspring, heresies against the state: and governments do not yet awaken to the fact that they who scorn the altar will not respect the throne. The whole force of what are called liberal institutions has been to weaken the influence of the clergy; and yet it is precisely on that same influence you will have to fall back. It is beneath the solemn shadow of the Church you'll seek your refuge yet!"

"No, no, father," said the archduke, with a laugh; "we have another remedy."

"The miter is stronger than the 'mitraille,' after all," said D'Esmonde, boldly. "Believe me, sir, that the solemn knell that tolls an excommunication will strike more terror through Christendom than all your artillery."

Either the remark or the tone in which it was uttered was unpleasing to the prince; indeed, all the abbé's courtesy at times gave way to an almost impetuous boldness, which royalty never brooks, for he turned away haughtily, and joined the others at a distant part of the room.

There was something of scorn in the proud look which D'Esmonde gave after him, and then slipped from the chamber with noiseless step and disappeared. Inquiring the way to the princess's apartment, the abbé slowly ascended the stairs, pondering deeply as he went. Nina was passing the corridor at the moment, and, supposing that he had mistaken the direction, politely asked if she could offer him any guidance? Scarcely noticing the questioner, he replied:

"I was looking for the Princesse de Midchekoff's apartments."

"It is here, sir; but she is indisposed."

"If you would say that the Abbé D'Esmonde——"

He had got thus far when, lifting his eyes, his glance fell upon her features; and then, as if spell-bound, he stood silently gazing at her. Nina's cheek grew crimson under the stare; but her eyes met his with unshaken firmness.

"If I were to disbelieve all probabilities," said he, slowly, "I should say that I see an old friend before me. Are you not the daughter of Huertos, the Toridor of Seville?"

"Fra Eustace!" said Nina, stepping back and staring steadily at him.

"No longer so, Lola; I am the Abbé D'Esmonde now," said he, while a faint flush tinged his pale features.

"And I am Nina, the 'Cameriera,'" replied she, scornfully. "See how unequally fortune has dealt with us!"

D'Esmonde made a sign towards the door, which she at once understood and answered.

"Yes, in the service of the princess."

"This is, indeed, a strange meeting, Lola."

"Call me Nina," said the girl, flushing, "or I shall remember old times, and my Spanish blood will little bear such memories."

"Where can we talk together, Nina?"

"Come this way, holy father," said she, with a half-sneering smile. "I suppose a poor girl may receive her confessor in her chamber."

D'Esmonde walked after her without speaking. While crossing a gallery she unlocked a door, and admitted him into a small but neatly-furnished room.

"Dear Lola," said the priest, as, taking her hand, he looked affectionately at her—"I must needs call you by the old name—what turn of fortune has brought you here?"

"It is a question well becomes you," said the girl, releasing her hand from his grasp, and drawing herself proudly up. "You cut the bark adrift, and you wonder that it has become a wreck!"

"How this old warmth of temper recalls the past, and how I love you for it, as I grieve over it, Lola; but be calm, and tell me everything, just as you used to tell me years ago."

"Oh! if I had the same pure heart as then," cried the girl, passionately. "Oh! if I could but shed tears, as once I did, over each slight transgression, and not have my spirit seared and hardened, as the world has made it."

"We cannot carry the genial freshness of youth into the ripe years of judgment, Lola. Gifts decay, and others succeed them."

"No more of this casuistry. *You* are, I see, the same, whatever changes time may have made in *me*; but I have outlived these trickeries. Tell me, frankly, what do you want with me?"

"Must there needs be some motive of self-interest in renewing an old but interrupted friendship, Lola? You remember what we once were to each other?"

"Oh, that I could forget it!—oh, that I

could wash out the thought, or even think it but a dream! But how can you recall these memories? If the sorrow be mine, is not the shame all yours?"

"The shame and the sorrow are alike mine," said D'Esmonde, in a voice of deep dejection. "*You* alone, of all the world, were ever able to shake within me the great resolves that in prayer and devotion I had formed. For *you*, Lola, I was, for a space, willing to resign the greatest cause that ever man engaged in. Ay, for love of *you*, I was ready to peril everything—even to my soul! Is not this enough for shame and sorrow, too? Is not this humiliation for one who wears the robe that I do?"

"You were a student in those days," said Nina, with a sneering smile; "and I never heard you speak of all those dreadful sacrifices. You used to talk of leaving the college with a light heart. You spoke of the world as if you were impatient to mingle with it. You planned I know not how many roads to fortune and advancement. Among other careers, I remember"—and here she burst into a scornful laugh, that made the priest's cheek grow crimson with passion—"I remember how you hit upon one which speaks rather for your ardor than your prudence. Do you forget that you would be a toridor? You, whose cheek grew pale, and whose heart sickened, as my father's horse lay emboweled in the ring, and who fainted outright when the bull's horns were driven into the barricade near you! You a toridor! A toridor should have courage!" And, as she spoke, her eyes flashed with the fire of passion.

"Courage!" said the priest, in a voice almost guttural from emotion—"and is there no other courage than the vulgar defiance of personal danger—the quality of the veriest savage and the merest brute in creation? Is there nothing more exalted in courage than to face bodily peril? Are all its instincts selfishness? What think you of the courage of him who, in all the conscious strength of intellect, with powers to win an upward way amongst the greatest and the highest, can stoop to a life of poverty and neglect—can give up all that men strive for—home, affection, family, citizenship—content to toil apart and alone—to watch, and fast, and pray, and think—ay, think till the very brain reels with labor—and all this for a cause in which he is but a unit! Courage! Tell me not of courage beside that of him who dares to shake the strongest thrones, and convulses empires with his word, whose counsels brave the might of armies, and dare even kings to controvert; and, greatest of all, the courage that for a cause can risk salvation! Yes, Lola, he who, to save others, hazards his own eternity! Have I not done it?" cried he, carried away by an impetuous rush of feeling. "Have I not overborne the truth and sustained the falsehood? Have I not warped the judgments, and clouded the faculties, and misdirected the aspirations of many who came to me for counsel, knowing that, if there might be evil now, there would be good hereafter, and that for present and passing sorrow there would be a glorious day of rejoicing? To this end have I spoken peace to the guilty man and hope to the hardened! Not for him, nor for me, but for the countless millions of the Church—for the mighty hosts who look to her for succor and consolation! This I call courage!"

And he drew himself proudly up and folded his arms on his breast with an air of haughty composure, while the girl, awed by his manner, and subdued by the impetuosity of his speech, gazed at him in half fear and wonderment.

"Tell me of your father, Lola," said D'Esmonde, in a low, soft voice, as he drew her low seat to his side.

"*He* was killed at Madrid; he died before the queen!" said she, proudly.

"The death of a toridor!" muttered the priest, mournfully.

"Yes, and Pueblos, too, is dead!"

"Not the little child that I remember——"

"The same. He grew up to be a fine man; some thought him handsomer than my father. My mother's family would have made a priest of him, but he chose the prouder destiny!"

"I cannot think of him but as the child—the little fellow who played about my knees, dressed like a matador, his long silky hair in a net."

"Oh, do not—do not speak of him," cried the girl, burying her face between her hands; "my heart will not bear those memories."

The priest's face was lighted up with a malevolent delight as he bent over her, as if reveling in the thought the emotions could call up.

"Poor little fellow!" said he, as if to himself. "How I remember his bolero that he danced for me." He stopped, and she sobbed bitterly. "He said that Lola taught him."

She looked up; the tears were fast coursing along her cheeks, which were pale as death.

"Eustace," said she, tremulously, "these thoughts will drive me mad; my brain is reeling even now."

"Let us talk of something else, then," said he. "When did you leave the opera—and why?"

"How can you ask?—you were at Seville at the time. Have you forgotten that famous marriage, to which, by your persuasion, I consented; was this scheme only one of those unhappy events which are to be the seed of future good?"

The sneer made no impression on the priest, who calmly answered, "Even so, Lola."

"What do you mean, sir?" cried she, angrily; "to what end am I thus? Was I so base-born and so low? Was my lot in life so ignominious that I should not have raised my ambition above a fortune like this?—the waiting woman of one whose birth is not better than my own."

"You are right, Lola, perfectly right, and with patience and prudence you will be her equal yet. Acton is an English noble——"

"What care I for that?" said she, passionately: "the marriage was a counterfeit."

"The marriage was a true and a valid one."

"And yet you yourself told me it was not binding."

"I had my reasons for the deceit, Lola," said he, persuasively. "You were deserted and desolate; such widowhood would have brought you to the grave with sorrow. It were better that you should strive against misery."

"Even in shame?" asked she, scornfully.

"Even in shame, for the shame would be short-lived; but Lord Norwood is alive, and you are his wife."

"Lord Norwood! I have heard that name so often," said she, musingly.

"At Florence, of course, he was every night at the Mazzarini Palace, the same Gerald Acton you remember long ago."

"And he is a lord—an English noble?"

"And you are an English peeress, Lola. There is not a coronet more safe upon a titled head than I can make yours—can and will make," added he, slowly. "But you must be patient; I must now speak to you, Lola, of themes in which you can take no interest, and subjects of which you know nothing: but listen to me attentively, and hear me, for fortune has not thus thrown us together without a meaning.

"The hour is come, Lola, when heretics and infidels have determined on an attack of our faith; not as they have hitherto attempted, and with such signal failure, by the weapons of controversy and discussion, but by brute force—by the might of millions driven to madness from want and misgovernment. To avert this terrible calamity is now the unceasing thought of the Church. Some have counseled one thing, some another; some would go forth to the fight, trusting that, as of old, God would not forget his people; there are others who deem this course presumptuous and unwise. The hearts of kings are not as they once were—in their confessor's keeping. Our age and manners would send forth no crusade! The battle must be otherwise contested. You could not follow me, Lola, were I to tell you either of the perils or their antidotes. Enough that I say we must have trusty and faithful agents in every land of Europe, and in every rank in every people. From the secret whisperings of the Czar, to the muttered discontent of the Irish peasant, we must know them all. To this end have we labored anxiously and eagerly for some time back, and already have we made great progress. From every court of Europe we now receive tidings, and there is not a royal palace where our interests are unguarded. Some serve us for the glorious cause itself, some have their own price, some again are in our hands from motives of self-interest or terror, but all are alike true. This princess—this Dalton—I destined for a duty of the same nature. Married to a man of Midchekoff's wealth and influence, she might have done good service, but I scarcely dare to trust her; even at the sacrifice of herself she might fail me, and, although in my power, I cannot count upon her. Think, then, of my joy at finding you—one on whose fidelity I may hazard life itself. You can be all to me, and a thousand times more than ever she could."

"Your spy," said the girl, steadily, but without the slightest semblance of anger.

"My friend, my counselor, my correspondent, Lola."

"And the price?"

"You may name it. If your heart be set on mere worldly distinction, I will prove your marriage, and although Norwood is not rich, his country never neglects the class he belongs to. Would you break the tie—the bond is in my keeping."

"I never loved him," cried she, passionately, "and you knew it. The marriage was one of those snares on which your mind never ceases to dwell."

"If you loved another, Lola?" said he, interrupting, and then waiting for her to finish the speech.

"And if I had," burst she forth, "am I credulous enough to fancy that your word

can reconcile every difference of rank and fortune—that you can control destiny—and even coerce affection? No, no, Eustace; I have outlived all that!"

"Then were you wiser when you believed it," said he, gravely. "Now for his name."

There was a tone of almost commanding influence in which these last few words were uttered, and his dark full eyes were steadily fixed on her as he spoke them.

She hesitated to answer, and seemed to reflect.

"I ask no forced confession, Lola," said he proudly, and rising at the same time from his seat. "In all the unreserve of our old affection, I told you *my* secret; *yours* is with yourself."

"But, can you——" She stopped.

"I can, and I will aid you," said he, finishing her sentence.

"There is the name, then!" cried she, as, with a passionate gesture, she drew a sealed letter from her bosom, and showed him the superscription.

D'Esmonde almost startled; but recovering himself in an instant, he said:

"The address is not correct, Lola. It should be thus——" And taking a pen, he drew it across the last line on the cover, and wrote, instead, "Dewanpore Barracks, Calcutta." "We must talk together this evening," said he, restoring the letter, and, without more, withdrew.

CHAPTER XLIX.

D'ESMONDE'S LETTER.

It will spare the reader a somewhat lengthy discussion if we give him a peep at an extract from a letter written at this period by the Abbé D'Esmonde to a friend and fellow priest in Ireland. It was written on the very evening whose events we have just mentioned, and when fresh from the scenes of which he speaks.

The name or circumstances of the abbé's confidant have no interest for us, nor need we allude to him more particularly than by stating that he was one who took a prominent part in his country's politics, and was a well-known agitator, both in print and on the platform. The present moment might not be inopportune to show the injustice of that sneer so often passed upon men of this stamp, and which assumes that their whole lives are spent in the agitation of small and irritating questions of mere local interest—the petty intrigues of a village or a hamlet—and without knowledge or interest for those greater themes which stir the heart of all Europe. We must not, however, be led away from our purpose; but, leaving these inferences to our reader's appreciation, keep to the sober business of our task.

We have only to premise that D'Esmonde and his friend had been school-fellows and college companions, and that the revelations made were in all the confidence of unbounded trust and security. Neither was the hazard of a post-office incurred, for the document was forwarded, with several letters from Rome, by a private hand—a priest, who twice each year performed the journey on a similar errand, and—shall we startle our reader if we add, in a spirit apart from all the caprices of fiction—still travels on the same mission.

After some apology for the time the epistle would be on the road, seeing that it should first return to Rome ere it began its journey northward, D'Esmonde next alludes to some private and personal matters, and some individuals of their acquaintance, and then proceeds:

"It is not without much inconvenience that I am here at this moment, but my presence was necessary to neutralize the influence of this troublesome old countess, and who would fain stop, if she could, all these liberal movements ere they have developed their true meaning. You can have no idea how difficult is this task, nor with what persistent folly people go on repeating each other's platitudes about 'timely checks,' 'scotching the snake,' and so forth. It is now upwards of half a century since Europe has seen a real political convulsion. A new lesson is wanting. I often used to hope that you of the West might be able to give it. I had formed great expectations of Chartism at one time. It possessed the due elements of mischief in abundance: it was Infidel and Hungry; but it wanted the great requisites—determination and courage. The example must come from the continent, and, in one respect, it is so much the better. Your home disturbers would be necessarily the enemies of the Anglican Church, whereas *our* anarchists here are inseparably associated with Protestantism. This *coup* required some cleverness, but we at last accomplished it. Ronge's movement of secession gave the first opportunity; the Swiss troubles offered the second; a little more, and the *Bonnet rouge* will be the symbol of the Protestant faith. Mark the advantage of this: see the distrust with which every nation of the continent will

regard England and her constitution-mongering; look how they will be induced to associate her printed cottons with her Church, and connect the spread of her trade with the treacherous dissemination of her doctrines. So far, so good. And then, remember, that to all this anarchy and ruin the Church of the true faith alone offers any effectual opposition—the 'platoon' for the hour of conflict; but to the priest must they come to consolidate the shattered edifice—to rebuild the tottering fabric of society. Men do not see this yet; and there is but one way to teach it—a tremendous lesson of blood and anarchy. This is in store for them, believe me.

"My great difficulty is to persuade these people to patience. They will not wait, as Napoleon did for the Prussians, till they were '*en flagrant delit;*' and yet, if they do not, the whole experiment goes for nothing. With all their hordes of horse, foot, and dragoons—their grape and canister—their grenades and rocket-batteries—they have not the courage of a poor priest. His Holiness is, however, doing better. He has taken the whole *au sérieux;* he has brought himself to believe that moderate reforms—what are they?—will satisfy the wishes of demagogue ambition, and that, when he has lashed popular fury into full speed, he can check it at will. Of course you guess what will follow, and you already see what a busy time is before us. Oh, my dear Michel, I can stop here, and, closing my eyes, revel in the glorious future that must succeed! I see the struggle before me; I know that some good men, mayhap some great ones, will fall in it; but in the distance I see the dome of St. Peter's rising majestically above the clouds of battle, and the countless millions kneeling once more before its altars!

"I do not clearly understand you about Ireland, although I agree in the policy of putting the Protestant rebel in the foreground. A conflict ever so brief with the government would be most useful. I have thought a good deal on the subject, and am convinced that nothing would awe England more than the impression of any foreign assistance being given to Irish insurrection, while it would lend to *your* loyalty the grand trait of nationality. This is a highly important feature. Remark how they are taunting us with being ultramontane just now, and think what an answer this will be to the sarcasm! I am sure—that is, if you concurred with me—I could easily persuade some young fellows in this service to join the movement. As officers, and well acquainted with military details, they would have a formidable effect in English eyes. I have two or three in my mind already—one, a brother of my young princess, that fair damsel of whom I spoke in my last letter as my destined *charge d'affaires* at St. Petersburg—a very difficult post to fill, and one for which I am by no means sure she will be adequate. When I reflect on the difficulties experienced by us in arriving at truth, we, who have the hearts of men so open before us, I am astounded at any success that attends a mere secular government. More than two-thirds of those with whom I live are, so to say, in my power: that is, their reputation and their fortunes; and yet I must make them feel this ten times a day to turn them to my account. Believe me the Holy Office was right; there is an inseparable bond of union between truth and a thumb-screw!

"Tell me if you wish for military aid: substantially, I am well aware, it would be worth nothing, but it might assist in pushing your patriots, who, I must own, are a cautious race, a step further. This Dalton boy is a thorough Austrian up to this—a regular 'God and the Emperor' soldier: but I have thrown more stubborn metal into the crucible, and seen it come out malleable.

"You ask about the 'converts;' and I must own that their defection is a greater slur on Protestantism than any matter of glorification to us. They are unceasing in their exactions, and all fancy that no price is too high for the honor of their alliance; not a shovel-hat amongst them who does not expect to be a 'Monsignore' at least!

"Some, however, like my friend, Lady Hester, are wealthy, and in this way reward the trouble they give us. On her security I have obtained a loan, not of the sum you wished for, but of a smaller amount, the particulars of which I enclose. I know not if you will agree with me, but my opinion is, that nothing should be expended on the Irish press. Its influence is slight, and purely local; reserve all your seductions for the heavier metal on the other side of the Channel, and who, however ignorantly they talk, are always heard with respect and attention.

"I cannot go over as you propose, nor, if I could, should I be of any use to you. You all understand your people, their habits and modes of thought, far better than we do, who have been fencing with cardinals, and sparring with the Sacred College, for the last ten or a dozen years. Above all things, no precipitation; remember that your grand policy is the maintenance of that feverish condition that paralyzes

every effort of English policy. Parade all your grievances; but rather to display the submission with which you bear them than to pray for their relief. Be touchy only for trifles; keep all your martyrdom for great occasions; never forget that this time it your loyalty is to be rewarded. Adieu, my dear Michel. Tell his grace whatever you think fit of these, my opinions, and say, also, that he may rely on us here for withdrawing or confirming, as he pleases, any concessions he may deem proper to grant the English government. We know his difficulties, and will take care not to augment them. As to the cardinal's hat, let him have no doubts; only beg him to be circumspect, and that this is not the time to assume it! If men would but see what a great cause we have, and how it is to be won by waiting—nothing more, Michel—nothing more, believe me, than by mere waiting!

"All that you tell me, therefore, about titles, and dignities, and so forth, is premature. With patience you will be able to assume all, from which a momentary precipitation would infallibly see you repulsed. A few of your leading men still cling to the ruinous notion of elevating Ireland: for heaven's sake cease not to combat this. It is the Church—the Church alone—for which we combat. Her difficulties are enough, without linking her fortune to such a sinking destiny! You have many able men amongst you, and they ought to see this proposition in its true light.

"You are right—though you only threw it out in jest—about the interest I feel for my little princess and her brother. It was the charity of a relative of theirs—a certain Mr. Godfrey—that gave me the entrance to my career. He sent me to Louvain as a boy, and thence to Salamanca, and afterwards to Rome. He paid liberally for my education, and I believe intended, had he lived, to have provided handsomely for me. The story has an ugly ending; at least the rumors are gloomy ones, and I would rather not revive their memory. Here have I fallen into a sad track of thought, dear Michel; and now it is past midnight, and all is silent about me, and I feel half as if I ought to tell you everything, and yet that everything resolves itself into nothing; for, of my actual knowledge, I possess not one single fact.

"Can you conceive the position of a man with a great, a glorious, future before him—rewards the very highest his wildest ambition ever fancied—a sphere to exercise powers that he feels within, and but needing a field for their display? Picture to yourself such a man, and then fancy him tortured by one terrible suspicion—one damning doubt—that there is a flaw in his just title to all this—that some day or other there may rise up against him—he knows not how, or whence, or why—from the very earth as it were—a voice to say, 'You are disowned, disgraced—you are infamous before men!' Such a terrible hell have I carried for years within me! Yes, Michel, this ulcer is eating at my very heart, and yet it is only like a vision of evil—some mind-drawn picture, carried up from infancy through boyhood, and stealing on, year by year, into the prime of life, strengthening its ties on me like a malady.

"You will say this is a diseased imagination—the fruits of an overworked brain, or, not improbably, the result of an overwrought vanity, that would seek consolation for failures in the dim regions of superstition. It may be so; and yet I have found this terror beset me more in the seasons of my strength and activity than in those of sickness and depression. Could I have given a shape and color to my thoughts, I might have whispered them in the confessional, and sought some remedy against their pain; but I could not. They flash on my waking faculties like the memories of a recent dream. I half doubt that they are not real, and look around me for the evidences of some change in my condition. I tremble at the first footstep that draws near my door, lest the new-comer should bring the tidings of my downfall!

"I was at Rome—a student of the Irish College—when this cloud first broke over me. Some letter came from Ireland—some document containing a confession, I believe. I was summoned before the superiors, and questioned as to my family, of which I knew nothing; and as to my means, of which I could tell as little. My attainments at the college were inquired into, and a strict scrutiny as to my conduct; but though both were above reproach, not a word of commendation escaped them; on the contrary, I overheard, amid their whisperings, the terrible word, 'Degradato!' You can fancy how my heart sank within me at a phrase so significant of shame and debasement!

"I was told the next morning that my patron was dead, and that, having no longer the means to support the charges of a student, I should become a 'laico;" in other words, a species of servant in the college. These were dreadful tidings; but they were short of what I feared. There was nothing said of 'degradation.' I struggled, however, against the hardship

of the sentence—I appealed to my proficiency in study—the prizes I had won—the character I bore, and so on; but although a few months more would have seen me qualified for the priesthood, my prayer was rejected, and I was made a 'laico.' Two months afterwards I was sent to the convent of the 'Espiazione,' at Ancona. Many of my early letters have told you the sufferings of that life!—the awful punishments of that gloomy prison, where all are 'Degradati,' and where none are to be found save men stained with the foulest crimes. I was seventeen months there—a 'laico'—a servant of the meanest class—no consolation of study, no momentary solace in tracing others' thoughts to relieve the horrible solitude of my own. Labor—incessant, debasing labor—my lot from day till dawn.

"I have no clue to the nature of my guilt. I declare solemnly before heaven, as I write these lines, that I am not conscious of a crime—save such as the confessional has expiated—and yet the ritual of my daily life implied such. The offices and litanies I had to repeat, the penances I suffered, were those of the 'Espiazione!' I dare not trust myself to recall this terrible period—the only rebellious sentiment my heart has ever known sprang from that tortured existence. As an humble priest in the wildest regions of Alpine snow—as a missionary among the most barbarous tribes—I could have braved hardships, want, death itself; but as the 'Degradato,' dragging out life in failing strength, with faculties each day weaker, watching the ebb of intellect, and wondering how near I was to that moping idiocy about me, and whether, in that state, suffering and sorrow slept! Oh, Michel, my hands tremble, and the tears blot the paper as I write! Can this ordeal ever work for good? The mass sink into incurable insanity—a few, like myself, escape. And how do they come back into the world? I speak not of other changes; but what hardness of the heart is engendered by extreme suffering—what indifference to the miseries of others! How compassionless do we become to griefs that are nothing to those we have ourselves endured! You know well that mine has not been a life of indolence, that I have toiled hard and long in the cause of our faith, and yet I have never been able to throw off the dreary influence of that conventual existence. In the excitement of political intrigue, I remember it least; in the whirlwind of passions by which men are moved, I can for a time forget the cell, the penance, and the chain. I have strong resentments, too, Michel. I would make them feel that to him they sentenced once to 'degradation,' must they now come for advice and guidance—that the poor 'laico' can now sit at their councils and direct their acts. There is something so glorious in the tyranny of Rome, so high above the petty sovereignty of mere kings, soaring beyond the bounds of realms and states, crossing Alps and oceans, proclaiming its proud edicts in the great cities of Europe, declaring its truths in the silent forests of the Far West, stirring the heart of the monarch on his throne, thrilling the rugged breast of the Indian in his wigwam, that even to bear a banner in its ranks is a noble privilege. And now I come back to these children, with whose fortunes I feel myself—I know not how—bound up. They were related to this Mr. Godfrey, and that, perchance, may be the secret link which binds us. The girl might have won a grand destiny—she had beauty, grace, fascination—all that men prize in these days of ours; but there was no high ambition—nothing beyond the thirst for personal admiration. I watched her anxiously and long. There was a weak goodness about her heart, too, that gave no promise of self-sacrifice. Such, however, as she is, she is mine. As for the boy, I saw him yesterday for the first time, but he cannot be a difficult conquest. Again I hear you ask me, why can I turn from great events and stirring themes to think of these; and again I own that I cannot tell you. Power over every one, the humblest as the highest, the weakest in purpose and the strongest of heart—power to send forth or to restrain, to crush or to exalt—this is the prize of those who, like you and me, walk humbly, that we may reign proudly.

"And now, dear Michel, good-bye. I have made you a confession, and, if I have told little, the fault is not mine. You know all my sentiments on great events—my hopes, and my anticipations. I must leave this to-morrow, or the day after, for there is much to do beyond the Alps. If Kings and Kaisers but knew as much as we poor priests, the coming would scarce be a merry Christmas with them.

"Yours, in all truth and brotherhood,

"MATHEW D'ESMONDE.

"Feast of St. Pancratius,
"Hof Thor, Vienna."

It was already daybreak when D'Esmonde finished his letter, but, instead of retiring to bed, he opened his window, and sat enjoying the fresh air of the morning. Partly from habit, he opened his book of

"Offices;" but his eyes wandered, even from the oft-repeated lines, to the scene before him—the spreading glacis—where, already, the troops were mustering for parade. "What a strange thing is courage!" thought he. "I, who feel my spirit quail at the very rumbling sound of a gun-carriage, have a soul to see all Europe convulsed, and every nation in arms, undismayed!"

CHAPTER L.

THE CADET VON DALTON.

As Madame de Heidendorf's mornings were always passed in receiving the visits or answering the letters of her political acquaintances, Kate was free to spend her hours with Frank, exchanging confidences, and talking of that dear home from which they were more separated even by circumstance than by space.

The cadet had obtained leave for the entire day—an inconceivable favor in his eyes—and Kate was seated at her breakfast when he appeared. When they met the day before, Frank's undivided attention had been drawn to Kate herself—the change in her whole air and manner—that graceful dignity of mien which elevated his regard for her to a species of worship. Now, however, he had time to be struck with the accessories of her position—the gorgeous chamber, the splendid silver of the service, the rich liveries—everything which bespoke her proud and affluent condition.

"I almost start back with shame, Kate," said he, "if, in passing these great mirrors, I catch a glimpse of my humble figure, so unsuited does it seem to magnificence like this; nor can I help thinking that your household agrees with me. With all their respectful courtesy, they must wonder when they look on the brother of their princess."

"You know well, dearest Frank, that in your service the highest in the land must pass the ordeal of cadetship."

"Which means half an hour for an archduke, and a forenoon for a serene highness. Even Walstein took but a week to spring from the ranks to a lieutenancy; a month later saw him a rittmeister; and already he commands a regiment."

"What a young soldier to have caught up the complaining cant about slow promotion!" said Kate, laughing.

"Ten months a cadet, and not even made corporal yet!" sighed Frank. "To be sure I might have been, had it not been for the stockhaus."

"And what may that be, dear Frank?"

"The prison; neither more nor less. When I came here, Kate, the nephew, or grand-nephew, of the Feld-Marschal von Auersberg, I thought it became me to assume something like style in my mode of life. My comrades told me as much, too; and, as I had no difficulty in obtaining credit, I ran in debt everywhere. I lent to all who asked me, and gave away to many more. Every one said that the Feld would pay one day or other, and I never confessed how poor we were at home. I know I was wrong there, dearest Kate; I feel that acutely now; but somehow the deception I began with others gained even more rapidly on myself. From continually talking of our Dalton blood, and our high position in our own country, I grew to believe it all, and fancied that some at least of these imaginings must be real. But, above all, I cherished the hope that promotion would come at last, and that I should live to be an honored soldier of the Kaiser.

"In the very midst of all this self-deception, the Feld returns to Vienna from a tour of inspection, and, instead of sending to see me, orders my colonel to his presence. I know not, of course, what passed, but report alleges that for an hour the old general harangued him in terms the most bitter and insulting. Now, my dear sister, the wrath poured out upon a commanding officer does not become diminished as it descends through the successive grades of rank, and falls at last on the private. For *my* misdemeanor the regiment was ordered away from Vienna, and sent to Laybach, in the very depth of winter, too. This could not help my popularity much among my comrades; and as I was now as destitute of credit as of means, you may fancy the alteration of my position—the black bread of the commissary, instead of the refined cookery of the 'Schwan;' the midnight patrol, in rain or snow-drift, in place of the joyous carouse of the supper-table; the rude tyranny of a vulgar sergeant, in lieu of the friendly counsels of an equal; all that is menial and servile—and there is enough of both in the service—heaped upon me day after day; till, at last, my only hope was in the chance that I might ultimately imbibe the rude feelings of the peasant-soldier, and drag out my existence without a wish or a care for better.

"As if to make life less endurable to me, the officers were forbidden to hold intercourse with me; even such of the cadets as were above the humbler class were ordered

not to associate with me; my turns of duty were doubled; my punishments for each trifling offense increased; and there I was, a soldier in dress, a convict in duty, left to think over all the flattering illusions I had once conceived of the service, its chivalry, and its fame!

"I wrote to Walstein, telling him that if I could not obtain my freedom otherwise, I would desert! A copy of my letter, I know not how obtained, was sent to my colonel, and I was sentenced to a month's arrest, a week of which I was to pass in irons. They now made me a rebel in earnest, and I came out of the 'stockhaus' more insubordinate than I went in. It would weary, and it would fret you, dearest sister, were I to tell all the petty schemes I formed of resistance, and all the petty tyrannies they brought down upon my head: the taunt of my 'gentle blood,' my 'noble origin,' my 'high descent,' being added to every cruelty they practiced, till I was ready to curse the very name that associated me with this bitterness. They told me that a second desertion was always punished with death, and that even the attempt was accounted as the act. I resolved, then, to finish with this dreary existence, and I wrote a farewell letter to poor Nelly, telling her that, as I was certain of being taken, these were the last lines I should ever write. In this I repeated all I have now told you, and a vast deal more, of the hardships and indignities I had endured; and this, like my former letter, was sent back to me. Then came three months more of durance, after which I came out what they deemed a good soldier."

"Subdued at last!" sighed Kate.

"Not a bit of it. Like a Banat charger, I had a kick in me, after all their teaching and training. I found out the lance-corporal of our company was the man who had discovered my letters. I sent him a challenge, fought, and wounded him. Here was another offense; and now the Minister of War was to deal with me himself, and I half fancied they would be glad to get rid of me. Far from it. The 'stockhaus' again, and short fetters, my wrist to my ankle, were the sovereign remedies for all misdeeds. In this plight I made my entrance into Vienna."

"Did you ever think of uncle Stephen all this while, Frank—never appeal to him?"

"Ay, Kate, and what was more, *he* thought of *me*, for he had my punishment rolls brought to him; and although, from some good-natured interference, they did not forward more than a fourth of my misdeeds, there was enough to condemn me in his eyes, and he wrote, 'No favor to this cadet,' on the back of my certificate."

"Poor boy! so friendless and deserted."

"Persecuted by creditors, too," continued Frank, as excited by the recital of his sorrows he paced the room in a transport of anger; "fellows that never rested till they got me in their books, and now gave me no peace for payment. Out of three kreutzers a day, Kate—a penny English—I was to discharge all the debts of my extravagance, and live in style! A Dalton, well born and nurtured, in a position of ignominious poverty!"

"Not one to aid you!"

"Walstein was away in Bohemia with his regiment, and, perhaps, it were better so, for I had told him such narratives of our family, such high-flown stories of our princely possessions, that I could not have had the courage to face him with an avowal of the opposite. At last I did make a friend, Kate; at least, one poor fellow took an interest in me, talked to me of home, of you and Nelly; mostly of her and of her curious carvings, which he prized almost as much as little Hans used. He sat with me many an hour under the trees of the Prater, or we strolled along in the shady alleys of the 'Au Garten,' and his companionship somehow always soothed and comforted me, for he was so stored with book-learning, that he could ever bring out something from Uhland, or Richter, or Wieland, that suited the moment, just as if the poet had one in his mind when he wrote it. How often have I wished that I were like him, Kate, and had a mind like his, teeming with its own resources against sorrow!"

"Tell me more of him, Frank dearest; I feel an interest in him already."

"And yet you would scarcely have liked him, if you saw him," said the boy with a bashful and hesitating manner.

"Why not, Frank? His appearance might have been little promising, his face and figure commonplace——"

"No, no; not that—not that. Adolf was good-looking, with a fine, clear brow, and a manly, honest face; nor was his manner vulgar—at least for his station. He was a pedlar."

"A pedlar, Frank?" cried Kate, growing scarlet as she spoke.

"Ay, I knew well how you would hear the word," said the boy; "I often used to fancy my high-bred sister's scorn if she could have seen the companion whose arm lay around my neck, and who spoke to me as 'Thou.'"

Kate made no answer, but her cheek was crimson, and her lip trembled.

"You and Walstein were never out of my thoughts," continued Frank, "for I could fancy how each of you would look down upon him."

"Not that, Frank," said she, in confusion, "if he were indeed kind to you—if he were a true friend in that time of dreariness and gloom."

"So was he—with hand, and heart, and purse. And yet—confound that sense of pride, which poisons every generous movement of the heart, and will not let it throb in unison with one of humble fortune!—I never could get the Dalton out of my head. There it was, with that lumbering old fabric of an Irish house, our wasteful habits, and our idle dependents, all going down to ruin together; and instead of despising myself for this, I only was ashamed—at what, think you?—of my friendship for a pedlar! Many a holiday have I kept my barrack-room, rather than be seen with Adolf in the Volks Garden or the Graben. I liked to be along with him in the solitude of the Prater, or in our country walks; but when he asked me to accompany him to the café or the theater, Kate—to some ordinary in the Leopoldstadt, or some wine-cellar on the Danube, I used to feign duty, or actually take a comrade's guard, to avoid it. How meanly you think of me for all this, Kate! I see, by the flush upon your cheek, what shame the confession has given you."

Kate's confusion grew almost intolerable; she twice tried to speak, but the effort was above her strength, and Frank, who mistook her silence for rebuke, at last went on:

"You may guess, Kate, from what I have now told you, how much soldiering has realized all my early hopes and ambitions. I suppose times were different long ago."

"Of course they were, or uncle Stephen would not now be a field-marshal."

As if in echo to her words, at this moment a servant, throwing wide the door, announced the "Feld" himself. Frank fell back as the old general advanced into the room, bowing with a courtesy that would have done honor to a courtier. He was dressed in the uniform of his rank, and wore all his decorations, a goodly mass, that covered one entire side of his coat.

Approaching Kate with a manner of admirably blended affection and respect, he kissed her hand, and then saluted her on either cheek. "Forgive me, my dear niece," said he, "if I have not been earlier to pay my respects, and say welcome to Vienna; but my note will have told you that I was on duty yesterday with the emperor."

Kate blushed and bowed, for unhappily she had not read the note through. Frank's presence had made her forget all but himself. With all the gallantry of his bygone school, the old Feld proceeded to compliment Kate on her beauty and grace, expressing in proper phrase his pride at the possession of such a relative.

"The empress was the first to tell me of your arrival," said he; "and nothing could be more gracious than the terms in which she spoke of you."

With a thrill of pleasure Kate heard these words, and greedily drank in every syllable he uttered. Not alone her betrothal to the prince, but all the circumstances of her future destiny, seemed to be matters of deep interest to the court, and poor Kate listened with wonder to the Feld as he recounted the various speculations her marriage had given rise to. She little knew within what a narrow circle the sympathies of royalty are forced to revolve, and how glad they are of anything to relieve the tedious monotony of existence. One most important question had already arisen, since the empress had expressed a wish that the young princess should be presented to her; but Madame de Heidendorf refused her permission, on the ground that she had not yet been presented at the court of the Czar. All the difficulties of the two cases, the arguments for either course, the old general deployed with an earnestness, that, if it at first amused, at last deeply interested Kate. The flattering sense of self-importance giving a consequence to trifles, which, if told of another, she would have smiled at.

"I was desirous of gratifying the empress before I saw you, my dear niece," said he, taking her hand; "but you may guess how much greater is my anxiety now that I have learned to know you. It will be, indeed, a proud day for the old field-marshal when he shall present one of his own name and family, so gifted and so beautiful. A thorough Dalton!" added he, gazing on her with rapture.

"How glad am I, sir, to see that all the distinctions your great career has won have not effaced the memory of our old name and house!"

"I have but added to it another as noble as itself," replied he, haughtily. "Others have given their energies to degrade our ancient lineage. It is to be your task and mine, Madame la Princesse, to replace us in our rightful station."

Kate instinctively sought out Frank with

her eyes, but could barely catch a glimpse of his figure within a recess of a window. More than once the poor cadet had meditated an escape; but as the door was on the opposite side of the room, he saw discovery would be inevitable. With a graceful courtesy the old Feld asked after father and Nelly, expressing his wish to see and know them, in terms which plainly conveyed to Kate his utter ignorance of their station and habits.

"As a younger son myself, without the ties of fortune, I may be permitted to doubt how far the head of a distinguished house has a right, from any considerations of personal gratification, to reside away from his country, madam. I must own that my nephew's conduct in this respect has not met my approval. I have not felt free to tell him so, our intercourse being for so many years interrupted; but you will say as much for me. Let him know that the great names of a nation ought not to die out in people's memories."

"You are aware, sir," said Kate, timidly, "that papa's means are not as they once were; circumstances of economy first suggested his coming abroad."

"A reason that always has appeared to me insufficient," said the other, sternly. "He could have reduced his establishment at home—fewer hunters—less splendid banquets."

"Hunters and banquets!" sighed Kate. "How little he knows of us!"

"Here, I see nothing but the best fruits of his system," said he, kissing her hand with gallantry; "no cost could be accounted too much that aided the attainment of such perfection. I am too old a courtier not to distinguish between mere native gracefulness and that more polished elegance which comes of refined intercourse. My niece is worthy to be a princess! But your brother——"

"Oh! what of dear Frank?" cried she, eagerly.

"Simply this, madam: habits of wasteful expenditure have unsuited him to the stern realities of a soldier's life. With his fortune and his tastes, he should have sought service among those popinjays that English tailors make lancers or hussars of. He might have won the laurels that are gathered on Hounslow or St. James's Park; he might have been distinguished in that barbaric warfare you call an Indian campaign; but here, in this empire, where soldiering means discipline, self-denial, hardship, endurance!—I was eight years a cadet, madam, twelve a sous-lieutenant. I saw the decoration I should have received given to another. The Dienst Kreutz I had won was refused me, because I had not served twenty years; and yet, by accepting these and hundreds like them as the inevitable necessities of the service, I am what now you see me."

"And if Frank will be but patient——"

"He may be a corporal within a year, madam," said the Feld, gravely, and with the air of a man who had advanced a somewhat bold pledge.

"But he must be an officer within a week, sir," said Kate, taking the general's hand within her own. "I seldom ask favors, and as seldom are they refused me. The chivalry of Austria will surely suffer no attaint from one whose distinction it is to be *your* relative, and a Dalton. Nay, dear uncle, this is the first, the very first request, I have ever made of you. It would not be meet for me to say, in *your* presence, what a guerdon is his name for his good conduct."

"You are too sanguine, madam. You do not know this boy."

"Every thought of his heart I know—every hope that sustains him. He himself has told me all his shortcomings."

"His insubordination?"

"Yes."

"Extravagance?"

"Yes."

"His days of imprisonment?"

"Yes."

"His arrests in irons?"

"All—everything; and what are they, save the boyish excesses of one who, carried away by high spirits, and buoyed up by the flattering sense of relationship to a great and distinguished name, has been led on to follies by the mere native warmth of temperament. It is easy to see how little he thought of himself, and how much of his uncle!"

The old general shook his head dubiously.

"There, dear uncle," said she, pressing him into a seat before a table with writing materials, "take that pen and write."

"Write what, dear child?" said he, with a softness very different from his usual manner.

"I know nothing of the forms, nor the fitting phrases. All I want is that Frank should have his sword-knot."

"You have learned the proper word, I see," said he, smiling, while he balanced the pen doubtingly in his fingers. "The colonel of his regiment is an imperial prince."

"So much the better, uncle. A Hapsburg will know how to reward a Dalton."

"So, then, we begin thus," said the old general, whose half-suppressed smile showed that he was merely jesting with her eagerness: "'Imperial Highness — The Cadet Von Dalton, whose distinction it is to be the grand-nephew of a very old soldier, and the brother of a very young princess——'"

"Nay, surely, this will not do," said Kate.

"'A very young princess,'" resumed the Feld, as he continued to write, "'who, confiding in her own captivations and your highness's gallantry——'"

"This is but jesting with me, uncle, and I am serious," said she, poutingly.

"And am not I serious, too, madam?" cried he, laying down the pen. "If I ask promotion for a boy, whose whole career has been one infraction of discipline, whose services are all inscribed in the Provost-Marshal's return, is it not better that I should press his claims on the merits of others than dwell upon his own misconduct? My dear child," said he, affectionately, "there are natures that cannot bear a too sudden prosperity, as there are individuals who cannot endure too sudden changes of climate. Our Dalton blood has a little of this same infirmity. Shall I tell you how I won my first step in the service? I was at Hohenkirchen when Moreau began his celebrated retreat through the defiles of the Schwartzwald. The company in which I served as a simple corporal occupied a large farmhouse, on an elevated plateau, above the road to Schweinfurt. We could see for miles along the valley, and our position was taken up to observe the movement of the enemy, and immediately report when his advanced guard came in sight. Our orders also were to hold the place as long as we were able, and delay as much as possible the enemy's advance; in other words, if we could retard him by half a day, at the sacrifice of our party, our duty would be well done. These unpleasant situations arise now and then in war; but one comfort is, they seldom occur twice to the same man!

"The captain who commanded us was an old officer, who had borne his slow promotion with many a heart-burning, and now resolved, come what might, to win his grade. Without waiting for the enemy, he took a patrol party and set out to meet them. We never saw them again! Our lieutenant, alike impatient, determined on a *reconnaissance*. He had scarcely been gone half an hour when a quick rattling of fire-arms told us that he was engaged with the enemy. One man alone returned to tell us that the rest had fallen, and that the enemy was approaching in force. The command now devolved on me. I had been four times passed over in promotion, distinct acts of service left unnoticed, and my claims as much ignored as if I were the veriest dolt. I will not pretend to say that I bore these disappointments without pain; but they taught me one lesson at least: 'that duty is above all consideration of self.' I well knew what was expected of us, and resolved, if possible, to fulfill it. I prepared at once for a stout resistance—a hopeless, of course, but an obstinate one. Well, I will not imitate the tardiness of the duty by a similar prolixity. We held the farm for two hours, during which the roof was twice on fire from the enemy's shells; and when, at length, they stormed the place, our defense was reduced to eight men, commanded by a corporal with two shot-wounds in his chest. We were made prisoners, and carried away to Strasburg, from whence I was exchanged under a cartel, and came back to my regiment as a lieutenant. Had I merely sought promotion, madam, and followed the dictates of ambition and not of duty, I had perhaps fallen like the others. It was in the very forgetfulness of myself lay my prosperity and my reward."

Kate's eyes sought out Frank, resolved on one effort more for her object, but the boy was gone. He had contrived to slip away unseen during the conversation, and was now waiting at the corner of the street, impatient for the general's departure, to return to his sister.

"I am to have the honor of dining in your company to-day," said the Feld, rising to take leave. "Let me hope that my obduracy will not weaken your regard for one so proud of being your uncle."

"No, uncle," said she, "and chiefly since I do not believe in the obduracy, and have have full faith in the affection."

With every testimony of regard, they now took leave of each other, and the general retired as Kate betook herself to her own room.

She had scarcely left the apartment when the archduke entered it. Madame de Heidendorf had told him that the princess was there with her uncle, and he came expressly to see her. "Gone again!" exclaimed he; "am I never to see this mysterious beauty?" while he threw his eyes around the room. "What's this addressed to myself here," added he, as he caught sight of the paper which the Feld had half written. "To his Imperial Highness, the Archduke Franz Albrecht, commanding the eleventh regiment of infantry." Rapidly glancing over

the few lines, he at once caught their meaning, and detected the playful spirit in which they were conceived. "The fair princess must not be disappointed in her opinion," said he, laughingly, as he took up the pen and wrote: "Too happy to anticipate the unexpressed wish, the archduke appoints Cadet von Dalton to a lieutenancy in the hussars, of the Würtemberg Regiment," and signing his well-known initials at the foot, he sealed and addressed the paper to the Princesse de Midchekoff. This done, he left the house, passing as he went a young cadet, whose military salute he scarcely noticed, nor knew the anxious heart for whose happiness he had just provided.

Young Frank stood respectfully at the salute as the prince passed, and then bounded away to rejoin his sister. The drawing-room, however, was empty, and it was by mere chance that he saw the letter, on which the address was scarcely dry. Taking this with him, he hastened to her room. "A letter for you, Kate," cried he, "and with a royal seal, too!"

"Poor Frank!" said she, coming out to meet him. "That I should have such tidings for you! The Feld is obdurate and unyielding. He fancies that there is no road to honor save the old track he has trod himself."

"I knew as much, Kate. Had I stayed longer in the room, I could not have refrained from bursting out to say, 'Hold, sister dearest; not the best grade in all the service is worth so much solicitation. I'll carry the musket while I must, and the day they make me an officer I'll smash the sword across my knee and leave them!"

Kate broke the seal of the packet without answering this passionate speech, and then, with a cry of joy, exclaimed, "Here it is, Frank! The prince himself has given you the rank, and in the hussars, too!"

"Let me see it," cried the boy—"let me see it." And tearing the paper from her hand, he read it again and again. "I scarce know—I can scarce believe this real; but a prince's word—a royal promise, Kate, is surely sacred."

"Of that there can be no doubt, Frank."

"And I am a hussar and an officer," said he, with a burst of delight. "I'd not change with the Kaiser this minute, Kate."

"My dear, dear Frank!" said she, passing her arm around his neck.

"And to owe it all to you, my sweet Kate! If anything could enhance the pleasure of this piece of fortune, it is this fact. And such a regiment, Kate—the Prince Paul's. The turappé all one mass of gold, and the shako splendid, and their horses the true Hungarian breed—the native horse crossed with the Arab! I feel already as if I were in the saddle and careering wildly about. Oh, Kate, what glorious news!"

Again and again he embraced her in his ecstasy, and she, hiding her head upon his shoulder, tried to suppress the burst of emotions which filled her heart, for she thought at what a price she purchased the power she wielded.

They sat long with hands close locked beside each other—neither speaking—each traveling his own road of thought; and how wide apart they lay!

CHAPTER LI.

VIENNA.

We cannot afford to linger in Vienna nor speak of the week—the most brilliant of all her life—Kate passed there. It was the first burst of that ambition which had so long taken possession of her, and she saw herself, at length, in all the pride of her station, and her beauty the object of a hundred flatteries.

Fêted at the court, distinguished by the special attentions of the princes, most courteously received in all the society of the most exclusive capital of Europe, the whirl of pleasure and excitement as effectually precluded thought as it defied reflection. Hitherto she had seen the world only as a dependent, or at least as something appertaining to Lady Hester, in whose caprices she was bound to share, making partnery, as it were, in all her likings and dislikings; but now, she was become the center around which all these attentions revolved, and her own will was the directing impulse of every action.

Of all the cities of the continent, Vienna was most remarkable for almost instinctively adopting the tone of its court in respect to a distinguished visitor. There was something like intuition in the way in which they guessed the feeling of royalty, and as quickly made it their own.

The restricted limits of the first society, of course, made this practicable, as well as the fact that all belonging to it were more or less engaged in the service of the emperor. Kate Dalton was now to enjoy this flattery, and find herself, wherever she went, the special object of attention.

At the Hof Theater—where they played her favorite operas; at the great reviews in the Prater, at the balls of the palace, or the

déjeûners of Schönbrunn, she seemed the occasion of the fête, and to do *her* honor all appeared assembled. Carried away by the triumphant delight of pleasure, so associated with power, she either forgot at times the price at which her greatness had been purchased, or was disposed to still the beatings of her heart by the thought, "My destiny is chosen: it is too late to look back." To have grieved over her lot, besides, would have seemed an utter selfishness, seeing that she was the means of dispensing such happiness to all her family. Her poor father placed once more in comfort; Nelly free to follow the dictates of her charming fancy, without the alloying sense of toil; and dear Frank, in all the exuberant joy of his promotion, eternally reminding her that she was his patroness. The quick clatter of his charger's hoofs in the courtyard, the clank of his saber as he ran up the stairs, were but the glad prelude to his daily outpouring of gratitude! Ay, "to be sorry now would be but selfish."

Such was the philosophy in which she wrapped herself; and day after day the feeling gained strength within her. It was true there were moments when all the sophistry gave way, and her affections flowed full and strong in the deep channels of her heart. Then, indeed, she saw the emptiness of all this gorgeous parade—how little it gave of real happiness—how seldom it ever called forth one generous feeling or one high desire, and she wished the Fates had dealt otherwise with her. At times, she almost longed for the humble home, in all its poverty, with nothing but Nelly's bright smile and gentle voice to cheer its solitude! It may have been this conflict—for conflict it was—that gave to her demeanor a certain calm dignity, which, in the critical estimation of society, elevated her high above any charge of frivolity or capriciousness. She was a thought graver, perhaps, than her years; but the feeling imparted an indescribable grace to one whose beauty was the very type of brilliancy. After all, these were but passing clouds; nor did she ever suffer herself to recur to the past, save when wayward memories would obtrude uncalled for.

At last came a letter from Lady Hester; and, although not a long one, it called up thoughts that all her endeavors could not efface from recollection. There were, once again, all the old familiar names with which she used to be so conversant.

Lady Hester, however, was much changed: all the capricious irritability of the fine lady had given place to a kind of importunate piety. She had grown "devote," and her life a string of religious observances. After dwelling complacently on the self-imposed round of her mortifications and penances, she went on:

"D'Esmonde has just returned, and delights me by saying that you are quite free from any contagion as to the errors of the Greek Church. Of course, outwardly, you must conform; even if Midchekoff did not insist, his countrymen would; but he says that St. Ursula is the sure resource in such cases, and mentions the instance of a nun who took lessons in Spanish from the devil, and, by the aid of the blessed Ursula, was nothing the worse.

"I told Jekyl, who left this on Friday, to send me an image of St. Ursula, that I might forward it to you; but the careless wretch has sent me a statuette of Fanny Elssler by mistake. He discovered his error, however, and has written me a most humble letter, mentioning, by the way, that he was doing a 'novena' for penance, and danced the polka all the preceding night with a sharp peg in the sole of his foot. With all his oddity, there is a great deal to like in him.

"I have only once heard from the Onslows; their conduct has been too shocking; they are not ruined at all, but got up the story, I verily believe, just to destroy my nerves. Sir S. is living in Ireland, at that place with the horrid name your father used to talk of, with Sydney; and George has gone to India, a major, I think, in some cavalry regiment. At Grounsell's kind suggestion, I have been cut off with a miserable allowance of fifteen hundred a year; but even with this I am content. St. Brigitta, of Cleves, lived on hard peas, and never wore anything but an old sack for the last seventeen years of her life; and Célestine has got a charming pattern of a capote, *à la* Cistercine, which, when made of white cashmere, will be perfectly simple and very becoming. I wear my hair now always in bands, and very low on the face. D'Esmonde says I'm the image of the Madonna of Domenichino, which, you may remember, I always preferred to Raphael's.

"Cardinal Bruschetti has been spending a few days here, and I cannot tell you the charm I have felt in his society, contrasted with the frivolous dissipation I have been used to. He is so suave, and so gentle, so persuasive, without importunity, and so conciliating withal. Not the least austerity about him; but at times actually gay! He quite approves of my having kept Fripponi as my cook. 'A change of cuisine,' said he, 'involves a change of digestion, a change of temperament, and a moral

change:' alterations far too important to be incurred at once. This is so far pleasant, as certainly the man is an admirable artist. His eminence said yesterday that the salmi of ortolans was a dish fit for the pope. We drive out, or row, every day on the lake, and I shall be quite lonely when he leaves this. I am curious to know if you remember a bust of him in the Vatican. He was, and indeed is, a remarkably handsome man; and his leg has been modeled I can't say how often. He asks me to whom I am writing, and begs you will remember him in your prayers: how touchingly simple, is it not?

"I ventured last night on a bit of importunity, and asked his eminence a favor. That poor dear Jekyl, you know, is miserably off. His family, all so wealthy, he says, only allow him a few hundreds a year; and with his generous habits and wastefulness this must be actual want. Well, I asked the cardinal if there might not be some way of sending him out as a missionary—like St. Vincent de Paul. I'm certain he'd not like the dress nor the bare feet, but he'd be so happy with those charming Tonga islanders, who, such is their zeal, that they actually give four and five scalps for a wax image of the Virgin. His eminence hinted that there might be difficulties, but he'd think of it!

"Your prince passed through here on Tuesday, on his way to Naples; he wants to see 'La Giovina' dance in that new ballet of 'Paradiso.' They say she is perfectly lovely. The prince asked after you, and said something about its not being etiquette for him to write to you, or that you should write first, or, I really forget what; you know the slurring way he has of talking, and how he walks away before he has finished. He's worse than ever, I think, or probably it is *I* that have less patience with him now since you are gone!

"Jekyl told me—in strict confidence, remember—that M. did not stand well with his court, and that there would be nothing wonderful in the Czar's refusing his leave for the marriage. What you ought to do in that case I cannot conceive; a convent, I suppose, would be the only thing. After all, it might probably have been as well if you had taken poor George. The estate is still a good one, and he has some amiable points in his character, and he certainly loved you. I never told you the thousand confessions he made me, nor his entreaties for my intercession, but there is no harm now in letting you hear them. It is, however, impossible to say with whom one could live happily! George begged of me to send him every letter you wrote to me, and of course you can use the knowledge of the fact at your discretion.

"Now, for two little commissions, my dear Kate, and I have done. I want you to get me a case of Tokay from the Teleki estate—mind, not Palfi's, which, his eminence says, wants the oily flavor. Some of the archdukes will manage this for you. I'm certain your long eyelashes have got further than this already. The second is, to send me a haunch of Bohemian venison—Schwartenschild's, if possible. The cardinal says that fat is become as scarce as true piety, and that a well-fed buck is as rare as a good Christian!

"Are they wearing their corsages pointed at the back?—not that I care, dearest, for I am above such vanities, but Célestine wishes to know. When you receive the St. Ursula, keep her in your own room, and with her face to the west; and so good-bye and, with many prayers, believe me,

"Affectionately yours,

"THEODOSIA,

"Late HESTER ONSLOW.

"Could you, by any chance, send me a good miniature of yourself?—perhaps you guess for what purpose. Haselquist's oil picture is too large for what I want; and, besides, is really not like you. Even with all its imperfections his eminence sits looking at it for hours at an evening, and says he can scarcely fancy anything lovelier. I do not ask after Madame de H., for I hate the woman. His eminence has told me such things of her! But of course you can only make the best of it for the present, and get on as well as you can.

"D'Esmonde tells me that Frank is a fine boy and very good-looking, but fearfully dissipated; but I suppose the service is like the Life Guards with us—and what can we expect? *À propos* to this, Norwood has written to me twice some inexplicable nonsense about you, which I have not replied to. What does he mean by 'treating a flirt like a flounce'? Jekyl says that the police have stopped his passport, or he should have been after you to Vienna. This is quite unintelligible to me, and I don't know why I repeat it."

Never did a frivolous letter give more serious thought, nor bring gloomier reflections, than did this epistle to Kate Dalton. Her mind dwelt far less on the paragraph which concerned her own future than on that which spoke of George—his devoted affection and enduring sorrow! And so it was true that he loved her! He had even

confided the avowal to another, and asked for aid and counsel. Why had he, then, concealed it from herself? Was the fault hers? Had her own conduct been the reason? Had her encouragement of any other estranged him?—or was the teaching of the society in which she moved the reason? Poor fellow! How unfairly had she treated him—even to that very last incident of their last meeting!—and now they were to meet no more! No! death itself could not more effectually separate them than did space and destiny. Even this she felt to be better, far better, than the chances of renewed intimacy in the world. Lady Hester had not told her why she had never divulged her secret; still less to what end she revealed it now, when the knowledge must be only misery. The mention of Norwood, and the vague half-threat connected with his name, gave her but little uneasiness, since her mind had but space for one absorbing thought—George loved her! There was the sum of every reflection; and all the world around her, in its splendor or its brilliancy—the tortuous paths of political intrigue—the quiet byways of home—affection—the present and the future—were all as nothing when weighed against this one thought.

If her first impression had been to blame Lady Hester for revealing the secret, her second was to thank her with her whole heart. She remembered D'Esmonde, too, and the reasonings by which he accompanied the delivery of the letter; and she felt that this consciousness was a blessing of which no vicissitude could rob her—that, come what might of disappointment or sorrow in life, here at least, in her heart of hearts, was one hoarded treasure to compensate for all. If there were but one to whom she could confide her secret—with whom she could talk over her sorrow—she thought that she would be contented. To Nelly, she dared not; to Frank, she could not speak of it; what, then, of Nina? Alas! it was no longer a secret to *her!* Nina had seen the picture, and although nothing in her manner betrayed the slightest consciousness, Kate knew her too well not to feel herself in her power.

Nina's demeanor, however, exhibited nothing of insolent triumph; on the contrary, her manner was gentle, even to submissiveness, and something almost affectionate seemed to mingle with the feeling in which she fulfilled her duties. Kate remarked this, and only needed the courage to take advantage of it. At first, the very idea of Nina's consciousness was torture; but day by day this terror grew weaker, till at last she actually wished that the moment of explanation was over, and that she could pour out all her griefs before her. "She may have loved, unhappily, herself; and if so, will pity me. In any case, a frank avowal on my part will show that I knew nothing of his heart, and but little of my own, till 'too late.' We are never to meet again," and so-and-so; in fact, with many a casuistry, she satisfied herself that mere memory could never be a sin—that there could be nothing very wrong in looking back as often as the future seemed lowering and gloomy. It is hard to say if there might not have been some leaven of pique in these reasonings. The prince, according to Lady Hester, if he had not entirely forgotten, was already indifferent about her. Some uncertainty of ceremonial prevented his writing, or hearing from her; and at this very moment he was following out the ordinary life of dissipation which he led before. Why care for him—why even endeavour to nourish an affection that must be blighted in the end? Besides, her marriage was never one of inclination; Lady Hester had been most frank in explaining the prince's appreciation of it. As to her own reasons for the step, she knew them too well!

All that Kate had seen of life in her Florence experiences told her that such cases were the ordinary events of the world. Few were happily married—disparity of age, inequality of condition, incompatible tempers, and a hundred other causes, were ever at work. Lady Hester used to tell her that nobody was ever satisfied with their "married lot; the good and right-minded only pined under it, the less scrupulous proclaimed their dissatisfaction to the world, and asked for sympathy!" These were the two categories that comprehended all her theory. Now Kate was quite resolved to be one of the former class; but she saw no reason why she ought not to have one confidante of her cares.

With all the force of these persuasions she could not get over the awkwardness of the confession, and would have given worlds that Nina herself would take the first step. That simple-minded creature, however, appeared dead to every hint or suggestion; she could never see the drift of any remark, save in its most obvious sense, and actually pushed Kate's temper to the last entrenchment of patience by pure stupidity. "Is it possible—can it be that I am deceived—that she has not recognized the miniature?" thought Kate. "Is my secret still in my own keeping?" As this thought struck her, everything appeared to confirm it—the

girl's manner, devoid of every trait of imperiousness, and actually humble to servility. "Oh, if I could but be sure of this—if I could know that I could bury both my shame and my sorrow together!" In this vacillating state of suspense—one day, all hope and confidence; the next, terror and dread—she lived on, till the period drew nigh for their departure from Vienna.

Madame de Heidendorf had delayed beyond her intention, in the hope of receiving some French news; and Kate eagerly watched the post for some tidings from home—for home it still was, in every feeling of her heart,

"No letters again, Nina?" said she, despondingly, as the maid entered the room.

"None, madam."

"Have your friends forgotten you, Nina, as well as mine appear to have done?"

"Nina has but few friends, madam; and still fewer would think of writing to her."

"Poor Nina," said Kate, affectionately; and the blood rushed to the girl's face at the words, and her eyes flashed with an expression of sudden passion.

"No pity, madam — no pity!" cried she, with a voice full of emotion, "or I may forget myself—forget myself, and you also!" And with these words she hurried from the room, without waiting for more. Kate sat shocked and abashed by the girl's violence, and yet neither daring to reprove her, nor even remonstrate with her. What abject slavery was this to feel! How mean did she seem to her own heart!—what rottenness was within that gilded splendor by which she was surrounded! Where was the ambitious envy with which she once looked up to the rich and powerful, now? Where that intense desire to be among the great and the titled? and with whom would she not have changed conditions, even to Nina herself?

It is not weak of heart and low of courage that one should face the great journey of life. Its trials and crosses, even to the most fortunate, demand all that we can summon of hope and of energy. And yet so was it that she was about to begin the road — the long and dreary road — before her! As she sat thus musing, a great noise was heard from the street without. She arose and opened the window. The whole Platz was crammed with people, eagerly talking and gesticulating. A surging, waving motion, too, seemed to sway them, and at length she could detect that they were slowly proceeding onward towards the gate of the city. The deep roll of a drum then turned her attention, and, in the far distance, she saw the glancing bayonets of an infantry column as they advanced.

Military spectacles are of too frequent recurrence in Vienna to create much surprise or excitement, and yet, evidently, from the looks and gestures of the people, they were both present here. The band of a regiment struck up the national hymn of Austria, and as the proud notes swelled into the air, a dark body of Tyrolese Jagers poured into the Platz. Still there was no enthusiasm of the people. They listened to the loyal sounds in cold apathy. To the Tyrolese succeeded a grenadier battalion, after which came a long dense column of infantry of the line, their knapsacks on their backs, and their bread rations strapped above them. Behind these was the artillery, the long-tailed black horses giving a solemn look to the procession, as its clanking sounds fell mournfully on the ear. From the wide Platz they now moved on, and passing out of the Kortner gate, defiled into the Glacis. But a moment before, and that immense space was empty; and now, from every avenue of the city, troops came pouring in like rivers to the sea. The black-plumed hunters from Tyrol, the gigantic Croat grenadiers, the swarthy Bohemian cuirassiers, and the white-cloaked dragoons of Austria—all were seen advancing and forming as if in battle-array. While Kate's eye ranged eagerly over the field in search of the blue uniform of the Hungarians, Madame de Heidendorf entered the room with an open letter in her hand.

"What can this mean?" asked Kate, anxiously. "It is surely not a mere review?"

"Far from it, madam," said the countess, imposingly. "The great drama is about to begin. News has come that Italy is in open revolt, and fresh troops are to be despatched thither with all speed. Twelve thousand are to march to-day, eight more to-morrow."

"And Frank——"

She stopped, abashed by the disdainful expression of Madame de Heidendorf's face.

"Your brother's regiment, madam, will form part of the force, and he will, of course, contribute the importance of his presence! How happily constituted must be the mind that can turn from the grand theme of a whole nation's destiny to the petty fortunes of a corporal or a sous-lieutenant."

"And yet so it is," replied Kate, boldly; "dear Frank is nearer to my heart than

all that I see yonder. Oh yes, madam," cried she, replying to the glance of scorn the countess bestowed, "it is quite true. Mine is an ignoble spirit. My affections are linked with lowly objects—would that my ambitions had never risen above them!"

What reply Madame de Heidendorf might have given to this speech, so much more daring than any she had uttered before, there is no knowing, when Frank burst into the room, and clasped his sister in his arms.

"I have but a moment, Kate, and we are off—off to Italy;" and then seeing the countess, the boy bowed courteously, and apologized for his abrupt entrance. "Count Stephen has got the command, and placed me on his staff."

"I hope you may merit this proof of his confidence, sir," said Madame de Heidendorf, haughtily.

"Frank will be a brave soldier, madam," broke in Kate. "He is a Dalton."

"He must be true as well as brave. Fidelity is needed now as much as valor."

"And who will dare to question mine?" cried Frank; and then, as if impatient that he should have been led away from a dearer theme, he placed his arm within Kate's, and drew her towards the window. "I had so much to say to you, my dearest sister. I have been thinking of nothing but you—and—and — what you told me. I would break off this match—It is not too late—you are only betrothed."

"Oh! no, no, Frank—do not give me such counsels. I am pledged in word and bound in honor. I have taken a solemn vow."

"But you have been deceived—I know you have; enough that I see such a woman as that your companion. I tell you again, you must break off."

"I cannot—I cannot!"

"Then, by heaven! I will do it myself. It surely is not for all the glitter of this state and pomp that you would sell your affections? These gauds have not corrupted your heart already? No, no, I read you better than that. Listen to my plan, then —do not leave this till you hear from me. If this lady—I do not know her name—insists on your departure, be as peremptory, and say that you wish to see your family first. You are not a slave, and cannot be coerced."

"I will hear no more of this, Frank—the very thought is maddening. No, no, Frank; if you would be my friend, teach me how to fulfill my duty—my sworn, pledged allegiance; do not seek to shake my faith, nor make me less resolute in honor."

"It is, then, as I feared," cried he, passionately; "these cursed bribes *have* bought you. Oh! it is not thus Nelly would have been won."

"I know it—I know it well!" cried she, bursting into tears; "but I never was like *her*."

"But you were, and you are, dearest," said he, kissing her forehead, "our own sweet Kate, that we were all so proud of. Oh! forgive me if I said what could hurt you, for I would pour out my heart's blood to serve or to save you."

There was a mournful emphasis on the last two words, which bespoke their deep meaning; and now, locked in each other's arms, they wept bitterly.

"As the Field-Marshal von Auersberg has just ridden into the palace, his aide-de-camp ought probably to dry his tears and receive him," said Madame de Heidendorf, as she sailed proudly out of the room.

"You heard that, Kate?—you heard what she said to *me?*—think, then, what kindness and sympathy she will feel for *you!*" said the boy, as he dashed his hand indignantly against his forehead. "Was I not right about these Russians?"

"Come, Frank, let us go to uncle Stephen," said Kate, trying to smile and seem at ease; and hand-in-hand they descended the stairs together.

The drawing-room into which they now entered was filled with officers of different arms of the service; among whom Count Dalton stood conspicuous, both from his size and the soldierlike character of a figure that not even old age seemed able to impair.

"How provoking, my sweet niece," said he, taking Kate's hand between both his, "now to part, just as I was learning the happiness of knowing you! Here are all these gentlemen grumbling and complaining about leaving their homes and families, and yet I'll wager there is not one amongst them carries away a heavier heart than I do. Come into this room, my dear; let us have five minutes together." And Kate took his arm, while he led her forward. Madame de Heidendorf, meanwhile, seated herself on a sofa, and summoned the most distinguished officers of the party to inform her as to all that was going forward.

It was one of her favorite affectations to be deeply versed in military tactics; not that she acknowledged herself deficient in any art or science, but soldiering was her strong point. She therefore questioned and cross-questioned these unhappy gentlemen at great length.

"You have no mortars? Do I hear you aright, Colonel Ivabowsky? No mortars?"

"None, madam."

"And how, may I ask, do you mean to reduce Milan to ashes?"

This was a very puzzling question; and she repeated it in a still more commanding tone.

"Perhaps that may not be deemed desirable, madam," modestly insinuated another officer.

"Not desirable, sir? You said, not desirable! Why, really I shall begin to fancy I ought to go to school again in military matters. Are you aware, sir, it's the very center of these wretches; that it is fed from Switzerland and Piedmont with all that is infamous in political doctrine? Milan must be bombarded, sir!"

The colonel bowed courteously to an opinion expressed with so much authority.

"You'll find at least that the field-marshal will be of my opinion," continued she. "As a military position, it is worth nothing."

"But as a capital city, madam?" mildly interposed the colonel.

"The old story," said she, contemptuously. "Women and children."

"Most legitimate objects of protection, I trust, madam."

But she turned contemptuously away, as if controversy with such an adversary was beneath her.

"We have three rocket-batteries, madam," interposed a staff officer, desirous of offering himself to her notice.

"I hope you'll use them with effect, sir. I envy you the pleasure of seeing them plunging amidst that vile mob it is the fashion to call the people now-a-days."

"I hope we shall do our duty, madam," said an old, stern-looking major, who felt little flattered at this interference.

"I should like to see more chivalry—more ardent devotion in the defenders of a monarchy," said the countess. "I can understand coldness in the lower classes, but that the well-born and the noble should be apathetic and slow to move, is beyond my comprehension."

"Bey'm Blitzen," retorted the major, "that is not bad! Here we are going to shed our blood for the Kaiser, and we are told that it is not enough, without we are born counts and barons."

"What is it, Heckenstein?" said Count Dalton, as he entered the room, and laid his hand familiarly on the other's shoulder. "I have seldom seen you look so angry."

But the old soldier turned away without a reply.

"Madame de Heidendorf," said the old general, "I know not what you have said to offend an old and tried servant of the emperor—a soldier of Wagram and Austerlitz—a faithful follower, when the fortunes of this great empire were at the lowest. But, believe me, these are not times to flout loyalty and despise fidelity."

"The times are worse than I thought them," said the countess, "when these principles have infected such men as Count Dalton. I had certainly hoped that his young relative would have received a very different lesson at his outset in life, nor can I wonder if such teachings end in evil. Here is the archduke. How I wish his highness had come a little earlier!"

As she spoke, the prince entered, with all the careless ease of his ordinary manner. It was impossible to detect from his countenance whether he regarded the event as a serious one, or simply one of those popular commotions which are ever occurring in a large empire.

"I know you are discussing politics, or something akin to them," said he, laughingly. "Madame de Heidendorf has her 'cabinet countenance' on, and Auersberg is looking as fierce as a field-marshal ought to do when contradicted. Come, general, present me to the princess. It is an honor I have been long desiring. How tired you must be of all this, madam!" said he to Kate. "Such wise people as will not talk gossip—such high-minded souls as never will condescend to say a good thing or hear one, are insupportable." And seating himself beside her, he rattled on about Vienna, its society and its pleasures, with all the ease and flippancy of a young fashionable of the day, while, in an attitude of deep respect, not unmixed with a dash of impatience, stood the old count before him.

"What does Auersberg want to tell us?" said the prince at last, looking up in the old general's face.

"To say adieu, your royal highness."

"You don't go with the troops, surely?" said the duke, laughing.

"At the head of my own regiment, your royal highness."

"Ah, by the by, the Auersbergs are in your brigade. Very proper that. And is this my *protégé*?" said he, taking Frank's arm, and drawing him forward. "There's your best example, sir. Be only as good a soldier, and the name of Dalton will be a title of nobility amongst us. Good-bye, lieutenant. General, farewell. Give that 'canaille' a lesson quickly, and come back to us as soon as you can."

Kate rose and followed Frank out of the room. For a few seconds they were closely locked in each other's arms, without speak

ing. "Oh, Frank dearest! when are we to meet again—and how?" cried she, passionately.

"In pride and happiness, too, Kate," said the boy, joyfully. "I have no fears for the future. But what is this, sister dearest—gold?"

"Do not refuse me, Frank. It is the only happiness left me."

"But this is the Russian's, Kate."

"No, believe me, it is not. Count Stephen has made me his heir; he has given me all his fortune. Even good luck can come too late!" said she, with a sigh.

"Do not leave this till I write to you, Kate. I will do so very soon—that is, if I can; but these are anxious times. You know, Kate"—here the boy whispered in a voice low and tremulous from agitation—"you know, Kate, that I only left the ranks a couple of days ago. I can tell, then, better than all these great folks, what soldiers think and say: they are not as they used to be. Lead them against the Frenchman, and they will fight as they have ever fought; but if it be to fire on their own townsfolk—to charge through streets where they lounged along hand-in-hand with the people, like brothers—they will not do it."

"This is very alarming, Frank. Have you told the count?"

"No; nor would I for worlds. What! betray my comrades, and be called on before a court-martial to say who said this, and what man said t'other!"

"But could you not, at least, give him some warning?"

"And be ordered from his presence for the presumption, or told that I was a rebel at heart, or such tidings had never been uttered by me. The old Feld would as soon believe that this earth was cut adrift to wander at hazard through all space, as that treason should lurk behind an Austrian uniform. It would be an evil hour for him who should dare to tell him so."

"Oh, Frank, how terrible is all this!"

"And yet I do not despair; nay, Kate, but I am even more hopeful for it; and, as Walstein says, if the empire halt so long behind the rest of Europe, she must one day or other take a race to come up with it."

"And is Walstein a—a——" She stopped.

"No; he's very far from a democrat or a republican. He's too well born, and too rich, and too good-looking, to be anything but a monarchist. Oh, if you but saw him! But, hark! there are the trumpets! Here come the Würtembergs; and there's my charger, Kate. Is he not splendid? A Banat horse, all bone and sinew."

"How I should like to have been a man and a soldier," said she, blushing deeply.

"There, that's Walstein—that's he with the scarlet dolman!" cried Frank; "but he's coming over—he sees us. No! he's passing on. Did you see him, Kate?—did you remark him?"

"No, Frank dearest: I see nothing but *you*, my own fond brother." And she fell upon his neck, weeping.

"Herr Lieutenant!" said a hussar, with his hand to his cap.

"Yes, I'm ready—I'm coming," cried Frank. And with one long, last embrace he tore himself away, springing down the stairs in mad haste.

"Madame de Heidendorf is good enough to say she will come and see the troops defile from the glacis," said the archduke to Kate, as, still overwhelmed with sorrow, she stood where Frank had left her. "Perhaps you would do us the honor to come also?"

Kate accepted the invitation at once, and hurried to her room for a bonnet.

"Not that one, Madame la Princesse," said Nina, eagerly; "the yellow with black lace, rather. The national colors will be a flattery to his royal highness."

"What a coquette you are, Nina!"

"And how irresistible would madam be, were she to condescend to be even a little of one!" said Nina, smiling.

"Perhaps I may yet," said Kate, half-sighing as she spoke; and Nina's dark eyes sparkled as she heard her. "But what do you mean by coquetry, Nina?" asked she, after a pause.

"It may mean much, madam, or very little. With such as I am, it may be a rose-colored ribbon; with Madame la Princesse, it may be the smile that wins royalty. Coquetry, after all, is a mere recognition of admiration. An old Spanish dramatist says 'that a glance from bright eyes is like the hoisting of an ensign to acknowledge a salute.'"

"How you run on, Nina, and how ashamed I feel when I catch myself afterwards thinking over your words!"

Nina laughed merrily at this confession, while she opened the door for Kate to pass out. In a moment after, Kate was seated beside the archduke, and Madame de Heidendorf followed in another carriage.

The archduke was neither very good-looking nor agreeable. His manners were not remarkable for any peculiar elegance, nor was there in his air and bearing any of that special charm which very often seems the prerogative of royal personages; and yet it would have been excessively difficult

to persuade Kate of all this, as she drove along the streets crowded with uncovered heads. The clank of the escort that rode at either side, the quick roll of the drum, and the rush out of the guard to salute as he passed, created a sensation of pleasure in her mind like the enjoyment of a delighted child. Oh, if Nelly could but see her now! —if dear old papa were but there to look at her; and Hanserl—little Hans—that loved the Hapsburg house as he loved the patron saint of his own village!

It was, indeed, worth something to taste of splendor like this! And now she issued forth into the spacious glacis, glittering with thousands of bayonets, and trembling under the tramp of the moving squadrons. The whole line saluted as he drove slowly past, band after band taking up the sounds, till the proud hymn of Austria filled the whole air. The soldiers cheered, too, loud and long, for his imperial highness was beloved by the army, and, like all his house, was a thorough soldier.

"You have never seen our troops under arms before?" said he, with a proud elation in his look. "They are fine fellows, and faithful as they are brave." He was about to say more, when the dull roll of a drum was heard along the line, and the deep-voiced command from regiment to regiment ran, "Alle nieder zum Gebet," and, at the word, every weapon was lowered, and every head drooped forward in prayer. Not a sound—not a whisper—was heard in that mighty host, till, after the expiration of some minutes, the command once more summoned them to arms. Then came the word "March!" and with a cheer that made the very air vibrate, the troops set out for Italy.

CHAPTER LII.

THE MARCH.

Is there any enthusiasm like that of a young soldier setting forth on his first campaign? High in heart and hope, what can equal the glorious pictures his fancy draws of fame and honor? Where will his imagination stop in creating scenes of heroic daring or deeds of noble chivalry? In such a mood Frank Dalton rode along amongst his comrades, with whom at once he became the greatest favorite. Explain it how one will, or give up the problem in despair, but there is no denying the fact, the Irish character has more of high spirits, more buoyancy, than that of any continental people. Deriving pleasure or amusement from incidents that others accept as commonplace, making even the rubs and collisions of life subservient to his playful humor, the Irishman has resources of ready wit and brilliant fancy you may seek for in vain amongst Germans or Italians, or even Frenchmen.

The contrarieties of nature, the contradictions of character that puzzle politicians and drive political economists half crazy, are delightful elements of social intercourse; and what makes the "nation" ungovernable very frequently renders the "individual" the most easy-tempered and manageable man of his set. What a boon was it, then, to the gloomy, thoughtful Bohemian, to the dreary German, or the fitful, passionate nature of the wild Hungarian, to chance upon one who had moods of mind to suit them all, and stores of amusing thought that none of them possessed! Frank was the delight of the regiment; and whether he rode in the front or in the rear a group was certain to be gathered round him, listening with eagerness to his stories, or enjoying the quaint drollery which every passing object or event was sure to elicit.

Emerging at a bound from the petty annoyances and vexatious cares of his humble position, with all its harassing of debt and poverty, the boy was almost wild with delight at his newly-won freedom. A thorough Dalton, he forgot every strait and difficulty he had passed through, and thought only of the present, or so much of the future as his hopes embellished. Kate's generosity, too, made him feel rich, and he was not unwilling to be thought so. That passion for ascendency, that over-eagerness to make a fair figure before the world, no matter at what material sacrifice, or at what heavy cost, was bred "in his very bone;" but so inveterately Irish is it that, if the nation should ever be visited with the income-tax, there is not a man in the land who will not over-estimate his means for the sake of the boast to the collector!

A wealthy comrade, if he be but free-handed, is sure to be popular on a march. The fastidiousness that would stand aloof from more formal attentions gives way here to the chances of the road; and civilities that would elsewhere imply obligation are now the mere accidents of the way.

To the honor of the Austrian service be it said, "tuft-hunting" is not to be found there. The officers of a regiment embrace representatives of every class of the empire, from the haughtiest names of Europe

down to the sons of the humblest peasant; and yet the "camaraderie" is perfect. Very probably there is nothing more contributes to this than the absence of all secrecy as to each man's resources. The prince is known to be rich; the son of the little burgher, or Amtmann, is equally known to be poor. Nothing is expected from any above his means, and no disgrace attaches to narrow fortune. If, therefore, Frank was not surrounded by shrewd-witted adventurers, eager to make the most of his extravagance, he was not the less exposed to the flattering acknowledgments his generous habits evoked, and the vanity that comes of being distinguished amongst one's fellows. To be sure, this was his father's failing, and his grandfather's before him! Frank, then, entertained all the officers of his squadron on the march, practicing a hundred little devices and surprises for them. Now, it was a cold luncheon, laid out in a wood at noonday; now, it was a smoking supper in a village, where even the generals were fain to munch "commissary rations." Even the soldiers of his "zug" participated in this liberality, and many a flask of wine was pledged to the health of the young lieutenant. As if to make him perfectly happy, the old count, his uncle, was obliged to hurry forward, and thus Frank was relieved from the constraint of the only one whose presence could have imposed reserve.

It was in the boundless freedom of this liberty, unchecked by prudence, unrestrained by fear of consequences, Frank's lavish nature knew no bounds. He wrote to Vienna for horses of high price; he ordered carriages and liveries to be sent after him. The very surprise his extravagance excited was an incense that he gloried in. How many a generous nature has been wrecked by stupid admiration! how many a true heart has been corrupted by the vulgarity of notoriety!

"What will the Dalton do next?—what has the fellow in his head now?" were surmises that he never heard without delight, and stimulated him to new efforts to create astonishment. Ireland, too, so remote from all their knowledge—that far-away island—furnished many a theme for wonder, and he repeated, with ecstasy, several of his father's stories of their former greatness and the barbaric splendor in which they lived. How easy is self-deception, and what a strange cheat is that a man can practice on himself! But so was it: he actually forgot the long years of their obscure poverty, all their hard trials and distresses, the penury of their daily life—everything!—and could only think of Kate in all her splendor, and himself in every indulgence of his fancy. And yet he loved his father and Nelly, too—loved them both dearly. He would have given worlds that the old man could have seen him as he rode at the head of his men. He often felt his eyes grow dim as he fancied the burst of delight it would have caused him. And poor Nelly! how he pictured her features glowing with admiration, and yet trembling from agitation, for he thought of all her warnings.

It is a singular fact, that in the short interval before the tremendous events of the last great European convulsion, the aristocratic influence seemed at its very highest point. Never in each state of the continent were the claims of family more regarded nor the sway of proud names more submissively recognized. Like the fever-flush before death, it deceived many who beheld it! In the eyes of his astonished comrades, young Dalton perfectly represented this character. Rich, well born, brave and eccentric, his seemed indeed an enviable lot in life. Happy for him if the deception had stopped short with them! Unluckily, however, it extended to himself, and he at last believed every fiction that his own brain suggested.

In this wild delirium of the day-dream he rode along through the deep glens and valleys of the Tyrol, along the banks of the rapid Inn, through the glorious vale of Meran, and at last gained the great road which, through Trent and Roveredo, debouches on the Lago di Guarda. Here a despatch from Vienna overtook them, with orders that a small party should be sent off under some officer of intelligence to examine the condition of the Stelvio pass, the highest of all the Alpine roads of Europe, and which, crossing from the South Tyrol, descends directly into Italy by the Lake of Como.

Although it was still early, fresh snows were said to have fallen on that elevated road, and it was an important question whether it were longer practicable for the transit of artillery. Frank was delighted to be selected for this duty—a separate command, no matter how small or insignificant, had something adventurous and independent about it that pleased him. There was a dash of peril, too, in the enterprise, for already the Valteline and the Brianza were said to be overrun by bands of patriot troops, raising contributions for the war, and compelling others to take up arms.

Frank's instructions were, however, to

examine and report upon the road, and, avoiding all possible collision with the enemy, either to unite with any Austrian brigade he could reach, or, if compelled, to retire upon the Tyrol. Some of his comrades pitied him for being selected for this lonely duty, others envied; but all regretted his departure, and, with many a warm wish for a speedy meeting, and many a pledge of affection, they saw him depart on his enterprise.

In the small "zug" of twenty men under his command there was a young Hungarian cadet, whom, although of good family and birth, Frank remarked never to have seen by any chance in society with the officers. Ravitzky was a handsome, daring-looking fellow, with that expression of mingled sadness and intrepidity in his face so peculiarly Hungarian. He was the best horseman in the regiment, and a thorough soldier in his look and carriage. It had often puzzled Frank why a youth with such advantages had not been promoted. On the one or two occasions, however, on which he asked the question, he had received evasive or awkward replies, and saw that the inquiry was at the least an unpleasant theme among his comrades.

Frank Dalton was well pleased at the opportunity now offered to know something more of this young soldier, almost the only one under his command who could speak any other language than Hungarian. Ravitzky, however, although perfectly respectful in his manner, was cold and reserved, showing no desire for an intimacy at which he might be supposed to have felt proud. Without actually repelling, he seemed determined to avoid nearer acquaintanceship, and appeared always happier when he "fell back," to exchange a few guttural words with his comrades, than when called to "the front," to converse with his officer.

Frank was piqued at all this; he saw that neither his rank, his supposed wealth nor his assumed position imposed upon the cadet; and yet these were the very claims all his brother-officers had acknowledged. Amazed at this wound to his self-love, he affected to forget him altogether, or only remember him as one of the soldiers in his command. So far from seeming displeased, Ravitzky appeared more at his ease than before, and as if relieved from the worry of attentions that were distasteful to him. This conduct completed the measure of Frank's indignation, and he now began actually to hate the youth, on whom he practiced all the possible tyrannies of military discipline. These Ravitzky bore without seeming to be aware of them, discharging every duty with an exactitude that made punishment, or even reproof, impossible.

It is likely that if Frank had not been corrupted by all the adulation he had so lately received—if his self-esteem had not been stimulated into an absurd and overweening vanity, he would have read this youth's character aright and have seen in him that very spirit of independence which once he himself sought to display, albeit by a very different road! Now, however, he received everything in a false light—the reserve was insolence, the coldness was disrespect, the punctuality in duty a kind of defiance to him. How often he wished he had never taken him; the very sight of him was now odious to his eyes.

Austrian troops enjoy so much freedom on a march that it is difficult often for the most exacting martinet to seize opportunities for the small tyrannies of discipline. Frank's ingenuity was now to be tried in this way, and, it is but fair to confess, not unsuccessfully. He compelled the men to appear each morning as smart as if on parade—their carbines in the bandoleers, and not slung at the saddle—he inspected every belt and strap and buckle, and visited even the slightest infraction with a punishment. Ravitzky accepted all this as the ordinary routine of discipline, and never, even by a look, appeared to resent it. Tyranny would seem to be one of the most insidious of all passions, and, if indulged in little things, invariably goes on extending its influences to greater ones.

At Maltz a new occasion arose for the tormenting influence of this power, as the military post brought several letters from Vienna, one of which was addressed to the Cadet Ravitzky. It was about a week before, Frank was indignantly complaining to his sister of the shameless violation of all feeling exhibited in opening and reading every soldier's letter. He was eloquently warm in defending such humble rights, and declaimed on the subject with all the impassioned fervor of an injured man; and yet so corrupting is power, so subtle are the arguments by which one establishes differences and distinctions, that now he himself saw nothing strange nor severe in exercising this harsh rule towards another.

He was out of temper, too, that morning. The trim and orderly appearance of the men gave no opportunity of a grumble, and he strutted along on foot in front of his party, only anxious for something to catch at. On turning suddenly around, he saw Ravitzky with his open letter before him, reading. This was a slight breach of

discipline on a march where infractions far greater are every day permitted: but it offered another means of persecution, and he called the cadet imperiously to the front.

"Are you aware, cadet," said he, "of the general order regarding the letters of all who serve in the ranks?"

"I am, Herr Lieutenant," said the other, flushing deeply, as he saluted him.

"Then you know you were committing a breach of discipline in opening that letter?"

"As the letter is written in Hungarian, Herr Lieutenant, I felt that to show it to you could be but a ceremony."

"This explanation may satisfy you, sir; it does not suffice for me. Hand me your letter."

Ravitzky grew scarlet at the command, and for an instant he seemed as though about to dispute it; but duty overcame every personal impulse, and he gave it.

"I see my own name here!" cried Frank as the one word legible to his eye caught him. "How is this?"

Ravitzky grew red and pale in a second, and then stood like one balancing a difficulty in his own mind.

"I ask again, how comes a mention of me in this document?" cried Frank, angrily.

"The letter, Herr Lieutenant, is from my cousin, who, aware that I was serving in the same troop with you, offered to make me known to you."

"And who is this cousin with whom I am so intimate?" said Frank, proudly.

"Count Ernest Walstein," said the other, calmly.

"What! is he your cousin? Are you really related to Walstein?"

The other bowed slightly in assent.

"Then how is it, with such family influence, that you remain a cadet? You have been two years in the service?"

"Nearly four years, Herr Lieutenant," was the quiet reply.

"Well, four years, and still unpromoted; how is that?"

Ravitzky looked as if unable to answer the question, and seemed confused and uneasy.

"You have always been a good soldier. I see it in your 'character roll;' there is not one punishment recorded against you."

"Not one!" said the cadet, haughtily.

"There must, then, be some graver reason for passing you over?"

"There may be," said the other, with a careless pride in his manner.

"Which you know?" said Frank, interrogatively.

"Which I guess at," said Ravitzky.

"Here is your letter, cadet," said Frank, handing it back to him. "I see you will not make a confidant of me, and I will not force a confession."

Ravitzky took the letter, and, saluting with respect, was about to fall back, when Frank said:

"I wish you would be frank with me, and explain this mystery."

"You call it mystery, sir?" said the other, in astonishment. "You are an Irishman born, and call this a mystery?"

"And why not. What has my birth to do with it?"

"Simply that it might have taught the explanation. Is it truth, or am I deceived in believing your nation is neither well received nor kindly met by the prouder country with which you are united; and that, save when you stoop to blush at your nationality, you are never recognized as claimant for either office or advancement?"

"This may have been the case once to some extent," said Frank, doubtingly, "but I scarcely think such differences exist now."

"Then you are more fortunate than we," said Ravitzky.

"But I see men of your nation the very highest in military rank—the very nearest to the sovereign?"

"Theirs be the shame, then," said Ravitzky. "There are false hearts in every land."

"This is a puzzle to me I cannot comprehend."

"I'll tell you how to understand it all, and easily too, Herr Lieutenant. Take this letter and forward it to the council of war; declare that Cadet Ravitzky acknowledged to yourself that he was a Hungarian, heart and soul, and, save the eagle on his shako, had nothing of Austria about him. Add, that a hundred thousand of his countrymen are ready to assert the same; and see if they will not make *you* an ober-lieutenant, and send *me* to Moncacs for life." He held out the letter as he spoke for Frank to take, and looked as proudly defiant as if daring him to the act.

"You cannot suppose I would do this?"

"And yet it is exactly your duty, and what you took a solemn oath to perform not a week back."

"And if there be such disaffection in the troops, how will they behave before an enemy?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"As they have always done; ay, even in this very campaign that now threatens us, where men are about to strike a blow for liberty, you'll see our fellows as foremost

in the charge as though the cause at stake was not their own."

"Ravitzky, I wish you had told me nothing of all this."

"And yet you forced the confession from me. I told Walstein, over and over, that you were not suited for our plans. You rich men have too much to lose to venture on so bold a game; he thought otherwise, and all because you were an Irishman!"

"But I have scarcely ever seen Ireland. I know nothing of its grievances or wrongs."

"I believe they are like our own," said Ravitzky. "They tell me that your people, like ours, are warm, passionate, and impatient; generous in their attachments, and terrible in their hatred. If it be so, and if England be like Austria, there will be the same game to play out there as here."

Frank grew thoughtful at these words; he recalled all that the Abbé D'Esmonde had said to him about the rights of a free people, and the duties of citizenship, and canvassed within his own mind the devoirs of his position; meanwhile Ravitzky had fallen back to the men and taken his place in the ranks.

"They'll not compromise me before an enemy," thought Frank; "that, I may rely on." And with this trustful assurance he mounted and rode slowly forward, deeply sunk in thought, and far less pleasantly than was his wont to be. From all the excitement of his late life, with its flatteries and fascinations, he now fell into a thoughtful mood, the deeper that it was so strongly in contrast to what preceded it. The greater interests that now flashed across his mind made him feel the frivolity of the part he had hitherto played. "Ravitzky is not older than I am, and yet how differently does *he* speculate on the future! *His* ambitions are above the narrow limits of selfish advancement, and the glory *he* aims at is not a mere personal distinction."

This was a dangerous theme, and the longer he dwelt upon it, the more perilous did it become.

The snow lay in deep drifts in many parts of the mountain, and the progress of the little party became daily slower as they ascended. Frequently they were obliged to dismount and lead their horses for miles, and at these times Frank and Ravitzky were always together. It was intimacy without any feeling of attachment on either side, and yet they were drawn towards each other by some strange mysterious sympathy. Their conversation ranged over every topic, from the great events which menaced Europe to the smallest circumstances of personal history; and in all Frank found the cadet his superior. It was not alone that his views were higher, more disinterested, and less selfish, but his judgments were calmer and better weighed.

"*You* want to be a count of the empire, and a grand cross of every order of Europe," said Ravitzky, one day to Frank, at the close of a rather warm discussion. "*I* want to see my country free, and live an humble soldier in the ranks." This bold avowal seemed to separate them still more widely, and it was plain that each regarded the other with distrust and reserve. It was after some days of this distance that Frank endeavored to restore their intimacy by leading Ravitzky to speak of himself, and at last ventured to ask him how it came that he still remained a cadet, while others, in every way inferior to him, were made officers.

"I have refused promotion some half-dozen times over," said the other. "As a Kaiser cadet, my time of service will expire in a few months hence; then I shall be free to leave the service. Were I to accept my grade as an officer, I should have to take an oath of fidelity to the emperor, which I would not, and pledge myself to a course that I could not do."

"Then they probably know the reasons for which you have declined promotion?"

"Assuredly they can guess them," was the curt reply.

"You are a strange fellow, Ravitzky, and I scarcely understand you."

"And yet there is nothing less a mystery than my conduct or my motives," rejoined he, proudly. "My father is a noble high in the service and confidence of the emperor, and although a Magyar by birth, is Austrian by choice and predilection. My sympathies are with my countrymen. In obedience to his wishes I have entered this service; in justice to myself I mean to quit it when I can with honor."

"And for what, or where?" asked Frank.

"Who knows?" said he, sorrowfully. "Many of our nation have gone over the seas in search of a new land. Already we are almost as destitute of a home as the Poles. But why talk of these things, Herr Lieutenant? I may be led to say that which it would be your duty to report—you ought, perhaps, as it is, to denounce me. Have no fears; my life would always be spared; my family's fidelity would save *me*. This is one of the glorious privileges of birth," cried he, scornfully. "The 'fusillade' will be the sentence for one of those poor fellows yonder, but you and I are too well born for justice to reach."

"Assuredly, *I'll* not quarrel with the privilege!" said Frank, laughing.

"And yet, if I were as rich and as great as you are," said Ravitzky, "it is exactly what I should do! With your fortune and your rank, you want nothing from King or Kaiser. Who, then, would not strive for the higher rewards that only a whole nation can confer?"

Frank blushed deeply at the allusion to his supposed wealth, but had not the courage to refute it. He, however, sought an opportunity to turn the conversation to other channels, and avoided for the future all mention of every theme of politics or party. The mischief, however, was done; he brooded forever in secret over all the Hungarian had told him; while old memories of fresh wrongs, as narrated by his father long ago, kept recurring and mingling with them, till not only the themes excluded other thoughts, but that he felt the character of his own ambition changing, and new and very different hopes succeeding to his former ones.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE SKIRMISH.

At last they reached the summit of the Stelvio, and began the descent of the mountain; and what a glorious contrast does the southern aspect of an Alpine range present to the cold barrenness of the north! From the dreary regions of snow, they came at length to small patches of verdure, with here and there a stunted pine-tree. Then the larches appeared, their graceful feathery foliage chequering the sunlight into ten thousand fanciful shapes, while streams and rivulets bubbled and rippled on every side—not ice-bound as before, but careering along in glad liberty, and with the pleasant music of falling water. Lower down, the grass was waving as the wind moved on, and cattle were seen in herds reveling in the generous pasture, or seeking shelter beneath the deep chestnut trees, for already, even here, the Italian sun was hot. Lower again came dark groves of olives and trellised vines; long aisles of leafy shade traversing the mountain in every direction, now curving in graceful bends, now in bold zigzags, scaling the steep precipices, and sometimes hanging over cliffs and crags, where not even the boldest hand would dare to pluck the ruddy bunches!

Beneath them, as they went, the great plain of Lombardy opened to their view; that glorious expanse of wood and waving corn, with towns and villages dotting the surface; while directly below, at their very feet as it were, stretched the Lake of Como, its wooded banks reflected in the waveless water. What a scene of beauty was that fair lake, with its leafy promontories, its palaces, and its Alpine background, all basking under the deep blue of an Italian sky; while perfumes of orange groves, of acacias and magnolias, rose like an incense in the air, and floated upwards!

Even the hard nature of the wild Hungarian—the rude dweller beside the dark-rolling Danube or the rapid Theiss—could not survey the scene unmoved; and, dismounting from their saddles, the hussars moved stealthily along, as if invading the precincts of some charmed region. Frank was in no haste to leave so picturesque a spot, and resolved to halt for the night beneath the shade of some tall chestnut-trees, where they had sought shelter from the noonday sun. Como was at his feet, straight down beneath him was the wooded promontory of Bellagio, and in the distance rose the Swiss Alps, now tinged with the violet hue of sunset. Never was there a scene less likely to suggest thoughts of war or conflict. If the eye turned from the dark woods of the Brianza to the calm surface of the lake, everything wore the same aspect of peaceful security. Figures could be seen seated or walking on the terraces of the villas; gorgeously-decked gondolas stole over the bay, their gold-embroidered ensigns trailing lazily in the water. Equipages and troops of horsemen wound their way along the leafy lanes; nor a sight nor sound that did not portend ease and enjoyment.

With all Frank's ardor for adventure, he was not sorry at all this. His orders to fall back, in case he saw signs of a formidable movement, were too peremptory to be disobeyed, and he would have turned away with great reluctance from a picture so temptingly inviting. Now there was no need to think of this. The great dome of the Milan Cathedral showed on the horizon that he was not thirty miles from the Austrian headquarters, while all around and about him vouched for perfect quiet and tranquility.

Tempted by a bright moonlight and the delicious freshness of the night, he determined to push on as far as Lecco, where he could halt for the day, and by another night march reach Milan. Descending slowly, they gained the plain before midnight, and now found themselves on that narrow strip

of road which, escarped from the rock, tracks the margin of the lake for miles. Here Frank learned from a peasant that Lecco was much too distant to reach before daybreak, and determined to halt at Varenna, only a few miles off.

This man was the only one they had come up with for several hours, and both Frank and Ravitzky remarked the alarm and terror he exhibited as he suddenly found himself in the midst of them.

"Our cloth here," said the cadet, bitterly, "is so allied to thoughts of tyranny and cruelty, one is not to wonder at the terror of that poor peasant."

"He said Varenna was about five miles off," said Frank, who did not like the spirit of the last remark, and wished to change the topic.

"Scarcely so much; but that as the road was newly mended, we should be obliged to walk our cattle."

"Did you remark the fellow while we were talking, how his eye wandered over our party? I could almost swear that I saw him counting our numbers."

"I did not notice that," said the cadet, with an almost sneering tone. "I saw that the poor fellow looked stealthily about from side to side, and seemed most impatient to be off."

"And when he did go," cried Frank, "I could not see what he took. His 'Felice notte, signori,' was scarce uttered when he disappeared."

"He took us for a patrol," remarked the other, carelessly; and whether it was this tone, or that Frank was piqued at the assumed coolness of the cadet, he made no further remark, but rode on to the front of the party. Shortly after this the moon disappeared, and as the road occasionally passed through long tunnelings in the rock, the way became totally obscured, so that in places they were obliged to leave the horses entirely to their own guidance.

"There's Varenna at last!" said Frank, pointing out some lights, which, glittering afar off, were reflected in long columns in the water.

"That may still be a couple of miles off," said Ravitzky, "for the shores of the lake wind greatly hereabouts. But, there! did you not see a light yonder?—*that* may be the village." But as he spoke the light was gone, and although they continued to look towards the spot for several minutes, it never reappeared.

"They fish by torchlight here," said Ravitzky, "and that may have been the light; and, by the way, there goes a skiff over the water at a furious rate!—hear how the fellows ply their oars."

The dark object which now skimmed the waters must have been close under the rocks while they were speaking, for she suddenly shot out, and in a few minutes was lost to view.

"Apparently the clink of our sabers has frightened those fellows too," said Frank, laughing, "for they pull like men in haste."

"It's well if it be no worse," said the cadet.

"Partly what I was thinking myself," said Frank. "We may as well be cautious here." And he ordered Ravitzky, with two men, to ride forty paces in advance, while four others, with carbines cocked, were to drop a similar distance in the rear.

The consciousness that he was assuming a responsibility made Frank feel anxious and excited, and at the same time he was not without the irritating sense that attaches to preparations of needless precaution. From this, however, he was rallied by remarking that Ravitzky seemed more grave and watchful than usual, carefully examining the road as he went along, and halting his party at the slightest noise.

"Did you hear or see anything in front?" asked Frank, as he rode up beside them.

"I have just perceived," said the cadet, "that the boat which half an hour ago shot ahead and left us, has now returned, and persists in keeping a little in advance of us. There! you can see her yonder. They make no noise with their oars, but are evidently bent on watching our movements."

"We'll soon see if that be their 'tactic,'" said Frank; and gave the word to his men "to trot."

For about half a mile the little party rode sharply forwards, the very pace and the merry clink of the accouterments seeming to shake off that suspectful anxiety a slower advance suggests. The men were now ordered to walk their horses, and just as they obeyed the word, Ravitzky called out, "See, there she is again. The winding of the bay has given them the advantage of us, and there they are still in front!"

"After all," rejoined Frank, "it may be mere curiosity. Cavalry, I suppose, are seldom seen in these parts."

"So much the better," said Ravitzky, "for there is no ground for them to maneuver, with a mountain on one hand and a lake on the other. There! did you see that light? It was a signal of some kind. It was shown twice; and mark, now! it is acknowledged yonder."

"And where is the boat?"

"Gone."

"Let us push on to Varenna; there must

be some open ground near the village!" cried Frank. "Trot!"

An older soldier than Frank might have felt some anxiety at the position of a party so utterly defenseless if attacked; perhaps, indeed, his inexperience was not his worst ally at this moment, and he rode on boldly, only eager to know what and where was the peril he was called on to confront. Suddenly Ravitzky halted, and called out: "There's a tree across the road."

Frank rode up, and perceived that a young larch-tree had been placed across the way, half carelessly as it seemed, and without any object of determined opposition.

Two men dismounted by his orders to remove it, and, in doing so, discovered that a number of poles and branches were concealed beside the rocks, where they lay evidently ready for use.

"They've had a Tyroler at work here," cried an old corporal of the hussars. "They mean to stop us higher up the road, and if we fall back we'll find a barricade here in our rear."

"Over with them into the lake," said Frank, "and then forward at once."

Both orders were speedily obeyed, and the party now advanced at a rapid trot.

They were close to Varenna, and at a spot where the road is closely hemmed in by rocks on either side when the sharp bang of a rifle was heard, and a shrill cry shouted something from the hillside, and was answered from the lake. Ravitzky had but time to give the word "Forward!" when a tremendous fire opened from the vineyards, the roadside, and the boat. The red flashes showed a numerous enemy, but, except these, nothing was to be seen. "Forwards, and reserve your fire, men!" he cried. And they dashed on; but a few paces more found them breasted against a strong barricade of timber and country carts, piled up across the way; a little distance behind which rose another barricade; and here the enemy was thickly posted, as the shattering volley soon proved.

As Frank stood irresolute what course to take, the corporal, who commanded the rear, galloped up to say that all retreat was cut off in that direction, two heavy wagons being thrown across the road, and crowds of people occupying every spot to fire from.

"Dismount, and storm the barricade!" cried Frank. And, setting the example, he sprang from his saddle, and rushed forwards.

There is no peril a Hungarian will not dare if his officer but lead the way. And now, in face of a tremendous fire at pistol-range, they clambered up the steep sides, while the balls were rattling like hail around them.

The Italians, evidently unprepared for this attack, poured in a volley, and fled to the cliffs above the road. Advancing to the second barricade, Frank quickly gained the top, and sprang down into the road. Ravitzky, who was ever close behind him, had scarcely gained the height when, struck in the shoulder by a ball, he dropped heavily down upon the ground. The attack had now begun from front, flanks, and rear together, and a deadly fire poured down upon the hussars without ceasing, while all attempt at defense was hopeless.

"Open a pass through the barricade," shouted Frank, "and bring up the horses!" And while some hastened to obey the order, a few others grouped themselves around Ravitzky, and tried to shelter him as he lay.

"Don't leave me to these fellows, Dalton," cried he, passionately. "Heave me over into the lake rather."

Frank now saw that the poor fellow's cheek was torn with a shot, and that his left hand was also shattered.

"The fire is too heavy, Herr Lieutenant. The men cannot open a way for the cattle," whispered the old corporal.

"What's to be done, then?" asked Frank. But the poor corporal fell dead at his side as he spoke.

The brunt of the conflict was, however, at the barricades; for, despairing of any prospect of removing the obstacles, many of the hussars had ridden recklessly at them, and there, entangled or falling, were shot down remorselessly by the enemy. One alone forced his way, and, with his uniform bloody and in rags, dashed up to Frank.

"Get the cadet up in front of you," whispered Frank. And Ravitzky, who was now unconscious, was lifted into the saddle, while the hussar, grasping him with his strong arms, held him against his chest.

"Forward, now," said Frank; "on, to the first village, and see him cared for."

"But you, Herr Lieutenant—what's to become of you?"

"I'll not leave my poor wounded comrades."

"There's not a living man amongst them," cried the hussar. "Come along with us, Herr Lieutenant. We may want your help, too."

The firing ceased at this moment; and to the wild shouts and din of conflict there succeeded a dead silence.

"Keep quiet—keep quiet; stand close beneath the rock," whispered Frank.

"Here comes the boat." And, with slow and measured stroke, the skiff neared the shore, about twenty paces from where they stood.

"Pull in boldly," cried a gruff voice, in Italian. "There's nothing to fear now. Neither man nor horse could survive that fire!"

"Would that the great struggle could be accomplished so easily!" said a softer tone, which Frank almost fancied he had heard before.

Lanterns were now seen moving in the space between the barricades, and crowds pressed down to examine and pillage the dead.

"Have you found the officer's body?" asked he of the soft voice.

"I suspect the party was under a sergeant's command," said another.

"No, no," rejoined the former. "Giuseppe was positive that he saw an officer."

"See that he has not escaped, then," said the other, eagerly. "The tale of this night's adventure might be told in two ways at Milan."

"The cadet is dying, sir. His head has fallen back," whispered the hussar to Frank.

"The lake, Dalton, the lake!" muttered the dying man, as he threw his arms around Frank's neck. Frank caught him while he was falling, but, overborne by the weight, reeled back against the rock.

"How many are in the boat?" whispered Frank.

"I see but one man, sir," said the hussar.

"Now for it, then," said Frank; "place him between us on a carbine, and make for the boat."

With the energy of a newly-inspired hope, the man obeyed in an instant; and, carrying their wounded comrade, they moved stealthily along beneath the shadow of the rock. It was only as they emerged from this, and gained the little gravelly beach, that their figures could be seen.

"Be quiet now, men, and leave that fellow to me," said Frank, as he cocked his pistol. The clank of the sabers, however, seemed warning enough for the crafty Italian, who jumped at once into the lake. With a rush, the Hungarians sprang into the skiff, while Frank, seizing it by the prow, pushed boldly out. The plunge and the splash had, meanwhile, attracted notice, and several hurried down to the beach. Frank had but time to order his men to lie down, when a crashing volley flew over them. "Now, to your oars, boys, before they can load again." The light skiff almost rose out of the water to their vigorous stroke; and although the balls tore incessantly amongst them, they continued to row on. Sheets of bright flame flashed across the water, as volley after volley followed; but the Hungarians were soon out of the reach of the fire, with no other loss than some slight wounds.

At first it seemed as if some pursuit were intended; but this was soon abandoned, and the noise of horses and wheels on the road showed that the multitude were departing landwise. Frank now bethought him what was best to be done. If the country were really in open revolt, the only chance of safety lay in surrendering to something like authority; if this were a mere partial outbreak, in all likelihood the opposite shores of the lake would offer a refuge. A single light, like a star, shone in the far distance, and thither Frank now steered the boat. Ravitzky lay against his knees, his head on Frank's lap, breathing heavily, and occasionally muttering to himself, while the men kept time to the oars with a low, mournful chant, which sounded at least like a death-wail over their comrade.

The lake opposite Varenna is nearly at its widest part; and it was full three hours after the occurrence of the skirmish that they drew near to the light, which they now saw preceeded from a little boathouse belonging to a villa a short distance from shore. A small harbor, with several boats at anchor in it, opened on the water's edge, and a great flight of marble steps led up to a terraced garden, adorned with fountains and groups of statuary.

Frank saw at once that he had invaded the precincts of one of those princely villas which the Milanese nobility possess on the lake, and was uncertain which course to take. His Austrian uniform, he well knew, would prove a sorry recommendation to their kind offices. For some time back the breach between the Austrians and the Lombards had gone on widening, till at length every intercourse had ceased between them; and even the public places resorted to by the one were sure to be avoided on that account by the other. Scarcely a day passed without Milan witnessing some passages of hostility or insolence, and more than one fatal duel showed how far political dislike had descended into personal hatred.

To ask for aid and assistance under circumstances such as these would have been, as Frank felt, a meanness; to demand it as a right would have been as insolent a pretension; and yet what was to be done? Ravitzky's life was in peril; should he,

from any scruple whatever, hazard the chances of saving his poor comrade? "Come what may," thought he, "I'll claim their succor—theirs be the shame if they refuse it!"

The approach was longer than he suspected, and, as he went along, Frank had occasion to remark the tasteful elegance of the grounds, and the costly character of all the embellishments. He saw that he was about to present himself before one of the magnates of the land, and half prepared himself for a haughty reception. Crossing a little bridge, he found himself on a grassy plateau, on which a number of windows looked out; and these now all lay open, while seated within were several persons enjoying the Italian luxury of a "bel fresco," as the air of the lake gently stirred the leaves, and carried some faint traces of Alpine freshness into the plains beneath. A large lamp, covered with a deep shade, threw a dubious light through the chamber, and gave to the group all the effect and coloring of a picture.

On an ottoman, supported by pillows, and in an attitude of almost theatrical elegance, lay a lady, dressed in white, a black veil fastened in her hair behind, being half drawn across her face. At her feet sat a young man, with an air of respectful attention; and a little further off, in an easy chair, reclined the massive proportions of a priest, fanning himself with his skull-cap, and seemingly gasping for air. Behind all, again, was another figure—a tall man, who, with a cigar in his mouth, slowly paced the chamber up and down, stopping occasionally to hear the conversation, but rarely mingling in it.

There was that air of indolent enjoyment and lassitude, that mingled aspect of splendor and neglect, so characteristically Italian in the scene, that Frank forgot himself, as he stood still and gazed on the group, and even listened to the words.

"After all," said the young man, in Italian, "it is better to let them do the thing in their own way! Cutting off a patrol here, shooting a sentry there, stabbing a general to-day, poisoning a field-marshal to-morrow, seems to our notions a very petty war, but it makes a country very untenable in the end!"

"Fuori i barbari! over the Alps with them, at any cost!" growled the priest.

"I agree with you," said the tall man, stopping to brush the cinder from his cigar, "if you can drive them away in a stand-up fight; and I don't see why you could not! Numerically, you are about five hundred to one; physically, you look their equals. You have arms in abundance; you know the country; you have the wishes of the people——"

"The prayers of the Church," interposed the lady.

"Beati sunt illi qui moriuntur pro patriâ," muttered the padre.

"You and I, father," said the young man, "would like a little of that beatitude in this world, too."

Frank had now heard more than he had desired to hear; and, unhooking his saber, he suffered it to clink at his heels as he boldly advanced towards the windows.

"Whom have we there?" cried the tall man, advancing to the terrace, and challenging the stranger.

Frank replied, in French, that he was an Austrian officer, whose party had been waylaid near Varenna, and who had made his escape with a wounded comrade and a few others.

"So the shots we heard came from that quarter?" whispered the youth to the lady.

She signed to him to be cautious, and the tall man resumed:

"This is a private villa, sir; and as yet, at least, neither an Austrian barrack nor an hospital."

"When I tell you, sir," said Frank, with difficulty restraining his passion, "that my comrade is dying, it may, perhaps, excite other feelings than those of national animosity."

"You are a Hungarian?" asked the youth.

"What of that?" broke in the padre. "Tutti barbari! tutti barbari!"

Meanwhile the tall man leaned over where the lady sat, and conversed eagerly with her.

"You have to think how it will look, and how it will tell abroad!" said he, in English. "How shall we persuade the people that we are in their cause, if you make this villa an Austrian refuge?"

She whispered something low in reply, and he rejoined impatiently:

"These are small considerations; and if we are to be always thinking of humanity, let us give up the game at once."

"You'll not refuse my comrade the consolations of his Church, at least?" said Frank. "I see a reverend father here——"

"And you'll never see him follow you one step out of this chamber," broke in the priest. "Ego autem, tanquam surdus, non audiebam," muttered he, with a wave of his hand.

"But if he be a good Catholic?" interposed the youth, half slyly.

"Let them be confounded who seek to do me evil!" said the priest, with a solemnity that said how deeply he felt for his own safety.

"This discussion is lasting too long," said Frank, impatiently. "I cannot coerce your humanity, but I can demand as a right that a soldier of your emperor shall receive shelter and succor."

"I told you so," said the tall man, still addressing the lady in English; "first the entreaty—then the menace."

"And what are we to do?" asked she, anxiously.

"Let them occupy the boat-house; there are beds in the lofts. Jekyl will see that they have whatever is necessary; and perhaps by to-morrow we shall get rid of them." Turning towards the youth, he spoke to him for a few minutes rapidly, and the other replied, "You are right. I'll look to it." He arose as he spoke, and bowing politely to Frank, pronounced himself ready to accompany him.

With a few words of apology for his intrusion, as awkwardly uttered as they were ungraciously received, Frank retired from the chamber, to retrace his steps to the harbor.

Little as he was disposed to be communicative, Albert Jekyl—for it was our old acquaintance—contrived to learn as they went along every circumstance of the late encounter. The pliant Jekyl fully concurred in the indignant epithets of cowards and assassins bestowed by Frank upon his late assailants, deplored with him the miserable and mistaken policy of revolt among the people, and regretted that, as foreigners themselves, they could not offer the hospitality of the villa to the wounded man without exposing their lives and fortunes to an infuriated peasantry.

"What nation do you then belong to?" asked Frank, shrewdly concealing his knowledge of English.

"We are—so to say—of different countries," said Jekyl, smiling and evading the question. "The padre is a Florentine——"

"And the lady?"

"She is a very charming person, and if it were not that she is a little over-devout—a shade too good—would be the most delightful creature in existence."

"The tall man is her husband, I conclude."

"No—not her husband," smiled Jekyl again: "a person you'll like much when you see more of him. Short and abrupt, perhaps, at first, but so kind-hearted, and so generous."

"And has the villa got a name?" asked Frank, in a voice of some impatience at finding how little his companion repaid his frankness.

"It is called La Rocca," said Jekyl. "Had you not been a stranger in Italy you would scarcely have asked. It is the most celebrated on the whole lake."

Frank thought he had heard the name before, but when, where, or how, he could not remember. Other cares were, besides, too pressing upon him to make him dwell on the subject, and he willingly addressed himself to the more urgent duties of the moment.

The boat-house stood in no need of all Jekyl's apologies. Frank had lodged in many inferior quarters since he had begun soldiering; there were several excellent bedrooms and a delightful little saloon, which looked directly out upon the lake. Ravitzky, too, had rallied considerably, and his wounds, although formidable from the loss of blood, showed nothing likely to prove fatal. Jekyl pledged himself to send a surgeon at once to him; and, adding all kinds of civil speeches and offers of personal service, at last left the friends together to exchange confidences.

"What are our hosts like, Dalton?" said the cadet.

"*You* would call them most patriotic, Ravitzky, for they would scarcely give us shelter. Their only regret seemed that our friends yonder had not done the work better, and finished off the rest of us!"

"It is not pleasant to accept of an ungracious hospitality; but I suppose that I, at least, shall not trouble them long. There's something hot goes on ebbing here that tells of internal bleeding, and, if so, a few hours ought to suffice."

Frank did his best to rally his poor comrade; but the task is a difficult one with those whose fear of death is small.

"You'll have to write to Milan, Dalton," said he, suddenly.

"I should rather say, to hasten thither at once," said Frank. "I ought to report myself as soon as possible."

"But you mustn't leave me, Dalton; I cannot part with you. A few hours is not much to you, to me it is a lifelong. I want you also to write to Walstein for me; he'll take care to tell my mother."

Frank knew well the breach of discipline this compliance would entail, and that he could scarcely be guilty of a graver offense against duty; but Ravitzky clung to his wish with such pertinacity, throwing into the entreaty all the eagerness of a last request, that Frank was obliged to promise he would remain, and let the result take what

shape it might. While he, therefore, gave orders to his only unwounded comrade to hold himself in readiness to set out for Milan by daybreak, he proceeded to write the brief despatch which was to record his disaster. There are few sadder passages in the life of a young soldier than that in which he has to convey tidings of his own defeat. Want of success is so linked and bound up with want of merit, that every line, every word, seems a self-accusation.

However inevitable a mishap might appear to any witnessing it, a mere reader of the account might suggest fifty expedients to escape it. He knew, besides, the soldier-like contempt entertained in the service for all attacks of undisciplined forces, and how no party, however small, of "regulars" was esteemed insufficient to cope with a mob of peasants or villagers. Any contradiction to so acknowledged a theory would be received with loud reprobation, and, whatever came of it, the most inevitable result would be the professional ruin of him unlucky enough to incur such a failure.

"There's an end of the career of Lieutenant von Dalton," said Frank, as he concluded the paper. "Neither his uncle, the field-marshal, nor his sister, the princess, will have favor enough to cover delinquency like this." It did, indeed, seem a most humiliating avowal, and probably his own depressed state gave even a sadder coloring to the narrative. He accompanied this despatch with a few lines to the count, his grand-uncle, which, if apologetic, were manly and straightforward; and, while bearing a high testimony to Ravitzky's conduct, took all the blame of failure to himself alone.

He would gladly have lain down to rest when this was completed, but the cadet pressed eagerly for his services, and the letter to Walstein must be written at once.

"The surgeon tells me that there is internal bleeding," said he, "and that, should it return with any degree of violence, all chance of recovery is hopeless. Let us look the danger boldly in the face, then, Dalton, and, while I have the time, let me tell Walstein all that I have learned since we parted. The letter I will confide to your safe keeping, till such time as it can be forwarded without the risk of discovery."

"Is there necessity for such precaution?" asked Frank.

"Can you ask me the question?"

"Then how am I to write it?" said he.

"Simply from my dictation," said the other, calmly. "The sentiments will not be yours, but mine. The mere act of the pen, for which these fingers are too weak, can never wound the susceptibility of even *your* loyalty. You are not satisfied with this?"

Frank shook his head dubiously.

"Then leave me where I am. I ask no companionship, nor friendship either—or, if you prefer it, hasten to Milan and denounce me as a traitor. My character is well enough known not to need corroboration to your charge; the allegation will never hurt *me*, and it may serve *you*. Ay, Herr Lieutenant, it will prove an opportune escape for the disgrace of this unlucky night. They will forgive you much for such a disclosure."

Frank's temper would have been insufficient to bear such an insult as this, had not the words been spoken by one already excited to the madness of fever, and whose eye now flashed with the wild glare of mania.

It was long before Frank could calm down the passionate excitement of the sick man, and fit him for the task he wished to execute; and even then Ravitzky undertook it in a sullen, resentful spirit, that seemed to say that nothing short of a necessity would have reduced him to such a confidence. Nor was this all. Pain and nervous irritability together made him difficult and occasionally impossible to understand. The names of people and places of Hungarian origin Frank in vain endeavored to spell; the very utmost he could do being to follow the rapid utterance with which the other at times spoke, and impart something like consistency to his wild, unconnected story.

That Ravitzky had been employed in secret communications with some of the Hungarian leaders was plain enough, and that he had held intercourse with many not yet decided how to act, was also apparent. The tangled web of intrigue was, however, too intricate for faculties laboring as his were, and what between his own wanderings and Frank's misconceptions, the document became as mysterious as an oracle. Perhaps Frank was not sorry for this obscurity; or perhaps, like the lady who consoled herself for the indiscretion of keeping a lover's picture by the assurance that "it was not like him," he felt an equal satisfaction in thinking that the subject of his manuscript could never throw any light upon any scheme that ever existed. Now, it ran on about the feelings of the Banat population, and their readiness to take up arms; now, it discussed the fordage of rivers in Transylvania. Here, was an account of the arms in an arsenal of Arad; there, a suggestion how to cut off Nugent's corps on the "Platen See." At times it

seemed as if a great "Sclave" revolt was in contemplation; at others, the cause appeared that of the Hungarian nobles alone, anxious to regain all the privileges of the old feudalism. "At all events it is rebellion," thought Frank; and heartily glad was he when the task was completed, and everything save the address appended. It was now sealed, and by Ravitzky's advice deposited within the lining of Frank's pelisse, till such time as a safe opportunity might offer of forwarding it to Walstein.

The task occupied some hours; and when it was completed, so tired was Frank by former exertion and excitement, that he lay down on the floor, and with his head on the sick man's bed fell fast asleep. Such had been his eagerness to finish this lengthy document, that he had never perceived that he was watched as he wrote, and that from the little copse beside the window a man had keenly observed him for several hours long.

Ravitzky, too, fell into a heavy slumber; and now, as both slept, a noiseless foot crossed the floor, and a man in the dark dress of a priest drew nigh the bedside. Waiting for some seconds as if to assure himself of the soundness of their sleep, he bent down and examined their features. Of the cadet he took little notice; but when his eyes fell upon Frank's face, pale and exhausted as he lay, he almost started back with astonishment, and for several minutes he seemed as if trying to disabuse himself of an allusion. Even the uniform seemed to surprise him, for he examined its details with the greatest care. As he stood thus, with the pelisse in his hand, he seemed suddenly to remember the letter he had seen placed within the lining; and then as suddenly drawing out his penknife, he made a small aperture in the seam, and withdrew the paper. He was about to replace the pelisse upon the bed, when, by a second thought as it were, he tore off the envelope of the letter, and reinserted it within the lining.

A single glance at it appeared to convey the whole tenor of its contents, and his dark eyes ran over the words with eager haste; then, turning away, he moved cautiously from the room. Once in the free air again, he reopened the paper, his sallow features seeming to light up with a kind of passionate luster as he traced the lines. "It is not—it cannot be without a meaning, that we are thus for ever meeting in life!" cried he; "these are the secrets by which destiny works its purpose, and we blindly call them accidents! Even the savage knows better, and deems him an enemy who crosses his path too frequently. Ay, it will come to this one day," muttered he, slowly; "he or I—he or I." Repeating this over and over, he slowly returned to the villa.

CHAPTER LIV.

A VILLA AND ITS COMPANY.

Having told our readers that the villa was called La Rocca, it is perhaps needless that we should say that the lady was our old friend, Lady Hester, who, under the spiritual guidance of the Canon of the Duomo, was now completing her religious education, while Lord Norwood was fain to escape the importunity of duns and the impertinence of creditors by a few weeks' retirement in this secluded region. Not that this was his only inducement. For some time back he had pressed his claim on various members of his government for place or employment. He had in vain represented the indignity of a peer reduced to beggary, or the scarcely better alternative of play for support. He had tried—unsuccessfully, however—every sort of cajolery, menace, and flattery, to obtain something; and, after successively offering his services for or against Carlism in Spain, with Russia or against her in the Caucasus, with twenty minor schemes in Mexico, Sicily, Greece, and Cuba, he at last determined on making Northern Italy the sphere of his abilities, wisely calculating that before the game was played out he should see enough to know what would be the winning side.

An accidental meeting with D'Esmonde, which renewed their old intimacy, had decided him on taking this step. The abbé had told him that the English government of the day was secretly favorable to the movement; and although, from the necessities of state policy and the requirements of treaties, unable to afford any open or avowed assistance, would still gladly recognize his participation in the struggle, and, in the event of success, liberally reward him. "A new kingdom of Upper Italy, with Milan for the capital, and Viscount Norwood the resident minister plenipotentiary," there was the whole episode, in three volumes, with its "plot," "catastrophe," and "virtue rewarded," in appropriate fashion; and as times were bad, neither racing nor cards profitable, patriotism was the only unexplored resource he could think of.

Not that my lord had much faith in the abbé. Far from it. He thought all

priests were knaves; but he also thought "that he'll not cheat *me.* No, no; too wide awake for that. He'll not try that dodge. Knows where I've graduated. Remembers too well what school I come of." He was perfectly candid, too, in this mode of reasoning, calmly telling D'Esmonde his opinions of himself, and frankly showing that any attempt at a "jockey" of him must inevitably fail. The abbé, to do him justice, took all this candor well—affected to deem it the mere ebullition of honest John-Bullism; and so, they were well met. At times, indeed, the priest's enthusiasm carried him a little away, and he ventured to speculate on the glorious career that conversion would open to the noble viscount, and the splendid fruits such a change would be certain to produce. Norwood was, however, too practical for such remote benefits; and, if the abbé couldn't "make the thing safe," as he styled it, would not listen to this suggestion. A rich Italian princess—there were two or three such prizes in the wheel—or an Infanta of Spain, might solace many a theological doubt; but Norwood said there was no use in quoting the "fathers" when he was thinking only of the "daughters."

And the priest wisely seemed to take him at his word. As for Lady Hester, political intrigue was quite new to her, and consequently very delightful. Since the cardinal's departure for Rome she had begun to weary somehow of the ordinances of her new faith. The canonico but ill replaced his eminence. He had none of that velvety smoothness of manner, that soft and gentle persuasiveness of the dignitary. He could neither smile away a doubt, nor resolve a difficulty by a "bon mot." It is but fair to say that he was no ascetic, that he loved good cheer and pleasant converse, and was free to let others participate in the enjoyment. Lady Hester was, however, too much habituated to such indulgences to reckon them other than necessaries. D'Esmonde, if he had had time, might have compensated for all these deficiencies, but he was far too deeply engaged with other cares, and his air of grave preoccupation was more suited to awe her ladyship than suggest ease in his presence. And now we come to Albert Jekyl—the last member of this incongruous family. Nothing was less to his taste than any fanaticism, whether it took the form of religion or politics. All such extravagances were sure to interfere with society, impede intercourse, and disturb that delightful calm of existence wherein vices ripen, and where men of his stamp gather the harvest.

To overthrow a government, to disturb the settled foundations of a state, were, to his thinking, a species of "inconvenanace" that savored of intense vulgarity; and he classified such anarchists with men who would like to smash the lamps, tear down the hangings, and destroy the decorations of a salon in which they were asked to pass the evening, preferring to sit down amid ruin and wreck, rather than eat their supper at a well-ordered and well-furnished board.

To Jekyl's eyes it was a very nice world as it was, if people would only let it alone! "A world of bright eyes, and soft tresses, and white shoulders, with Donizetti's music and Moët's champagne, was not to be despised at all." He had no sympathies, therefore, with these disturbers; but he was too well bred ever to oppose himself to the wishes of the company, and so he seemed to concur with what he could not prevent. He could have wished that the Italians would take a lesson from the Swiss, who only revolt when there is nothing else to do, and never take to cutting each other's throats during the season when there are travelers to be cheated; "but, perhaps," said he, "they will soon get enough of it, and learn that their genius lies more in ballets and bonbons than in bombs and lockets."

Of such various hopes and feelings were the party made up who now awaited D'Esmonde's presence at the supper-table. It was past midnight, and they had been expecting him with impatience for above an hour back. Twice had the canonico fallen asleep, and started up with terror at what he called a "fantasma di fame." Jekyl had eaten sardines and oysters till he was actually starving. Lady Hester was fidgety and fretful, as waiting always made her; while Norwood walked from the room to the terrace, and out upon the grass, to listen, uneasy lest any mischance should have befallen one who was so deeply involved in their confidences.

"It is but three or four-and-twenty miles to Milan," muttered Norwood; "he might easily have been here by this."

"The road is infested with banditti," growled out the padre.

"Banditti!" said Norwood, contemptuously. But whether the sneer was intended for the cut-throat's courage, or the folly of men who would expect any booty from a priest, is hard to say; clearly the padre took it in the latter sense, for he rejoined:

"Even so, milordo. When I was curé of

Bergamo they stopped me one night on the Lecco road. A bishop was on a visit with me, and I had gone up to Milan to procure some fish for our Friday's dinner. Oime! what a turbot it was, and how deliciously it looked at the bottom of the calessino, with the lobsters keeping guard at either side of it, and a small basket of Genoa oysters—those rock beauties that melt in the mouth like a ripe strawberry! There they were, and I had fallen asleep, and was dreaming pleasantly. I thought I saw St. Cecilia dressing 'filets de sole aux fines herbes,' and that she was asking me for sweet marjoram, when suddenly I felt a sharp stick as it were in my side, and, starting up, I felt the point—the very point—of a thin stiletto between my ribs.

"'Scusi, padre mio,' said a whining voice; and a great black-bearded rascal touched his cap to me with one hand, while with the other he held the dagger close to my side, a comrade all the time covering me with a blunderbuss on the opposite side of the cart—'scusi, padre mio, but we want your purse!' 'Maladetto sia——' 'Don't curse,' said he, beggingly—'don't curse, padre, we shall only have to spend more money in masses. But be quick; out with the "quattrini."'

"'I have nothing but the church fund for the poor,' said I, angrily.

"'We are the poor, holy father,' whined the rogue.

"'I mean the poor who hate to do evil,' said I.

"'It grieves us to the soul when we are driven to it!' sighed the scoundrel; and he gave me a gentle touch with the point of the stiletto. Dark as it was, I could see the wretch grin as I screamed out.

"'Be quick,' growled out the other, roughly, as he brought the wide mouth of the trombone close to my face. There was no help for it. I had to give up my little leathern pouch with all my quarter's gatherings. Many a warning did I give the villains of the ill luck that followed sacrilege—how palsies, and blindness, and lameness came upon the limbs of those who robbed the Church. They went on counting the coins without so much as minding me! At last, when they had fairly divided the booty, the first fellow said, 'One favor more, holy father, before we part!'

"'Would you take my coat or my cassock?' said I, indignantly.

"'Heaven forbid it,' said he, piously. 'We want only your blessing, padre mio!'

"'My blessing on thieves and robbers?'

"'Who need it more, holy father?' said he, with another stick of the point—'who need it more?'

"I screamed aloud, and the wretches this time laughed outright at my misery. Meantime, they both uncovered, and knelt down in the road before me. Oime! oime! There was no help for it. I had to descend from the calessino!"

"And did you bless them, father?" asked Jekyl.

"That did I. For when I tried in the middle of the benediction to slip in a muttering of 'Confundite ipsos qui quærunt animam meam,' the whining rogue popped out his accursed weapon, and cried, 'Take care, holy father, we only bargain for the blessing.'"

"They left you the fish, however?" said Norwood.

"Not an oyster!" sighed the priest. "'You would not have us eat flesh on the fast, padre mio?' said the hypocritical knave. 'Poor fellows like us have no dispensation, nor the money to buy it!' And so they packed up everything, and then, helping me to my seat, wished me a pleasant journey, and departed."

"I am curious to know if you really forgave them, padre?" said Jekyl, with an air of serious inquiry.

"Have I not said so?" rejoined the priest, testily.

"Why, you tried to insinuate something that surely was not a blessing, father."

"And if I did, the fellow detected it. Ah, that rogue must have served mass once on a time, or his ears had never been so sharp!"

"Are yours quick enough to say if that be the tramp of a horse?" asked Norwood, as he listened to the sounds.

"Yes, that is a horse," cried Jekyl.

"Now, then, for the soup," exclaimed the canon. "Ah, yes!" added he, with a sigh, as he turned to Lady Hester, "these are the crosses—these are the trials of life; but they are good for us—they are good for us! Poor mortals that we are! 'Non est sanitas in carne meâ.' Oime! oime!" And so moralizing, he gave her his arm as he re-entered the house. In less than a minute later, D'Esmonde galloped up to the door, and dismounted.

"Has anything occurred?—you are late to-night," asked Norwood, hastily.

"Nothing. The city, however, was in great alarm, and the tocsin was twice sounded in the churches when I left at ten o'clock. The guards were doubled at the gates, and mounted patrols making the rounds in every quarter."

"What was this for?" asked Norwood.

"A mere false alarm; nothing more. The Austrians are harassed beyond measure by these frequent calls to arms; and men grumble that they are mustered twice or thrice during the night without any cause. A petard exploded in the street, or a church bell rung, is sure to call out the whole garrison."

"I begin to suspect that our Italian friends will be satisfied with this, and never go further," said Norwood, contemptuously.

"You are wrong there. It is by the frequency and impunity of these demonstrations that they are working up courage for an overt movement. By the time that the Austrians have grown indifferent to such nightly disturbances, the others will have gained hardihood for a real outbreak."

"If they only be persuaded that war is assassination on a grand scale, they might make excellent soldiers," simpered Jekyl. But the others seemed to take no heed of his pleasantry.

"Have they not fixed a time?" asked Norwood, eagerly, "or is all left vague and uncertain as ever?"

"The Swiss are quite ready. We only wait now for the Piedmontese. Genoa is with us at a word; so are Leghorn and the towns of the Romagna. The signal once given, there will be such a rising as Italy has not seen for centuries. England will supply arms, ammunition——"

"All but men," sighed Norwood; "and it is exactly what are wanting." "And France——"

"Will give her sympathies," broke in Jekyl. "That dear France! that always says god-speed to disturbance and trouble wherever it be."

"What of that Austrian soldier?" said D'Esmonde, who did not quite like the tone of either of his companions—"is he better?"

"The surgeon says that he cannot recover," replied Jekyl; "and for that reason I suspect that he is in no danger."

"Have you seen the officer to-day?" asked the priest, again.

"No," replied Norwood. "Jekyl and I twice endeavored to speak with him; but he slept half the forenoon, and since that has been writing innumerable despatches to headquarters."

"They say at Milan that he'll be shot for this misadventure," said D'Esmonde; "that he acted in contravention to his orders, or did something, I know not what, which will be treated as a grave military offense."

"The canonico is furious with us for this delay," said Jekyl, laughing, as he returned from a peep into the salon. The abbé was, meanwhile, deep in a whispered conversation with Norwood. "Ay," said the latter, doubtingly, "but it's a serious thing to tamper with a soldier's fidelity. The Austrians are not the people to suffer this with impunity."

"How are they to know it?"

"If it fail—if this young fellow reject our offers, which, as a Hungarian, it is just as likely that he will do?"

"But he is not a Hungarian. I know him, and all about him."

"And can you answer for his readiness to join us?"

"I cannot go that far: but seeing the position he stands in, what can be more probable? And, take the worst case: suppose that he refuses, I have him still!"

"How do you mean?"

"Simply that I have in my hands the means to destroy all his credit, and peril his very life!" The sudden energy of passion in which he delivered these words appeared to have escaped him unawares, for as quickly recovering his wonted smoothness of tone, he said, "Not that anything short of the last necessity would drive me to such an alternative."

"May I never have to trust to your tender mercies, abbé!" said Norwood, with a laugh, in which there was far more of earnest than of jesting; "but let us talk of these things after supper." And with the careless ease of a mere idler, he lounged into the house, followed by the others.

Once seated at supper, the conversation took a general turn, requiring all the abbé's skill and Jekyl's tact at times to cover from the servants who waited the secret meaning of many of those allusions to politics and party which Lady Hester uttered, in the perfect conviction that she was talking in riddles. Her indiscretion rendered her, indeed, a most perilous associate; and in spite of hints, warnings, and signs, she would rattle on upon the dangerous theme of revolt and insurrection; the poor devices of deception she employed being but sorry blinds to the native quickness of Italian shrewdness.

This little fire of cross-purposes sadly perplexed the canonico, who looked up now and then from his plate with a face of stupid astonishment at all that went forward.

"You have heard, I suppose, canon," said the abbé, adroitly addressing him, "that the city authorities have only granted twelve thousand crowns for the festival of San Giovanni?"

"Twelve thousand crowns! It will not pay for the throne of the Virgin," growled out the canon, "not to speak of the twenty-six angels in sprigged muslin!"

"There are to be no angels this time. The priests of the Santa Croce are to walk behind the canopy."

"It will ruin the procession," muttered the canon.

"They certainly look as little like angels as need be," interposed Jekyl, slyly.

"Sixty lamps and two hundred tapers are a scanty allowance," continued D'Esmonde.

"Darkness—positive darkness!" ejaculated the canon; "'ubi evasit pietas nostra?'—what has become of our ancient faith?"

"The soldier, your reverence, wishes to see you immediately," said a servant, entering in haste; "he fears that he is sinking fast."

"The heavy dews of the morning are falling—can he not wait till the sun rises, Giuseppe?"

"You had better see him at once, canon," whispered the abbé.

"Oime! oime!" sighed the priest, "mine is a weary road—'potum meum cum fletu miscebam,'" added he, finishing off his champagne: "is it far from this?"

"Only to the boat-house, father," said Lady Hester.

"'Per mares et ignes!' it's a good half hour's walk," growled he.

"You can have the pony carriage, father," interposed she.

"He starts at everything by night—don't trust the pony," said Jekyl.

"Well, then, be carried in my chair, father."

"Be it so—be it so," muttered he. "I yield myself to anything—'sicut passer sub tecto'—I have no will of my own."

"Go along with him, my lord," whispered D'Esmonde; "the opportunity will be a good one to see the young officer. While the father talks with the sick man, you can converse with the friend. See in what frame of mind he is."

"Does he speak French? for I am but an indifferent German," said Norwood.

"Yes, French will do," said D'Esmonde, who, after a moment's hesitation as to whether he should reveal the secret of Frank's country, seemed to decide on still reserving the knowledge.

"But this could be better done to-morrow," said Norwood.

"To-morrow will be too late," whispered D'Esmonde. "Go now; you shall know my reasons at your return."

Norwood took little heed of the canonico's attempts at conversation as they went along. His mind was occupied with other thoughts. The moment of open revolt was drawing nigh, and now came doubts of D'Esmonde's sincerity and good faith. It was true that many of the priests were disposed to the wildest theories of democracy—they were men of more than ordinary capacity, with far less than the ordinary share of worldly advantages. D'Esmonde, however, was not one of these; there was no limit to which his ambition might not reasonably aspire—no dignity in his Church above his legitimate hopes. What benefit could accrue to him from a great political convulsion? "He'll not be nearer to the Popedom when the cannon are shaking the Vatican!" Such were the puzzling considerations that worked within him as he drew near the boat-house.

A figure was seated on the door-sill, with his head buried beneath his hands, but on hearing the approach of the others he quickly arose and drew himself up. "You are too late, sir," said he, addressing the priest, sternly; "my poor comrade is no more!"

"Ah me! and they would drag me out in the chill night air," groaned the canonico.

The cruelty of that must have weighed heavily on his heart.

Frank turned away, and re-entered the house without speaking, while Norwood followed him in silence. On a low truckle-bed lay the dead soldier, his manly face calm and tranquil as the cold heart within his breast. A weather-beaten, bronzed soldier sat at the foot of the bed, the tears slowly flowing along his cheeks, as his bloodshot eyes were fixed upon his comrade. It was the first blood that had been shed in the cause of Italian independence, and Norwood stood thoughtfully staring at the victim.

"Poor fellow!" said he; "they who gave his death-wound little knew what sympathy for liberty that jacket covered, nor how truly the Hun is the brother of the Italian."

"They were assassins and murderers!" cried Frank, passionately; "fellows who attacked us from behind walls and barricades."

"Your reproach only means that they were not soldiers."

"That they were cowards, rather—rank cowards. The liberty that such fellows strive for will be well worthy of them! But no more of this," cried he, impatiently; "is there a church near, where I can lay his body—he was a Catholic?"

"There is a chapel attached to the villa; I will ask permission for what you require."

"You will confer a favor on me," said Frank, "for I am desirous of hastening on to Milan at once."

"You will scarcely find your comrades there," said Norwood.

Frank started with surprise, and the other went on:

"There are rumors of a serious revolt in the city, and some say that the imperial troops have retired on the Mantua road."

"They know nothing of Austrian soldiers who say these things," said Frank, haughtily; "but there is the more need that I should lose no time here."

"Come, then, I will show you the way to the chapel," said Norwood, who could not divest himself of a feeling of interest for the young soldier.

Frank spoke a few words in Hungarian to his men, and hastily wrapping the dead man in his cloak, they placed him on a door, his shako and his sword at either side of him.

"You will see that he is buried as becomes a brave and a true soldier," said Frank, with a faltering accent, as they went along. "This will defray the cost."

"No, no; there is no need of that," said Norwood, pushing away the proffered purse. "We'll look to it ourselves."

"Let there be some record of him preserved, too, for his friends' sake. His name was 'Stanislas Ravitzky.'"

"And may I ask yours?" said Norwood.

"You'll hear of it in the first court-martial return for Milan," said Frank, bitterly.

"Then why go there?—why hasten to certain ruin?"

"You would say, why not desert?—why not forfeit my honor and my oath? Because I am a gentleman, sir; and, if the explanation be not intelligible, so much the worse for you."

"I have left him in the chapel," said Norwood to D'Esmonde, a few minutes after this conversation; "he is kneeling beside the corpse, and praying. There is nothing to be done with him. It is but time lost to attempt it."

"So much the worse for *him*," said D'Esmonde, significantly repeating the words that Norwood related, while he hastily left the spot and walked towards the high road, where now an Austrian picket was standing beside the horses.

"This is your warrant, sir," said D'Esmonde to the officer, handing him a paper; "you'll find the person you seek for in the chapel yonder."

The officer saluted in reply, and ordered his men to mount, while D'Esmonde, passing into a thick part of the copse, was out of sight in a moment.

CHAPTER LV.

PETER DALTON ON POLITICS, LAW, AND SOCIALITIES.

We have seen Baden in the "dark winter of its discontent"—in the spring-time of its promise—and now we come back to it once more, in the full blaze of its noonday splendor. It was the height of the season! And what a world of dissipation does that phrase embody! What reckless extravagance—what thoughtless profusion—what systematic vice glossed over by the lacquer of polished breeding—what beauty which lacks but innocence to be almost divine! All the attractions of a lovely country, all the blandishments of wealth, the aids of music and painting, the odor of flowers, the songs of birds—all pressed into the service of voluptuous dissipation, and made to throw a false luster over a scene where vice alone predominates.

It was the camp of pleasure, to which all rallied who loved to fight beneath that banner. And there they were, a mingled host of princes, ministers, and generals. The spoiled children of fashion, the reckless adventurer, the bankrupt speculator, the flattered beauty in all the pride of her loveliness, the tarnished virtue in all the effrontery of conquest! Strange and incongruous elements of good and evil—of all that is honored in heroism, and all that men shrink from with shame—there they were met as equals.

As if by some conventional relaxation of all the habits which rule society, men admitted to their intimacies, here, those they would have strenuously avoided elsewhere. Vice, like poverty, seemed to have annihilated all the distinctions of rank, and the "decorated" noble and the branded felon sat down to the same board like brethren.

Amid all the gay company of the Cursaal none appeared to have a greater relish for the glittering pleasures of the scene than a large elderly man, who, in a coat of jockey cut and a showy waistcoat, sat at the end of one of the tables—a post which the obsequious attention of the waiters proclaimed to be his own distinctively. Within a kind of ring fence of bottles and decanters of every shape and size, he looked the genius of hospitality and dissipation; and it was only necessary to mark how many a smile was turned on him, how many a soft glance

was directed towards him, to see that he was the center of all-designing flattery. There was a reckless, unsuspecting jollity in his look that could not be mistaken; and his loud, hearty laugh bespoke the easy self-satisfaction of his nature. Like "special envoys," *his* champagne bottles were sent hither and thither down the table, and at each instant a friendly nod or a courteous bow acknowledged his hospitable attention. At either side of him were seated a knot of his peculiar parasites, and neither were wit nor beauty wanting to make their society agreeable. There is a species of mock affection—a false air of attachment in the homage rendered to such a man as this, that makes the flattery infinitely more seductive than all the respectful devotion that ever surrounded a monarch. And so our old friend, Peter Dalton—need we name him?—felt it. "Barring the glorious burst of a fox-hunting chorus, or the wild 'hip hip' of a favorite toast, it was almost as good as Ireland." Indeed, in some respects, it had rather the advantage over the dear island.

Peter was intensely Irish, and had all the native relish for high company, and it was no mean enjoyment that he felt in seeing royal and serene highnesses at every side of him, and knowing that some of the great names of Europe were waiting for the very dish that was served first in honor to himself. There was a glittering splendor, too, in the gorgeously decorated "Saal," with its frescoes, its mirrors, its lusters, and its bouquets, that captivated him. The very associations which a more refined critic would have caviled at had their attractions for *him*, and he gloried in the noise and uproar. The clink of glasses and the crash of plates were to his ears the pleasant harmony of a convivial meeting.

He was in the very height of enjoyment. A few days back he had received a large remittance from Kate. It came in a letter to Nelly, which he had not read, nor cared to read. He only knew that she was at St. Petersburg waiting for Midchekoff's arrival. The money had driven all other thoughts out of his head, and before Nelly had glanced her eye over half the first page, he was already away to negotiate the bills with Abel Kraus, the money-changer. As for Frank, they had not heard of him for several months back. Nelly, indeed, had received a few lines from Count Stephen, but they did not appear to contain anything very interesting, for she went to her room soon after reading them, and Dalton forgot to ask more on the subject. His was not a mind to conjure up possible misfortunes. Always too ready to believe the best, he took the world ever on its sunniest side, and never would acknowledge a calamity while there was a loophole of escape from it.

"Why would'nt she be happy?—What the devil could ail her?—Why oughtn't he to be well?—Wasn't he as strong as a bull, and not twenty yet?" Such were the consolations of his philosophy, and he needed no better.

His flatterers, too, used to insinuate little fragments of news about the "princess" and the "young count," as they styled Frank, which he eagerly devoured, and, as well as his memory served him, tried to repeat to Nelly when he returned home of a night. These were enough for him; and the little sigh with which he tossed off his champagne to their health was the extent of sorrow the separation cost him.

Now and then, it is true, he wished they were with him; he'd have liked to show the foreigners "what an Irish girl was;" he would have been pleased, too, that his handsome boy should have been seen amongst "them grinning baboons, with hair all over them." He desired this the more, that Nelly would never venture into public with him, or, if she did, it was with such evident shame and repugnance, that even his selfishness could not exact the sacrifice. "'Tis, maybe, the sight of the dancing grieves her, and she lame," was the explanation he gave himself of this strange turn of mind; and whenever honest Peter had hit upon what he thought was a reason for anything, he dismissed all further thought about the matter forever. It was a debt paid, and he felt as if he had the receipt on his file.

On the day we now speak of he was supremely happy. An Irish peer had come into the Saal leaning on his arm, and twice called him "Dalton" across the table. The waiter had apologized to a royal highness for not having better Johannisberg, as the "Schloss" wine had all been reserved for the "count," as Peter was styled. He had won four hundred napoleons at roulette before dinner; and a bracelet, that cost a hundred and twenty, was glittering on a fair wrist beside him, while a murmur of his name, in tones of unquestionable adulation, from all parts of the table, seemed to fill up the measure of his delight.

"What's them places vacant there?" called he out to the waiter, and pointing to five chairs turned back to the table, in token of being reserved.

"It was an English family had arrived that morning who bespoke them."

"Faix! then, they're likely to lose soup and fish," said Peter; "the 'coorses' here wait for no man." And as he spoke the party made their appearance.

A large, elderly lady of imposing mien and stately presence led the way, followed by a younger and slighter figure; after whom walked a very feeble old man, of a spare and stooping form: the end being brought up by a little rosy man, with a twinkling eye and a short, jerking limp, that made him seem rather to dance than walk forward.

"They've ca-ca-carried off the soup already," cried the last-mentioned personage, as he arranged his napkin before him, "and—and—and I fa-fancy, the fish, too."

"Be quiet, Scroope," called out the fat lady; "do be quiet."

"Yes; but we shall have to p-p-pay all the same," cried Scroope.

"There's good sense in that, anyway," broke in Dalton; "will you take a glass of champagne with me, sir? You'll find it cool, and not bad of its kind."

Mr. Purvis acknowledged the courtesy gracefully, and bowed as he drank.

"Take the ortolans to that lady, Fritz," said Dalton to the waiter; and Mrs. Ricketts smiled her sweetest gratitude.

"We are dreadfully late," sighed she; "but the dear Princess of Stauffenschwillingen passed all the morning with us, and we couldn't get away."

"I thought it was the woman about the ro-rope dancing detained you."

"Hush, Scroope—will you be quiet? Martha dearest, don't venture on those truffles. My poor child, they would be the death of you." And, so saying, she drew her companion's plate before herself. "A most agreeable, gentlemanlike person," muttered she, in a whisper, evidently intended for Peter's ears. "We must find out who he is. I suppose you know the princess, sir? Don't you love her?" said she, addressing Dalton.

"Faix! if you mean the old lady covered with snuff that comes here to have her dogs washed at the well, without intending any offense to you, I do not. To tell you the truth, ma'am, when I was in the habit of fallin' in love, it was a very different kind of a creature that did it! Ay, ay, 'The days is gone when beauty bright my heart's ease spoilt!'"

"'My heart's chain wove,'" smiled and whispered Mrs. Ricketts.

"Just so. It comes to the same thing. Give me the wine, Fritz. Will you drink a glass of wine with me, sir?"

The invitation was addressed to General Ricketts, who, by dint of several shoves, pokings and admonitions, was at last made aware of the proposition.

"Your father's getting a little the worse for wear, miss," said Dalton to Martha, who blushed at even the small flattery of the observation.

"The general's services have impaired his constitution," remarked Mrs. Ricketts, proudly.

"Ay, and to all appearance it was nothing to boast of in the beginning," replied Peter, as he surveyed with self-satisfaction his own portly form.

"Fourteen years in the Hima-Hima-Hima——"

"Himalaya, Scroope—the Himalaya."

"The highest mountains in the world!" continued Purvis.

"For wet under foot, and a spongy soil that never dries, I'll back the Galtees against them any day. See, now, you can walk from morning to night, and be over your head at every step you go."

"Where are they?" inquired Scroope.

"Why, where would they be? In Ireland, to be sure; and here's prosperity to her, and bad luck to process-servers, 'polis,' and poor-law commissioners!" Dalton drained his glass with solemn energy to his toast, and looked as though his heart was relieved of a weight by this outburst of indignation.

"You Irish are so patriotic!" exclaimed Mrs. Ricketts, enthusiastically.

"I believe we are," replied Dalton. "'Tis only we've an odd way of showing it."

"I remark that they ne-never live in Ireland when they can live out of it," cackled Purvis.

"Well, and why not? Is it by staying at home in the one place people learn improvements? You might drink whisky-punch for forty years and never know the taste of champagne. Potatoes wouldn't teach you the flavor of truffles. There's nothing like travelin'!"

"Very true," sighed Mrs. Ricketts; "but, as the poet says, "Where'er I go, whatever realms I see——'"

"The devil a one you'll meet as poor as Ireland," broke in Dalton, who had now thrown himself headlong into a favorite theme. "Other countries get better, but she get's worse."

"They say it's the po-po——" screamed Scroope.

"The Pope, is it?"

"No; the po-potatoes are the cause of everything."

"They might as well hould their prate, then," broke in Peter, whose dialect always

grew broader when he was excited. "Why don't they tell me, that if I was too poor to buy broadcloth, it would be better for me to go naked than wear corduroy breeches? Not that I'd mind them, miss!" said he, turning to Martha, who already was blushing at his illustration.

"I fear that the evil lies deeper," sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"You mean the bogs," asked Dalton.

"Not exactly, sir; but I allude to those drearier swamps of superstition and ignorance that overlay the land."

Peter was puzzled, and scratched his ear like a man at a nonplus.

"My sister means the pr-pr-pr——"

"The process-servers?"

"No; the pr-priests, the priests," screamed Purvis.

"Bother!" exclaimed Dalton, with an accent of ineffable disdain. "'Tis much you know about Ireland!"

"You don't agree with me, then," sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Indeed I do not. Would you take away the little bit of education out of a country where there's nothing but ignorance? Would you extinguish the hopes of heaven amongst them that has nothing but starvation and misery here? Try it—just try it. I put humanity out of the question; but just try it, for the safety's sake! Pat isn't very orderly now, but, faix! you'd make a raal devil of him then, entirely!"

"But Popery, my dear sir—the confessional——"

"Bother!" said Dalton, with a wave of his hand. "How much you know about it! 'Tis just as they used to talk long ago about drunkenness. Sure, I remember well when there was all that hue and cry about Irish gentlemen's habits of dissipation, and the whole time nobody took anything to hurt his constitution. Well, it's just the same with confession—everybody uses his discretion about it. *You* have your peccadilloes, and *I* have my peccadilloes, and that young lady has her——Well, I didn't mean to make you blush, Miss, but 'tis what I'm saying, that nobody, barrin' a fool, would be too hard upon himself!"

"So that it ain't con-confession at all," exclaimed Purvis.

"Who told you that?" said Peter, sternly. "Is it nothing to pay two-and-sixpence in the pound if you were bankrupt to-morrow? Doesn't it show an honest intention, any way?" said he, with a wink.

"Then what are the evils of Ireland?" asked Mrs. Ricketts, with an air of inquiring interest.

"I'll tell you, then," said Dalton, slowly, as he filled a capacious glass with champagne. "It is'nt the priests, nor it is'nt the potatoes, nor it isn't the Protestants either, though many respectable people think so; for you see we have always priests and potatoes, and a sprinkling of Protestants, besides; but the real evil of Ireland—and there's no man living knows it better than I do—is quite another thing, and here's what it is." And he stooped down and dropped his voice to a whisper, "'Tis this: 'tis paying money when you have'nt it!" The grave solemnity of this enunciation did not seem to make it a whit more intelligible to Mrs. Ricketts, who certainly looked the very type of amazement. "That's what it is," reiterated Dalton, "paying money when you haven't it! There's the ruin of Ireland; and, as I said before, who ought to know better? For you see, when you owe money and you haven't it, you must get it how you can. You know what that means; and if you don't, I'll tell you. It means mortgages and bond debts; rack-renting and renewals; breaking up an elegant establishment; selling your horses at Dycer's; going to the devil entirely; and not only yourself, but all belonging to you. The tradesmen you dealt with; the country shop where you bought everything; the tithes; the priest's dues—not a farthing left for them."

"But you don't mean to say that people shouldn't p-p-pay their debts?" screamed Purvis.

"There's a time for everything," replied Dalton. "Shaving one's self is a mighty useful process, but you wouldn't have a man get up out of his bed at night to do it? I never was for keeping money—the worst enemy wouldn't say that of me. Spend it freely when you have it; but sure it's not spending to be paying debts due thirty or forty years back, made by your great-grandfather!"

"One should be just before being ge-gen-gene-gene——"

"Faix! I'd be both," said Dalton, who with native casuistry only maintained a discussion for the sake of baffling or mystifying an adversary. "I'd be just to myself and generous to my friends, them's my sentiments; and it's Peter Dalton that says it!"

"Dalton!" repeated Mrs. Ricketts, in a low voice—"didn't he say Dalton, Martha?"

"Yes, sister; it was Dalton."

"Didn't you say your name was Da-Da-a-a——"

"No, I didn't!" cried Peter, laughing.

"I said Peter Dalton as plain as a man could speak: and if ever you were in Ireland, you may have heard the name before now."

"We knew a young lady of that name at Florence."

"Is it Kate—my daughter Kate?" cried the old man, in ecstasy.

"Yes, she was called Kate," replied Mrs. Ricketts, whose strategic sight foresaw a world of consequences from the recognition. "What a lovely creature she was!"

"And you knew Kate?" cried Dalton again, gazing on the group with intense interest. "But was it my Kate? perhaps it wasn't mine!"

"She was living in the Mazzarini Palace with Lady Hester Onslow."

"That's her—that's her! Oh, tell me everything you know—tell me all you can think of her. She was the light of my eyes for many a year! Is the old lady sick?" cried he, suddenly, for Mrs. Ricketts had leaned back in her chair, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

"She's only overcome," said Martha, as she threw back her own shawl and prepared for active service; while Scroope, in a burst of generous anxiety, seized the first decanter near him and filled out a bumper.

"She and your da-daughter were like sisters," whispered Scroope to Dalton.

"The devil they were!" exclaimed Peter, who thought their looks must have belied the relationship. "Isn't she getting worse—she's trembling all over her."

Mrs. Ricketts's state now warranted the most acute sympathy, for she threw her eyes wildly about, and seemed like one gasping for life.

"Is she here, Martha? Is she near me—can I see her—can I touch her?" cried she, in accents almost heartrending.

"Yes, yes: you shall see her; she'll not leave you," said Martha, as if caressing a child. "We must remove her; we must get her out of this."

"To be sure; yes, of course!" cried Dalton. "There's a room here empty. It's a tender heart she has, any way;" and, so saying, he arose, and with the aid of some half-dozen waiters transported the now unconscious Zoe, chair and all, into a small chamber adjoining the Saal.

"This is her father's hand," murmured Mrs. Ricketts, as she pressed Dalton's in her own—"her father's hand."

"Yes, my dear!" said Dalton, returning the pressure, and feeling a strong desire to blubber, just for sociality's sake.

"If you knew how they loved each other," whispered Martha, while she busied herself pinning cap-ribbons out of the way of cold applications, and covering up lace from the damaging influence of restoratives.

"It's wonderful—it's wonderful!" exclaimed Peter, whose faculties were actually confounded by such a rush of sensations and emotions.

"Make him go back to his dinner, Martha; make him go back," sighed the sick lady, in a half dreamy voice.

"I couldn't eat a bit; a morsel would choke me this minute," said Dalton, who couldn't bear to be outdone in the refinements of excited sensibility.

"She must never be contradicted while in this state," said Martha, confidingly. "All depends on indulgence."

"It's wonderful!" exclaimed Dalton again—"downright wonderful!"

"Then, pray go back; she'll be quite well presently;" rejoined Martha, who, already from the contents of a reticule like a carpet-bag, had metamorphosed the fair Zoe's appearance into all the semblance of a patient.

"It's wonderful; it beats Banagher!" muttered Peter, as he returned to the Saal, and resumed his place at the table. The company had already taken their departure, and except Purvis and the general, only a few stragglers remained behind.

"Does she often get them?" asked Peter of Purvis.

"Only when her fee-fee-feelings are worked upon; she's so se-sensitive!"

"Too tender a heart," sighed Peter, as he filled his glass and sighed over an infirmity that he thought he well knew all the miseries of. "And her name, if I might make bould?"

"Ricketts — Mrs. Montague Ricketts. This is Ge-Ge-General Ricketts." At these words the old man looked up, smiled blandly, and lifted his glass to his lips.

"Your good health, and many happy returns to you," said Peter, in reply to the courtesy. "Ricketts—Ricketts. Well, I'm sure I heard the name before."

"In the D-D-Duke's despatches you may have seen it."

"No, no, no. I never read one of them. I heard it here, in Baden. Wait, now, and I'll remember how." Neither the effort at recollection nor the aid of a bumper seemed satisfactory, for Dalton sat musingly for several minutes together. "Well, I thought I knew the name," exclaimed he, at last, with a deep sigh of discomfiture; "'tis running in my head yet—something about chilblains—chilblains."

"But the name is R-R-Ricketts," screamed Purvis.

"And so it is," sighed Peter. "My brain is wool-gathering. By my conscience, I have it now, though!" cried he, in wild delight. "I knew I'd scent it out. It was one Fogles that was here—a chap with a red wig, and deaf as a doornail."

"Foglass, you mean—Fo-Foglass—don't you?"

"I always called him Fogles; and I'm sure it's as good a name as the other, any day."

"He's so pl-pleasant," chimed in Scroope, who, under the influence of Dalton's champagne, was now growing convivial—"he's so agreeable; always in the highest circles, and dining with no-no-no——"

"With nobs," suggested Peter. "He might do better, and he might do worse. I've seen lords that was as great rapscallions as you'd meet from this to Kilrush."

"But Foglass was always so excl-exclusive, and held himself so high."

"The higher the better," rejoined Dalton, "even if it was out of one's reach altogether; for a more tiresome ould crayture I never foregathered with; and such a bag of stories he had, without a bit of drollery or fun in one of them. You may think that kind of fellow good company in England, but in my poor country, a red herring and a pint of beer would get you one he couldn't howld a candle to. See, now, Mister——"

"P-P-Purvis," screamed the other.

"Mister Purvis—if that's the name—see, now, 'tisn't boasting I am, for the condition we're in wouldn't let any man boast—but it's what I'm saying, the English is a mighty stupid people. They have their London jokes, and, like London porter, mighty heavy they are, and bitter besides, and they have two or three play-actors that makes them die laughing at the same comicalities every day of the year. They get used to them, as they do the smoke and the noise, and the Thames water; and nothing would persuade them that, because they're rich, they're not agreeable, and social, and witty. And may I never leave this, but you'd find cuter notions of life, droller stories, and more fun, under a dry arch of the aqueduct of Stoney Batter than if you had the run of Westminster Hall. Look at the shouts of laughing in the law coorts—look at the loud laughter in the House of Commons! Oh, dear! oh, dear! it makes me quite melancholy just to think of it. I won't talk of the Parliament, because it's gone; but take an Irish coort, in Dublin or on the assizes, at any trial—murder, if you like—and see the fun that goes on: the judge quizzing the jury, and the counsel quizzing the judge, and the pris'ner quizzing all three. There was poor ould Norbury—rest his soul!—I remember well how he couldn't put on the black cap for laughing."

"And is ju-justice better administered for all that?" cried Purvis.

"To be sure it is. Isn't the laws made to expose villainy, and not let people be imposed upon? Sure it's not to hang Paddy Blake you want, but to keep others from following his example. And many's the time in Ireland when, what between the blunderin' of the crown lawyers, the flaws of the indictment, the conscientious scruples of the jury—you know what that means—and the hurry of the judge to be away to Harrowgate or Tunbridge—a villain gets off. But, instead of going out with an elegant brand-new character, a bit of a joke—a droll word spoken during the trial—sticks to him all his life after, till it would be just as well for him to be hanged at once as be laughed at, from Pill-lane to the Lakes of Killarney. Don't I remember well when one of the Regans—Tim, I think it was—was tried for murder at Tralee: there was a something or other they couldn't convict upon. 'Twas his grandfather's age was put down wrong, or the color of his stepmother's hair, or the nails in his shoes wasn't described right—whatever it was, it was a flaw as they called it; and a flaw in a brief, like one in a boiler, leaves everybody in hot water. 'Not guilty,' says the jury, 'for we can't agree.'

"''Tis a droll verdict,' says O'Grady, for he was the judge. 'What d'ye mean?'

"'Most of us is for hanging, my lord; but more of us would let him off.'

"'What will you do, Mr. Attorney?' says the judge. 'Have you any other evidence to bring forward?' And the Attorney-General stooped down, and began whispering with the bench. 'Very well,' says the judge, at last, 'we'll discharge him by proclamation.'

"'Wait a minute, my lord,' says old Blethers, who got five guineas for the defense, and hadn't yet opened his mouth. 'Before my respected but injured client leaves that dock, I call to your lordship, in the name and on behalf of British justice—I appeal to you, by the eternal principles of our glorious constitution, that he may go forth into the world with a reputation unstained, and a character unblemished.'

"'Not so fast, Mister Blethers,' says old Grady—'not so fast. I'm going over Thieve-na-muck Mountain to-night, and,

with the blessing of God. I'll keep your unblemished friend where he is till morning.' Now you see the meaning of what I was telling you. 'Tis like tying a kettle to a dog's tail."

It is not quite clear to us whether Purvis comprehended the story or appreciated the illustration, but he smiled, and smirked, and looked satisfied, for Peter's wine was admirable, and iced to perfection. Indeed, the worthy Scroope, like his sister, was already calculating how to "improve the occasion," and further cultivate the esteem of one whose hospitable dispositions were so excellent. It was just at this moment that Martha glided behind Purvis's chair, and whispered a word in his ear. Whatever the announcement it required some repetition before it became quite palpable to his faculties, and it was only after about five minutes that his mind seemed to take in all the bearings of the case.

"Oh, I ha-have it!" cried he. "That's it, eh?" And he winked with a degree of cunning that showed the most timely appreciation of the news.

"Wouldn't the young lady sit down and take something?" said Dalton, offering a seat. "A glass of sweet wine? They've elegant Tokay here."

"Thanks, thanks," said Scroope, apologizing for the bashful Martha; "but she's in a bit of a quandary just now. My sister wishes to return home, and we cannot remember the name of the hotel."

Dalton took a hearty fit of laughing at the absurdity of the dilemma.

"'Tis well," said he, "you weren't Irish. By my conscience! they'd call that a bull;" and he shook his sides with merriment. "How did you get here?"

"We walked," said Martha.

"And which way did you come?"

"Can you remember, Scroope?"

"Yes, I can re-re-remember that we crossed a little platz, with a fountain, and came over a wooden bridge, and then down an alley of li-li-linden-trees."

"To be sure ye did," broke in Dalton; "and the devil a walk of five minutes ye could take in any direction here without seeing a fountain, a wooden bridge, and a green lane. 'Tis the same, whichever way you turn, whether you were going to church or the gambling-house. Would you know the name if you hear it? Was it the Schwan?" Purvis shook his head. "Nor the Black Eagle?—nor the Cour de Londres?—nor the Russie?—nor the Zaringer?" Nor, in fact, any of the cognate hotels of Baden. "Wasn't there a great hall when you entered, with orange-trees all round it, and little couriers, in goold-lace jackets, smoking and drinking beer?" Scroope thought he had seen something of that sort. "Of course ye did," said Dalton, with another burst of laughter. "'Tis the same in every hotel of the town. There's a clock that never goes, too, and a weather-glass always at 'set fair,' and pictures round the walls of all the wonderful inns in Germany and Switzerland, with coaches-and-four driving in at full gallop, and ladies on the balconies, and saddle-horses waiting, and every diversion in life going on, while, maybe, all the time, the place is dead as Darmstadt."

Scroope recognized the description perfectly, but could give no clue to its whereabouts.

"Maybe 'tis Kaufmayer's. Was it painted yellow outside?"

Scroope thought not. "It hadn't a garden in front?" He couldn't say positively; but, if so, it was a small garden. "He didn't remark two dogs in stone beside the door?" No, he had not seen them!

"Then, by the powers!" exclaimed Peter, "I give it up. Nelly's the only body can make anything out of it."

"And who's Ne-Ne-Nelly?" screamed Purvis.

"My daughter, Miss Dalton," said Peter, haughtily, and as if rebuking the liberty of the question.

Scroope hastened to apologize, and suddenly remembered how frequently he had heard of the young lady from her sister, and how eager Mrs. Ricketts would be to make her acquaintance.

"There's nothing easier than that same," said Dalton. "Just come with me to my little place, and take tea with us. Nelly will be right glad to see them that was kind to her sister, and then we'll try if we can't find out your inn."

"Can we do this, Martha?" cried Scroope, in seeming agitation.

"I'll speak to my sister," mildly replied she.

"Do then, miss," said Dalton. "Say 'tis just alone, and in the family way, and that we haven't more than ten minutes' walk from this; or, we'll get a coach if she likes."

The very thought of practicing hospitality was ecstasy to honest Peter, who, while Martha retired to consult her sister, ordered in a relay of bottles to beguile the time.

"I like that little ould man," said he, confidingly, to Purvis, while he bent a kindly glance on "the general." "He doesn't say much, and, maybe, he hears

less; but he takes his glass pleasantly, and he lays it down when it's empty, with a little sigh. I never knew a bad fellow had that habit."

Scroope hinted that the general was one of the bright stars of the British army.

"I didn't care that he took Tippoo Saib, or Bergen-op-Zoom, and that's a big word—for a wickeder pair of devils, by all accounts, never lived—if he's all right here." And Peter touched the left region of his brawny chest. "If he's good and generous, kind to the poor, and steady to his friends, I'd be prouder to know him than if he was 'Bony,' or Brian Maguire!"

Scroope assured him that the general's greatness took nothing from the kindly qualities of his heart; and, indeed, the mild looks of the old man well corroborated the eulogy; and he and Dalton nodded and drank to each other with all the signs of a most amicable understanding.

Martha was not long absent. She returned with all manner of acknowledgments on the part of her sister; but gratitude was so counterbalanced by delicacy—fears of intrusion were so coupled with enthusiastic delight, that poor Dalton was quite unable to unravel the web, and satisfy himself what were her real intentions.

"Is it that she won't come?" said he, in a state of bewilderment.

"Oh no," said Martha; "she did not mean that."

"Well, then, she is coming," said he, more contentedly.

"She only fears the inconvenience—the trouble she may give Miss Dalton—not to speak of the abruptness of such a visit."

"She doesn't know Nelly, tell her that. She doesn't know Nelly Dalton," said Peter. "'Tis the same girl doesn't care for trouble or inconvenience; just talk to her about Kate, and you'll pay her well for all she could do for you."

"My sister thinks a carriage would be better, she is so very weak," mildly observed Martha.

"Well, we'll get one in a jiffy. Fritz, my man, send down to the Platz for a shandradan—a wagon, I mean. 'Tis a droll name for a coach." And he laughed heartily at the conceit. "And now, Mr. Purvis, let us finish them before we go. The gen'ral is doing his part like a man. It's wonderful the nourishment wouldn't put flesh on him—you could shave him with his shin-bone!" and Dalton stared at the frail figure before him with all the astonishment a great natural curiosity would create.

"What a kind creature! what a really Irish heart!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sailed into the room, and sank into a chair beside Dalton. "It is like a dream, a delicious dream, all this is. To be here in Baden, with my dear Miss Kate Dalton's father—actually going to drink tea. What a thought, Martha! to drink tea with dearest Nelly!"

Peter began to fear that the prospect of such happiness was about to overwhelm her sensibilities once more: but fortunately, this time, she became more composed, and discussed the visit with wonderful calm and self-possession.

The carriage now drove up, and although Dalton would greatly have preferred a little longer dalliance over the bottle, he politely gave one arm to Mrs. Ricketts and the other to Martha, issuing forth from the Cursaal in all the pride of a conqueror.

CHAPTER LVI.

NELLY'S TRIALS.

While Mr. Dalton is accompanying his guests along the Lichtenthal Alley, and describing the various objects of interest on either hand, we will take the opportunity of explaining to our reader why it happened that honest Peter no longer inhabited the little quiet quarters above the toy-shop.

By Kate's liberality, for some time back he had been most freely supplied with money. Scarcely a week passed over without a line from Abel Kraus to say that such or such a sum was placed to his credit; and Dalton once more reveled in those spendthrift habits that he loved. At moments, little flashes of prudential resolve would break upon him. Thoughts of Ireland and of the "old place" would arise, and he would half determine on some course of economy which might again restore him to his home and country. But the slightest prospect of immediate pleasure was sufficient to rout these wise resolves, and Baden was precisely the spot to suggest such "distractions." There was nothing Peter so much liked in the life of this watering-place as the facility with which acquaintance was formed. The stately reserve of English people was his antipathy, and here he saw that all this was laid aside, and that people conversed freely with the neighbor that chance had given, and that even intimacies grew up between those who scarcely knew each other's names.

Whatever might be thought of these practices by more fastidious critics, to Peter Dalton they appeared admirable. In

his estimation the world was a great Donnybrook Fair, where everybody came to amuse and be amused. Grave faces and careworn looks, he thought, should stay at home, and not disturb the harmony of what he deemed a great convivial gathering.

It may easily be guessed from this what classes of persons found access to his intimacy, and how every smooth-tongued adventurer, every well-dressed and plausible-looking pretender to fashion, became his companion. Nothing but honest Peter's ignorance of foreign languages set any limit to his acquaintance; and, even with this, he had a shake-hands intimacy with every Chevalier d'Industrie of France and Germany, and a cigar-lending-and-lighting treaty with every long-haired Pole in Baden.

As he dined every day at the Cursaal, he seldom returned home of an evening without some three or four chance acquaintances, whom he presented to Nelly without knowing their names. But they were sure to be "tip-top chaps," and "up to everything." Not that the latter eulogy was much of an exaggeration—the majority of them, indeed, well deserving such a panegyric. If Dalton's long stories about Ireland and its joys or grievances were very uninteresting to these gentlemen, they found some compensation in the goodness of his wine and the abundance of his cigars; and hock and tobacco digested many a story which, without such adjuncts, would never have found a listener. Play is, however, so paramount to all else at Baden, that, as the season advanced, even a hot supper from the "Russie" and an ice-pail full of champagne-flasks could not attract the company from the fascinations of the gaming-table, and Peter saw that his choice spirits were deserting him.

"You live so far away," cried one. "Your house is full a mile from the Cursaal."

"There is such a climb-up to that crib of yours, Dalton," cried another. "One can't manage it in this hot weather. Why won't you pitch your tent in the plain? It's like going up the Righi to try and reach your quarters."

Such and such like were the polite admonitions administered by those who wanted a convenient lounge for their spare half-hours, and who, while affecting to think of their friend, were simply consulting what suited themselves. And is this philosophy confined only to Baden? Is not the world full of friendships that, like cab-fares, are regulated by the mile? The man who is half a brother to you while you live on the Boulevard de Gand, becomes estranged from your bosom when you remove to the Champs Elysées; and in these days of rapid transport, ten minutes' walk would separate the most devoted attachments.

Dalton's pride was at first wounded by these remonstrances; but his second thoughts led him to think them more reasonable, and even elevated the grumblers in his esteem. "Sure, ain't they the height of the fashion? Sure, isn't everybody trying to get them? Is it any wonder they wouldn't scale a mountain for sake of a glass of wine?" The quiet home, so dear to him by many an association—the little window that looked out upon the Alten Schloss, and beside which Nelly sat with him each evening—the small garden underneath, where Hans cultivated his beautiful carnations, and where many a little figure graced some bed or alley—all became now distasteful. "The stairs creaked dreadfully; he didn't think they were quite safe. The ceilings were so low, there was no breathing in the rooms. The hill would be the death of him; he had pains in his knees for half the night after he climbed it." Even the bracing air of the mountain, that was his once boast and pride, was now a "searching, cutting wind, that went through you like a knife." It was a mean-looking little place, too, over a toy-shop, "and Hans himself wasn't what he used to be."

Alas! there was some truth in this last complaint. He had grown more silent and more absent than ever; sometimes would pass whole days without a word, or remain seated in his little garden absorbed in deep thought. The frequenters of his shop would seek in vain for him, and were it not for Nelly, who, in her father's absence, would steal down the stairs and speak to them, the place would have seemed deserted. On one or two occasions she had gone so far as to be his deputy, and sold little articles for him; but her dread of her father's knowing it had made her ill for half the day after.

It was, then, a dreadful blow to Nelly when her father decided on leaving the place. Not alone that it was dear by so many memories, but that its seclusion enabled her to saunter out at will under the shade of the forest trees, and roam for hours along the little lanes of the deep wood. In Hans, too, she took the liveliest interest. He had been their friend when the world went worst with them; his kindness had lightened many a weary burden, and his wise counsels relieved many a

gloomy hour. It was true that of late he was greatly altered. His books, his favorite volumes of Uhland and Tieck, were never opened. He never sat, as of yore, in the garden, burnishing up his quaint old fragments of armor, or gazing with rapture on his strange amulets against evil. Even to the little ballads that she sang he seemed inattentive and indifferent, and would not stop to listen beneath the window as he once did.

His worldly circumstances, too, were declining. He neglected his shop altogether—he made no excursions as of old to Worms or Nuremberg for new toys. The young generation of purchasers found little they cared for in his antiquated stores, and, after laughing at the quaint old devices by which a past age had been amused, they left him. It was in vain that Nelly tried to infuse some interest into the pursuit which once had been his passion. All the little histories he used to weave around his toys, the delusions of fancy in which he reveled, were dissipated and gone, and he seemed like one suddenly awakened from a delicious dream to the consciousness of some afflicting fact. He strenuously avoided the Daltons, too, and even watched eagerly for moments of their absence to steal out and walk in the garden. When by chance they did meet, his manner, instead of its old cordiality, was cold and respectful; and he, whose eyes once sparkled with delight when spoken to, now stood uncovered, and with downcast looks, till they went by him.

No wonder, then, if Dalton thought him changed.

"'Tis nothing but envy's killing him, Nelly," said he. "As long as we were poor like himself, he was happy. It gratified the creature's pride that we were behind with the rent; and while he was buying them images, he was a kind of a patron to you; but he can't bear to see us well off—that's the secret of it all. 'Tis our prosperity is poison to him."

To no end did Nelly try to undeceive her father on this head. It was a corollary to his old theory about "the 'bad dhrop' that was always in low people." In vain did she remind him of poor Hanserl's well-tried friendship, and the delicacy of a kindness that in no rank of life could have been surpassed. Dalton was rooted in his opinion, and opposition only rendered him more unforgiving.

Quite forgetting the relations which once subsisted between them, he saw nothing in Hanserl's conduct but black ingratitude. "The little chap," he would say, "was never out of the house; we treated him like one of the family, and look at him now! You saw him yourself, Nelly—you saw him shed tears the other day when you spoke of the princess. Was that spite or not—tell me that? He couldn't speak for anger when you told him Frank was an officer."

"Oh, how you mistake these signs of emotion, dearest father!"

"Of course I do. I know nothing—I'm too old—I'm in my dotage. 'Tis my daughter Nelly understands the world, and is able to teach me."

"Would that I knew even less of it; would that I could fall back to the ignorance of those days when all our world was within these walls!"

"And be cutting the images, I hope, again!" said he, scornfully; "why don't you wish for that? It was an elegant trade for a young lady of your name and family! Well, if there's anything drives me mad, it's to think that all them blasted figures is scattered about the world, and one doesn't know at what minute they'll turn up against you!"

"Nay, father," said she, smiling sadly; "you once took an interest in them great as my own."

"It only shows, then, how poverty can break a man's spirit."

Discussions like these, once or twice a week, only confirmed Dalton in his dislike to his old abode, and Nelly at last saw that all resistance to his will was hopeless. At last he peremptorily ordered her to give Hans notice of their intended removal, for he had fixed upon a house in the Lichtenthal Alley to suit them exactly. It was a villa which had a few months before been purchased and fitted up by a young French count, whose gains at the gaming-table had been enormous. Scarcely, however, had he taken possession of his sumptuous abode than "luck" turned; he lost everything in the world, and finished his career by suicide! In a colony of gamblers, where superstition has an overweening influence, none could be found rash enough to succeed to so ill-omened a possession; and thus, for nigh half the season, the house continued shut up and unoccupied. Dalton, whose mind was strongly tinctured with fears of this kind, yet felt a species of heroism in showing that he was not to be deterred by the dangers that others avoided; and as Abel Kraus, to whom the property now belonged, continually assured him "it was just the house for *him*," Peter overcame his scruples, and went to see it.

Although of small extent, it was princely

in its arrangements. Nothing that French taste and elegance could supply was wanting, and it was a perfect specimen of that costly splendor which in our own day rivals all the gorgeous magnificence of "the Regency." Indeed, it must be owned that honest Peter thought it far too fine to live in, he trod the carpets with a nervous fear of crushing the embroidery, and he sat down on the brocaded sofa with as much terror as though it were glass. How he was ever to go asleep in a bed where Cupid and angels were sculptured in such endless profusion, he couldn't imagine; and he actually shrank back with shame from his own face, as he surveyed it within the silver frame of a costly toilet-glass.

Such were his impressions as he walked through the rooms with Abel, and saw, as the covers were removed from lusters and mirrors, some new and more dazzling object at each moment reveal itself. He listened with astonishment to the account of the enormous sums lavished on these sumptuous articles, and heard how twenty, or thirty, or forty thousand francs had been given for this or that piece of luxury.

What was forty napoleons a month for such splendor! Kraus was actually lending him the villa at such a price; and what a surprise for Nelly, when he should show her the little drawing-room in rose-damask he meant for herself; and then there was a delightful arbor in the garden to smoke in; and the whole distance from the Cursaal was not above ten minutes' walk. Peter's fancy ran over rapidly all the jollifications such a possession would entail; and if he wished, for his own sake, that there were less magnificence, he consoled himself by thinking of the effect it would have upon others. As he remarked to himself, "There's many thinks more of the gilding than the gingerbread!"

If Nelly's sorow at leaving Hanserl's house was deep and sincere, it became downright misery when she learned to what they were about to remove. She foresaw the impulse his extravagance would receive from such a residence, and how all the costliness of decoration would suggest wasteful outlay. Her father had not of late confided to her the circumstances of his income. He who once could not change a crown without consulting her, and calling in her aid to count the pieces and test their genuineness, would now negotiate the most important dealings without her knowledge. From his former distrust of Kraus he grew to believe him the perfection of honesty. There is something so captivating to a wasteful man in being freely supplied with money—with receiving his advances in a spirit of apparent frankness—that he would find it impossible to connect such liberality with a mean or interested motive. Kraus's little back room was then a kind of California, where he could dig at discretion; and if, in an unusual access of prudence, honest Peter would ask, "How do we stand, Abel?" Kraus was sure to be too busy to look at the books, and would simply reply, "What does it matter? How much do you want?" From such a dialogue as this Dalton would issue forth the happiest of men, muttering to himself how differently the world would have gone with him if he "had known that little chap thirty or forty years ago."

Without one gleam of comfort—with terror on every side—poor Nelly took possession of her splendor to pass days of unbroken sorrow. Gloomy as the unknown future seemed, the tidings she received of Kate and Frank were still sadder.

From her sister she never heard directly. A few lines from Madame de Heidendorf, from a country house near St. Petersburg, told her that the prince had not succeeded in obtaining the imperial permission, and that the marrige was deferred indefinitely; meanwhile, the betrothed princess lived a life of strict seclusion as the etiquette required, seeing none but such members of the royal family as deigned to visit her. Poor Nelley's heart was nigh to bursting as she thought over her dear Kate—the gay and brilliant child, the happy, joyous girl, now pining away in dreary imprisonment. This image was never cut of her mind, and she would sit hour after hour in tears for her poor sister. What fortune happiness, however great it might be, could repay a youth passed in misery like this? What splendor could efface the impression of this dreary solitude, away from all who loved and cared for her?

Of Frank, the tidings were worse again. A short and scarcely intelligible note from Count Stephen informed her that, "although the court-martial had pronounced a sentence of death, the emperor, rather than stain a name distinguished by so many traits of devotion to his house, had commuted the punishment to imprisonment for life at Moncacs. "There was," he added, "a slight hope that, after some years, even this might be relaxed, and banishment from the imperial dominions substituted. Meanwhile," said the old soldier, "I have retired forever from a career where, up to this hour, no stain of dishonor attached to me. The name which I bore so long with distinction is now branded

with shame, and I leave the service to pass the few remaining days of my life wherever obscurity can best hide my sorrow and my ignominy!"

Although Nelly at once answered this afflicting letter, and wrote again and again to Vienna, to Milan, and to Prague, she never received any reply, nor could obtain the slightest clue to what the sentence on Frank referred. To conceal these terrible events from her father was her first impulse; and although she often accused herself of duplicity for so doing, she invariably came round to her early determination. To what end imbitter the few moments of ease he had enjoyed for years past? Why trouble him about what is irremediable, and make him miserable about those from whom his careless indifference asks nothing and requires nothing? Time enough when the future looks brighter, to speak of the sorrows of the past!

This task of secrecy was not a difficult one. Dalton's was not a nature to speculate on possible mischances so much as to hope for impossible good turns of fortune; and when he knew that Kate had sent him money, and Frank did not ask for any, the measure of his contentment was filled. Kate was a princess, and Frank an officer of hussars; and that they were as happy as the day was long he would have taken an oath before any "justice of the quorum," simply because he saw no reason why they ought not to be so; and when he drank their healths every day after dinner, and finished a bumper of champagne to their memory, he perfectly satisfied his conscience that he had discharged every parental duty in their behalf. His "God bless you, my darling child!" was the extent of his piety as of his affection; and so he lived in the firm belief that he had a heart overflowing with good, and kind, and generous sentiments. The only unpleasant feelings he had arose for Nelly. Her eyes, that in spite of all her efforts showed recent tears, her pale face, her anxious, nervous manner, worried and amazed him. "There's something strange about that girl," he would say to himself; "she would sing the whole day long when we hadn't a shilling beyond the price of our dinner; she was as merry as a lark, cutting out them images till two or three o'clock of a morning; and now that we have lashings and leavings of everything, with all manner of diversions about us, there she sits moping and fretting the whole day." His ingenuity could detect no explanation for this. "To be sure, she was lame, and it might grieve her to look at dancing, in which she could take no part. But when did she ever show signs of an envious nature? She was growing old, too—at least she was six or seven-and-twenty—and no prospect of being married; but was Nelly the girl to grieve over this? Were not all her affections and all her hopes homebound? 'Twasn't fretting to be back in Ireland that she could be!—she knew little of it before she left it." And thus he was at the end of all his surmises without being nearer the solution.

We have said enough to show that Nelly's sorrow was not causeless, and that she had good reason to regret the days of even their hardest fortune.

"Had we been but contented as we were!" cried she; "had we resisted ambitions for which we were unfitted, and turned away from paths in life too steep and too arduous for our strength, we might have been happy now! Who can say, too, what development of mind and intelligence should not have come of this life of daily effort and exertion? Frank would have grown manly, patient, and self-relying—Kate would have been, as she ever was, the light of our home, making us sharers in all those gifts of her own bright and happy nature—while even I might have risen to worthier efforts of skill than those poor failures I have now to blush for."

Such were the regrets which filled her heart, as she sat many an hour in solitude, grieving over the past, and yet afraid to face the future.

CHAPTER LVII.

AN ACT OF SETTLEMENT.

WERE we disposed to heroics, we might compare Mrs. Ricketts's sensations, on entering the grounds of the villa, to the feelings experienced by the ancient Gauls when, from the heights of the Alps, they gazed down on the fertile plains of Italy. If less colored by the glorious hues of conquering ambition, they were not the less practical. She saw that, with her habitual good fortune, she had piloted the Ricketts barque into a safe and pleasant anchorage, where she might at her leisure refit and lay in stores for future voyaging. Already she knew poor Dalton, as she herself said, from "cover to cover"—she had sounded all the shallows and shoals of his nature, and read his vanity, his vainglorious importance, and his selfish pride, as though they were printed on his forehead. Were Nelly to be like Kate, the victory, she thought, could not be very difficult. "Let her have but

one predominant passion, and be it love of admiration, avarice, a taste for dress, for scandal, or for grand society, it matters not, I'll soon make her my own."

"This will do, Martha!" whispered she, in Miss Ricketts's ear, as they drove up the approach.

"I think so," was the low-uttered reply.

"Tell Scroope to be cautious—very cautious," whispered she once more; and then turned to Dalton, to expatiate on the beauty of the grounds, and the exquisite taste displayed in their arrangement.

"It has cost me a mint of money," said Dalton, giving way irresistibly to his instinct of boastfulness. "Many of those trees you see there came from Spain and Portugal, and not only the trees, but the earth that's round them."

"Did you hear that, Martha?" interposed Mrs. Ricketts. "Mr. Dalton very wisely remarks that man is of all lands, while the inferior productions of nature require their native soils as a condition of existence."

"Yes, indeed," said Dalton, fathering the sentiment at once; "'tis only the blacks that can't bear the cowld. But, after all, maybe they're not the same as ourselves."

"I own I never could think them so," smiled Mrs. Ricketts, as though the very appearance of Peter Dalton had confirmed the prejudice

"Faix! I'm glad to hear you say that," said he, delightedly. "'Tis many's the battle Nelly and me has about that very thing. There's the villa, now—what d'ye think of it?"

"Charming—beautiful—a paradise!"

"Quite a paradise!" echoed Martha.

"'Tis a mighty expensive paradise, let me tell you," broke in Peter. "I've a gardener, and four chaps under him, and sorrow a thing I ever see them do but cut nosegays and stick little bits of wood in the ground, with hard names writ on them; that's what they call gardening here. As for a spade or a hoe, there's not one in the country; they do everything with a case-knife and watering-pot."

"You amaze me," said Mrs. Ricketts, who was determined on being instructed in horticulture.

"There's a fellow now, with a bundle of moss-roses for Nelly, and there's another putting out the parrot's cage under a tree—that's the day's work for both of them."

"And are you not happy to think how your ample means diffuse ease and enjoyment on all round you? Don't tell me that the pleasure you feel is not perfect ecstasy."

"That's one way of considering it," said Dalton, dubiously, for he was not quite sure whether he could or could not yield his concurrence.

"But if people didn't la-la-la——"

"Lay abed, you mean," cried Dalton; "that's just what they do; a German wouldn't ask to awake at all, if it wasn't to light his pipe."

"I meant la-la-labor; if they didn't la-labor the ground, we should all be starved."

"No political economy, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts; "I will not permit it. That dreadful science is a passion with him, Mr. Dalton."

"Is it?" said Peter, confusedly, to whose ears the word economy only suggested notions of saving and sparing. "I can only say," added he, after a pause, "tastes differ, and I never could abide it at all."

"I was certain of it," resumed Mrs. Ricketts; "but here comes a young lady towards us—Miss Dalton, I feel it must be."

The surmise was quite correct. It was Nelly, who, in expectation of meeting her father, had walked down from the house, and now, seeing a carriage, stood half irresolute what to do.

"Yes, that's Nelly," cried Dalton, springing down to the ground; "she'll be off now, for she thinks it's visitors come to see the place."

While Dalton hastened to overtake his daughter, Mrs. Ricketts had time to descend and shake out all her plumage—a proceeding of manual dexterity to which Martha mainly contributed; indeed, it was almost artistic in its way; for, while feathers were disposed to droop here, and lace taught to fall gracefully there, the fair Zoe assumed the peculiar mood in which she determined on conquest.

"How do I look, Martha?" said she, bridling up, and then smiling.

"Very sweetly—quite charming," replied Martha.

"I know that," said the other, pettishly; "but am I maternal—am I affectionate?"

"Very maternal—most affectionate," was the answer.

"You're a fool," said Mrs. Ricketts, contemptuously; but had barely time to restore her features to their original blandness, when Nelly came up. The few words in which her father had announced Mrs. Ricketts spoke of her as one who had known and been kind to Kate, and Nelly wanted no stronger recommendation to her esteem.

The quiet, gentle manner of the young

girl, the almost humble simplicity of her dress, at once suggested to Mrs. Ricketts the tone proper for the occasion, and she decided on being natural; which, to say truth, was the most remote thing from nature it is well possible to conceive. Poor Nelly was not, however, a very shrewd critic, and she felt quite happy to be so much at her ease as they walked along to the house together.

Mrs. Ricketts saw that Kate was the key-note to all her sister's affection, and therefore talked away of her unceasingly. To have heard her, one would have thought they had been inseparable, and that Kate had confided to the dear old lady the most secret thoughts of her heart. The amiable Zoe did, indeed, contrive to effect this rather by the aid of an occasional sigh, a tone of lamentation and sorrow, than by direct assertion; all conveying the impression that she was cut to the heart about something, but would rather be "brayed in a mortar" than tell it. Martha's mild and submissive manner won rapidly on Nelly, and she wondered whether Kate had liked her. In fact, the visitors were all so very unlike the usual company her father presented to her, she felt disposed to think the best of them; and even Scroope came in for a share of her good opinion.

The interior of the villa changed the current of conversation, and now Mrs. Ricketts felt herself at home examining the rich brocade of the hangings, the bronzes, and the inlaid tables.

"Lyons silk—twenty-four francs a meter!" whispered she to Scroope.

"I thought they hadn't a s-s-sixpence," observed the other.

"All these things are new, Scroope!—all new!"

"I—I—I was observing that, sister."

"What a creature he is, Scroope!—what a creature!"

"And the daughter, I suspect, is only ha-ha-half-witted."

"Humph!" ejaculated Zoe, as though she did not quite coincide with that opinion.

The confidential dialogue was broken in upon by Dalton, who, having dragged the poor general over the terrace and flower-garden, was now showing him the inside of the dwelling.

"If I could but see dear Kate here!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, as she slowly sank into a downy chair, "I'd fancy this was home. It's all so like herself—such graceful elegance, such tasteful splendor."

"It's neat—I think it's neat," said Dalton, almost bursting with the effort to repress his delight.

"Oh, sir, it's princely! It's worthy the great name of its possessor. Dear Kate often told me of her beautiful home."

"I thought you li-li-lived over a toy-shop? Foglass said you li-lived——"

"So we did, while the place was getting ready," said Dalton, flushing.

"Just let me sit here, and watch the rippling of that shining river!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts, laying her hand on Dalton's, and, by a melting look, withdrawing him from Scroope's unlucky reminiscence. "If I could but pass the night here, I feel it would be ecstasy."

"What easier, if it's in earnest you are?" cried Dalton. "We never make use of this little drawing-room. Nelly will get you a bed put up in it in five minutes."

"Isn't that Irish, Scroope?—isn't that what I often told you of Ireland?" cried Zoe, as her eyes glistened.

"Well, but I'm not joking," resumed Dalton; "small as the place is, we can make room for you all. We'll put Miss Martha in Nelly's room, and the general can have mine; and there's a mighty snug little place for you in the garden."

"Oh, dear, dear, dear Ireland, how I love you!" said Mrs. Ricketts, closing her eyes, and affecting to talk in her sleep.

"There's worse places," murmured Dalton, who drank in national flattery as the pleasantest "tipple" after personal. "But say the word, now, and see if we won't make you comfortable."

"Comfortable!—you mean happy, supremely happy," ejaculated Zoe.

"And there's no inconvenience in it, none whatever," continued Dalton, who now was breast-high in his plot. "That's a fine thing in this little town of Baden; you can have everything at a moment's warning, from a sirloin of beef to a strait-waistcoat."

Now Mrs. Ricketts laughed, till her eyes overflowed with tears, at Dalton's drollery; and Scroope, too, cackled his own peculiar cry; and the old general chimed in with a faint wheezing sound—a cross between the wail of an infant and a death-rattle; in the midst of which Dalton hurried away to seek Nelly, who was showing the garden to Martha.

"Now, mind me, Scroope," cried Mrs. Ricketts, as soon as they were alone, "no selfishness, no eternal trouble about your own comfort. We may probably pass the summer here, and——"

"But I—I—I won't sleep under the stairs. I—I—I promise you," cried he, angrily.

"You had a dear little room, with a

lovely view, at Noëringen. You are most ungrateful."

"It was a d-dear little room, six feet square, and looked out on a tannery. My skin would have been leather if I had st-st-stayed another week in it."

"Martha slept in a wardrobe, and never complained."

"For that matter, I passed two months in a sh-shower-bath," cried Scroope; "but I—I won't do it a-any more."

To what excesses his rebellious spirit might have carried him it is hard to say, for Dalton now came up with Nelly, who was no less eager than her father to offer the hospitalities of the villa. At the hazard of detracting in the reader's esteem from all this generous liberality, we feel bound to add, that neither Dalton nor his daughter ever speculated on the lengthened sojourn which Mrs. Ricketts's more prophetic spirit foreshadowed.

The accidental mistake about the hotel first suggested the offer, which, of course, the next day was sure to obviate. And now, it has so often been an unpleasant task to record little flaws and frailties of the Ricketts's nature, let us take an opportunity of mentioning some traits of an opposite kind, which, even as a "set off," are not valueless. Nothing could be more truly amiable than the conduct of the whole family when the question of their stay had been resolved upon. Had Scroope been bred a cabinetmaker, he couldn't have been handier with bed-screws, laths, and curtain-rods. Martha, divested of shawl and bonnet, arranged toilet-tables and looking-glasses like the most accomplished housemaid; while, reclining in her easy-chair, the fair Zoe vouchsafed praises on all the efforts around her, and nodded, as Jove might, on mortal endeavors to conciliate him.

Poor Nelly was in ecstasy at all this goodness: such a united family was a perfect picture. Nothing seemed to inconvenience them—nothing went wrong. There was a delightfully playful spirit in the way they met and conquered little difficulties, and, whenever hard pushed by fate, there was a wonderful reticule of Mrs. Ricketts's which was sure to contain something to extricate them at once. Since Aladdin's lamp, there never was such a magical contrivance as that bag; and the Wizard of the North, who makes pancakes in a gentleman's hat and restores it unstained, and who, from the narrow limits of a snuff-box, takes out feathers enough to stuff a pillow-case, would have paled before the less surprising but more practical resources of the "Ricketts's sack."

Various articles of toilet necessity, from objects peculiar to the lady's own, down to the general's razors, made their appearance. An impertinent curiosity might have asked why a lady going to dine at a public ordinary should have carried about with her such an array of flannel-jackets, cordials, lotions, slippers, hairbrushes, and night-caps; but it is more than likely that Mrs. Ricketts would have smiled at the short-sighted simplicity of the questioner, as she certainly did at poor Nelly's face of quiet astonishment.

It was a downright pleasure to make sacrifices for people so ready to accommodate themselves to circumstances, and who seemed to possess a physical pliancy not inferior to the mental one. The general wanted no window to shave at. Martha could bestow herself within limits that seemed impossible to humanity. As for Scroope, he was what French dramatists call "a grand utility"—now climbing up ladders to arrange curtain-rods, now descending to the cellars in search of unknown and nameless requisites. A shrewd observer might have wondered that such extensive changes in the economy of a household were effected for the sake of one night's accommodation; but this thought neither occurred to Dalton nor his daughter, who were, indeed, too full of admiration for their guests' ingenuity and readiness, to think of anything else.

As for honest Peter, a houseful of company was his delight. As he took his place that evening at the supper-table, he was supremely happy. Nor was it wonderful, considering the pleased looks and bland faces that he saw on each side of him. All his stories were new to his present audience. Mount Dalton and its doings were an anecdotic mine, of which they had never explored a single "shaft." The grandeur of his family was a theme all listened to with interest and respect; and, as Mrs. Ricketts's flattery was well-timed and cleverly administered, and Scroope's blunders fewer and less impertinent than usual, the evening was altogether a very pleasant one, and, as the cant is, went off admirably.

If Nelly now and then had little misgivings about the over-anxiety to please displayed by Mrs. Ricketts, and a certain exaggerated appreciation she occasionally bestowed upon her father's "Irishism," she was far too distrustful of her own good judgment not to set down her fears to ignorance of life and its conventionalities. "It would ill become *her*," she thought, "to criticise people so well bred and so

well mannered." And this modest depreciation of herself saved the others.

It was thus that the hosts felt towards their guests as they wished them good-night, and cordially shook hands at parting.

"As agreeable an old lady as ever I met," said Dalton to his daughter; "and not wanting in good sense, either."

"I like Miss Martha greatly," said Nelly. "She is so gently-mannered and so mild, I'm sure Kate was fond of her."

"I like them all but the little man with the stutter. He seems so curious about everything."

"They are all so pleased—so satisfied with everything," said Nelly, enthusiastically.

"And why wouldn't they? There's worse quarters, let me tell you, than this! It isn't under Peter Dalton's roof that people go to bed hungry. I wouldn't wonder if they'd pass a day or two with us."

"Do you think so?" said Nelly, scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or the reverse.

"We'll see to-morrow," said Dalton, as he took his candle and began to climb up the stairs to the room which he was now to occupy instead of his own chamber, singing, as he went, an old ballad:

> "The whole Balrothery hunt was there, and welcome were they all!
> With two in a bed, and four on the stairs, and twelve in the Bachelor's hall!"

Leaving Dalton to con over the stray verses of his once favorite ballad, as he dropped off to sleep, we turn for a moment to the chamber which, by right of conquest, was held by the fair Zoe, and where, before a large mirror, she was now seated; while Martha was engaged upon that wonderful head, whose external machinery was almost as complex as its internal. Mrs. Ricketts had resolved upon adopting a kind of materno-protective tone towards Nelly; and the difficulty now was to hit off a "coiffure" to sustain that new character. It should combine the bland with the dignified and simple, without being severe. There was something Memnonic in that large old head, from which the grey hair descended in massive falls, that seemed worthy of better things than a life of petty schemes and small intrigues; and the patient Martha looked like one whose submissive nature should have been bent to less ignoble burdens than the capricious fretfulness of a tiresome old woman. But so is it every day in life: qualities are but what circumstances make them, and even great gifts become but sorry aids when put to base uses!

There was another figure in the group, and for him no regrets arise as to talents misapplied and tastes perverted. Nature had created Scroope Purvis for one line of character, and he never ventured to walk out of it. In a large and showy dressing-gown belonging to his host, and a pair of most capacious slippers from the same wardrobe, Scroope had come down to assist at a cabinet council. He had just performed a voyage of discovery round the house, having visited every available nook, from the garret to the cellars, and not omitting the narrow chamber to which Nelly herself had retired, with whom he kept up an amicable conversation for several minutes, under pretense of having mistaken his room. Thence he had paid a visit to old Andy's den; and, after a close scrutiny of the larder, and a peep between the bars at the dairy, came back with the honest conviction that he had done his duty.

"It's sm-small, sister—it's very small," said he, entering her chamber.

"It's not smaller than Mrs. Balfour's cottage at the Lakes, and you know we spent a summer there," said the lady rebukingly.

"But we had it all to—to ourselves, sister."

"So much the worse. A cook and a cellar are admirable fixtures.—The curls lower down on the sides, Martha. I don't want to look like Grisi." There was something comforting in the last assurance, for it would have sorely tested poor Martha's skill had the wish been the reverse.

"They don't seem to ha-have been long here, sister. The knifeboard in the scullery hasn't been used above a—a few times. I shouldn't wonder if old Da-Da-Dalton won the villa at play."

"Fudge?—Fuller on the brow, Martha—more expansive there."

"Isn't the girl vulgar, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Decidedly vulgar, and dressed like a fright!—I thought it was only you, Martha, that rolled up the back hair like a snail's shell." Martha blushed, but never spoke. "I suppose she's the same that used to cut the pipe-heads and the umbrella-tops. I remarked that her fingers were all knotted and hard."

"Her smile is very pleasing," submitted Martha, diffidently.

"It's like her father's laugh—far too natural for my taste! There's no refinement, no elegance, in one of your sweet,

unmeaning smiles. I thought I had told you that at least twenty times, Martha. But you have grown self-willed and self-opinionated of late, and I must say you couldn't have a graver fault! Correct it in time, I beseech you."

"I'll try," said Martha, in a very faint voice.

"If you try, you'll succeed. Look at your brother. See what he has become. There's an example might stimulate you."

Another and a far deeper sigh was all Martha's acknowledgment of this speech.

"He was the same violent, impetuous creature that you are. There you needn't tear my hair out by the roots to prove it! He wouldn't brook the very mildest remonstrance; he was passionate and irrestrainable, and see—see what I've made him. Oh, you spiteful creature, how you hurt me!"

This cry of pain was not quite causeless, for Martha was trembling from head to foot, and actually only saved herself from falling by a mechanical clutch at something like a horse's tail. With many excuses, and in a voice broken by regrets, she resumed her task with a vigorous effort for success, while Mrs. Ricketts and Purvis exchanged glances of supreme contempt.

"I speak to you, Martha," resumed she, "for your own sake. You cannot see what all the world sees—the sinful selfishness of your nature—a vice, I must say, the less pardonable, that you live beneath the shadow of my counsels!—Scroope, don't creak that chair—sit upon that stool there.—Now that we shall probably spend two months here——"

"Here! Do—do you m-mean here?" cried Purvis.

"Of course I mean here, sir. There's nothing in the shape of a lodging to be had under three or four hundred francs a month. This is a very sweet place, and when the old gentleman can be induced to take a room in the town for himself, and that his daughter learns, as she will—though certainly not from Martha—what is due to *me*, it will be comfortable and convenient. We'll ask the princess, too, to spend a week with us; for who knows, in the present state of politics, to what corner of Germany we may yet be reduced to fly!"

"How will you m-m-manage with Haggerstone and the rest, when they arrive, sister?"

"Easily enough. I'll show them that it's for their advantage that we are here. It is true that we agreed to take a house together; but every plan is modified by the events of the campaign. Petrolaffsky will be content if Mr. Dalton plays piquet; the colonel will like his claret and Burgundy; and Foglass will be pleased with the retirement that permits him to prosecute his attentions to Martha."

Poor Martha blushed crimson at the tone, rather, even than the words of the speech, for, when nothing else offered, it was the practice of Mr. Ricketts to insinuate coquetry as among her sister's defects.

"You needn't look so much confused, my dear," resumed the torturer; "I'm certain it's not the first affair of the kind you've known."

"Oh, sister!" cried Martha, in a voice of almost entreaty.

"Not that I think there would be anything unsuitable in the match. He is, probably, fifty-eight or nine—sixty at most—and, excepting deafness and the prosy tendency natural to his time of life, pretty much like everybody else."

"You know, sister, that *he* never thought of *me*, nor *I* of *him*."

"I know that I am not in the confidence of either party," said Mrs. Ricketts, bridling; "and I also know I am sincerely happy that my head is not crammed with such fiddle-faddle. Before the great event comes off, however, you will have time to attend to something else, and therefore I beg you will keep in mind what I am about to say to you. We are here, Martha," resumed she, with all the solemnity of a judicial charge—"we are here by no claims of relationship or previous friendship. No secret ties of congenial tastes bind us up together. No common attachment to some other dear creature forms a link between us. We are here as much by chance as one can venture to call anything in this unhappy world. Let us, then, show fortune that we are not unworthy of her goodness, by neglecting nothing which may strengthen our position and secure our permanence. In a word, Martha, throw over all your selfishness—forget the miserable egotism that besets you, and study that young girl's character and wishes. She has never been courted in life—flatter her; she has never been even thought of—show her every consideration. She is evidently of a thoughtful turn, and nobody can mope better than yourself. Insinuate yourself day by day into little household affairs, mingling counsels here and warnings there—always on the side of economy—so that, while affecting only to play with the reins, you'll end by driving the coach."

"I'm afraid I've no head for all this, sister."

"Of course you haven't, nor for any-

thing else without *me* to guide you. I'm perfectly aware of that. But you can learn. You can at least obey!"

"My sister means that you can st-st-struggle against the natural w-w-willfulness of your d-disposition," cackled in Pulvis.

"I'll do my best," murmured Martha, in a voice of humility.

"Women are so fond of sa-saving," cried Scroope; "you'll always be safe when you c-c-cut down the estimates."

"Attend to that, Martha!" remarked Mrs. Ricketts.

"Find out the price of ch-chickens, and always buy them a kreutzer cheaper than she has done."

"There is nothing gives such an ascendency in a house as showing that you can maintain the establishment for fourpence less per quarter," said Zoe, gravely. "I have known connubial happiness, that has stood the test of temper and illness for years, wrecked on the small rock of a cook's bill. Like all wasteful men, you may be sure that this Dalton has many miserly habits. Learn these, and indulge them. There was that poor Marquis of Binchley, that never dined without a hundred wax candles in the room, left all his fortune to a nephew he once found collecting the sealing-wax from old letters and making it up for fresh use. Reflect upon this, Martha; and always bear in mind that the vices of mankind are comparatively uninstructive. It is their foibles, their small weaknesses, that teach everything."

"When Ha-Ha-Haggerstone comes, and finds no room for him, you'll ha-ha-have the devil to pay."

"He shall 'take it out' in dinners, Scroope; and what between drinking Dalton's wine with him, and abusing him behind his back, you'll see he'll be perfectly happy."

"How long do you propose to st-stay here, sister?" asked Scroope.

"Ask the butterfly how long the rose and the hyacinth will bloom," said Mrs. Ricketts, pensively; for, by dint of smiling at herself in the looking-glass, she had come round to that mock poetical vein which ran through her strange, incongruous nature. "And now good-night, dears," sighed she. "These are sweet moments, but they are paid for at a price. Exhausted energies will have repose." She held out her hand to Martha, who kissed it respectfully, and then waved a graceful adieu to Purvis, as he retired.

"Sister Zoe has a head for everything," muttered Purvis to Martha. "There's nothing she's not up to."

"She is very clever, indeed!" sighed Martha.

"And this isn't the worst h-hit she has ever made. It was d-deucedly well done to get in here."

Either Martha didn't concur in the sentiment, or Scroope's satisfaction did not need any backing, for she made no reply.

"They've given me a capital room; I fa-fancy Dalton's own, for I found a heap of old bills and letters in a table-drawer, and something like a—like a—like a writ"—here he laughed till the tears came at the drollery of the thought—"in the pocket of his dressing-gown."

"Good-night," said Martha, softly, as she glided into the little chamber allotted to her. Poor Martha! Save Nelly's, hers was the saddest heart beneath that roof. For the first time in all her long years of trial, a ray of doubt, a flash of infidelity, had broken upon her mind, and the thought of her sister-in-law's infallibility became for a moment suspected. It was not that abused and outraged submission was goaded into rebellion; it was dormant reason that was suddenly startled into a passing wakefulness. It was like one of those fitful gleams of intelligence which now and then dart across the vacuity of dulled intellects, and, like such, it was only a meteor flash, and left no trace of light behind it. Even in all its briefness, the anguish it gave was intense. It was the delusion of a whole life rent asunder at once, and the same shock which should convulse the moral world of her thoughts would rob her of all the pleasantest fancies of her existence. If Zoe were not all goodness and all genius, what was to become of all the household gods of the Villino? Titians would moulder away into stained and smoked panels; "Sèvres" and "Saxe" would fall down to pasbeboard and starch; carved oak and ebony would resolve themselves into leather; and even the friendship of princes and the devotion of philosophers be only a mockery, a sham, and a snare!

Poor Martha! Deprived of these illusions, life was but one unceasing round of toil; while, aided by imagination, she could labor on unwearied. Without a thought of deception, she gloried in the harmless frauds to which she contributed, but couldn't resist the contagion of credulity around her. How easily could such a spirit have been molded to every good gift, and qualities like these have been made to minister to comfort and happiness, and the faith that was given to gilt paper, and glue, and varnish, elevated to all that is highest in the moral and material world!

And now they were all in slumber beneath that roof—all save one. Poor Nelly sat at her window, tearful and sad. In the momentary excitement of receiving her guests she had forgotten her cares; but now they came back upon her, coupled with all the fears their wasteful habits could suggest. At times she blamed herself for the tame cowardice which beset her, and restrained her from every effort to avert the coming evil; and at times she resigned herself to the gloomy future, with the stern patience of the Indian who saw his canoe swept along into the rapids above the cataract. There was not one to turn to for advice or counsel, and the strength that would have sustained her in any other trial was here sapped by the dread of giving pain to her father. "It would ill become *me* to give him cause for sorrow—I, that of all his children have ministered nothing to his pride nor his happiness!" Such was the estimate she held of herself, and such the reasoning that flowed from it.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE "CURSAAL."

The attempt to accommodate a company to which the house was unsuited would have been a painful source of annoyance to most men. To Peter Dalton it was unqualified pleasure. The subversion of all previous arrangements, the total change in the whole order of domesticity, were his delight. The changing of rooms, the being sent to sleep in strange and inconvenient corners, the hurry-scurry endeavors to find a substitute for this, or a representative for that, the ingenious devices to conceal a want or to supply a deficiency, afforded him the most lively amusement; and he went about rubbing his hands, and muttering that it did his heart good. It was "so like Mount Dalton when he was a boy."

All Mrs. Ricketts's softest blandishments were so many charms clean thrown away. His thoughts were centered on himself and his own amiable qualities, and he reveled in the notion that the world did not contain another as truly generous and as hospitable as Peter Dalton. In accordance with the singular contradictions of which his character was made up, he was willing to incur every sacrifice of personal inconvenience, if it only served to astonish some one, or excite a sensation of surprise at his good nature; and while all Nelly's efforts were to conceal the inconveniences these hospitalities inflicted, Peter was never satisfied except when the display could reflect honor on himself, and excite a tribute of flattery from his guests. Nor was he all this time in ignorance of Mrs. Ricketts's character. With native shrewdness he had at once detected her as an "old soldier;" he saw the practiced readiness of her compliance with everything; he saw the spirit of accommodation in which she met every plan or project; he knew the precise value of her softest look or her sweetest smile; yet he was quite content with possessing the knowledge, without any desire to profit by it. Like one who sits down to play with sharpers, and resolves that either the stakes shall be a trifle or the roguery be very limited, he surrendered himself to the fair Zoe's seductions with this sort of a reservation to guide him.

If Mrs. Ricketts did not cheat him by her goodness, she took her revenge by the claims of her grandeur. Her intimacy with great people—the very greatest—exalted her to the highest place in Dalton's esteem. Honest Peter knew nothing of the years of toil and pain—the subtle arts—the deep devices—the slights—the affronts—the stern rebuffs here, the insolent denials there—by which these acquisitions, precarious as they were, had been won. He did not know how much of the royalty was left-handed, nor how much of the nobility was factitious. All he could see was the gracious salutes wafted to her from coroneted carriages, the soft smiles wafted from high places, the recognitions bestowed on her in the promenade, and the gracious nods that met her in the Cursaal.

Mrs. Ricketts was perfect in all the skill of this peculiar game, and knew how, by the most ostentatious display of respect in public, not only to exalt the illustrious personage who deigned to acknowledge her, but also to attach notice to herself as the individual so highly favored. What reverential courtesies would she drop before the presence of some small German "Hoch-heit," with a gambling-house for a palace, and a roulette-table for an exchequer! What devotional observances would she perform in front of the chair of some snuffy old dowager "Herzogin," of an unknown or forgotten principality! How pertinaciously would she remain standing till some "Durchlaut" was "out on the horizon;" or how studiously would she retire before the advancing step of some puny potentate—a monarch of three hussars and thirty chamberlains! Poor Peter was but a sorry pupil in this "school of design." He found it difficult to associate rank with unwashed

faces and unbrushed clothes; and, although he *did* bow, and flourish his hat, and perform all the other semblances of respect, he always gave one the idea of an irreverential acolyte at the back of a profoundly impressed and dignified high-priest.

Dalton was far more at his ease when he paraded the rooms with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, enjoying heartily all the notice they elicited, and accepting, as honest admiration, the staring wonderment and surprise their appearance was sure to excite. Mrs. Ricketts, who had always something geographical about her taste in dress, had this year leaned towards the Oriental, and accordingly presented herself before the admiring world of Baden in a richly-spangled muslin turban, and the very shortest of petticoats, beneath which appeared a pair of ample trousers, whose deep lace frills covered the feet, and even swept the floor; a paper-knife of silver gilt, made to resemble a yataghan, and a smelling-bottle, in the counterfeit of a pistol, glittered at her girdle, which, with the aid of a very-well-arched pair of painted eyebrows, made up as presentable a sultana as one usually sees in a second-rate theater. If Dalton's blue coat and tight nankeen pantaloons—his favorite full-dress costume—did somewhat destroy the "Bosphorean illusion," as Zoe herself called it, still more did Martha's plain black silk and straw bonnet—both types of the strictly useful, without the slightest taint of extraneous ornament.

Purvis and the general, as they brought up the rear, came also in for their meed of surprise. The one, lost under a mass of cloaks, shawls, scarfs and carpets; and the other, moving listlessly along through the crowded rooms, heedless of the mob and the music, and seeming to follow his leader with a kind of fatuous instinct utterly destitute of volition or even of thought. A group, so singularly costumed, seen every day dining at the most costly table, ordering whatever was most expensive; the patrons of the band, and the numerous flower-girls, whose bouquets were actually strewed beneath their feet, were sure to attract the notice of the company; a tribute, it must be owned, which invariably contains a strong alloy of all that is ill-natured, sarcastic and depreciating. Zoe was a European celebrity, known and recognized by every one. The only difficulty was to learn who the new "victim" was, whence he came and what means he possessed. There are few places where inventive genius more predominates than at Baden, and Dalton was alternately a successful speculator in railroads, a South American adventurer, a slaver and a Carlist agent: characters for which honest Peter had about as many requisites as he possessed for Hamlet or Cardinal Wolsey. He seemed to have abundance of money, however, and played high—two qualities of no small request in this favored region. Dalton's gambling tastes were all originally associated with the turf and its followers; a race in his eyes was the legitimate subject of a bet; and if anything else could rival it in interest, it was some piece of personal prowess or skill, some manly game of strength or activity. To men of this stamp the wager is merely a pledge to record the sentiments they entertain upon a particular event. It is not, as gamesters understand it, the whole sum and substance of the interest. Personal pride, the vain glory of success, is the triumph in one case; in the other, there is no question of anything save gain. To this difference may be traced the wide disparity of feeling exhibited by both in moments of failing fortune. To one, loss comes with all the harassing sensations of defeat; wounded self esteem and baffled hope give poignancy to the failure. To the other, it is a pure question of a moneyed forfeiture, unaccompanied with a single thought that can hurt the pride of the player. Hence the wild transports of passion in the one case, and the calm, cold self-possession in the other.

We need scarcely say to which class Dalton belonged; indeed, so far as the public play at Baden was concerned, it was the notoriety that pleased him most. The invariable falling back to make way for him as he came up; the murmur of his name as he passed on; the comments on what he would probably do; and, not least of all, the buzz of admiring astonishment that was sure to arise as he plumped down before him the great canvas bag, full of gold, which the banker's porter had just handed him!

All the little courtesies of the croupiers, those little official flatteries which mean so much and so little, were especially reserved for *him*; and the unlucky player, who watched his solitary napoleon "raked in" by a yawning, listless croupier, became suddenly aware, by the increased alacrity of look around him, that a higher interest was awakened as Peter drew nigh.

The "count's" chair was ostentatiously placed next the banker's; a score of cards to mark the chances laid before him; the grave croupier—he looked like an archdeacon—passed his gold snuff-box across the table; the smartly-wigged and waist-

coated one at his side presented the cards to cut, with some whispered remark that was sure to make Dalton laugh heartily. The sensation of this *entrée* was certain to last some minutes; and even the impatience of the players to resume the game was a tribute that Dalton accepted as complimentary to the bustle of his approach.

In accordance with the popular superstition of the play-table, Dalton's luck was an overmatch for all the skill of more accomplished gamblers; knowing nothing whatever of the game, only aware when he had won or lost, by seeing that his stake had doubled or disappeared, he was an immense winner. Night after night the same fortune attended him, and so unerringly seemed all his calculations made, that the very caprices of his play looked like well-studied and deep combinations. If many of the bystanders were disposed to this opinion, the "bankers" thought otherwise; they knew that, in the end, the hour of retribution must come, and, through all their losses, not only observed every mark of courteous deference towards him, but, by many a bland smile and many a polite gesture, seemed to intimate the pleasure they felt in his good fortune. This was all that was wanting to fill up the measure of Dalton's delight.

"There isn't a bit of envy or bad feeling about them chaps," he would often say; "whether I carry away forty naps. or four hundred of a night, they're just as civil. Faix! he knew many a born gentleman might take a lesson from them."

So long as he continued to win, Dalton felt comparatively little interest in play, beyond the notice his presence and his large stakes were sure to excite. As a game, it possessed no hold upon him; and when he had changed his heaps of glittering gold for notes, he arose to leave the table, and to forget all that had occurred there as matters of no possible interest to remember.

Such was no longer the case when fortune turned. Then, and for the first time, the gambler's passion awoke in his heart, and the sting of defeat sent its pangs through him. The prying, searching looks of the bystanders, too, were a dreadful ordeal; for all were curious to see how he bore his losses, and Dalton was no accomplished gamester, who could lose with all the impassive gravity of seeming indifference. Still less was he gifted with that philosophy of the play-table, that teaches a timely retreat before adverse fortune; he knew nothing of those sage maxims by which the regular gambler controls his temper and regulates his conduct; nor had he learned the art by which good and sterling qualities, the gifts of noble natures, can be brought into the service of a low and degrading vice! Dalton, it must be owned, was what is called "a bad loser"—that is, he lost his temper with his money; and the more steadily luck seemed against him, the more determinedly did he "back his fortune." Now doubling, now trebling his stake, he lost considerable sums, till at last, as the hand of the clock stood within a few minutes of the closing hour, he emptied the remainder of his bag upon the table, and, without counting, set it all upon a card.

"Rouge perd et couleur!" cried the banker, and raked in the glittering heap, and, amid a murmur of half-compassionate astonishment, Peter arose from the table. Mrs. Ricketts and her suite were all in the ball-room, but Dalton only remembered them when he had gained the open air. The terrible shock of his reverse had overwhelmed all his faculties, and almost stunned him to unconsciousness. At last, he bethought him of his guests; but it was some time before he could summon sufficient composure of look to go in search of them. He had been so accustomed—to use his own phrase—"to ride the winner," that he didn't know how to face the company as a beaten man. He thought of all the glances of impertinent pity his presence would call forth, and imagined the buzz of remark and comment every line of his features would give rise to. Poor Peter!—little knew he that such signs of sympathy are never given to the very saddest of misfortunes, and that, in such a society, no one wastes a thought upon his neighbor's reverses, except when they serve as a guide to himself.

He did, indeed, overhear from time to time little broken sentences like these: "The old fellow with the white mustache has had a squeeze to night;" "He caught it heavy and thick;" "Must have lost close on a thousand naps.;" "Bank walked into him;" and so on—comments as free from any tone of sympathy as the proudest heart could possibly have asked for. But even these were easier to bear than the little playful cajoleries of Mrs. Ricketts on his supposed successes.

Knowing him to be a frequent winner, and hearing from Scroope the large sums he occasionally carried away, she invariably accosted him with some little jesting rebuke on his "dreadful luck"—that "wicked good fortune"—that would follow him in everything and everywhere.

Purvis had been a close spectator of all that went on, this unlucky evening, and was actually occupied with his pencil in calculating the losses when Peter entered the room.

"He had above eighteen or twenty bank-notes of a th-thousand francs," cried he, "when he be-be-began the evening. They are all gone now! He played at least a dozen rouleaux of fifty naps.; and as to the bag, I can m-make no guess how m-m-much it held."

"I'll tell you then, sir," said Peter, good-humoredly, as he just overheard the last remark. "The bag held three hundred and eighty napoleons; and as you're pretty correct in the other items, you'll not be far from the mark by adding about fifty or sixty naps. for little bets here and there."

"What coolness—what stoical indifference!" whispered Mrs. Ricketts to Martha, but loud enough for Dalton to hear. "That is so perfectly Irish; they can be as impetuous as the Italian, and possess all the self-restraint and impassive bearing of the Indian warrior."

"But w-w-why did you go on, when luck was a-a-against you?"

"Who told me it was against me till I lost all my money?" cried Dalton. "If the first reverse was to make a man feel beat, it would be a very cowardly world, Mr. Purvis."

"Intensely Irish!" sighed Mrs. Ricketts.

"Well maybe it is," broke in Peter, who was not in a mood to accept anything in a complimentary sense. "Irish it may be; and as you remarked a minute ago, we're little better than savages——"

"Oh, Mr. Dalton—dear Mr. Dalton!"

"No matter; I'm not angry, ma'am. The newspapers says as bad—ay, worse, every day of the week. But what I'm observing is, that the man that could teach me how to keep my money could never have taught me how to win it. You know the old proverb about the 'faint heart,' Mr. Purvis?"

"Yes; but I—I—I don't want a f-f-fair lady!"

"Faix! I believe you're right there, my little chap," said Peter, laughing heartily, and at once recovering all his wonted good-humor at the sound of his own mellow-toned mirth; and in this pleasant mood he gave an arm to each of his fair companions, and led them into the supper-room. There was an ostentatious desire for display in the order Dalton gave that evening to the waiter. It seemed as if he wished to appear perfectly indifferent about his losses. The table was covered with a costly profusion that attracted general notice. Wines of the rarest and most precious vintages stood on the sideboard. Dalton did the honors with even more than his accustomed gayety. There was a stimulant in that place at the head of the table—there was some magical influence in the duty of host that never failed with him. The sense of sway and power that ambitious minds feel in high and pre-eminent stations were all his, as he sat at the top of his board; and it must be owned, that with many faults of manner, and many shortcomings on the score of taste, yet Peter did the honors of his table well and gracefully.

Certain is it Mrs. Ricketts and her friends thought so. Zoe was in perfect ecstasies at the readiness of his repartees, and the endless variety of his anecdotes. He reminded her at once of Sheridan and "poor dear Mirabeau," and various other "beaux esprits" she used to live with. Martha listened to him with sincere pleasure. Purvis grew very tipsy in the process of his admiration, and the old general, suddenly brought back to life and memory, under the influence of champagne, thought him so like Jack Trevor, of the Engineers, that he blubbered out, "I think I'm listening to Jack. It's poor Trevor over again!"

Was it any wonder if in such intoxications Peter forgot all his late reverses, nor ever remembered them till he had wished his company good night, and found himself alone in his own chamber! Pecuniary difficulties were no new thing to Dalton, and it would not have interfered with his pleasant dreams that night had the question been one of those ordinary demands which he well knew how to resist or evade by many a legal sleight and many an illegal artifice; but here was a debt of honor; he had given his name, three or four times during the evening, for large sums, lost on the very instant they were borrowed! These must be repaid on the next day; but how, he knew not. How he "stood" in Abel Kraus's books he had not the remotest idea. It might be with a balance, or it might be with a deficit. All he really knew was, that he had latterly drawn largely and spent freely; and, as Abel always smiled and seemed satisfied, Peter concluded that his affairs needed no surer or safer evidences of prosperity. To have examined ledgers and day-books with such palpable proofs of solvency, would have been, in his eyes, an act of as great absurdity as that of a man who would not believe in the sunshine till he had first consulted the thermometer!

"I must see Abel early to-morrow. Abel will set it all right," were the conclusions

to which he always came back; and if not very clearly evident how, why, or by what means, still he was quite satisfied that honest Kraus would extricate him from every difficulty. "The devil go with it for black and red," said he, as he lay down in his bed. "I'd have plenty of cash in my pocket for everything this night, if it wasn't for that same table; and an ugly game it is as ever a man played. Shuffle and cut; faites your 'jeu;' thirty-four—thirty-three; red wins—black loses; there's the whole of it; sorrow more on't, except the sad heart that comes afterwards!" These last words he uttered with a deep sigh, and then turned his face to the pillow.

He passed a restless, feverish neight; the sleep being more harassing than even his waking moments, disturbed as it was by thoughts of all he had lately gone through. All the tremendous excitement of the play-table, heightened by the effect of wine, made up a wild, chaotic confusion in his brain, that was almost madness. He awoke repeatedly, too, eager for daylight, and the time to call upon honest Abel. At these times he would pace his room up and down, framing the speeches by which he meant to open the interview. Kraus was familiar with his usual "pleas." With Ireland and her stereotyped distresses he was thoroughly conversant. Famine, fever, potato-rot, poor-rates, emigration and eviction, were themes he could have almost discussed himself; but all he recognized in them was an urgent demand for money, and an occasion for driving the very hardest of bargains. The Russian remittances had been less regular of late; so at least Abel averred, for Dalton neither knew, nor tried to know, any details. The dates were frequently inconvenient, and the places of payment oftentimes remote. Still, Abel was civil—nay, almost cordial; and what can any man ask for more than a smile from his banker?

Dalton was quite at ease on one point, Kraus was sure to know nothing of his late losses at play; in fact, out of his little den wherein he sat he seemed to be aware of nothing in the whole wide world. A small "slip," which arrived each morning from Frankfort, told him the current exchanges of the day. The faces of his clients revealed all the rest. But Dalton was greatly deceived on this point. There was not the slightest incident of Baden with which he was not familiar, nor any occurrence in its life of dissipation on which he was uninformed. His knowledge was not the offspring of any taste for scandal, or any liking for the secret gossiping of society. No; his was a purely practical and professional information. The archduke, who had lost so heavily at roulette, would need a loan on the morrow; the count, who was about to elope with the marchioness, must have bills on Paris; the colonel, who had shot the baron in a duel, couldn't escape over the frontier without money. In a word, every vice and iniquity seemed the tributaries of his trade; and whether to consummate their wickedness, or escape its penalty, men must first come to Abel Kraus!

To see him crouching behind his little desk, poring over the scattered fragments of dirty papers, which were his only books, you would never have suspected that he had a thought above the mystic calculations before him. Watch him more narrowly, however, and you will perceive that not a figure can cross the street and approach his door without meeting a shrewd, quick glance from those dark eyes; while a faint muttering sound betrays his detection of the visitor's object.

Long, then, before Dalton swaggered up to the money-changer's den, Abel knew every circumstance of the previous night, and had actually before him on his desk a correct account of all the sums he had lost at play. Abel was not unprepared for such tidings. Dalton was precisely the man to rush headlong into play the moment fortune turned with him, and the pang of defeat was added to the bitterness of a loss; Abel only wondered that the reverse had not come earlier. And so he mumbled below his breath, as, with his hat set jauntily on one side, and his hands stuck carelessly beneath his coat-tails, Dalton came forward.

Peter had so far "got up" his air of easy indifference as to whistle a tune, but, somehow, as he drew nearer to the door, the sounds waxed fainter and fainter, and, before he had crossed the threshold, had sunk away into the cadence of a heavy sigh. Abel never looked up as the other entered, but, affecting the deepest preoccupation, went on with his figures.

"Morrow, Abel," said Dalton, as he threw himself into a chair, and, removing his hat, began to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. "This is a murdering hot day. It's not ten yet, and the sun's roasting!"

"Fine weather for de harvest, Herr von Dalton, but a leetle rain do no harm."

"Faix! I think not—neither to man nor beast!"

Abel grinned at the brawny throat and massive proportions that seemed so unequal to sustain the heat, but said nothing.

"How's the exchange, Abel?" said Peter—"how's the exchange?"

Now, in justice to our worthy friend Dalton, we must own that he put this question without having the very remotest idea of its meaning. An inscription from the tomb of the Pharaohs would have been to the full as intelligible to him as an abstract from the "City Article." He asked it as certain "charming women" inquire about the compass on board-ship—something, in fact, suitable to the time and place, and proper to be done on like occasions.

"De exchange is very uncertain; de market is up and down," said Abel, dryly.

"That's bad," said Dalton, gravely—"that's very bad!"

"De Mongolian loan is de reason," rejoined Abel.

Dalton gave a grunt that might mean assent or displeasure with that view of the case, but did not trust himself with more.

"Dey will not take de scrip at eighty-two, and I tink dey are right."

"Faix! I don't doubt but that they are!" chimed in Peter.

"Dey are right, if all be true we hear of de security. It is de mines of de state dat are hypotheked—how you call it—what you say, 'hypotheked'?"

Dalton was completely puzzled now, and could only scratch his ear—his invariable symptom of utter discomfiture.

"'Tis no matter," cried Abel, with a grating, harsh laugh. "Dey promise, and no pay; and dat is very bad—ha! ha! ha!"

Now Dalton joined in the laugh, but with as ill a grace as need be.

"Dey promise, and dey no pay, Herr von Dalton!" repeated the Jew, with another laugh, as though he could not tear himself away from so excellent a jest. "Dey borrow, dat dey may make explorations—how you call dem?—wit oder men's money. If dey do win, well! if dey lose—bah! dey are bankrupt!"

Now all these allusions were of the most provoking character to poor Dalton, who could not help feeling a very different sympathy for the Mongolians from that expressed by Abel Kraus. "Who knows what difficulties they're in—maybe they'd pay it if they could," muttered he, as he slapped his boot with his cane, and fell into a musing fit.

"Dey shall not have one kreutzer of my moneys; I can tell dem dat!" said Kraus, as he buttoned up the keys of his strong-box, as though suiting the action to his words.

"Don't put up the keys so soon, Abel," said Dalton, with an effort at a laugh. "I want to see the inside of that little iron trunk there."

"You no want money, Herr von Dalton!" exclaimed the other, in amazement. "You no want money! You draw eight hundred florin on Tuesday; you have four hundred on Wednesday evening, and seven rouleaux of napoleons; on Saturday, again, I send you twenty thousand franc!"

"All true—every word of it," said Dalton. "But there's no use telling a hungry man about the elegant dinner he ate last week! The short of the matter is, I want cash now."

Kraus appeared to reflect for a few minutes, and then said: "If a leetle sum will do——"

"Faix! it will not. I want five hundred naps., at the very least."

Kraus threw down his pen, and stared at him without speaking.

"One would think from your face, Abel, that I was asking for a loan of the national debt. I said five hundred naps."

Abel shook his head mournfully, and merely muttered "Ja! ja!" to himself. "We will look over de account, Herr von Dalton," said he at last; "perhaps I am wrong, I no say, I am sure; but I tink—dat is, I believe—you overdraw very much your credit."

"Well, supposing I did; is it the first time?" said Dalton, angrily. "Ain't I as good a man now as I was before?"

"You are a very goot man, I know well; a very goot and a very pleasant man; but you know de old German proverb, 'Das Gut ist nicht Gelt.'"

"I never heard it till now," muttered Peter, sulkily; "but if a robber in this country put a pistol to your head, he'd be sure to have a proverb to justify him! But to come to the point: can I have the money?"

"I fear very much——No!" was the dry response.

"No—is it?" cried Dalton, starting up from his seat; "did you say no?"

Kraus nodded twice, slowly and deliberately

"Then bad luck to the rap ever you'll see more of *my* money," cried Peter, passionately. "You old Jewish thief, I ought to have known you long ago; fifty, sixty, seventy per cent. I was paying for the use of my own cash, and every bill I gave as good as the bank paper! Ain't you ashamed of yourself, tell me that—ain't you downright ashamed of yourself?"

"I tink not; I have no occasions for shame," said the other, calmly.

"Faix! I believe you there," retorted Dalton. "Your line of life doesn't offer many opportunities of blushing. But if I can't bring you to know shame, maybe I can teach you to feel sorrow. Our dealing is ended from this day out. Peter Dalton doesn't know you more! He never saw you! he never heard of your name! D'ye mind me now? None of your boasting among the English here that you have Mr. Dalton's business. If I hear of your saying it, it's not a contradiction will satisfy me. Understand me well—it's not to leave a mark of friendship that I'll come in here again!"

The fierce tone in which Dalton said these words, and the gesture he made with a tremendous walking-stick, were certainly well calculated to excite Abel's terrors, who, opening a little movable pane of the window, looked out into the street, to assure himself of succor in case of need.

"What's the use of family, rank, or fortune," cried Dalton, indignantly, as he paced up and down the little shop, in a perfect frenzy of passion, "if a little dirty Jew, with a face like a rat-terrier, can insult you? My uncle is one of the first men in Austria, and my daughter's a princess; and there's a creature you wouldn't touch with the tongs has the impudence to—to—to——" Evidently the precise offense did not at once occur to Dalton's memory, for, after several efforts to round off his phrase—"to outrage me—to outrage me!" he cried with the satisfaction of one who had found a missing object.

Meanwhile, Abel who had gradually resumed his courage, was busily engaged in some deep and intricate calculations, frequently referring to a number of ill-scrawled scraps of paper on a file before him, not heeding, if he heard, the storm around him.

"Dere, saar," said he at length, as he pushed a slip of paper towards Dalton—"dere, saar; our affairs is closed, as you say. Dere is your debt—eighteen hundred and seventy-three florins, 'convenzion money.' Dere may be leetle charges to be added for commissions and oder tings; but dat is de chief sum which you pay, now."

There was a sharp emphasis on the last monosyllable that made Dalton start.

"I'll look over it; I'll compare it with my books at home," said he, haughtily, as he stuffed the slip of paper into his waistcoat pocket.

"Den you no pay to-day?" asked Abel.

"Nor to-morrow, nor the day after, nor, maybe, a while longer," said Dalton, with a composure he well knew how to feel in like circumstances.

"Very well, den; I will have securities. I will have bail for my moneys before tree o'clock this day. Dere is de sommation before de tribunal, Herr von Dalton." And he handed a printed document, stamped with the official seal of a law court, across the table. "You will see," added the Jew, with a malicious grin, "dat I was not unprepared for all dis. Abel Kraus is only an old Jew, but he no let de Gentile cheat him!"

Dalton was stunned by the suddenness of this attack. The coolly-planned game of the other so overmatched all the passionate outbreak of his own temper, that he felt himself mastered at once by his wily antagonist.

"To the devil I fling your summons!" cried he, savagely. "I can't even read it."

"Your avocat will explain it all. He will tell you dat if you no pay de moneys herein charged, nor give a goot and sufficient surety dereof before de civil gericht, dis day, dat you will be consign to de prison of de state at Calsruhe, dere to remain your 'leben lang,' if so be you never pay."

"Arrest me for debt the day it's demanded!" cried Dalton, whose notions of the law's delay were not a little shocked by such peremptory proceedings.

"It is in criminal as well as in civil gericht to draw on a banker beyond your moneys, and no pay, on demand."

"There's justice for you!" cried Dalton, passionately. "Highway robbery, housebreaking, is decenter. There's some courage at least in *them!* But I wouldn't believe you if you were on your oath. There isn't such a law in Europe, nor in the East 'Ingies!'"

Abel grinned, but never uttered a word.

"So, any ould thief, then, can trump up a charge against a man—can send him off to jail—before he can look around him!"

"If he do make false charge, he can be condem to de galleys," was the calm reply.

"And what's the use of that?" cried Dalton, in a transport of rage. "Isn't the galleys as good a life as sitting there? Isn't it as manly a thing to strain at an oar as to sweat a guinea?"

"I am a burgher of the Grand Duchy," said Abel, boldly, "and if you defame me, it shall be before witnesses!" And as he spoke he threw wide the window, so that the passers-by might hear what took place.

Dalton's face became purple; the veins in his forehead swelled like a thick cordage, and he seemed almost bursting with

suppressed passion. For an instant it was even doubtful if he could master his struggling wrath. At last he grasped the heavy chair he had been sitting on, and dashing it down on the ground, broke it into atoms; and then, with an execration in Irish, the very sound of which rang like a curse, he strode out of the shop, and hastened down the street.

Many a group of merry children, many a morning excursionist returning from his donkey ride, remarked the large old man, who, muttering and gesticulating as he went, strode along the causeway, not heeding nor noticing those around him. Others made way for him as for one it were not safe to obstruct, and none ventured a word as he passed by. On he went, careless of the burning heat and the hot rays of the sun—against which already many a "jalousie" was closed, and many an awning spread—up the main street of the town, across the Platz, and then took his way up one of the steep and narrow lanes which led towards the upper town. To see him, nothing could look more purpose-like than his pace and the manner of his going; and yet he knew nothing of where he walked nor whither the path led him. A kind of instinct directed his steps into an old and oft-followed track, but his thoughts were bent on other objects. He neither saw the half-terrified glances that were turned on him, nor marked how they who were washing at the fountain ceased their work, as he passed, to stare at him.

At last he reached the upper town; emerging from which by a steep flight of narrow stone steps, he gained a little terraced spot of ground, crossed by two rows of linden trees, under whose shade he had often sat of an evening to watch the sunset over the plain. He did not halt here, but passing across the grassy sward, made for a small low house which stood at the angle of the terrace. The shutters of the shop-window were closed, but a low half-door permitted a view of the interior; leaning over which, Dalton remained for several minutes, as if lost in deep reverie.

The silent loneliness of the little shop at first appeared to engross all his attention, but after a while other thoughts came slowly flitting through his muddy faculties, and with a deep-drawn sigh he said:

"Dear me! but I thought we were living here still! It's droll enough how one can forget himself! Hans, Hans Roeckle, my man!" cried he, beating with his stick against the doors as he called out. "Hanserl! Hans, I say! Well, it's a fine way to keep a shop! How does the creature know but I'm a lady that would buy half the gimcracks in the place, and he's not to be found! That's what makes these devils so poor—they never mind their business. 'Tis nothing but fun and diversion they think of the whole day long. There's no teaching them that there's nothing like 'indhustry!' What makes us the finest people under the sun? Work—nothing but work! I'm sure I'm tired telling him so! Hans, are you asleep, Hans Roeckle?" No answer followed this summons, and now Dalton, after some vain efforts to unbolt the door, strode over it into the shop. "Faix! I don't wonder that you hadn't a lively business," said he, as he looked around at the half-stocked shelves, over which dust and cobwebs were spread like a veil. "Sorrow a thing I don't know as well as I do my gaiters! There's the same soldiers, and that's the woodcutter with the matches on his back, and there's the little cart Frank mended for him! Poor Frank, where is he now, I wonder?" Dalton sighed heavily as he continued to run his eye over the various articles all familiar to him long ago. "What's become of Hans?" cried he at last, aloud; "if it wasn't an honest place he wouldn't have a stick left! To go away and leave everything at sixes and sevens—well, well, it's wonderful!"

Dalton ascended the stairs—every step of which was well known to him—to the upper story, where he used to live. The door was unfastened, and the rooms were just as he had left them—even to the little table at which Nelly used to sit beside the window. Nothing was changed; a bouquet of faded flowers—the last, perhaps, she had ever plucked in that garden—stood in a glass in the window-sill; and so like was all to the well-remembered past, that Dalton almost thought he heard her foot-step on the floor.

"Well, it was a nice little quiet spot, any way!" said he, as he sank into a chair, and a heavy tear stole slowly along his cheek. "Maybe it would have been well for me if I never left it! With all our poverty we spent many a pleasant night beside that hearth, and many's the happy day we passed in that wood there. To be sure, we were all together, then! that makes a difference! instead of one here, another there, God knows when to meet; if ever!

"I used to fret many a time about our being so poor, but I was wrong after all, for we divided our troubles amongst us, and that left a small share for each; but there's Nelly now, pining away—I don't know for

what, but I see it plain enough; and here am I myself with a heavy heart this day; and sure, who can tell if Kate, great as she is, hasn't her sorrows; and poor Frank, 'tis many a hard thing, perhaps, he has to bear. I believe in reality we were better then!"

He arose, and walked about the room: now, stopping before each well-remembered object; now, shaking his head in mournful acquiescence with some unspoken regret; he went in turn through each chamber, and then, passing from the room that had been Nelly's, he descended a little zigzag, rickety stair, by which Hans had contrived to avoid injuring the gnarled branches of a fig-tree that grew beneath. Dalton now found himself in the garden; but how unlike what it had been! Once, the perfection of blooming richness and taste—the beds without a weed, the gravel trimly raked and shining, bright channels of limpid water running amid the flowers, and beautiful birds of gay plumage caged beneath the shady shrubs—now, all was overrun with rank grass and tall weeds; the fountains were dried up, the flowers trodden down—even the stately yew hedge, the massive growth of a century, was broken by the depredations of the mountain cattle. All was waste, neglect, and desolation.

"I'd not know the place—it is not like itself," muttered Dalton, sorrowfully. "I never saw the like of this before. There's the elegant fine plants dying for want of care! and the rose-trees rotting just for want of a little water! To think of how he labored late and early here, and to see it now! He used to call them carnations his children: there was one Agnes, and there was another Undine—indeed, I believe that was a lily: and I think there was a Nelly, too; droll enough to make out they were Christians! but sure, they did as well; and he watched after them as close! ay, and stranger than all, he'd sit and talk to them for hours. It's a *quare* world altogether; but maybe it's our own fault that it's not not better; and perhaps we ought to give in more to each other's notions, and not sneer at whims and fancies when they don't please ourselves."

It was while thus ruminating, Dalton entered a little arbour, whose trellised walls and roof had been one of the triumphs of Hanserl's skill. Ruin, however, had now fallen on it, and the drooping branches and straggling tendrils hung mournfully down on all sides, covering the stone table, and even the floor, with their vegetation. As Dalton stood, sad and sorrow-struck at this desolation, he perceived the figure of Hans himself, as, half-hidden by the leaves, he sat in his accustomed seat. His head was uncovered, but his hair fell in great masses on either side, and with his long beard, now neglected and untrimmed, gave him an unusually wild and savage look. A book lay open on his knees, but his hands were crossed over it, and his eyes were upturned as if in reverie.

Dalton felt half ashamed at accosting him; there was something ungracious in the way he had quitted the poor dwarf's dwelling; there had been a degree of estrangement for weeks before between them, and altogether he knew that he had ill-requited all the unselfish kindness of the little toy-seller; so that he would gladly have retired without being noticed when Hans suddenly turned and saw him.

It was almost with a cry of surprise Hans called out his name.

"This is kind of you, Herr von Dalton. Is the fräulein——" He stopped and looked eagerly around.

"No, Hanserl," said Dalton, answering to the half-expressed question, "Nelly isn't with me; I came up alone. Indeed, to tell the truth, I found myself here without well knowing why or how. Old habit, I suppose, led me, for I was thinking of something else."

"They were kind thoughts that guided your steps," said the dwarf, in accents of deep gratitude, "for I have been lonely of late."

"Why don't you come down and see us, Hanserl? It's not so far off, and you know Nelly is always glad to see you."

"It is true," said the dwarf, mournfully."

"You were always a good friend to us, Hanserl," said Dalton, taking the other's hand and pressing it cordially; "and faix! as the world goes," added he, sighing, "there's many a thing easier found than a friend."

"The rich can have all—even friendship," muttered Hans, lowly.

"I don't know that, Hans; I'm not so sure you're right there."

"They buy it," said the dwarf, with a fierce energy, "as they can buy everything: the pearl for which the diver hazards life—the gem that the polisher has grown blind over—the fur for which the hunter has shed his heart's blood. And yet when they've got them they have not got content."

"Ay, that's true," sighed Dalton. "I suppose nobody is satisfied in this world."

"But they can be if they will but look upward," cried Hans, enthusiastically. "If

they will learn to think humbly of themselves, and on how slight a claim they possess all the blessings of their lot—if they will but bethink them that the sun and the flowers, the ever-rolling sea, and the leafy forest, are all their inheritance—that for them, as for all, the organ peals through the dim-vaulted aisle with promises of eternal happiness; and lastly, that, with all the wild contentions of men's passions, there is ever gushing up in the human heart a well of kind and affectionate thoughts —like those springs we read of, of pure water amid the salt ocean, and which, taken at the source, are sweet and good to drink from. Men are not so bad by nature, it is the prizes for which they struggle, the goals they strive for, corrupt them! Make of this fair earth a gambling-table, and you will have all the base passions of the gamester around it."

"Bad luck to it for gambling," said Dalton, whose intelligence was just able to grasp at the illustration, "I wish I'd never seen a card; and that reminds me, Hans, that maybe you'd give me a bit of advice. There was a run against me last night in that thieving place. The 'red' came up fourteen times, and I, backing against it every time, sometimes ten, sometimes twenty—ay, faix! as high as fifty naps. You may think what a squeeze I got! And when I went to ould Kraus this morning, this is what he sticks in my hand instead of a roll of bank-notes." With these words Dalton presented to Hans the printed summons of the "Tribunal."

"A Gerichts-Ruf!" said Hans, with a voice of deep reverence, for he entertained a most German terror for the law and its authority. "This is a serious affair."

"I suppose it is," sighed Dalton; "but I hope we're in a Christian country, where the law is open?"

Hans nodded, and Peter went on:

"What I mean is, that nothing can be done in a hurry—that when we have a man on our side, he can oppose and obstruct, and give delays, picking a hole here and finding a flaw there; asking for vouchers for this and proofs for that, and then waiting for witnesses that never come, and looking for papers that never existed; making Chancery of it, Hans, my boy—making Chancery of it."

"Not here—not with us!" said Hans, gravely. "You must answer to this charge to-day, and before four o'clock, too, or to-morrow there will be a writ of 'contumacy' against you. You haven't got the money?"

"Of course I haven't, nor a ten-pound note towards it."

"Then you must provide security."

"'Tis easy said, my little man, but it is not so easy dealing with human beings as with the little wooden figures in your shop beyond."

"There must be 'good and substantial bail,' as the summons declares; such as will satisfy the court," said Hans, who seemed at once to have become a man of acute worldly perception at sight of this printed document.

"Security—bail!" exclaimed Dalton. "You might as well ask Robinson Crusoe who'd be godfather to his child on the desert island. There's not a man, woman, or child in the place would give me a meal's meat. There's not a house I could shelter my head in for one night; and, see now," cried he, carried away by an impulse of passionate excitement, "it isn't by way of disparagement I say it to this little town—for the world all over is the same—the more you give the less you get! Treat them with champagne and venison; send money to this one, make presents to that, and the day luck turns with you, the best word they'll have for you is, 'He was a wasteful, careless devil—couldn't keep it when he had it—lived always above his means—all hand and mouth.' It's a kind friend that will vouchsafe as much as, 'Poor fellow—I'm sorry for him!'"

"And to what end is wealth," cried Hans, boldly "if it but conduce to this? Are the friends well chosen who can behave thus? Are the hospitalities well bestowed that meet such return? or is it not rather selfishness is paid back in the same base coin that it uttered?"

"For the matter of that," said Dalton, angrily, "I never found that vulgar people was a bit more grateful than their betters, nor low manners any warranty for high principles; and when one is to be shipwrecked, it's better to go down in a 'seventy-four' than be drowned out of a punt in a mill-pond."

"It's past noon already," said Hans, pointing to the sun-dial on his house. "There's little time to be lost."

"And as little to be gained," muttered Dalton, moodily as he strolled out into the garden.

"Let me have this paper," said Hans; "I will see the Herr Kraus myself, and try if something cannot be done. With time, I suppose, you could meet this claim?"

"To be sure I could, when my remittances arrive—when my instalments are paid up—when my rents come in—when——" He was about to add, "'when luck changes," but he stopped himself just in time.

"There need be no difficulty if you can be certain," said Hans, slowly.

"Certain!—and of what is a man certain in this life?" said Dalton, in his tone of moralizing. "Wasn't I certain of the Corrig-O'Neal estate? Wasn't I certain of Miles Dalton's property in the funds? Wasn't I certain that if the Parliament wasn't taken away from us, that I'd have my own price for the borough of Knocknascanclera?—and sorrow one of the three ever came to me. Ay, no later than last night, wasn't I certain that black would come up——"

"When I said certain," broke in Hans, "I meant so far as human foresight could pledge itself; but I did not speak of the chances of the play-table. If your expectations of payment rest on these, do not talk of them as certainties."

"What's my estates for? Where's my landed property?" cried Dalton, indignantly. "To hear you talk, one would think I was a Chevalier of Indhustry, as they call them."

"I ask your pardon, herr," said Hans, humbly. "It is in no spirit of idle curiosity that I speak; less still, with any wish to offend you. I will now see what is best to do. You may leave all in my hands, and by four o'clock, or five at furthest, you shall hear from me."

"That's sensible—that's friendly," cried Dalton, shaking the other's hand warmly, and really feeling the most sincere gratitude for the kindness.

If there was any act of friendship he particularly prized, it was the intervention that should relieve him of the anxiety and trouble of a difficult negotiation, and leave him, thoughtless and careless, to stroll about, neither thinking of the present nor uneasy for the future. The moment such an office had devolved upon another, Dalton felt relieved of all sense of responsibility before his own conscience; and, although the question at issue were his own welfare or ruin, he ceased to think of it as a personal matter. Like his countryman, who consoled himself when the house was in flames by thinking "he was only a lodger," he actually forgot his own share of peril by reflecting on the other interests that were at stake. And the same theory that taught him to leave his soul to his priest's care, and his health to his doctor's, made him quite satisfied when a friend had charge of his honor or his fortune.

It was as comfortable a kind of fatalism as need be; and, assuredly, to have seen Peter's face as he now descended the steps to the lower town, it would be rash to deny that he was not a sincere believer in his philosophy. No longer absent in air and clouded in look, he had a smile and a pleasant word for all who passed him; and now, with a jest for this one, and "a kreutzer" for that, he held on his way, with a tail of beggars and children after him, all attracted by that singular mesmerism which draws around certain men everything that is vagrant and idle—from the cripple at the crossing to the half-starved cur dog without an owner.

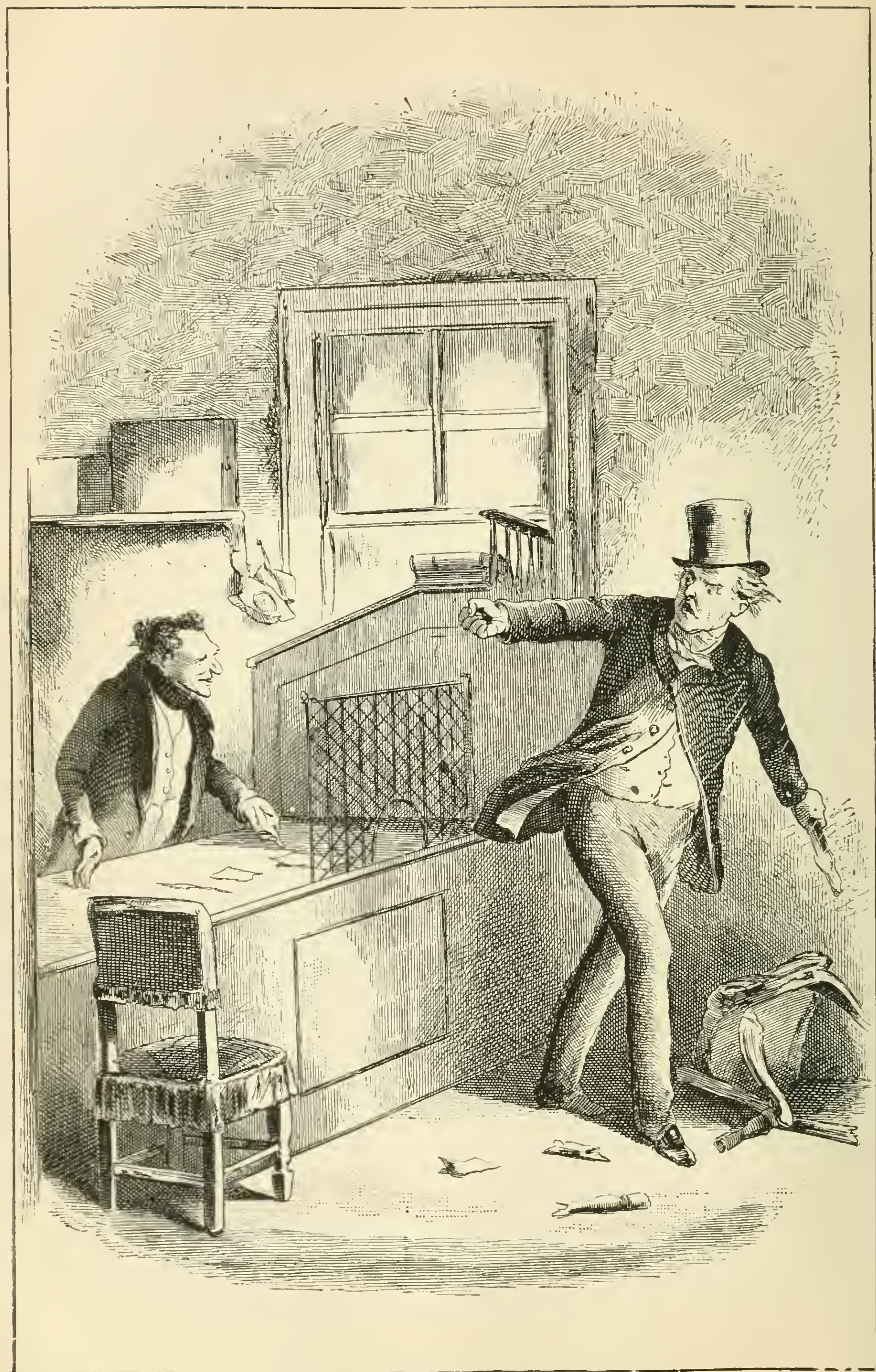
This gift was, indeed, his; and whatever was penniless, and friendless, and houseless, seemed to feel they had a claim on Peter Dalton.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE LAST STAKE OF ALL.

Dalton found his little household on the alert on his return home, for Mrs. Ricketts had just received an express to inform her that her "two dearest friends on earth" were to arrive that evening in Baden, and she was busily engaged in arranging a little *fête* for their reception. All that poor Nelly knew of the expected guests was, that one was a distinguished soldier, and the other a no less illustrious diplomatist: claims which, for the reader's illumination, we beg to remark were embodied in the persons of Colonel Haggerstone and Mr. Foglass. Most persons in Mrs. Ricketts's position would have entertained some scruples about introducing a reinforcement to the already strong garrison of the villa, and would have been disposed to the more humble but safe policy enshrined in the adage of "letting well alone." But she had a spirit far above such small ambitions, and saw that the Dalton hospitalities were capable of what, in parliamentary phrase, is called a "most extended application."

By the awe-struck air of Nelly, and the overweening delight manifested by her father, Zoe perceived the imposing effect of great names upon both, and so successfully did she mystify the description of her two coming friends that an uninterested listener might readily have set them down for the Duke and Prince Metternich, unless, indeed, that the praises she lavished on them would have seemed even excessive for such greatness. A triumphal arch was erected half-way up the avenue, over which in flowery initials, were to be seen the letters "B." and "P."—symbols to represent "Bayard" and "Puffendorf;" under which guise Haggerstone and the consul were to



Abel narrowly escapes caning.

be represented. Strings of colored lamps were to be festooned along the approach, over which an Irish harp was to be exhibited in a transparency, with the very original inscription of "Cead Mille failtha," in Celtic letters beneath.

The banquet—the word dinner was strictly proscribed for that day—was to be arrayed in the hall, where Dalton was to preside, if possible, with an Irish crown upon his head, supported by Nelly as the Genius of Irish music; and Zoe herself in a composite character—half empress, half prophetess—a something between Sappho and the Queen of Sheba; Martha, for the convenience of her various household cares, was to be costumed as a Tyrolese hostess; and Purvis, in a dress of flesh-colored web, was to represent Mercury, sent on purpose from above to deliver a message of welcome to the arriving guests. As for the general, there was a great doubt whether he ought to be Belisarius or Suwarrow, for, being nearly as blind as the one and as deaf as the other, his qualifications were about evenly balanced.

If not insensible to some of the absurdities of this notable project, Dalton forgot the ridicule in the pleasanter occupation of the bustle and movement, and the tumult it occasioned. It did his heart good to see the lavish waste and profusion that went forward. The kitchen-table, as it lay spread with fruit, fish, and game, might have made a study for "Schneiders;" and honest Peter's face glowed with delight as he surveyed a scene so suggestive of convivial thoughts and dissipation.

"No doubt of it, Nelly," said he, "but Mother Ricketts has grand notions! She does the thing like a princess!" The praise was so far well bestowed, that there was something royal in dispensing hospitality without regarding the cost; while, at the same time, she never entertained the slightest sentiment of esteem for those in whose favor it was to be exercised. Among the very few things she feared in this world was Haggerstone's "tongue," which she herself averred was best conciliated by "giving occupation to his teeth." The banquet was "got up" with that object, while it also gave a favorable opportunity of assuming that unbounded sway in Dalton's household which should set the question of her supremacy at rest forever.

To this end was poor Martha engaged with puff-paste, and jellies, and whip cream, with wreaths of roses and pyramids of fruit, from dawn till dusk. To this end was Purvis nearly driven out of his mind by endeavoring to get off by heart an address in rhyme, the very first line of which almost carried him off in a fit of coughing—the word Puffendorf being found nearly as unmanageable to voice as it was unsuited to verse. While poor Belisarius, stripped of rule and compass, denied access to water-colors, Indian-ink, or charcoal, spent a most woful day of weary expectancy.

It was, indeed, an awful scene of trouble, fatigue and exertion on every side, adding one more to these million instances where the preparation for the guest has no possible relation to the degree of esteem he is held in. For so is it in the world: our best receptions are decreed to these we care least for; "our friend" is condemned to the family dinner, while we lavish our fortune on mere acquaintances. In these days the fatted calf would not have been killed to commemorate the return of the prodigal, but have been melted down into mock-turtle, to feast "my lord" or "your grace."

The day wore on, and as the arrangements drew nearer to completion, the anxieties were turned towards the guests themselves, who were to have arrived at five o'clock. It was now six, and yet no sign of their coming! Fully a dozen times had Mrs. Ricketts called Martha from some household cares by the adjuration, "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, seest thou nobody coming?" Mercury had twice ventured out on the high road, from which he was driven back by a posse of hooting and laughing children; and Dalton himself paced up and down the terrace in a state of nervous impatience, not a little stimulated by hunger and certain flying visits he paid the iced punch, to see if it "was keeping cool."

There is, assuredly, little mesmeric relation between the expecting host and the lingering guest, or we should not witness all that we do of our friends' unpunctuality in this life. What a want of sympathy between the feverish impatience of the one and the careless dalliance of the other! Not that we intend this censure to apply to the case before us, for Haggerstone had not the very remotest conception of the honors that awaited him, and jogged along his dusty road with no greater desire to be at the end of the journey than was fairly justifiable in one who traveled with German post-horses and Foglass for a companion!

Six o'clock came, and, after another hour of fretful anxiety, it struck seven. By this time beef had become carbon, and fowls were like specimens of lava; the fish was reduced to the state of a "purée," while everything meant to assume the flinty resistance of ice was calmly settling down into a fluid existence. Many an architectural

device of poor Martha's genius was doomed to the fate of her other "castles," and towers and minarets of skillful shape dropped off one by one, like the hopes of her childhood. All the telegraphic announcements from the kitchen were of disasters, but Mrs. Ricketts received the tidings with a Napoleonic calmness; and it was only when warned by the gathering darkness over Dalton's brow that she thought it wiser to "give in."

Dalton's ill-humor had, however, a different source from that which she had expected. It proceeded from the quiet but steady importunity with which little Hans paced up and down before the door, now appearing before one window, now before another, totally insensible to the cold discouragement of Dalton's looks, and evidently bent on paying no attention to all the signs and signals intended for his guidance.

"Doesn't he see we've company in the house? Hasn't the little creature the sense to know that this is no time to be bothering and teasing about money? Has he no decency? Has he no respect for his superiors?" Such were the deep mutterings with which Dalton tried to "blow off the steam" of his indignation, while with many a gesture and motion he indicated his anger and impatience. "Faix! he's like a bailiff out there," cried he at last, as he issued forth to meet him. Whatever might have been the first angry impulses of his heart, his second thoughts were far more gentle and well disposed as he drew near to Hanserl, who stood, cap in hand, in an attitude of deep and respectful attention.

"They have accepted the bail, Herr von Dalton, and this bond needs but your signature," said Hans, mildly, as he held forth a paper towards him.

"Who's the bail? Give me the bond," said Dalton, rapidly; and not waiting for the answer to his question, "where's the name to be, Hanserl?"

"Here, in this space," said the dwarf, dryly.

"That's soon done, if there's no more wanting," rejoined Peter, with a laugh. "'Tis seldom that writing the same two words costs me so little! Won't you step in, a minute, into the house? I'd ask you to stop and eat your dinner, but I know you don't like strangers, and we have company to-day. Well, well, no offense—another time, maybe, when we're alone. He's as proud as the devil, that little chap," muttered he, as he turned back within the house; "I never saw one of his kind that wasn't. 'Tis only creatures with humpbacks and bent shins that never believes they can be wrong in this world; they have a conceit in themselves that's wonderful! Not that there isn't good in him, too—he's a friendly soul as ever I seen! There it is now, Peter Dalton's hand and deed;" and he surveyed the superscription with considerable satisfaction. "There it is, Hans, and much good may it do you!" said he, as he delivered the document with an air of a prince conferring a favor on a subject.

"You will bear in mind that Abel Kraus is a hard creditor!" said Hans, who could not help feeling shocked at the easy indifference Dalton exhibited.

"Well, but haven't we settled with him?" cried Peter, half impatiently.

"So far as surety for his claim goes——"

"Yes, that's what I mean—he's sure of his money—that's all he wants. I'd be the well-off man to-day if *I* was sure of getting back all ever I lent! But nobody does, and, what's more, nobody expects it."

"This bond expires in twelve days," added Hans, more than commonly anxious to suggest some prudential thoughts.

"Twelve days!" exclaimed Peter, who, instead of feeling alarmed at the shortness of the period, regarded it as so many centuries. "Many's the change one sees in the world in twelve days. Wouldn't you take something—a glass of Marcobrunner or a little plain Nantz?"

Hans made no reply, for, with bent-down head, and hands crossed on his bosom, he was deep in thought.

"I'm saying, that maybe you'd drink a glass of wine, Hans?" repeated Dalton; but still no answer came. "What dreamy creatures them Germans are," muttered Peter.

"And then," exclaimed Hanserl, as if speaking to himself, "it is but beginning life anew! Good-bye—farewell." And, so saying, he touched his cap courteously and moved hastily away, while Dalton continued to look after him with compassionate sorrow for one so little capable of directing his path in life. As he re-entered the house, he found that Mrs. Ricketts, abandoning all hope of her distinguished guests, had just ordered the dinner; and honest Peter consoled himself for their absence by observing that they should be twice as jolly by themselves! Had it depended on himself alone, the sentiment might have had some foundation, for there was something of almost wild gayety in his manner. All the vicissitudes of the morning, the painful alternations of hope and fear—hope, so faint as to be a torture, and fear, so dark as to be almost despair—had worked him up to a state of extreme excitement.

To add to this, he drank deeply, quaffing

off whole goblets of wine, and seeming to exult in the mad whirlwind of his own reckless jollity. If the jests he uttered on Scroope's costume, or the other allegorical fancies of Zoe's brain, were not of the most refined taste, they were at least heartily applauded by the indulgent public around his board. Mrs. Ricketts was in perfect ecstasies at the flashes of his "Irish wit;" and even Martha, fain to take on credit what was so worthily endorsed, laughed her own meek laugh of approval. As for Purvis, champagne completed what nature had but begun, and he became perfectly unintelligible ere dinner was over.

All this while poor Nelly's sufferings were extreme; she saw the unblushing, shameless adulation of the parasites, and she saw, too, the more than commonly excited glare in her father's eyes—the wildness of fever rather than the passing excitation of wine. In vain her imploring, beseeching glances were turned towards him; in vain she sought, by all her little devices, to withdraw him from the scene of riotous debauch, or recall him from the excesses of a revel which was an orgie. In his wild and boastful vein he raved about "home," as he still called it, and of his family possessions—at times vaunting of his wealth and greatness, and then as suddenly breaking into mad invectives against the Jews and money-lenders, to whom his necessities had reduced him.

"A good run of luck over there!" cried he, frantically, and, pointing to the blaze of lamps which now sparkled through the trees before the Cursaal. "One good night yonder, and Peter Dalton would defy the world. If you're a lucky hand, Miss Martha, come over and bet for me. I'll make the bank jump for it before I go to bed! I know the secret of it now. It's changing from color to color ruins everybody. You must be steady to one—black or red, whichever it is; stick fast to it. You lose two, three, maybe six or seven times running; never mind, go on still. 'Tis the same with play as with women, as the old song says:

If they're coy and won't hear when you say you adore,
Just squeeze them the tighter and press them the more.

Isn't that it, Mrs. Ricketts? Ah, baithershin! you never knew that song! Miss Martha's blushing; and just for that I'll back 'red' all the evening; and there's the music beginning already. Here's success to us all! and, faix! it's a pleasant way to deserve it."

Nelly drew near him as they were leaving the room, and, passing her arm fondly about him, whispered a few words in his ear.

"And why not this evening?" said he, aloud, and in a rude voice. "Is it Friday, that it ought to bring bad luck? Why shouldn't I go this evening? I can't hear you; speak louder. Ha! ha! ha! Listen to that, Miss Martha. There's the sensible Nelly for you! She says she had a dhrame about me last night!"

"No, dearest papa; but that it was like a dream to me. All the narrative seemed so natural—all the events followed so regularly, and yet I was awake just as I am now."

"More shame for you, then. We can't help ourselves what nonsense we think in our sleep."

"But you'll not go, dearest papa. You'll indulge me for this once, and I'll promise never to teaze you by such follies again."

"Faix! I'll go, sure enough; and, what's more, I'll win five thousand pounds this night, as sure as my name's Peter. I saw a black cat shaving himself before a new tin saucepan; and, if that isn't luck, I'd like to know what is. A black cat won the Curragh stakes for Tom Molly; and it was an egg saucepan made Doctor Groves gain the twenty thousand pounds in the lottery. And so, now, may I never leave this room if I'd take two thousand pounds down for my chances to-night!"

And in all the force of this confidence in fortune, Dalton sallied forth to the Cursaal. The rooms were more than usually crowded, and it was with difficulty that, with Mrs. Ricketts on one arm and Martha on the other, he could force his way to the tables. Once there, however, a courteous reception awaited him, and the urbane croupier moved his own august chair to make room for the honored guest. Although the company was very numerous, the play was as yet but trifling; a stray gold piece here or there glittered on the board, and in the careless languor of the bankers, and the unexcited looks of the bystanders, might be read the fact that none of the well-known frequenters of the place were betting. Dalton's appearance immediately created a sensation of curiosity. Several of those present had witnessed his losses on the preceding night, and were eager to see what course he would now pursue. It was remarked that he was not accompanied, as heretofore, by that formidable money-bag which, with ostentatious noise, he used to fling down on the table before him. Nor did he now produce that worn old leather pocket-book, whose bursting clasp could

scarce contain the roll of bank-notes within it. He sat with his hands crossed before him, staring at the table, but to all seeming not noticing the game. At length, suddenly arousing himself, he lent over and said a few words, in a whisper, to the croupier, who, in an equally low tone, communicated with his colleague across the table. A nod and a smile gave the quiet reply, and Dalton, taking a piece of paper, scrawled a few figures on it with a pencil, and with a motion so rapid as to be unseen by many of the bystanders, the banker pushed several rouleaux of gold before Dalton, and went on with the game.

Dalton broke one of the envelopes, and as the glittering pieces fell out, he moved his fingers through them, as though their very touch was pleasure. At last, with a kind of nervous impatience, he gathered up a handful, and, without counting, threw them on the table.

"How much?" said the croupier.

"The whole of it!" cried Dalton; and scarcely had he spoken, when he won.

A murmur of astonishment ran through the room as he suffered the double stake to remain on the board; which speedily grew into a louder hum of voices, as the banker proceeded to count out the gains of a second victory. Affecting an insight into the game and its chances which he did not possess, Dalton now hesitated and pondered over his bets, increasing his stake at one moment, diminishing it at another, and assuming all the practiced airs of old and tried gamblers. As though in obedience to every caprice, the fortune of the game followed him unerringly. If he lost, it was some mere trifle; when he won, the stake was sure to be a large one. At length even this affected prudence—this mock skill—became too slow for him, and he launched out into all his accustomed recklessness. Not waiting to take in his winnings, he threw fresh handfuls of gold amongst them, till the bank, trembling for its safety, more than once had to reduce the stakes he wished to venture.

"They'd give him five hundred naps. this moment if he'd cease to play," said some one behind Dalton's chair. "There's nothing the bank dreads so much as a man with courage to back his luck."

"I'd wish them a good night," said another, "if I'd have made so good a thing of it as that old fellow; he has won some thousand napoleons, I'm certain."

"*He* knows better than that," said the former. "This is a 'run' with him, and he feels it is. He'll break them before the night is over."

Dalton heard every word of this colloquy, and drank in the surmise as greedily as did Maabeth the witches' prophecy.

"He deserves to win, too," resumed the last speaker, "for I never saw a man play more boldly."

"So much for boldness," cried the other; "he has just risked a fifth time on the red and lost. See, if it be not two hundred naps."

The defeat had not disheartened him, for again Dalton covered the board with gold. As if that moment had been the turning-point of his destiny, his losses now began, and with all the rapidity of his previous gains. At first he bore the reverse calmly and patiently; after a while a slight gesture of impatience, a half-muttered exclamation, would escape him; but when loss followed loss unceasingly, and one immense stake disappeared after another, Dalton's fingers trembled, and his cheeks shook like one in ague. His straining, bloodshot eyes were fixed on the play with the intensity of passion, and a convulsive shudder would shake his massive frame at each new tidings of loss! "Am I never to have luck again? Is it only to lead me on that I won? Can this go on forever?" were the low muttered words which now he syllabled with difficulty, for already his utterance was thick, and his swollen tongue and flattened cheeks seemed threatened with paralysis.

His last stake was swept away before him, and Dalton, unable to speak, stretched forth his arms across the table to arrest the banker's hand. "A hundred naps. on the red," cried he, wildly; "no—two hundred—neck or nothing, I'll go five—d'ye hear me?—five hundred on the red!"

A short conversation in whispers ensued between the croupiers, after which one of them spoke a few words to Dalton in a low voice.

"You never said so when I was losing," cried Peter, savagely. "I heard nothing about the rules of the tables *then*."

"The stake is above our limit, sir; above the limit laid down by law," said the chief banker, mildly.

"I don't care for your laws. I lost my money, and I'll have my revenge."

"You can make half de stakes in my name, saar," said a long-mustached and not over clean-looking personage beside Dalton's chair.

"That will do—thank you," cried Dalton. "Bet two hundred and fifty for me, and I'll stake the rest."

A moment more, and the low voice of the croupier proclaimed that red had lost!

"What does he say? Why won't he speak plainly?" cried Dalton, in a voice of passionate energy.

"You lose de stake," muttered the man behind him.

"Of course I do! What other luck could I have? Lose—lose—lose!" said he to himself, in a low, moaning voice. "There they go—the fools!—betting away as fresh as ever. Why won't they take warning by *me?* Beggared, ruined, as it has left me. May I never if the red isn't winning every time now!" And, as he spoke, his eyes followed a great heap of gold which some fortunate gambler just drew in before him. "How much did he win then?" cried Dalton; but none replied to a question so contrary to every etiquette of the table.

"He never counts it," muttered Peter, as he continued to gaze on the lucky player with a kind of envious admiration. "They say it's best not to count one's winnings. I don't know what's best, and I believe 'tis only the devil knows—for it was *he* invented the game. Red again the winner!"

"Why you no back de red?" whispered the man behind his chair.

Dalton started, and was about to give an angry reply, but corrected himself, and merely stared stupidly at him.

"You win eleven hundred Napoleons if you do go on," said the other, showing in proof of his assertion the card on which he had marked all the chances.

"And where's the money?" cried Dalton, as, with a hissing utterance, he spoke, and pointed to the table before him. "Have I Coutts's Bank at my back, or is all Lombard Street in my pocket? 'Tis easy to say, Go on! Red again, by jingo!"

"I tell you dat!" said the other, gravely.

Dalton turned round in his chair, and stared steadfastly at the speaker. His mind was in that state of wild confusion, when every conception, however vague and fanciful, assumes a certain degree of reality, and superstitions take on them all the force of warnings. What if his prompter were the devil himself!—was it not exactly what he had often heard of? He never saw him there before, and certainly appearances were not much against the hypothesis. He was tall and spare, with a high, narrow forehead, and a pair of most treacherous-looking black eyes, that seemed to let nothing escape their vigilance. Unabashed by, or indifferent to, Dalton's scrutiny, he went on with his chronicle of the game, noting down the chances, and only muttering a few words to himself.

"Nine times red," said he, as he counted the scores.

"Will it go ten?" asked Dalton, with a purposelike energy that showed his faith in the oracle; but the other never heeded the question.

"Back de red, I say—back de red dis time," whispered he in Dalton's ear.

"Don't you see that I have no money?" said Dalton, angrily.

"Dey will lend on your name. Ask for a hundred Naps. Be quick—be quick."

Dalton stooped across the table, and whispered the croupier, who returned a look of doubt and uncertainty. Peter grew more pressing, and the other bent over and spoke to his colleague. This time the request was not met with a smile and a bland bow, and Dalton watched with angry impatience all the signs of hesitation and deliberation between them.

"Say your banker is closed—that you must have de moneys," whispered the dark man.

"Must I wait till the bank is open tomorrow morning," said Dalton, "or do you mean to give me this trifle?"

"Our rules are strictly opposed to the practice of lending, count," whispered the croupier at his side. "We have already transgressed them in your favor, and——"

"Oh, don't inconvenience the count!" interposed his colleague. "How much is it?"

"Say two hundred—two!" muttered the unknown.

"Two hundred Naps.," cried Dalton, resolutely.

"This will make five hundred and forty to-night, count."

"And if it was five thousand," said Peter, running his fingers through the gold with ecstasy, "what matter? There goes fifty on the red."

"Ah, you play too rash!" whispered the dark man.

"What business is that of yours? Am I your ward?" cried Dalton, passionately, for the stake was lost in the same instant. "Red again, fifty. May I never if I don't believe 'tis *you* brings me the bad luck!" said Dalton, darting a savage glance at the other, whose impassive face never betrayed the slightest emotion.

"I no wish to disturb your game, saar," was the meek reply of the dark man. And, with a bow of meek humility, he backed through the crowd, and disappeared.

In a moment, Dalton felt shocked at his own rudeness, and would have given worlds to have recalled his words, or even apologized for them. But other thoughts soon

supplanted these, and again his whole heart was in the game.

"You didn't bet last time," remarked some one near him, "and your favorite color won."

"No, I was looking about me. I was thinking of something else," replied he; and he sat fingering the gold pieces as though unwilling to part with them.

The game went on; luck came and went; the gold glittered and clinked; the same endless "refrain"—"Faites votre jeu, messieurs," followed by the same sing-song phrases, continued to roll on, and Dalton sat, now counting his money, and piling up the pieces into tens or twenties; or, with his head resting on his hand, deep in serious thought. Twice he placed a heavy stake upon the table, and recalled it at the very moment of the game's beginning. Every gesture and action showed the terrible struggle between hope and fear that went on within him. A red spot glowed on one cheek, while the other was pale as death, and his lips from time to time were moved with a short spasmodic jerk, as if some sudden pain shot through him. At last, with a great effort, he pushed all the gold into the center of the table, and cried out, but in a voice so strange and inarticulate, that the words could not be distinguished.

"You said 'rouge,' count, I think?" asked the croupier.

"I fancy the gentleman said 'noir,'" remarked a bystander.

"Let him declare for himself," observed another.

"But the game has already begun," said the banker.

"So much the worse for the bank," remarked another, laughing, "it's easy to see what will win."

"Pray declare your color, sir," said an impatient gambler at Dalton's side: "the whole table is waiting for you."

Dalton started, and, darting an angry look at the speaker, made an effort to rise from the table. He failed at first, but grasping the shoulder of the croupier, he arose to his full height, and stared around him. All was hushed and still, not a sound was heard, as in that assembly, torn with so many passions, every eye was turned towards the gigantic old man, who, with red eyeballs and outstretched hands, seemed to hurl defiance at them. Backwards and forwards he swayed for a second or two, and then, with a low, faint cry—the last wail of a broken heart—he fell with a crash upon the table. There he lay, his white hairs streaming over the gold and silver pieces, and his bony fingers flattened upon the cards. "A fit!—he's in a fit!" cried some, as they endeavored to raise him.—"Worse still!" remarked another, as he passed his hand from the pulse to the heart, "he is dead!"

The hero of a hundred fights, he who has seen death in every shape and on every field, must yield the palm of indifference to its terrors to the gambler. All the glorious insanity of a battle, all the reckless enthusiasm of a storm, even the headlong impetuosity of a charge, cannot supply the cold apathy of the gambler's heart; and so was it that they saw in that lifeless form nothing beyond a disagreeable interruption to their game, and muttered their impatience at the delay in its removal.

"Well," said Mrs. Ricketts, as she sat in an adjoining apartment, "have you any tidings of our dear Amphitryon?—is he winning to-night?" The question was addressed to the tall, dark man, who so lately had been standing behind Dalton's chair, and was an old acquaintance, Count Petrolaffsky.

"He no win no more, madam," replied he, solemnly.

"Has he gone away, then?—has he gone home without us?"

"He has gone home, indeed—into the other world," said he, shaking his head.

"What do you mean, count? For heaven's sake speak intelligibly."

"I mean as I do say, madam. He play a game as would ruin Rothschild: always change, and always at de wrong time, and never know when to make his 'paroli.' Ah, dat is the gran' secret of all play: when you know when to make your 'paroli' you win de whole world! Well, he is gone now, poor man, he cannot play any more!"

"Martha—Scroope, do go—learn something—see what has happened."

"Oh, here's the colonel. Colonel Haggerstone, what is this dreadful news I hear?"

"Your accomplished friend has taken a French leave of you, madam, and was in such a hurry to go, that he would not wait for another turn of the cards."

"He ain't d-d-dead?" screamed Purvis.

"I am very much afraid they'll insist on burying him to-morrow or next day, under that impression, sir," said Haggerstone.

"What a terrible event!—how dreadful!" said Martha, feelingly; "and his poor daughter, who loved him so ardently!"

"That must be thought of," interrupted Mrs. Ricketts, at once roused to activity by thoughts of self-interest. "Scroope, order the carriage at once. I must break

it to her myself. Have you any particulars for me, colonel?"

"None, madam! If coroners were the fashion here, they'd bring in a verdict of 'Died from backing the wrong color, with a deodand against the rake!'"

"Yes, it is ver' true, he always play bad," muttered the Pole.

And now the room began to fill with people discussing the late incident in every possible mood, and with every imaginable shade of sentiment. A few—a very few—dropped some expressions of pity and compassion. Many preferred making a display of their own courage by a bantering, scornful tone, and some only saw in the event how unsuited certain natures were to contend with the changeful fortunes of high play. These were, for the most part, Dalton's acquaintances, and who had often told him—at least so they now took credit for—that "he had no head for play." Interspersed with these were little discussions as to the immediate cause of death, as full of ignorance and as ingenious as such explanations usually are, all being contemptuously wound up by Haggerstone's remark, "that death was like matrimony—very difficult when wanted, but impossible to escape when you sought to avoid it!" As this remark had the benefit of causing a blush to poor Martha, he gave his arm to the ladies, with a sense of gratification that came as near happiness as anything he could imagine.

"Is Miss Dalton in the drawing-room?" said Mrs Ricketts, as with an air of deep importance she swept through the hall of the villa.

"She's in her room, madam," said the maid.

"Ask if she will receive me—if I may speak to her."

The maid went out, and returned with the answer that "Miss Dalton was sleeping."

"Oh, let her sleep!" cried Martha. "Who knows when she will taste such rest again?"

Mrs. Ricketts bestowed a glance of withering scorn on her sister, and pushed roughly past her, towards Nelly's chamber. A few minutes after, a wild, shrill shriek was heard through the house, and then all was still.

CHAPTER LX.

NELLY'S SORROWS.

Stunned, but not overcome, by the terrible shock, Nelly Dalton sat beside the bed where the dead man lay in all that stern mockery of calm so dreadful to look upon. Some candles burned on either side, and threw a yellowish glare over the bold, strong features on which her tears had fallen, as, with a cold hand clasped in his, she sat and watched him.

With all its frequency, death never loses its terrors for us! Let a man be callous as a hard world, and a gloomy road in it, can make him; let him drug his mind with every anodyne of infidelity; let him be bereft of all affection, and walk alone on his life-road, there is yet that which can thrill his heart in the aspect of the lips that are never to move more, and the eyes that are fixed forever. But what agony of suffering is it when the lost one has been the link that tied us to life—the daily object of our care—the motive of every thought and every action! Such had been her father to poor Nelly. His wayward, capricious humors, all his infirmities of temper and body, had called forth those exertions which made the business of her life, and gave a purpose and direction to her existence; now, repaid by some passing expression of thankfulness or affection, or, better still, by some transient gleam of hope that he was stronger in health, or better in spirits, than his wont; now, rallied by that sense of duty which can ennoble the humblest, as it can the greatest of human efforts, she watched over him as might a mother over an ailing child. Catching at his allusions to "home," as he still called it, she used to feed her hopes with thinking that at some distant day they were to return to their own land again, and pass their last years in tranquil retirement together; and now hope and duty were alike extinguished. "The fount that fed the river of her thoughts" was dry, and she was alone—utterly alone—in the world!

Old Andy, recalled by some curious instinct to a momentary activity, shuffled about the room, snuffing the candles, or muttering a faint prayer at the bedside; but she did not notice him any more then the figure who, in an attitude of deep devotion, knelt at the foot of the bed. This was Hanserl, who, book in hand, recited the offices with all the fervent rapidity of a true Catholic. Twice, he started and looked up from his task, disturbed by some noise without; but when it occurred a third time, he laid his book gently down, and stole noiselessly from the room. Passing rapidly through the little chamber, which used to be called Nelly's drawing-room, he entered the larger dining-room, in which now three or four ill-dressed men were standing, in the

midst of whom was Abel Kraus in active colloquy with Mr. Purvis. Hanserl made a gesture to enforce silence, and pointed to the room from whence he had just come.

"Ah!" cried Scroope, eagerly, you're a kind of co-co-connection, or friend at least, of these people, ain't you? Well, then, speak to this wo-worthy man, and tell him that he mustn't detain our things here; we were merely on a visit."

"I will suffer nothing to leave the house till I am paid to the last kreutzer," said Kraus, sternly; "the law is with me, and I know it."

"Be patient: but, above all, respect the dead," said Hans, solemnly. "It is not here, nor at this time, these things should be discussed."

"But we wa-want to go, we have ta-ta-taken our apartments at the 'Russie.' The sight of a funeral and a—a—a hearse, and all that, would kill my sister."

"Let her pay these moneys, then, and go in peace," said Kraus, holding forth a handful of papers.

"Not a gr-groschen, not a kreutzer will we pay. It's an infamy, it's a sh-sh-shameful attempt at robbery. It's as bad as st-stopping a man on the highway."

"Go on, sir—go on. You never made a speech which cost you dearer," said Kraus, as he took down the words in his pocket-book.

"I—I—didn't mean that; I did'nt say you were a housebreaker."

"Speak lower," said Hans, sternly. "And you, sir, what is this demand?"

"Two thousand francs—rent of this house; which, with damage to the furniture and other charges, will make two thousand eight hundred."

"I will pay it," said Hans, stopping him.

"Your credit would be somewhat better, Master Hans, had you not given a certain bail bond that you know of," said Kraus, sneeringly.

"I have wherewith to meet my debts," said Hans, calmly.

"I will claim my bond within a week—I give you notice of it," said Kraus.

"You shall be paid to-morrow. Let us be in peace to-night—bethink you what that room contains."

"He ain't black, is he? I—I would'nt look at him for a thousand pounds," said Purvis, with a shudder.

"If she remain here after noon, to-morrow," said Kraus, in a low voice, "a new month will have begun."

"To-morrow afternoon—lord! how close he r-ran it," exclaimed Purvis.

"Once more, I say, be patient," said Hans. "Let these good people go. You shall lose nothing—I pledge the word of a man who never told a falsehood. I will pay all. Have some pity, however, for this orphan—one who has now neither a home nor a country."

"Yes, yes, he'll have p-pity; he's an excellent man is Mr. Kraus. I shouldn't wonder if we'd come to terms about this vi-villa for ourselves."

Hans turned a look of anger towards him, and then said: "Go, sir, and take those that belong to you away also. This place no longer can suit you nor them. He who lies yonder can be flattered and fawned on no more; and, as for her, she is above your compassion, if it even lay in your heart to offer it."

"He ain't quite right here," whispered Purvis to Kraus, as he tapped his forehead significantly. "They told me that, in the town." Kraus moved away without reply, and Purvis followed him. "He's rich, too, they say," added he, in a whisper.

"They'll scarcely say as much this day week," said Kraus, sneeringly, while beckoning his people to follow him, he left the house.

No sooner did Mrs. Ricketts learn that her worldly possessions were safe, and that the harpy clutches of the law could make no seizure among those curious turbans and wonderful tunics which composed her wardrobe, than she immediately addressed herself to the active duties of the hour, with a mind at ease, and, while packing her trunks, inadvertently stowed away such little stray articles as might not be immediately missed, and might serve hereafter to recall thoughts of "poor dear Miss Dalton," for so she now preferred to name her.

"Those little box figures, Martha, don't forget them. They of course don't belong to the house; and Scroope suspects that the bracket for the hall lamp must have been her carving also."

"I've p-put away two pencil drawings marked 'E. D.' and a little sketch in oil of the Alten Schloss; and I've my pockets stuffed with the tulip roots."

"Well thought of, Scroope; and there's a beautiful paper knife—poor thing, she's not likely to want it now. What a sad bereavement! And are his affairs really so bad?"

"Ov-over head and ears in debt. There ain't enough to bury him if the dwarf does not shell out—but he will. They say he's in love with Nelly—he, he, he!"

"Shocking, quite shocking. Yes, Martha, that telescope is a very good one.

What improvidence—what culpable improvidence !"

"And is she quite friendless?" asked Martha, feelingly.

"Not while she has *our* protection," said Mrs. Ricketts, grandly. "I've determined to 'take her up.'"

Martha reddened slightly at the phrase, for she knew of some others who had been so "taken up," and with what small profit to their prosperity.

"Her talents, when aided by *our* patronage, will always support her," said Mrs. Ricketts, "and I mean, when the shock of this calamity is passed, to employ her on a little group for a centerpiece for our dinner-table. She will, of course, be charmed to have her genius displayed to such advantage. It will afford us a suitable opportunity of introducing her name."

"And we shall have the piece of carving for nothing," said Martha, who innocently believed that she was supplying another argument of equal delicacy and force.

"You're an idiot!" said Mrs. Ricketts, angrily, "and I begin to fear you will be nothing else."

"I'm quite sure I shall not," said the other, with a faint submissiveness, and continued her task of packing the trunks.

"Take care that you find out her sister's address, Martha. I'm sadly in want of some furs; that tippet, I suppose, is only fit for *you* now, and my sable muff is like a dog in the mange. The opportunity is a most favorable one; for, when the princess, as they persist in calling her, knows that her sister is our dependent, we may make our own terms. It would be the very ruin of her in St. Petersburg to publish such a fact."

"But Miss Dalton will surely write to her herself."

"She can be persuaded, I trust, to the contrary," said Mrs. Ricketts, knowingly; "she can be shown that such an appeal would in all likelihood wreck her sister's fortunes, that the confession of such a relationship would utterly destroy her position in that proud capital; and, if she prove obstinate, the letter need not go. You understand that, at least," added she, with a contemptuous glance that made poor Martha tremble.

Mrs. Ricketts was now silent, and sat reveling in the various thoughts that her active mind suggested. Upon the whole, although Dalton's dying was an inconvenience, there were some compensating circumstances. She had gained a most useful *protégée* in Nelly—one whose talents might be made of excellent use, and whose humble, unpretending nature would exact no requital. Again, the season at Baden was nearly over; a week or two more, at most, was all that remained. The "Villino," which she had let for the summer to some confiding family, who believed that Florence was a paradise in July and August, would again be at her disposal, and, in fact, as she phrased it, "the conjunctures were all felicitous," and her campaign had not been unfruitful. This latter fact attested itself in the aspect of her traveling-carriage, with its "spolia" on the roof and its various acquired objects under the body. Pictures, china, plate, coins, brocades, old lace, books, prints, manuscripts, armor, stained glass, trinkets, and relics of all kinds, showed that travel with her was no unprofitable occupation, and that she had realized the grand desideratum of combining pleasure with solid advantage.

Meanwhile, so ingenious is thorough selfishness, she fancied herself a benefactor of the whole human race. All the cajoleries she used to practice she thought were the amiable overflowings of a kindly nature; her coarse flatteries she deemed irresistible fascinations; her duperies even seemed only the triumphs of a mind transcendently rich in resources, and never for a moment suspected that the false coin she was uttering could be called in question, though the metal was too base for imposition. There is no supply without demand, and if the world did not like such characters there would be none of them! The Rickettses are, however, a large and an increasing class in society, and, to our national shame be it said, they are distinctively English in origin. And now we leave her, little regretting if it be forever; and if we turn to a darker page in our story, it is, at least, to one wherein our sympathies are more fairly enlisted.

That long night passed over like a dreary dream, and morning was now mingling its beams with the glare of the tapers, as Nelly sat beside the death-bed.

"Come with me, fräulein; come away from this," said Hanserl, as with a tearful eye and quivering lip he stood before her.

Nelly shook her head slowly, and for answer turned her gaze on the dead man.

"You shall come back again; I promise you, you shall come back again," said he, softly.

She arose without a word and followed him. They passed through an outer room, and entered the garden, where Hans, taking her hand, led her to a seat.

"You will be better here, fräulein," said he, respectfully; "the air is fresh and balmy."

"He sat beside me on this bench three nights ago," said she, as if talking to herself, "and said how he wished I could be with Kate, but that he could not part with me; and see—we are parted, and for a longer separation! Oh, Hanserl! what we would give to recall some of the past when death has closed it forever against us!"

"Remember Wieland, fräulein; he tells us that 'the impossible is a tree without fruit or flowers.'"

"And yet my mind will dwell on nothing else. The little thwartings of his will—the cold compliance which should have been yielded in a better spirit—the counsels that often only irritated—how they rise up now, like stern accusers, before me, and tell me that I failed in my duty."

"Not so, fräulein—not so," said Hans, reverently.

"But there is worse than that, Hanserl, far worse," said she, tremblingly. "To smooth the rough path of life I descended to deception. I told him the best when my heart felt the worst. Had he known of Kate's real lot, and had he sorrowed over *her* fortunes, might not such grief have been hallowed to him! To have wept over Frank—the poor boy in prison—might have raised his thoughts to other themes than the dissipation that surrounded him. All this was *my* fault. I would have his love, and see the price it has cost me!" She hid her face between her hands, and never spoke for a long time. And at length she lifted up her eyes, red as they were with weeping, and, with a heavy sigh, said, "How far is it to Vienna, Hanserl?"

"To Vienna, fräulein! It is a long journey—more than four hundred miles; but why do you ask?"

"I was thinking that if I saw Count Stephen—if I could but tell him our sad story myself—he might intercede for poor Frank, and perhaps obtain his freedom. His crime can scarcely be beyond the reach of mercy, and his youth will plead for him. And is it so far away, Hanserl?"

"At the very least—and a costly journey, too."

"But I would go on foot, Hans. Lame as I am, I can walk for miles without fatigue, and I feel as if the exertion would be a solace to me, and that my mind, bent upon a good object, could the more easily turn away from my own desolation. Oh, Hans, think me not selfish that I speak thus: but thoughts of my own loneliness are so linked with all I have lost, I cannot separate them. Even the humble duty that I filled gave a value to my life without which my worthlessness would have crushed me; for what could poor lame Nelly be—I, that had no buoyancy for the young, no ripe judgment for the old? And yet, in caring for him that is gone, I found a taste of love and happiness."

"I will go with you, fraulein; you shall not take this weary road alone. Heaven knows that, without you, this place would be too dreary for me."

"But your house, Hanserl—all that you possess—the fruits of all your hard industry——"

"Speak not of them," said Hans, reddening. "They who deem me rich are mistaken. I have speculated ill—I have made bad ventures—and what I have will but pay my debts, and I will be glad to quit this spot."

"And I," said Nelly, with a voice of deep emotion, "I cannot say that I can help you. I know nothing of what may remain to me in this world; my father never spoke to me latterly of his means, and I may be, for aught I know, a beggar. Will you see his banker and speak with him?"

"I have done so," said Hans, slowly. "He claims some small sum as due to him."

"And how am I to pay it?" said Nelly, growing pale. "It is true, I can labor——"

"Have no care for this, fraulein. It shall be looked to, and you shall repay it hereafter."

"Oh, Hanserl, beware!" said she solemnly; "we are an unfortunate race to those who help us; my poor father often said so, and even his superstitions are hallowed to me, now."

A gesture from some one within the house called Hans away, and Nelly was left alone. She sat with her eyes closed and her hands firmly clasped, deep in her own sad thoughts, when she heard a footstep close by. It was only Andy, who, with a piece of ragged crape fastened round his arm, was slowly tottering towards her. His face was flushed, and his eye wild and excited, as he continued to mutter and reply to himself,

"A Dalton—one of the ould stock—and maybe the last of them too."

"What is it, Andy?—tell me, what is it?" said she, kindly.

"There's no wake—there isn't as much as a tenant's child would have!"

"We are almost friendless here, Andy. It is not our own country."

"Ain't they Christians, though; couldn't they keep the corpse company? Is it four candles and a deal coffin ought to be at a Dalton's burial?"

"And we are poor, also," said she, meekly.

"And hasn't the poorest respect for the dead?" said he, sternly. "Wouldn't they sell the cow, or the last pig, out of honor to him that's gone to glory? I'll not stay longer in the place; I'll have my discharge; I'll go back to Ireland."

"Poor fellow," said Nelly, taking his hand kindly, and seating him beside her. "You loved him so! and he loved *you*, Andy. He loved to hear you sing your old songs, and tell over the names of his favorite hounds."

"Bessy and Countess were the sweetest among them," said the old man, wandering away to old memories of the past, "but Nora was truer than either." And so he fell into a low mumbling to himself, endeavoring, as it seemed, to recall the forgotten lines of some hunting chant, while Nelly returned to the house to take her last farewell ere the coffin lid was closed.

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CHAPTER LXI.

A LAST ADIEU.

The pleasure-seekers of Baden were not likely to be diverted from their pursuits by such humble calamities as Nelly Dalton's, and the gay world went on its gay road as merrily as though death or ruin could have no concern for them. Already the happy groups were gathering before the Cursaal. The sounds of music filled the air. Wealth was displaying its gorgeous attractions; beauty, her fascinations, and wit, its brilliancy; and none had a thought for that sad episode which a few hours had half obliterated from every mind. Under a spreading chestnut-tree, and around a table sumptuously spread for breakfast, a large party was assembled, discussing the news of the morning, and the plans of pleasure for the day. Some had but thoughts for the play-table, and could attune their ears to no other sounds than the clink of the gold and the rake of the croupier; others chatted of the world of politics and fashion; and a few, with that love of the picturesque the taste for painting engenders, were admiring the changeful effects of passing clouds on the landscape, and pointing out spots of peculiar beauty and sublimity.

"How well the Alten Schloss looks, with that mass of shadow on it!" remarked a young man to a fair and delicate-looking girl beside him; "and see how the weeping ash waves over the old walls like a banner!"

"And look!" cried she, "mark that little procession that is slowly winding up the pathway—what effect the few figures give to the scene, as they appear and disappear with each turning of the road! Some pilgrimage to a holy shrine, I fancy."

"No; it is a funeral. I can mark what Shelley calls the step of the bearers, 'heavy and slow;' and if you listen, you'll catch the sound of the death-bell."

"It's quite a picture, I declare," said she. "I wish I had brought my sketch-book."

And so it is ever! The sorrows that are rending some hearts in twain are but as objects of picturesque effect to others. And even the young and the tender-minded learn to look on the calamities that touch them not as things of mere artistic meaning.

Up that steep road, over rock and rugged stone, brushing between the tangled briars, or with difficulty being turned around some sharp angle, was now borne the corpse of him who had so often wended the same path on his homeward journey. Four peasants carried the coffin, which was followed by Nelly and old Andy; Hans, from a sense of respect, walking behind them. It was a long and arduous ascent, and they were often obliged to halt and take breath; and at such times Nelly would kneel down beside the coffin and pray. The sufferings of the last two days had left deep traces on her features, which had lost every tinge of color; her eyes, too, were deep set and heavy; but in the elevated expression of her brow at moments, and the compression of her lips, might be seen the energy of one who had a firm purpose, and was resolved to carry it through.

"Sit down and rest yourself, fraulein," said Hans, as he saw that she faltered in her step. "We are yet far from the top."

"I will rest at the fountain," said she, faintly. "It was a favorite spot of his." And they moved slowly on once more.

The fountain was a little well, carved in the native rock, around which some rude seats were also fashioned, the whole sheltered by a thick roof of foliage, which, even in noonday, cast a deep shadow around, and effectually screened it from the path that wound along beside it.

Scarcely had the bearers deposited the coffin beside the well, when the sound of voices was heard as a considerable number of persons descended the path. Words in French, German, and English showed that the party consisted of representatives of

these nations: but one voice, if once heard not readily forgotten, towered high above all the rest.

"I cannot offer my arm, madam," cried a sharp, ringing accent, "as the infernal road will not admit of two abreast, but I can go before and pilot you."

"Oh, thanks, sir," replied a mild, meek tone; "I can get on very well, indeed. I am only uneasy about my sister."

"I don't suspect that she incurs either much risk or fatigue, madam," rejoined the other, "seeing that she is seated in an arm-chair, and carried by two of the stoutest fellows in Baden."

"But the exertion, in her weak state——"

"She might make the ascent of Mont Blanc, madam, with the same appliances; and if you only told her that there were bargains to be had at the top, I verily believe she would do so."

"You don't think the things were cheap here, colonel?" said Miss Martha, who thought by a diversion to draw Haggerstone away from so dangerous a discussion.

"I am no connoisseur in Dutch dolls—nor Noah's arks, madam, although modern society presents us with something very like both; but I concluded that the prices were not exorbitant. I went there myself from a sense of equity. I once put a bullet into the little rascal's skin, and I have bought a salad-fork and a nutcrackers in requital."

"It was kindly thought of," sighed Martha, gently.

"They only cost me nine kreutzers, madam," rejoined Haggerstone, who was more afraid of being thought a dupe than ill-natured, "so that my sense of generosity did not make a fool of me, as it did with the dwarf himself."

"How so?"

"Why, in going security for that old Irishman, Dalton. It is to pay this debt that he has been sold out to-day, and I fancy that Swiss cottages and barking poodles will realize a very small dividend."

"Oh, Hanserl!" said Nelly, "what do I hear?"

"Hush, fräulein!" said he, with a gesture to enforce silence. "I will tell you of these things hereafter."

And now the others passed, and were soon out of hearing.

"Oh, Hanserl!" cried Nelly, bitterly, "how misfortunes crowd upon me! It was but a moment back I was feeding my mind with the sad consolation that my griefs were all my own—that the gloom of my dreary fortune cast no shadow on another; and now I see that I was wrong. *You* must pay the dear penalty of having befriended us!—the fruits of all your hard years of industry!"

"And you would rob me of their best reward—the glorious sense of a generous action?" broke in Hans. "They *were* years of toil and privation, and they might have been years of pleasure if avarice and greed had grown upon me, but I could not become a miser."

"The home you had made your own, lost to you forever!" sighed Nelly.

"It was no longer a home when you left it."

"The well-won provision for old age, Hanserl."

"And has not this event made me young again, and able to brave the world, were it twice as adverse as ever I found it? Oh, fräulein, you know not the heart-bounding ecstasy of him who, from the depth of an humble station, can rise to do a service to those he looks up to! And yet it is that thought which now warms my blood, and gives an energy to my nature that, even in youth, I never felt."

Nelly was silent; and now neither spoke a word, but sat with bent-down heads, deep sunk in their own reveries. At last she arose, and once more the sad procession resumed its way. They toiled slowly along till they reached the little level table-land, where the church stood—a little chapel, scarcely larger than a shrine, but long venerated as a holy spot. Poor Dalton had often spent hours here, gazing on the wide expanse of plain, and mountain, and forest, that stretched away beneath; and it was in one of his evening rambles that he had fixed upon the spot where they should lay him, if he could not "rest his bones with his forefathers."

"Sixty-eight!" muttered the old priest, as he read the inscription on the coffin-lid—"in the pride and vigor of manhood! Was he noble, that I see these quarterings painted here?"

"Hush—that is his daughter," whispered Hanserl.

"If he were of noble blood, he should have lain in the chapel, and on a catafalque," muttered the priest.

"The family is noble—but poor," said Hans, in a low whisper.

"A low mass, without the choir, would not ruin the poorest," said the priest, who sprinkled the coffin with half impatience, and, mumbling a few prayers, retired. And now the body was committed to the earth, and the grave was filled. The last sod was patted down with the shovel; and Nelly, unable to bear her grief any longer

in silence, threw herself on the spot and wept bitterly. Hans withdrew, and motioned to the others to follow him; and none remained but old Andy, who, on his knees, and with clasped hands, seemed to think that he was praying, although all his attention was directed to a little group of children who stood near, and whom he awed into reverence by many a threatening gesture.

And thus the long day stole over; and it was only as evening drew nigh that Nelly could be induced to take her last farewell, and breathe her last prayer over the grave of her father.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE TYROL JOURNEY.

If our task as story-teller had not other claims on us, we would gladly linger with Nelly Dalton, as, in company with Hanserl and old Andy, she wended her slow way through the deep valleys of the Schwartzwald. The little party might have created astonishment in even more frequented districts than the primitive tract in which they journeyed, and have suggested many a puzzling doubt as to what rank or condition they belonged. For Andy's convenience Hans had purchased an ass and a small cart, such as are sometimes used by the traveling beggars of every land. Seated in this, and in his old hunting-cap and scarlet coat, the old man fancied it was some pleasure excursion, or that he was "trundling along" to "cover," as he used to do sixty years ago. Nelly walked at his side, now roused from her deep musings to reply to some meaningless question of the old man, or now feeding her sad memories as she listened to the little snatches of song which occasionally broke from him. Hanserl formed the rear-guard, making, with his redoubted battle-axe and a most formidable old Turkish pistol, not the least singular figure in the procession. Their very baggage, too, had something strange and incomprehensible to common eyes; for, amidst stray scraps of old armor, the little remnants of Hanserl's collection, was to be seen an unfinished figure by Nelly's hand, or the rude beginning of some new group. Along with these were books and tools; and an infinity of queer costumes, of the dwarf's own designing, for various seasons of the year.

Still there was no impertinence in the curiosity that met them. If Andy's strange equipage and stranger dress might have raised a smile, Nelly's gentle look and modest air as rapidly checked it, and they who would have laughed outright at Hanserl's mock-chieftainship were subdued to a respectful deference by the placid dignity of her who walked before him. It was in that memorable year whose doings are recorded in our memory with all the solemn force of history, and all the distinct and vivid effect of events passing before our own eyes—that era, when thrones rocked and tottered, and kings, who seemed destined to transmit their crowns to unborn generations, became exiles and castaways, their state a mockery, and their princely homes given up to pillage; when the brightest day-dreams of good men became bound up with the wildest imaginings of the bold and the bad, and the word freedom comprehended all that was most glorious in self-devotion, and all that was most relentless in hate—in that troubled time, Hanserl wisely sought out the districts of mountain and crag—the homes of the hunter—in preference to the more traveled roads, and prudently preferred even the devious windings of the solitary glens to the thronged and peopled highways that connected great cities.

His plan was to direct their steps through the Vorarlberg into the Tyrol, where, in a small village, near Meran, his mother still lived. There, in case of need, Nelly would find a refuge, and, at all events, could halt while he explored the way to Vienna, and examined how far it might be safe for her to proceed thither. Even in all her affliction, out of the depths of a sorrow so devoid of hope, Nelly felt the glorious influence of the grand scenery through which they traveled. The giant mountains, snow-capped in early autumn; the boundless forests that stretched along their sides; the foaming cataracts as they fell in sheets of hissing water; the tranquil lakes that reflected tower and cliff and spire; the picturesque village, where life seemed to ripple on as peacefully as the clear stream before the peasant's door; the song of the birds, the tolling of the bells, the laugh of the children, the Alp horn answered from cliff to cliff, and dying away in distant echo—all these were realizations of many a girlish hope, when she wished her father to seek out some secluded village, and pass a life of obscure but united labor. There was no quixotism in the fancy. She knew well what it was to toil and work; to rise early, and go late to rest; to feed on coarse fare, and be clad in mean attire. All that poverty can inflict of privation she had

tasted, but fearlessly, and with a bold heart; self-reliance elevating her thoughts above every little adverse incident, and giving to her struggle that character of a task, a holy and a righteous task, which made at once her life's purpose and reward.

Scarcely a village at which they halted that did not strike her as like what her mind had often pictured for "their own," and many a quaint old house, with its carved galleries and latticed porch, she stood to gaze on, fancying it their home, and peopling every spot with the forms of those she loved. Oh! why had they not chosen this humble road?—why had their "paths in life" separated?—were the bitter reflections which now filled her eyes with tears and made her bosom heave almost to bursting. She did not foolishly suppose that the peasant can claim exemption from the trials and crosses of life, and that sorrow finds no entrance into remote and unfrequented tracts, but she knew that such burdens would not be too heavy for their strength, and that, while living a life of unpretending poverty, they should be free from the slavery of an assumed position, and able to combat the world fairly and honestly.

Of all lands the Tyrol is best suited to foster such feelings as these. There is a harmony and a keeping about it that is rarely found elsewhere. The dwellings of the people, so according with the character of the scenery; the costumes, the greetings, the songs of the peasantry; their simple and touching piety; their manners, so happily blending independence with courtesy, are felt at once as a charm, and give a color to the enjoyment of every one who sojourns amongst them. These were the sights and sounds which, better than all the blandishments of wealth, could soothe poor Nelly's sorrow, and make her thankful in the midst of her afflictions even to have witnessed them. As for Hanserl, his excitement grew daily higher as he passed the Arlberg and drew near the spots he had seen in childhood. Now, preparing some little surprise for Nelly, as they turned the angle of a cliff and gazed down upon a terrible gorge beneath; now, apprising her of some little shrine where pious wayfarers were wont to halt and pray; now, speculating if the old host of the village inn would be alive, or still remember him, he went along merrily, occasionally singing some "Alp lied," or calling to mind some ancient legend of the scene through which they journeyed. Above all, however, was his delight at the thought of seeing his old mother again. No sense of disappointment dashed this pleasure because he was returning poor and penniless. Home and the "frau mutter," as he reverently called her, had their hold upon his heart quite distinct from every accident of fortune. To tell her of all he had seen in far-away lands—for Hanserl thought himself a great traveler; to describe the great Cathedral of Worms, its vaulted aisles and painted windows, its saintly effigies and deep-toned organ, and the thousands who could kneel before the high altar! Then, what marvelous relics were there to describe!—not to speak of the memorable valley at Eschgau, where "Siegfried slew the Dragon." Poor Hans! the scenes of his youth had made him young again, and it was the very triumph of his joy when he could interest Nelly in some story, or make her listen with attention to the rude verses of some "Tyroler" poem.

Gladly would we linger with them as they went slowly along through the deep valley of Landech, and, halting a day at the Pontlatzer Brücke, that Hans might describe the heroic defense of his countrymen against the French and Bavarian forces, and then, skirting along the Engadine, came in sight of the great Orteler Spitze—the highest of the Tyrol Alps. And now, they reached Nauders, and, traversing a wild and dreary mountain tract, where even in autumn the snow is seen in clefts and crevices of the rock, they gradually gain the crest of the ridge, and look down at length on glorious Meran with the devotion of the pilgrim in sight of the Holy City. Hans knelt down and prayed fervently as his eyes beheld that garden valley with its vine-clad slopes and waving woods; its silvery river gliding along beneath bright villages and feudal castles. But soon he saw them no longer, for his eyes swam over in tears, and he sobbed like a child.

"There, fräulein, yonder, where you see the river winding to the southward, you see an old tower—'the Passayer Turm,' it is called; the frau mutter lives there. I see some one in the garden." And, overcome by emotion, he hid his face and wept.

Near as they seemed to the end of their journey, it was night ere they gained the valley at the foot of the mountain. The cottages were closed, and, except in the town—still about a mile distant—not a light was to be seen. The Tyrolers are an early race, and retire to rest soon after dusk. Hanserl, however, wanted no guidance to the way, and trudged along in front of the cart, following each winding of the track as though he had gone it but

the day before. Except a chance caution about the road, he never spoke—his heart was full of "home." The fatigue of a long day's journey, and the cold of the night air, had made Andy querulous and discontented, and it was all Nelly could do to answer the fretful questions and soothe down the irritation of the old man; but Hans heard nothing of either. At last they reached a little open space formed by a bend in the river, and came in sight of the old tower, at the foot of which, and abutting against it, stood a small cottage. A light gleamed from a little window, and no sooner had Hans seen it than he exclaimed:

"Gott sey dank! Fräulein, she is well. That is the frau mutter."

Poor Nelly's lip quivered as she tried to speak, for, humble as it was, what would she have given to have had even such a "home!" And now, passing through a little garden, Hans halted, and assisted Andy from the cart.

"Where are we, at all? Sure this isn't a place to stop the night in!" cried the old man, querulously.

"Hush, Andy, hush," whispered Nelly.

"'Tis thieves and vagabonds, maybe, lives here, Miss Nelly," said he, in a low voice.

"No, Andy, no; it is a kind welcome that awaits us."

"Ayeh!" exclaimed he, "I know better than that!"

Hans by this time had approached the door and raised the latch—for in the Tyrol the night rarely calls for other fastening. Nelly heard the sharp, clear sound of an old woman's voice above the hum of a spinning-wheel, and then the glad burst of joy as the mother recognized her son. Unwilling to interrupt their happiness, Nelly moved away out of hearing, when Hanserl came running out, followed by the old woman.

"This is the fräulein, mother," cried he, with a burst of delight; and the old woman, taking Nelly's hand, kissed it with deep respect.

With native courtesy she welcomed Nelly, and, as she entered her house, pointed with pride to a Madonna of Nelly's own carving, which stood on a bracket against the wall.

"You see, fraulein," said she, "how I have known you for many a day back; and there is your Saint Christopher, and there the 'Blessed Agnes at the Well.'" And so was it. The groups and figures which she believed to have been sold by Hanserl, were all stored up here and treasured like household gods. "Many a traveler has come here just to see these," continued the old peasant woman, "and many a tempting sum have they offered if I would sell them, but in all my poverty I did not stoop to this."

"Frau mutter, frau mutter," said Hans, rebukingly, and trying to cut short what he feared might offend Nelly.

"Nay, Hanserl, it is but the truth," said she, firmly; "I will not say that I did not do more wisely, too, for they who came left always some little present. Even the poor gave me their blessing, and said that they were happier when they had prayed before the Blessed Agnes." While thus running on in all the garrulity of old age, she never neglected the care of receiving her guests with suitable hospitality. Old Andy was accommodated with a deep straw chair near the stove. The little chamber, which, for its view upon the Passayer Thal, had been specially devoted to receive travelers, was got ready for Nelly, and Hans, once more at home, busied himself in arranging the household, and preparing supper.

"You are wondering at all the comforts you find here, Hanserl," said the old woman, "but see here, this will tell you whence they came;" and, opening an old ebony cabinet, she took out a large square letter with a heavy seal. "That reached me on a Christmas-day, Hanserl; the paper was from the Imperial 'Chancellerie' of Vienna, setting forth that, as the widow of Hans Roeckle, of Meran, born of Tyrol parents, and married to a Tyroler, had attained the age of eighty years, and never asked alms, nor sought for other aid than her own industry, she was now entitled to the Maria Teresa pension of twelve kreutzers a day for the rest of her life. I told them," said the old woman, proudly, "that my son had always taken care to provide for me, and that there were others that might want it more than I, but the Kreis-Hauptman said that my refusal would be an offense to the Kaiser, who had heard of my name from one of the archduchesses who traveled this way, and who had seen these blessed images and wished to buy them; so that I was fain to yield, and take, in thankfulness, what was offered in generosity. You see, Hanserl, how true is it, the fraulein has been our good angel; we have never had bad luck since the Madonna came here!"

Nelly slept soundly that night, and, for the first time since her calamities, her dreams were happy ones. Lulled by the ripple of the river beside her window, and the ceaseless murmuring of the old woman's voice as she sat up talking with her son the whole night long, she tasted at

length the sweets of deep and refreshing sleep. And what a gorgeous scene burst upon her waking eyes! Around, on every side of the little plain, rose the great mountains of the Tyrol; some, green and tree-clad to their summits, others, snow-capped or hid in the azure-colored clouds above them. Ancient castles crowned the crags, and foaming cataracts leaped from each fissured gorge; while below, in the valley, there lay a garden of rich profusion—the vine, the olive and the waving corn—with villages and peasant houses half hid in the luxuriant verdure. From the lowing cattle beside the river to the re-echoing horn upon the mountains, there seemed to come greeting and answer. All was grandeur and sublimity in the scene; but, more striking than these, was the perfect repose, the deep tranquility of the picture. The sounds were all those of peasant labor: the song of the vine-dresser, the rustling noise of the loaded wagon as it moved through some narrow and leafy road, the hissing of the sickle through the ripe corn.

"And yet," said Hanserl, as Nelly stood in silent enjoyment at the little porch—"and yet, fräulein, beyond those great mountains yonder, there is strife and carnage. Here, all is peaceful and happy; but the whole world of Europe is tempest-torn. Italy is up—all her people are in wild revolt. Hungary is in open insurrection. I speak not of other lands, whose fortunes affect us not, but the great empire of our Kaiser is convulsed to its very center. I have just been at Meran, troops are marching in every hour, and every hour come new messengers to bid them hasten southward. Over the Stelvio, where you see that dark line yonder, near the summit of the mountains, on they pour! They say, too, that Upper Austria is in rebellion, and that the roads from Innspruck are unsafe to travel. We are safe here, fräulein, but you must not venture further. We will try, from some of the officers who pass through, to glean tidings of the count, your grand-uncle, and where a letter may reach him; but bear with this humble shelter for a while, and think it a home."

If Nelly was disappointed and baffled by this impediment to her journey, she was not one to pass her time in vague regrets, but at once addressed herself to the call of new duties with a willing mind and a cheerful spirit.

Resuming her long-neglected tools, she set to work once more, stimulated by the new scenes and subjects around her. To the little children who often formed her "studies," she became the schoolmistress. To the old who were stricken with sickness, or the helplessness of age, she used to read for hours together. Every little pathway led her to some office of charity or kindness, till the "good fräulein" became a village byword, and her name was treasured, and her footstep welcomed, in every cottage around.

Her humble dress, her more humble manner, took nothing from the deference they yielded her. They felt too intensely the inborn superiority of her nature to think of any equality between them, and they venerated her with something like devotion. A physician to the sick, a nurse to the bedridden, a teacher to the ignorant, a blessing and an example to all, Nelly's hours were but too short for the calls of her duties, and, in her care for others, she had no time to bestow on her own sorrows.

As for Hanserl, he worked from daylight to dusk. Already the little garden, weed-grown and uncared-for before, was as blooming as his former one at the Alten Schloss. Under Nelly's guidance many a device was executed that seemed almost miraculous to the simple neighbors; and the lichen-clad rocks, the waving water-lilies or trellised creepers, which, in the wild wantonness of nature they had never noticed, now struck them as the very creations of genius. Even old Andy was not forgotten in their schemes of happiness; and the old huntsman used to spend hours in the effort to tame a young fox a peasant had brought him—a labor not the less interesting that its progress suffered many a check, and that many a laugh arose at the backslidings of the pupil.

And now we leave them for a brief season, all occupied and all happy; nor do we like the fate that calls us away to other and very different associates.

CHAPTER LXIII.

FLORENCE.

It was of a calm but starless night in winter that Florence was illuminated in honor of a victory over the Austrian troops at Goito. Never was patriotic ardor higher—never were stronger the hopes of Italian independence. From the hour of their retreat from Milan, the imperial forces had met with little but reverses, and, as day by day they fell back towards the Tyrol Alps, the hosts of their enemies swelled and increased around them; and from Genoa to the Adriatic all Italy was in march to

battle. It is not to speculate on the passable current of events, nor yet to dwell on the causes of that memorable failure, by which dissentient councils and false faith—the weakness of good men and the ambition of bad ones—brought ruin when there might have been victory; still less is it to gaze upon the brilliant spectacle of the rejoicing city, that we are now wending our way along the Arno, scarcely stopping to notice the thousand stars that glitter on the Duomo, nor the flickering lines of light which trace out the gigantic tower of the Palazzo Vecchio. Our theme is more humble then the former, and far too serious for such dalliance as the latter.

Leaving the crowded streets, resounding with the wild acclamations and wilder songs of the people, we pass over the Ponte Vecchio, and enter once again the dark abode of Racca Morlache. Whether from any suspicion of his unpopularity with the people, or from some secret necessity for precaution, the door is fastened by many an extra bolt, and more than one massive chain retains the iron shutters of the window. Perhaps there is something in this conscious security that has made him so sparing in his display of external joy, for two dim, discolored lamps were all that appeared above the door, and these were soon hurled down in contemptuous anger by the populace, leaving the little building in total darkness.

In easy indifference to such harmless insult, and not heeding the loud knocks which from stick or stone the iron shutters resounded under, the Jew sat at his table in that little chamber beside the Arno, of which the reader already knows the secret. Several decanters of wine are before him, and as he sips his glass and smashes his filbert, his air is that of the very easiest unconcern.

Attempting, but with inferior success, an equal degree of calm, sits the Abbé D'Esmonde, on the opposite side of the table. With all his training, his calm features betray at moments certain signs of anxiety, and, while he speaks, you can see that he is listening to the noises in the street without.

"How I detest that song!" said Morlache, as the full swell of a deep-voiced chorus filled the air. "I verily believe the revolution has not inflicted us with anything more outraging to good taste than the air of 'Viva Pio Nono.'"

"Always excepting Pio Nono himself," said D'Esmonde, "who is far more the child than the father of this movement."

"Not bad for a priest to renounce allegiance to his holy master!" said Racca, laughing.

"You mistake me, Signor Morlache," said D'Esmonde, eagerly. "I spoke of Pio Nono the politician—the rash innovator of time-honored institutions, the foolish donor of concessions that must be won back at the price of blood—the man who has been weak enough to head a movement which he ought to have controled in secret. How the people shout! I hear many a voice in accents of no Italian origin."

"Yes, the city is full of Poles and Hungarians."

"It will soon be time to drop the curtain on this act of the drama, Morlache; enough has been done to show the world the dangerous doctrines of these fanatics. They who cry 'No property in France,' shout 'No king in Germany'—'No Pope in Rome.' The peaceful or well-ordered must be taught to see in *us* their safeguard against these men. They must learn to think the Church the sanctuary it was of old. From all these convulsions which shatter empires, we are the refuge!"

"But you yourself gave the first impulse to this very movement, abbé?"

"And wisely and well we did it! Should we have stood passive to watch the gradual growth of that cursed spirit they miscall independent judgment—that rankest heresy that ever corrupted the human heart? Should we have waited till Protestantism with its Bible had sowed the seeds of that right of judgment which they proclaim is inherent in all men? Would it have been safe policy to admit of discussing what was obligatory to obey, and look on while this enlightenment—as they blasphemously term it—was arraigning the dogma of the Church as unblushingly as they questioned the decree of a minister?"

"I perceive," said the Jew, laughing, "you great politicians are not above taking a lesson from the 'Bourse,' and know the trick of puffing up a bad scheme to a high premium, prepared to sell out the day before 'the fall.'"

"We had higher and nobler views," said D'Esmonde, proudly. "The men who will not come to the altars of the Church must be taught her doctrines before the portals. Our task is to proclaim Rome—eternal Rome—to Europe!"

"Up to this, your success has not been signal," said Morlache, with a sneer. "This victory at Goito has given fresh vigor to the republicans. The Austrians once driven beyond the Alps, monarchy will be shortlived in Italy."

"And who says that they will be so

driven? Who even dreams of such a result, save some wild fanatic of Genoa, or some half-informed minister at London? The King of Naples only waits for the excuse of a Calabrian disturbance to recall his contingent. The Pope has already issued an order to Durando not to pass the Po. The Piedmontese themselves are on the verge of an irreparable quarrel—the men of Savoy and the north, for monarchy; the Genoese, wild with their own ancient ideas of a Ligurian republic. Is it the Lombards, think you, will conquer Lombardy? or do you fancy that Florence and Pisa are the nurseries of heroes? No, Morlache, the game of revolt is played out in Italy; the last trump is Goito."

"But if, flushed with conquest, the Piedmontese press on to greater successes?"

"They cannot—they would not, even if they could," broke in D'Esmonde. "Is it the republicans will shed their blood to conquer a kingdom of Upper Italy for Carlo Alberto? Is it the interest of Rome or Naples to see such a power in the Peninsula? Will the troops of the monarchy, on the other hand, fight for a cause that is to obliterate the throne? No; believe me, their mutual grudges have been well weighed and estimated. We never dared this bold policy without seeing clearly that their interests could never be reconciled!—I think I hear the sound of oars; yes, he must be coming at last!" D'Esmonde opened the window as he spoke, and looked out upon the river, which, reflecting along the sides the gorgeous pageantry of the illumination, was dark as ink in the middle of the stream. "Not a word of this, Morlache, when he joins us," added D'Esmonde.

"*He* is not in your confidence, then?" asked the other.

"*He?* of course he is not! If for no weightier reasons than that he is English and a Protestant: two things which, however weak they may prove either in patriotism or religion, never fail in their hatred of the Church and her cause. Like one of the Condottieri of old, he has joined the quarrel because hard knocks are usually associated with booty. Whenever he finds that he has no stake on the table, he'll throw down his cards."

"And the other—the Russian?"

"He is more difficult to understand; but I hope to know him yet. Hush, the boat is close in; be cautious!" And, so saying, he filled his glass, and reseated himself in all the seeming ease of careless dalliance. In a few minutes after, the prow of a light skiff touched the terrace, and a man stepped out, and knocked at the shutter.

"Welcome at last," said D'Esmonde, shaking hands with him. "We had almost despaired of seeing you to night. You appear to have been favored with a long audience!"

"Yes, confound it!" cried the other, who, throwing off his traveling-cloak, showed the figure of Lord Norwood. "We were kept dangling in an antechamber for nigh an hour. Midchekoff's fault, for he would not give his name, nor say anything more than that we were two officers with secret despatches from the camp. The people in waiting appeared to think the claim a poor one, and came and went, and looked at us, splashed and dirty as we were; but not, even out of curiosity, did one ask us what tidings we brought. We might have stayed till now, I believe, if I had not taken the resolution to follow an old priest—a bishop, I fancy—who seemed to have the *entrée* everywhere, and pushing vigorously after him, I passed through half a dozen ill-lighted rooms, and at last entered a small drawing-room, where the great man was seated at piquet with old Cassandroni, the minister. I must say that, considering the unauthorized style of my approach, nothing could be more well-bred and urbane than his reception of me. I was blundering out some kind of apology for my appearance, when he pointed to a chair, and begged me to be seated. Then, recognizing Midchekoff, who had just come in, he held out his hand to him. I gave him the despatches, which he pushed across the table to Cassandroni, as if it were more *his* 'affair,' and then turning to Midchekoff, conversed with him for some time in a low voice. As it would not have been etiquette to observe him too closely, I kept my eyes on the minister, and, faith, I must say that he could scarcely have looked more blank and out of sorts had the news reported a defeat. I suppose these fellows have a kind of official reserve, which represses every show of feeling; but I own that he folded up the paper with a degree of composure that quite piqued me!

"'Well, Cassandroni,' said his master, 'what's your news?"

"'Very good news, sir,' said the other calmly. 'His majesty has obtained a signal victory near Goito against a considerable force of the imperial army, under the command of Radetzky. The action was long and fiercely contested, but a successful advance of artillery to the side of a river, and a most intrepid series of cavalry charges, turned the flank of the enemy, and gained the day. The results do not, however, appear equal to the moral effect

upon the army, for there were few prisoners, and no guns, taken.'

"'That may perhaps be explained,' said I, interrupting; 'for, when the Austrians commenced their movement in retreat——' Just as I got thus far, I stopped, for I found that the distinguished personage I was addressing had once more turned to Midchekoff, and was in deep conversation with him, totally regardless of me and my explanation.

"'You have been wounded, my lord?' said he, after a moment.

"'A mere scratch, sir—a poke of a lance,' said I, smarting under the cool indifference of his manner.

"'I hope you're not too much fatigued to stop to supper,' said he; but I arose at the instant, and pleading the excuse of exhaustion and want of rest, begged to be permitted to retire, and here I am, not having tasted anything since I left Padua, and not in the very blandest of tempers either at the graciousness of my reception. As for Midchekoff, he kept his seat as if he meant to pass his life there; I hesitated for a second or two, expecting that he would join me; but not a bit of it, he smiled his little quiet smile, as much as to say, 'Good night,' and so I left him."

"He is probably detained to give some particulars of the engagement," said D'Esmonde.

"How can he?—he was never in it; he was writing letters all day at headquarters, and never came up till seven in the evening, when he rode down with a smart groom after him, and gave the Duke of Savoy a sandwich out of a silver case. That will be the only memorable fact he can retail of the day's fortune."

"The cause looks well, however," said D'Esmonde, endeavoring to divert his thoughts into a more agreeable direction.

"Tell me what is the cause, and I will answer you," said Norwood, sternly. "So far as *I* see, we are dividing the spoils before we have hunted down the game."

"You surely have no doubt of the result, my lord?" replied the other, eagerly. "The Austrians must relinquish Italy."

"Then who is to take it—that's the question? Is Lombardy to become Piedmont, or a Red republic? or are your brethren of the slouched hat to step in and portion out the land into snug nurseries for Franciscans and Ursulines? Egad, I'd as soon give it up to old Morlache yonder, and make it a New Jerusalem to educate a young race of money-lenders and usurers!"

"I wish we had even as much security for our loans," said Morlache, smiling.

"I hear of nothing but money—great loans here—immense sums raised there," cried Norwood; "and yet what becomes of it? The army certainly has seen none of it. Large arrears of pay are due; and, as for us who serve on the staff, we are actually supporting the very force we command."

"We are told that large sums have found their way into Austria in shape of secret service," said D'Esmonde, "and with good result too."

"The very worst of bad policy," broke in Norwood. "Pay your friends and thrash your enemies. Deserters are bad allies at the best, but are not utterly worthless if they must be paid for desertion. Let them go over like those Hungarian fellows—a whole regiment at a time, and bring both courage and discipline to our ranks! but your rabble of student sympathizers are good for nothing."

"Success has not made you sanguine, my lord," said Morlache, smiling.

"I have little to be sanguine about," replied he, roughly. "They have not spoiled me with good fortune, and even on this very mission that I have come now, you'll see it is that Russian fellow will receive all the reward; and if there be a decoration conferred, it is he, not I, will obtain it."

"And do you care for such baubles, my lord?" asked D'Esmonde, in affected surprise.

"We soldiers like these vanities as women do a new shawl, or you priests admire a smart new vestment, in which I have seen a fellow strut as proudly as any coxcomb in the ballet when he had completed his pirouette. As for myself," continued he, proudly, "I hold these stars and crosses cheaply enough. I'd mortgage my 'San Giuseppe' to-morrow if Morlache would give me twenty naps. on it."

"The day of richer rewards is not distant, my lord," said D'Esmonde. "Lombardy will be our own ere the autumn closes, and then—and then——"

"And then we'll cut each other's throats for the booty, you were going to say," burst in Norwood; "but I'm not one of those who think so, abbé. My notion is, that Austria is making a waiting race, and quietly leaving dissension to do amongst *us* what the snow did for the French at Moscow."

D'Esmonde's cheek grew pale at this shrewd surmise, but he quickly said:

"You mistake them, my lord. The interests at stake are too heavy for such a critical policy; Austria dare not risk so hazardous a game."

"The wiseheads are beginning to suspect as much," said Norwood, "and certainly amongst the prisoners we have taken there is not a trait of despondency, nor even a doubt, as to the result of the campaign. The invariable reply to every question is, the Kaiser will have his own again—ay, and this even from the Hungarians. We captured a young fellow on the afternoon of Goito, who had escaped from prison, and actually broke his arrest to take his share in the battle. He was in what Austrians call Stockhaus arrest, and under sentence either of death, or imprisonment for life, for treason. Well, he got out somehow, and followed his regiment on foot till such time as one of his comrades was knocked over; then, he mounted, and I promise you that he knew his work in the saddle. Twice he charged a half-battery of twelves, and sabered our gunners where they stood; and when at last we pushed the Austrian column across the bridge, instead of retreating, as he might, he trusted to saving himself by the river. It was then his horse was shot under him, as he descended the bank, and over they both rolled into the stream. I assure you it was no easy matter to capture him even then, and we took him under a shower of balls from his comrades, that showed how little his life was deemed, in comparison with the opportunity of damaging us. When he was brought in, he was a pitiable object; his forehead was laid open from a saber cut, his collar-bone and left arm broken by the fall, and a gunshot wound in the thigh, which the surgeon affirmed had every appearance of being received early in the action. He wouldn't tell us his name, or anything about his friends, for we wished to have written to them; the only words he ever uttered were a faint attempt at 'Hurrah for the emperor.'"

"And this a Hungarian?" said D'Esmonde, in surprise.

"He might have been a Pole, or a Wallach, for anything I know: but he was a hussar, and as gallant a fellow as ever I saw."

"What was the uniform, my lord?" asked the abbé.

"Light blue, with a green shako—they call them the regiment of Prince Paul of Wurtemberg."

"Tell me his probable age, my lord, and something of his appearance generally," said D'Esmonde, with increasing earnestness.

"His age I should guess to be two or three and twenty—not more certainly, and possibly even less than that. In height he is taller than I, but slighter. As to face, even with all his scars and bruises, he looked a handsome fellow, and had a clear blue eye that might have become an Englishman."

"You did not hear him speak?" asked the priest, with heightening curiosity.

"Except the few words I have mentioned, he never uttered a syllable. We learned that he had broken his arrest from one of his comrades; but the fellow, seeing our anxiety to hear more, immediately grew reserved, and would tell us nothing. I merely allude to the circumstance to show that the disaffection we trust to amongst the Hungarians is not universal; and even when they falter in their allegiance to the state, by some strange contradiction they preserve their loyalty to the 'Kaiser.'"

"I wish I could learn more about your prisoner, my lord," said the abbé, thoughtfully. "The story has interested me deeply."

"Midchekoff can, perhaps, tell you something, then, for he saw him later than I did. He accompanied the Duke of Genoa in an inspection of the prisoners just before we left the camp."

"And you said that he had a fair and Saxon-looking face?" said the abbé.

"Faith, I've told you all that I know of him," said Norwood, impatiently. "He was a brave soldier, and with ten thousand like him on our side, I'd feel far more at my ease for the result of this campaign than with the aid of those splendid squadrons they call the 'Speranza d'Italia.'"

"And the Crociati, my lord, what are *they* like?" said Morlache, smiling.

"A horde of robbers—a set of cowardly rascals who have only courage for cruelty—the outpourings of gaols and offcasts of convents—degraded friars and escaped galley-slaves!"

"My lord, my lord!" interrupted Morlache, suppressing his laughter with difficulty, and enjoying to the full this torrent of indignant anger. "You are surely not describing faithfully the soldiers of the Pope—the warriors whose banners have been blessed by the Holy Father?"

"Ask their general, Ferrari, whom they have three times attempted to murder. Ask *him* their character," said Norwood, passionately, "if D'Esmonde himself will not tell you."

"Has it not been the same in every land that ever struck a blow for liberty?" said the abbé. "Is it the statesman or the philosopher who have racked their brains and wasted their faculties in thought for the good of their fellow-men that have

gone forth to battle? or is it not rather the host of unquiet spirits who infest every country, and who seek in change the prosperity that others pursue in patient industry? Some are enthusiastic for freedom—some seek a field of personal distinction—some are mere freebooters; but, whatever they be, the cause remains the same."

"You may be right—for all I know you *are* right," said Norwood, doggedly; "but for my own part I have no fancy to fight shoulder to shoulder with cut-throats and house-breakers, even though the Church should have hallowed them with its blessing." Norwood arose as he said this, and walked impatiently up and down the chamber.

"When do you purpose to return to the army, my lord?" said D'Esmonde, after a pause.

"I'm not sure. I don't even know if I shall return at all," said Norwood, hastily. "I see little profit and less glory in the service! What say you, Morlache? Have they the kind of credit you would like to accept for a loan?"

"No, my lord," said the Jew, laughing. "Lombardy scrip would stand low in our market. I'd rather advance my moneys on the faith of your good friend, the Lady Hester Onslow."

Norwood bit his lips and colored, but made no reply.

"She has crossed into Switzerland, has she not?" asked D'Esmonde, carelessly.

"Gone to England," said the viscount, briefly.

"When? How? I never heard of that," said the abbé. "I have put off writing to her from day to day, never suspecting that she was about to quit the continent."

"Nor did she herself, till about a week ago, when Sir Stafford took an equally unexpected departure for the other world——"

"Sir Stafford dead? Lady Hester a widow?"

"Such is, I believe, the natural course of things for a woman to be when her husband dies."

"A rich widow, too, I presume, my lord?" said the abbé, with a quiet, but subtle glance at Norwood.

"That is more than she knows herself at this moment, I fancy, for they say that Sir Stafford has involved his bequests with so many difficulties, and hampered them with such a mass of conditions, that whether she will be a millionaire, or be actually poor, must depend upon the future. I can answer for one point, however, abbé," said he, sarcastically: "neither the Sacred College, nor the blessed brethren of the 'Pace,' are like to profit by the banker's economies."

"Indeed, my lord!" said the abbé, slowly, while a sickly palor came over his countenance.

"He has left a certain Doctor Grounsell his executor," continued Norwood, "and, from all that I can learn, no man has less tsste for painted windows, stoles, or saints' shin-bones."

"Probably there may be other questions upon which he will prove equally obdurate," said the abbé, in a voice only audible to the viscount. "Is her ladyship at liberty to marry again?"

"I cannot, I grieve to say, give you any information on that point," said Norwood, growing deep red as he spoke.

"As your lordship is going to England——"

"I didn't say so. I don't remember that I told you that!" cried he, hastily.

"Pardon me if I made such a palpable mistake; but it ran in my head that you said something to that purport."

"It won't do, abbé!—it won't do!" said Norwood, in a low whisper. "We, who have graduated at the 'Red House,' are just as wide awake as you of Louvain and St. Omer."

D'Esmonde looked at him with an expression of blank astonishment, and seemed as if he had not the most vague suspicion as to what the sarcasm referred.

"When can I have half an hour with you, Morlache?" said the viscount.

"Whenever it suits you, my lord. What say you to to-morrow morning at eleven?"

"No, no; let it be later. I must have a ten hours' sleep after all this fatigue, and the sooner I begin the better."

"Where do you put up, my lord—at the Hôtel de l'Arno?" asked the abbé.

"No; I wish we were there, with all my heart. But to do us honor, they have given us quarters at the 'Crocetto,' that dreary asylum for stray archdukes and vagabond grand-duchesses, in the farthest end of the city. We are surrounded with chamberlains, aides-de-camp, and guards of honor. The only thing they have forgotten is a cook! So I'll come and dine here to-morrow."

"You do me great honor, my lord. I'm sure the Abbé D'Esmonde will favor us with his company also."

"If it be possible, I will," said the abbé. "Nothing but necessity would make me relinquish so agreeable a prospect."

"Well, till our next meeting," said the viscount, yawning, as he put on his hat

"It's too late to expect Midchekoff here to-night, and so good-bye. The streets are clear by this time, I trust."

"A shrewd fellow, too," said Morlache, looking after him.

"No, Morlache, not a bit of it!" said D'Esmonde. "Such intellects bear about the same proportion to really clever men as a good swordsman does to a first-rate operator in surgery. They handle a coarse weapon, and they deal with coarse antagonists. Employ them in a subtle negotiation or a knotty problem, and you might as well ask a sergeant of the Blues to take up the femoral artery. Did you not remark a while ago that, for the sake of a sneer, he actually betrayed a secret about Sir Stafford Onslow's will?

"And you believe all that to be true?"

"Of course I do. The only question is, whether the Irish property, which, if I remember aright, was settled on Lady Hester at her marriage, can be fettered by any of these conditions? That alone amounts to some thousands a year, and would be a most grateful accession to those much-despised brethren his lordship alluded to."

"You can learn something about that point to-morrow when he dines here."

"He'll not be your guest to-morrow, Morlache. I must continue to occupy him for a day or two. He shall be invited to dine at court to-morrow—the request is a command—so that you will not see him. Receive Midchekoff if he calls, for I want to hear what he is about here—his money requirements will soon give us the clue. And I, too," said he, stretching and speaking languidly—"I, too, would be the better of some repose; it is now thirty-six hours, Morlache, since I closed my eyes in sleep. During that space I have written, and dictated, and talked, and argued, urging on the lukewarm, restraining the rash, giving confidence to this one, preaching caution to that, and here I am, at the end of all, with my task as far as ever from completion. Events march faster than we, do what we will; and as the child never comes up with the hoop he has set in motion till it has fallen, so we rarely overtake the circumstances we have created till they have ceased to be of any value to us. Now, at this precise moment I want to be in the Vatican, at the camp of Goito, in the council-chamber at Schönbrunn—not to speak of a certain humble homestead in a far-away Irish county—and yet I have nothing for it but to go quietly off to bed, leaving to fortune—I believe that is as good a name for it as any other—the course of events, which, were I present, I could direct at will. Napoleon left a great example behind him; he beat his enemies always by rapidity. Believe me, Morlache, men think pretty much upon a par in this same world of ours, the great difference being that some take five minutes where others take five weeks. The man of minutes is sure to win."

Just as the abbé had spoken, Norwood returned, saying:

"By the way, can either of you tell me if Jekyl is here now?"

"I have not seen him," said Morlache, "which is almost proof that he is not. His first visit is usually to me."

The streets were silent; a few stray lamps yet flickered over the spacious cupola of the Duomo, and a broken line of light faintly tracked one angle of the tower of the Piazza Vecchia; but except these last lingering signs of the late rejoicings, all Florence lay in darkness.

"How quiet is everything," said Morlache, as he took leave of his guests at his door. "The streets are empty already."

"Ay," muttered the abbé, "the rejoicing, like the victory, was but short-lived. Do our roads lie the same way, my lord?" asked he of Norwood.

"Very seldom, I suspect," replied the viscount, with a laugh. "*Mine* is in this direction."

"And *mine* lies this way," said D'Esmonde, bowing coldly, but courteously, as he passed on, and entered the narrow street beyond the bridge. "You are quite right, my lord," muttered he to himself; "our paths in life are very different. *Yours* may be wider and pleasanter, but *mine*, with all its turnings, goes straighter." He paused and listened for some seconds, till Norwood's steps had died away in the distance, and then turning back, he followed in the direction the other had taken.

Norwood walked rapidly along till he came to that small house on the Arno where Jekyl lived, and stopping in front of it, he threw a handful of sand against the window. To this signal, twice repeated, no reply was given to the viscount. He waited a few seconds, and then moved on. The abbé stood under the shadow of the tall palaces till the other was out of sight, and then, approaching the door, gave a long, low whistle. Within a few seconds the sash was opened, and Jekyl's voice heard:

"It's you, abbé? There's the key. Will you excuse ceremony, and let yourself in?" D'Esmonde opened the door at once, and mounting the stairs, entered the little chamber in which now Jekyl stood in his dressing-gown and slippers, and, although

suddenly roused from sleep, with a smile of courteous welcome on his diminutive features:

"I paid no attention to your first signal, abbé," said he, "scarcely thinking it could be you."

"Nor was it," said D'Esmonde, seating himself. "It was Lord Norwood, who doubtless must have had some important reason for disturbing you at this hour. I waited till he went off before I whistled. When did you arrive?"

"About three hours ago. I came from Lucerne, and was obliged to take such a zig-zag course, the roads being all blocked up by marching soldiers, guns, and wagons, that I have been eight days making the journey of three."

"So, Lady Hester is a widow! Strange, I only heard it an hour ago!"

"The post has been interrupted, or you would have known it a week back. I wrote to you from Zurich. I accompanied her so far on her way to England, and was to have gone the whole way, too, but she determined to send me back here."

"Not to settle her affairs in Florence," said D'Esmonde, with a quiet slyness.

"Rather to look after Lord Norwood's," said Jeykl. "I never could exactly get to the bottom of the affair; but I suppose there must be some pledge or promise, which, in a rash moment, she has made him, and that already she repents of."

"How has she been left in the will?" asked D'Esmonde, abruptly.

"Her own words are 'infamously treated.' Except a bequest of ten thousand pounds, nothing beyond the Irish estate settled at the time of her marriage."

"She will easily get rid of Norwood, then," rejoined the abbé, with a smile. "His price is higher."

"I'm not so sure of that," broke in Jekyl; "the noble viscount's late speculations have all proved unfortunate—even to his book on Carlo Alberto. He thinks he has gone wrong in not hedging on Radetzky."

"What does he know of the changes of politics?" said D'Esmonde, contemptuously. "Let him stick to his stablemen and the crafty youths of Newmarket, but leave state affairs for other and very different capacities. Does she care for him, Jekyl? Does she love him?"

"She does, and she does not," said Jekyl, with a languishing air, which he sometimes assumed when asked for an opinion. "She likes his fashionable exterior, his easy kind of drawing-room assurance, and, perhaps not least of all, the tone of impertinent superiority he displays towards all other men; but she is afraid of him—afraid of his temper and his tyrannical humor, and terribly afraid of his extravagance."

"How amusing it is," said D'Esmonde, with a yawn. "A minister quits the cabinet in disgust, and retires into private life forever, when his first step is to plot his return to power; so your widow is invariably found weighing the thoughts of her mourning with speculations on a second husband. Why need she marry again? tell me that."

"Because she is a widow, perhaps. I know no other reason," lisped out Jekyl.

"I cannot conceive a greater folly than that of these women, with ample fortune, sacrificing their independence by marriage. The whole world is their own, if they but knew it. They command every source of enjoyment while young, and have all the stereotyped solaces of old age when it comes upon them; and, with poodles, parrots, and parasites, mornings of scandal and evenings of whist, eke out a very pretty existence."

"Dash the whole with a little religion, abbé," cried Jekyl, laughing, "and the picture will be tolerably correct!"

"She shall not marry Lord Norwood: that, at least, I can answer for," said D'Esmonde, not heeding the other.

"It will be difficult to prevent it, abbé," said the other, dryly.

"Easier than you think for. Come, Master Jekyl, assume a serious mood for once, and pay attention to what I am about to say. This line of life you lead cannot go on forever. Even were your own great gifts to resist time and its influences, a new generation will spring up with other wants and requirements, and another race will come who knew not Joseph. With all your versatility, it will be late to study new models, and acquire a new tongue. Have you speculated, then, I ask you, on this contingency?"

"I've some thoughts of 'a monkery,'" lisped out Jekyl; "if the good folk could only be persuaded to adopt a little cleanliness."

"Would not marriage suit you better—a rich widow—titled, well-connected, and good-looking—of fashionable habits, and tastes that resemble your own?"

"There are difficulties in the case," said Jekyl, calmly.

"State them," rejoined the abbé.

"To begin. There is Lady Hester herself—for, of course, you mean *her*."

"I engage to solve all on that head."

"Then there is the viscount."

"For him, too, I hold myself responsible."

"Lastly, there is Albert Jekyl, who, however admirably he understands Garçon life, might discover that the husband was not among the range of his characters. As it is, my dear abbé, I lead a very pretty existence. I am neither bored nor tormented, I never quarrel with anybody, nor is the rudest man ever discourteous to *me*. I possess nothing that any one envies, except that heaven-born disposition to be pleased, of which nothing can rob me. I dine well, drive in rich equipages, and, if I liked, might ride the best horses; have at least a dozen opera-boxes ready to receive me, and sweeter smiles to welcome me than would become me to boast of."

"Well, then, my proposal is, to give you all these on a life interest, instead of being a tenant-at-will," broke in D'Esmonde.

"And all this out of pure regard for me?" asked Jekyl, with a sly look.

"As a pure matter of bargain," replied D'Esmonde. "Lady Hester has advanced large sums to the cause in which I am interested. It would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to repay them. We still want means, and that ten thousand pounds legacy would render us immense service at this moment. Her income can well spare the sacrifice."

"Yes, yes," said Jekyl, musingly; and then looking fondly at his own image in the glass, he said, "I shall be a dead bargain after all."

D'Esmonde bit his lip to repress some movement of impatience, and after a pause said:

"This matter does not admit of delay. Circumstances will soon require my presence in England, and with a strong sum at my command; besides——"

"If I understand you aright," said Jekyl, "you are to conduct the whole negotiations to a successful end, and that I shall have neither a bill to endorse, nor a duel to fight throughout the affair."

"You shall be scathless."

"There is another point," said Jekyl, quickly. "How shall I figure in the newspapers—Albert Jekyl, Esquire, of where? Have you thought of that? I wish I had even an uncle a baronet."

"Pooh, pooh," said D'Esmonde, impatiently. "You marry into the peerage—that's quite enough."

"Perhaps you're right," said Jekyl. "All that enumeration of family connection—'niece to the chief justice of Bembouk,' or 'cousin-german to the vice-consul at Gundalloo'—smacks terribly of 'Moses and son.'"

"We are agreed, then," said the abbé, rising.

"I swear," said Jekyl, rising and throwing out his hand in the attitude of the well-known picture of the "Marshals." "The step that I am about to take will throw its gloom over many a dinner-party, and bring sadness into many a *salon*; but I'll retire at least with dignity, and, like Napoleon, I'll write my memoirs."

"So far, then, so good," said D'Esmonde; "now, with your leave, I'll throw myself on this sofa and snatch an hour's sleep." And ere Jekyl had arranged the folds of what he called his "sable pelisse" as a covering, the abbé was in deep slumber.

CHAPTER LXIV.

PRIESTCRAFT.

WITH less than two hours of sleep, D'Esmonde arose refreshed and ready for the day. Jekyl was not awake as the priest quitted his quarters, and, repairing to his own lodgings, dressed himself with more than usual care. Without any of the foppery of the abbé, there was a studied elegance in every detail of his costume, and, as he stepped into the carriage which awaited him, many turned their looks of admiration at the handsome priest.

"To the Crocetto," said he, and away they went.

It was already so early that few persons were about as they drove into the court of the palace, and drew up at a private door. Here D'Esmonde got out and ascended the stairs.

"Ah, monsignore!" said a young man, somewhat smartly attired in a dressing-gown and velvet cap. "He did not return here last night."

"Indeed!" said the abbé, pondering.

"He dismissed the carriage at the Pitti, so that in all likelihood he passed the night at the palace."

"Most probably, said D'Esmonde, with a bland smile; and then, with a courteous "Good-morning," he returned to his carriage.

"Where to, signore?" asked the driver.

"Towards the Duomo," said he. But scarcely had the man turned the second corner than he said, "To the 'Moskova,' Prince Midchekoff's villa."

"We're turning our back to it, signore. It's on the hill of Fiesole."

D'Esmonde nodded, but said no more. Although scarcely a league from the city, the way occupied a considerable time, being one continued and steep ascent. The abbé was, however, too deeply engaged with his own thoughts to bestow attention on the pace they journeyed, or the scene around. He was far from being insensible to the influence of the picturesque or the beautiful; but now other and weightier considerations completely engrossed his mind, nor was he aware how the moments passed till the carriage came to a stop.

"The prince is absent, sir, in Lombardy," said a gruff-looking porter from within the gate.

D'Esmonde descended, and whispered some words between the bars. "But my orders—my orders!" said the man, in a tone of deference.

"They would be peremptory against any other than *me*," said D'Esmonde, calmly; and, after a few seconds' pause, the man unlocked the gate, and the carriage passed in.

"To the back entrance," called out D'Esmonde. And they drove into a spacious court-yard, where a number of men were engaged in washing carriages, cleaning horses, and all the other duties of the stable. One large and cumbrous vehicle, loaded with all the varied "accessories" of the road, and fortified by many a precaution against the accidents of the way, stood prominent. It was covered with stains and splashes, and bore unmistakable evidence of a long journey. A courier, with a red-brown beard descending to his breast, was busy in locking and unlocking the boxes, as if in search for some missing article.

"How heavy the roads are in the north," said D'Esmonde, addressing him in German.

The man touched his cap in a half-sullen civility, and muttered an assent.

"I once made the same journey myself, in winter," resumed the abbé, "and I remember thinking that no man undergoes such real hardship as a courier. Sixteen, seventeen, ay, twenty days and nights of continued exposure to cold and snows, and yet obliged to have all his faculties on full stretch the whole time, to remember every post station, every bridge and ferry—the steep mountain passes, where oxen must be hired—the frontiers of provinces, where passports are viséd."

"Ay, and when the lazy officials will keep you standing in the deep snow a full hour at midnight, while they ring every copeck to see if it be good money."

"That's the true and only metal for a coinage," said D'Esmonde, as he drew forth a gold napoleon, and placed it in the other's hand. "Take it, my worthy fellow," said he, "it's a part of a debt I owe to every man who wears the courier's jacket. Had it not been for one of *your* cloth, I'd have been drowned at the ford of Ostrovitsch."

"It's the worst ferry in the empire," said the courier. "The emperor himself had a narrow escape there. The raft is one half too small."

"How many days have you taken on the way?" asked D'Esmonde, carelessly.

"Twenty-eight—yesterday would have made the twenty-ninth—but we arrived before noon."

"Twenty-eight days!" repeated D'Esmonde, pondering.

"Ay, and nights too! But, remember that Vradskoi Notski is three hundred and eighty versts below St. Petersburg."

"I know it well," said D'Esmonde, "and with a heavily-loaded carriage it is a weary road. How did she bear the journey?" said he, in a low, scarcely heard, whisper.

"Bear it!—better than I did; and, except when scolding the postilions for not going twelve versts an hour, in deep snow, she enjoyed herself the entire way."

D'Esmonde gave a knowing look and a smile, as though to say that he recognized her thoroughly in the description.

"You know her, then?" asked the courier.

"This many a year," replied the abbé, with a faint sigh.

"She's a rare one," said the man, who grew at each moment more confidential, "and thinks no more of a gold rouble than many another would of a copeck. Is it true, as they say, she was once an actress?"

"There are stranger stories than that about her," said D'Esmonde. "But why has she come alone? How happens it that she is here?"

"That is the secret that none of us can fathom," said the courier. "We thought there was to have been another, and I believe there is another in the passport, but it was no affair of mine. I had my orders from the prince's own intendant, who bespoke all the relays for the road, and here we are."

"I will explain all the mystery to you at another time, courier," said D'Esmonde; "meanwhile, let nothing of what we have been saying escape you. By the way," added he, half carelessly, "what name did she travel under?"

"The passport was made out 'Die Gräfin von Dalton;' but she has a Spanish name, for I heard it once from the intendant."

"Was it Lola de Seviglia?"

"That it was. I remember it well."

"We are very old friends indeed!" said the abbé; "and now be cautious; let none know that we have spoken together, and I can serve your fortune hereafter."

The German scarcely looked quite satisfied with himself for the confidence he had been unwittingly led into; "but, after all," thought he, "the priest knows more than I could tell him;" and, so, he resumed his search without further thought of the matter.

As for D'Esmonde, his first care was to inquire for Monsieur de Grasse, the prince's chief secretary, with whom he remained closeted for nigh an hour. It will not be necessary to inflict all the detail of that interview on the reader; enough, that we state its substance to have been a passing entreaty on the part of D'Esmonde to be admitted to an audience of the prince, as firmly resisted by the secretary, whose orders were not to admit any one, nor, indeed, acknowledge that his highness was then there.

"You must wait upon him at the Crocetto, monsignore," said De Grasse. "Your presence here will simply cause the dismissal of those who have admitted you, and yet never advance your wishes in the least."

"My business is too urgent, sir, to be combated by reasons so weak as these," replied D'Esmonde; "nor am I much accustomed to the air of an antechamber."

"You must yet be aware, monsignore, that the orders of Prince Midchekoff are absolute in his own house." The secretary dropped his voice almost to a whisper as he finished this sentence, for he had just overheard the prince speaking to some one without, and could detect his step as he came along the corridor.

With a look of most meaning entreaty he besought the abbé to keep silence, while he crept noiselessly over and turned the key. D'Esmonde uttered an exclamation of anger, and, sweeping past a window, within which stood a magnificent vase of malachite, he caught the costly object in the wide folds of his gown, and dashed it to the ground in a thousand pieces. De Grasse gave a sudden cry of horror, and at the same instant Midchekoff knocked at the door, and demanded admittance. With faltering hand the secretary turned the key, and the prince entered the room, casting his eyes from D'Esmonde to the floor, where the fragments lay, and back again to the priest, with a significance that showed how he interpreted the whole incident. As for the abbé, he looked as coldly indifferent to the accident as though it were the veriest trifle he had destroyed.

"I came to have a few moments' interview with you, prince," said he, calmly; "can you so far oblige me?"

"I am entirely at your orders, monsignore," said the Russian, with a faint smile. "Allow me to conduct you to a chamber in less disorder than this one."

The abbé bowed and followed him, not seeming to hear the allusion. And now, passing through a number of rooms, whose gorgeous furniture was carefully covered, they reached a small chamber opening upon a conservatory, where a breakfast-table was already spread.

"I will waste neither your time nor my own, prince, by an apology for the hour of this visit, nor the place; my business did not admit of delay—that will excuse me in your eyes."

The prince gave a cold bow, but never spoke.

D'Esmonde resumed. "I have heard the news from the camp: Lord Norwood tells me that the Austrians have fallen back, and with a heavy loss, too."

"Not heavy!" said the Russian, with a smile.

"Enough, however, to raise the hopes and strengthen the courage of the others. Goito was, at least, a victory." A faint shrug of the shoulders was the only reply the prince made, and the abbé went on: "Things are too critical, prince, to treat the event slightingly. We cannot answer either for France or England; still less can we rely on the politicians of Vienna. A second or a third reverse, and who can say that they will not treat for a peace, at the cost of half the states of Lombardy. Nay, sir, I am not speaking without book," added he, more warmly; "I know—I repeat it—I know that such a negotiation has been entertained, and that, at this moment, the cabinet of England has the matter in its consideration."

"It may be so," said the prince, carelessly, as he poured out his coffee.

"Then there is not a moment to be lost," cried the abbé, impetuously. "A cession of the Milanais means a republic of Upper Italy—the downfall of the Popedom—the rule of infidelity over the Peninsula. Are *we*—are *you* prepared for this? Enough has been done to show that Italian 'unity' is a fiction. Let us complete the lesson, by proving that they cannot meet the Austrian in arms. The present generation, at least, will not forget the chastisement, if it be but heavy enough."

"We may leave that task to the impe-

rialists," said the prince, with a cold smile.

"I do not think so. I know too much of German sluggishness and apathy. The reinforcements, that should pour in like a flood, creep lazily along. The dread of France—the old terror of those wars that once crushed them—is still uppermost. They know not how far Europe will permit them to punish a rebellious province; and, while they hesitate, they give time for the growth of that public opinion that will condemn them."

"Perhaps you are right," said the Russian, as he sipped his coffee carelessly.

"And if I be," cried D'Esmonde, passionately, "are we to sit tranquilly here till the ruin overtake us? Will Russia wait till the flame of a Red republic throws its lurid glare over Europe, and even gleam over the cold waters of the Neva? Is it her wish, or to her benefit, that the flag of the democrat and the infidel is to float over the continent?"

"You conjured up the monster yourself, monsignore. It is for you to order him back to the depths he came from."

"And we are ready for the task," said the priest. "We fostered this revolt, because we saw it was better to lop off a diseased limb than to suffer the gangrene to spread over the entire body; better to cast down into utter perdition the wild democrats, who but half believed us, than peril the countless millions of true Catholics. Nay, more, we acted with your counsel and concurrence. That revolt has already borne its fruits. Men see no issue to the struggle they are engaged in. The men of moderation are overborne by the wild clamor of the factionist. Anarchy is amongst them, and now is our moment to bid the contest cease, and earn from mankind the glorious epithet of 'peacemaker.' The tide of victory once turned, see how the mind of Europe will turn with it. Good wishes are prone to go with the battalions that advance!"

"Good wishes are not too costly a sympathy," said the Russian, coolly.

"It is to that point I am coming, prince," said the abbé; "nor have I intruded myself on your privacy to-day merely to discuss the public opinion of Europe. The whole of this question lies in a narrow compass. It is time that this struggle should cease—it is, at least, time that the tide of conquest should turn. Were Austria free to use her strength, we might trust the issue to herself; but she is not, and we must help her. I hold here the means," said he, placing on the table a heavy pocket-book crammed with letters. "This," said he, taking up one large sealed packet, "is an autograph from his Holiness, commanding Durando to halt at the Po, and under no circumstances to cross the frontier. This," continued he, showing another, "is to Ghirardi, to grant leave of absence to all officers who desire to return to their homes. This is to Krasaletzki, to provide for the disbandment of his legion. The King of Naples waits but for the signal to recall General Pepe and his contingent, fifteen thousand strong. And now, prince, there is but one other voice in Europe we wait for—the Czar's!"

"His imperial majesty has never wished well to the cause of order," said the Russian, with a studied calm of manner.

"Away with such trifling as this," said D'Esmonde, passionately; "nor do not try to impose upon me by these courteous generalities that amuse cabinets. Russia speaks to Western Europe best by her gold. The 'rouble' can come where the 'Cossack' cannot! There are men with these armies that comprehend no other argument—whose swords have their price. Our treasuries are exhausted; the sacred vessels of our altars—the golden ornaments of our shrines—are gone. You alone can aid us at this moment. It is no barren generosity, prince! You are combating your Poles more cheaply beside the Po and the Adige than on the banks of the Vistula! You are doing more! You are breaking up those ancient alliances of Europe whose existence excluded you from continental power! You are buying your freedom to sit down among the rulers of the Old World, and accustoming the nations of the West to the voice of the Boyard in their councils! And, greatest of all, you are now crushing into annihilation that spirit of revolt that now rages like a pestilence. But why do I speak of these things to one like you? You know full well the terms of the compact. Your own handwriting has confessed it."

Midchekoff gave a slight—a very slight movement of surprise, but never spoke.

"Yes," continued D'Esmonde, "I have within that pocket-book at this moment the receipt of Count Grünenburg, the Austrian secretary-at-war, for the second installment of a loan advanced by Prince Midchekoff to the imperial government. I have a copy of the order in council acknowledging in terms of gratitude the aid, and recommending that the cross of St. Stephen should be conferred on the illustrious lender. And, less gracious than these," added he, with sarcastic bitterness, "I have the record of the emperor's scruples about accord-

ing the first-class order of the empire to one whose nobility was but left-handed. Were these to appear to-morrow in the '*Razionale*,' is it only your pride as a prince that would be humbled? Or, think you, that a single stone would rest upon another in this gorgeous edifice where we are standing? Who or what could restrain an infuriated populace from wreaking their vengeance on the traitor? Who would lift a hand against the pillage of this splendor, and the desecration of this magnificence? It is not willingly that I tell you these things, nor had I ever spoken of them, if you had but heard me with fitting attention. I know, too, the price at which they are uttered. We never can be friends; but this is of small moment. Our cause—ours I say—for it is yours no less than mine—is above such consideration."

"How much do you require?" said Midchekoff, as he leaned his arm on the chimney-piece, and stared calmly at the abbé.

"Ghirardi and his staff demand two hundred thousand francs; Albizi will be a cheaper bargain. Marionetti and his force will be surrounded, and retire from Lombardy on parole of not serving during the campaign—he only asks enough to emigrate with. Then there is the Commissary of the Crociati—he is quite ready to become his own paymaster. There are others of inferior rank and pretensions, with whom I shall treat personally. The press, particularly of England, will be the difficulty; but its importance is above all price. The public mind must be brought back, from its sympathy for a people, to regard the rulers more favorably. Anarchy and misrule must be displayed in their most glaring colors. The Crociati will do us good service here; their crimes would sully a holier crusade than this! But I weary you, sir," said the abbé, stopping suddenly, and observing that Midchekoff, instead of seeming to listen, was busily occupied in writing.

"Morlache holds bills of mine to this amount," said the prince, showing a list of several large sums; "he will place them at your disposal on your giving a receipt for them. This is an order, also, regarding certain emeralds I had commissioned him to have mounted in gold. He need not do so, but will dispose of the gems, as I shall not want them." A very slight flush here colored his cheek, and he paused as if some bitter thought had crossed his mind.

D'Esmonde's quick eye read the meaning of the expression, and he said, "Am I to congratulate your highness on the approach of a certain happy event?"

"His majesty has not deigned to accord me the necessary permission," was the reply.

"Then I will be bold enough to say I congratulate you," cried D'Esmonde. "Your alliance should be with a royal house, prince. *Your* position in Europe is exceptional; such should be *your* marriage. Besides, the day is not very distant when there must come another dissection of the map of Europe. There will be new principalities, but wanting heads to rule them. The world is tired of Coburgs, and would gladly see another name amongst its royalties."

"I am at the disposal of my emperor," said Midchekoff, coldly; for whatever effect the flatteries might produce within, neither his words nor his looks would betray it, and now by his manner he showed that he wished the interview over.

"Mademoiselle, then, returns to her family?" asked D'Esmonde.

"To the care of the Count von Auersberg."

"The reputation of having once attracted your highness will be a fortune to her."

"She has refused a settlement of eighty thousand roubles a year."

"A most princely offer!" cried D'Esmonde.

"His majesty fixed the sum," said Midchekoff, as coolly as though talking of an indifferent matter.

D'Esmonde now rose to take his leave, but there was a reluctance in his manner that showed he was unwilling to go. At last he said, "Does your highness intend to return to the camp?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"I ask," said the abbé, "inasmuch as I am hourly in expectation of hearing from Cardinal Maraffa, with reference to a certain decoration, which you should long since have received——"

"Indeed! has his Holiness been pleased to consider me amongst his most ardent well-wishers?" cried the prince, interrupting.

"I may be in a position to assure your highness on that score before another day elapses. May I hope that you will receive me—even at some inconvenience—for my time is much occupied just now?"

"Whenever you call, Monsieur l'Abbé," was the prompt reply. "If you will deign to accept this ring as a souvenir of me, it will also serve to admit you at all hours, and in all places, to me."

"Your costly gift, prince," said D'Esmonde, flushing, "has a greater value in my eyes than all its luster can express."

And, with a most affectionate leave-taking, they parted.

"At what hour is the prince's carriage ordered?" said the abbé, as he passed through the hall.

"For two o'clock precisely, monsignore. He is to have an audience at the Pitti."

"To Florence—and with speed!" said D'Esmonde to his coachman; and away they drove.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE "MOSKOVA."

The Abbé D'Esmonde passed a busy morning. Twice was he closeted with the President of the Ministry, and once was he received in a lengthy audience at the Pitti; after which he repaired to the house of Morlache, where he remained till after two o'clock.

"There goes Midchekoff to the palace!" said the Jew, as a handsome equipage drove past.

"Then it is time for me to be away," said D'Esmonde, rising. "I have received orders to meet him there. Remember, Morlache, I must have this sum in gold, ready by the evening—the bills on London can reach me by post."

"All shall be attended to," said Morlache; and the abbé entered his carriage once more, giving orders for the Pitti.

When the carriage had passed the first turning, however, D'Esmonde appeared suddenly to have remembered something that till then had escaped him, and he desired the man to drive round to the San Gallo gate; thence he directed his way to the narrow road which traverses the valley of the Mugello, and winds along for miles at the foot of the hill of Fiesole. Once outside the city, D'Esmonde urged the man to speed, and they drove for nigh an hour at a rapid pace.

"There is a footpath somewhere hereabouts leads to Fiesole," said D'Esmonde, springing out and casting his eyes around. "I have it. Remain here till I come down. I may be absent for an hour or more; but be sure to wait for me." And so saying, he passed into a vineyard beside the road, and was soon lost to view.

The pathway was steep and rugged; but D'Esmonde traversed it with an active step, scarcely seeming to bestow a thought upon its difficulties, in the deeper preoccupation of his mind. As little did he notice the peasant greetings that met him, or hear the kindly accents that bade him "good day" as he went. If at intervals he stopped in his career, it was rather to take breath, and to recruit vigor for new efforts, than to look down upon the gorgeous scene that now lay beneath him. For an instant, however, his thoughts did stray to the objects in view, and, as he beheld the dark towers of a gloomy, castellated building, half hid amongst tall yew-trees, he muttered:

"Deeper and darker schemes than mine were once enacted there!—and what fruits have they borne after all? They who convulsed the age they lived in have never left an impress to ruffle the future, and, for aught that we know or feel, the Medici might never have lived. And this," cried he, aloud, "because theirs was a selfish ambition. There is but one cause whose interests are eternal—the Church—that glorious creation which combines power, here, with triumph, hereafter!"

His face, as he uttered the words, was no bad emblem of the nature within: a high and noble brow, lit up by the impress of a great ambition, and, beneath, eyes of changeful and treacherous meaning; while, lower down again, in the compressed lips and projecting chin, might be read the signs of an unrelenting spirit.

Passing along through many a tortuous path, he at last reached a small private gate, which led into the grounds of the "Moskova." He had to bethink him for a moment of the way which conducted him to the gardens, but he soon remembered the direction. It was the hour when in Italy the whole face of the country—the busiest streets of a thronged city—are deserted, and a stillness, far more unbroken than that of midnight, prevails. The glowing hours of noonday had brought the "siesta," and not a laborer was to be seen in the fields.

D'Esmonde found the garden unlocked, and entered. He knew that, by passing directly onward to the "Orangery," he could enter the villa by a small door, which led into the private apartments of the prince. This was, however, locked, but the window lay open, and with a spring he gained the sill, and entered the chamber. He knew it well; it was the little room appropriated by Midchekoff as his private library, simply furnished, and connected with a still smaller chamber, where, in an alcove, a species of divan stood, on which it was the rich man's caprice at times to pass the night. Although certain traces showed that the prince had been recently there, no letters nor papers lay about; there was no sign of haste or negligence, nor was anything left to the accidents of prying eyes or meddling

fingers. D'Esmonde opened the door which conducted into the corridor, and listened; but all was silent. He then sat down to think. The palace—for such, under the name of villa, it was—was of immense extent, and he could not expect to ramble many minutes without chancing upon some of the household. His color came and went, as, in deep agitation, he conceived in turn every possible project, for he was one whose mind worked with all the violent throes of some mighty engine; and even when taking counsel with himself, the alternate impulses of his reason became painful efforts. At last he made up his resolve, and, entering the inner chamber, he closed the shutters, and drew the curtains, and then, throwing around his shoulders a richly-lined cloak of sable, he rang the bell loudly and violently. This done, he lay down upon the divan, which, in the darkness of the recess, was in complete obscurity. He had barely time to draw the folds of the mantle about him when a servant entered, with noiseless step, and stood at a respectful distance, awaiting what he believed to be his master's orders.

"Send the signora," muttered D'Esmonde, with the cloak folded across his mouth, and then turned on his side. The servant bowed and retired.

D'Esmonde started up, and listened to the retiring footfalls, till they were lost in the distance, and then the strong pulsations of his own heart seemed to mock their measured pace. "Would the stratagem succeed?" "Would she come, and come alone?" were the questions which he asked himself, as his clasped hands were clenched, and his lip quivered in strong emotion. An unbroken stillness succeeded, so long that, to his aching senses, it seemed like hours of time. At last a heavy door was heard to bang—another, too—now, voices might be detected in the distance; then came footsteps, it seemed, as of several people; and, lastly, these died away, and he could mark the sweeping sounds of a female dress coming rapidly along the corridor. The door opened and closed—she was in the library, and appeared to be waiting. D'Esmonde gave a low, faint cough, and now, hastily passing on, she entered the inner chamber, and, with cautious steps traversing the darkened space, she knelt down beside the couch. D'Esmonde's hand lay half uncovered, and on this now another hand was gently laid. Not a word was uttered by either; indeed, their very breathings seemed hushed into stillness.

If the secrets of hearts were opened to us, what a history, what a life-long experience lay in those brief moments! and what a conflict of passion might be read in those two natures! A slight shudder shook D'Esmonde's frame at the touch of that hand, which so often had been clasped within his own, long, long ago, and he raised it tenderly and pressed it to his lips. Then, passing his other arm around her, so as to prevent escape, he said, but in a voice barely audible, the one word, "Lola!"

With a violent effort she tried to disengage herself from his grasp; and although her struggles were great, not a cry, not a syllable, escaped her.

"Hear me, Lola," said D'Esmonde; "hear me with patience and with calm, if not for my sake, for your own."

"Unhand me, then," said she, in a voice which, though low, was uttered wi'h all the vehemence of strong emotion. "I am not a prisoner beneath this roof."

"Not a prisoner, say you?" said D'Esmonde, as he locked the door and advanced towards her. "Can there be any bondage compared to this? Does the world know of any slavery so debasing?"

"Dare to utter such words again, and I will call to my aid those who will hurl you from that window," said she, in the same subdued accents. "That priestly robe will be but a poor defense here."

"You'd scarcely benefit by the call, Lola," said D'Esmonde, as he stole one hand within the folds of his robe.

"Would you kill me?" cried she, growing deathly pale.

"Be calm and hear me," said the priest, as he pressed her down upon a seat, and took one directly opposite to her. "It never could be my purpose, Lola, to have come here either to injure or revile you. I may, indeed, sorrow over the fall of one whose honorable ambitions might have soared so high—I may grieve for a ruin that was so causeless—but, save when anguish may wring from me a word of bitterness, I will not hurt your ears, Lola. I know everything—all that has happened—yet have I to learn who counseled you to this flight."

"Here was my adviser—here!" said she, pressing her hand firmly against her side. "My heart, bursting and indignant—my slighted affection—my rejected love! You ask me this—*you*, who knew how I loved him."

For some seconds her emotions overcame her, and, as she covered her face with her hands, swayed and rocked from side to side, like one in acute bodily pain.

"I stooped to tell him all—how I had thought and dreamed of him—how I followed his footsteps—sought out the haunts

that he frequented—and loved to linger in the places where he had been. I told him, too, of one night when I had even ventured to seek him in his own chamber, and was nearly detected by another who chanced to be there; my very dress was torn in my flight. There was no confession too humiliating for my lips to utter, nor my pen to trace; and what has been the return? But why do I speak of these things to one whose heart is sealed against affection, and whose nature rejects the very name of love? You will be a merciless judge, Eustace!"

"Go on; let me hear you out, Lola," said the priest, gently.

"The tale is soon told," rejoined she, hurriedly. "My letter reached him on the eve of a great battle. The army, it appears, had been marching for weeks, and suddenly came upon the enemy without expecting it. He told me so much in about as many words, and said that he was passing what might, perhaps, prove his last hours of life in replying to me. 'Outnumbered and outmaneuvered, nothing remains but to sell our lives dearly, and even in our defeat make the name of Englishmen one of terror to our enemies.' So he wrote, and so I could have read, with a swelling, but not a breaking heart, had he not added, that, for my warm affection, my whole soul's devotion, he had nothing but his friendship to give in return—that his heart had long since been another's, and that, although she never could be his—never in all likelihood know of his affection—he would die with her name upon his lips, her image in his heart. 'It matters little,' added he, 'in what channel flow the feelings of one, where to-morrow, in all likelihood, the course will be dried up forever. Let me, however, with what may be the last lines I shall ever write, thank you—nay, bless you—for one passage of your letter, and the thought of which will nerve my heart in the conflict now so near, and make me meet my last hour with an unbroken spirit.' The mystery of these words I never could penetrate, nor have I the slightest clue to their meaning. But why should I care for them? Enough that I am slighted, despised, and rejected! This letter came to my hands six weeks ago. I at once wrote to the Prince Midchekoff, telling him the woman he was about to marry loved, and was loved by, another; that she entertained no feeling towards himself but of dread and terror. I told him, too, that her very beauty would not withstand the inroads of a sorrow that was corroding her heart. He replied to me, and I wrote again. I was now his confidante, and he told me all. How that he had addressed a formal demand to the emperor for leave to marry, and how he had taken safe measures to have his prayer rejected. Then came the tidings of the Czar's refusal to Madame de Heidendorf, and *my* triumph; for I told her, and to her face, that, once more, we were equals. It was, stung by this taunt, that she refused to travel with me—refused to accept the splendid dowry to which her betrothal entitled her, and demanded to be restored to her family and friends, poor as she had left them. It was then that I resolved on this bold step. I had long been learning the falsehood of what are called friends, and how he who would achieve fortune must trust to himself alone. Midchekoff might not love me, but there was much in my power to secure his esteem. My head could be as fertile in schemes as his own. I had seen much and heard more. The petty plottings of the Heidendorf, and the darker counsels of the Abbé D'Esmonde, were all known to me——"

"You did not dare to write my name?" asked the priest, in a slow, deliberate voice.

"And why should I not?" cried she, haughtily. "Is it fear, or is it gratitude should hold my hand?"

"You forget the past, Lola, or you had never said these words."

"I remember it but as a troubled dream, which I will not suffer to darken my waking hours. At last I begin to live, and never till now have I known the sensation of being above fear."

"You told the prince, then, of our relations together? You showed him my letters and your own replies?" said D'Esmonde, as he fixed his dark eyes upon her.

"All—all!" said she, with a haughty smile.

"You, perhaps, told him that I had engaged you to write to me of all you heard or saw at St. Petersburg?"

"I said so, in a most unpolished phrase: I called myself a spy."

"You were probably not less candid when designating your friends, Lola," said D'Esmonde, with a faint smile. "How, pray, did you name *me*?"

"It was a better word—one of cutting reproach, believe me," said she. "I called you a 'priest,' sir. Do you think there is another epithet can contain as much?"

"In the overflowing of those frank impulses, Lola, of course you spoke of Norwood—of Gerald Acton, I mean, as you may remember him better under that name. You told the prince of your marriage to this Englishman—a marriage solemnized

by myself, and of which I retain the written evidence."

"With the falsehood that for a brief moment imposed upon myself, I would not stoop to cheat another! No, Eustace, this may be priestcraft. To outlive a deception, and then employ it; to tremble at a fallacy first, and to terrorize by means of it after, is excellent Popery, but most sorry womanhood!"

"Unhappy, wretched creature!" cried D'Esmonde. "Where have you learned these lessons? Who could have taught you this?"

"You—and you alone, Eustace. In reading *your* nature, I unread my own faith; in seeing your falsehood, I learned to believe there was no truth anywhere. I asked myself, what must be the religion if this man be its interpreter?"

"Hold—hold!" cried D'Esmonde, passionately. "It is not to such as you I can render account of my actions, nor lay bare the secret workings of my heart. Know this much, however, woman, and ponder over it well, that if a man like me can make shipwreck of his whole nature, crush his hopes, and blast his budding affections, the cause that exacts the sacrifice must needs be holy. Bethink you that my goal is not like *yours*. I have not plotted for a life of inglorious ease. I have not schemed to win a pampered and voluptuous existence. It is not in a whirlwind of passionate enjoyment I have placed the haven of my hopes. You see me—as I have ever been—poor, meanly housed, and meanly fed—not repining at my lot either, not deeming my condition a hard one. Why am I thus, then? Are the prizes that worldly men contend for above *my* reach? Am I the inferior of those who are carrying away the great rewards of life? Where is the stain of falsehood in all this?"

"Were I to copy the picture and paint myself in the same colors," said Lola—"were I to show what I have stooped to—a scoff and a shame!—how I neither faltered at a crime, nor trembled before exposure—all that I might be what I now am!"

"The mistress of a prince!" said D'Esmonde, with a contemptuous smile.

"Was it a prouder fortune, when my lover was the serge-clad seminarist of Salamanca?" said she, laughing scornfully.

"I linked you with a higher destiny, Lola," said D'Esmonde, deliberately.

"Again you refer to this pretended marriage, but I put no faith in your words; nor, were they even true, should they turn me from my path."

"At least, you should confirm your claim to his name and title," said D'Esmonde. "The rank you will thus attain will but strengthen your position in the world, and they who would treat contemptuously the toridor's daughter, will show every courtesy and deference to the English peeress."

"I will hazard nothing on your advice, priest," said she, proudly. "I know you as one who never counseled without a scheme of personal advantage. This Acton has injured you. You desire his ruin; or, perhaps, some deep intrigue awaits myself. It matters not: I will not aid you!"

"How you misjudge me, Lola," said he, sorrowfully. "I meant by this act to have repaired many an unconscious wrong, and to have vindicated an affection which the troubled years of life have never been able to efface. Amidst all the cares of great events, when moments are precious as days of ordinary existence, I have come to offer you this last reparation. Think well ere you reject it."

"Not for an instant!" cried she, passionately. "Make weaker minds the tools of your subtle artifices, and leave *me* to follow my own career."

"I will obey you," said D'Esmonde, with an air of deep humility. "I ask but one favor. As this meeting is unknown to all, never speak of it to Midchekoff. My name need never pass your lips, nor shall my presence again offend you. Adieu forever!"

Whether some passing pang of remorse shot through her heart, or that a sudden sense of dread came across her, Lola stood unable to reply, and it was only as he moved away towards the door that she found strength to say "Good-bye."

"Let me touch that hand for the last time, Lola," said he, advancing towards her.

"No, no! Leave me!" cried she, with a sick shudder, and as though his very approach suggested peril.

D'Esmonde bowed submissively, and passed out. With slow and measured steps he traversed the alleys of the garden; but once outside the walls, he hastened his pace. Descending the mountain with rapid strides, he gained the road where the carriage waited in less than half an hour.

"To the city," said he. And, throwing himself back in his seat, drew down the blinds, while, with folded arms and closed eyes, he tasted of, what habit enabled him at any moment to command, a refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER LXVI.

VALEGGIO.

The little village of Valeggio, near the Lago di Garda, was fixed upon as the spot where the commissaries of both armies should meet to arrange on the exchange of prisoners. It stood at about an equal distance from their headquarters, and, although a poor and insignificant hamlet, was conveniently situated for the purpose in hand. Soon after daybreak, the stirring sounds of marching troops awoke the inhabitants, and a half-squadron of Piedmontese lancers were seen to ride up the narrow street, and, dismounting, to picket their horses in the little piazza of the market. Shortly after these came an equal number of Hungarian hussars, "Radetzky's Own," who drew up in the square before the church; each party seeming carefully to avoid even a momentary contact with the other. Several country carts and wagons lined the street, for a number of prisoners had arrived the preceding evening, and taken up their quarters in the village, who might now be seen projecting their pale faces and bandaged heads from many a casement, and watching with eager curiosity all that was going forward. About an hour later, an Austrian general, with his staff, rode in from the Peschiera road, while, almost at the very instant, a caléche with four horses dashed up from the opposite direction, conveying the Piedmontese commissary.

So accurately timed was the arrival, that they both drew up at the door of the little inn together, and as the one dismounted, the other alighted from his carriage.

The etiquette of precedence, so easily settled in the ordinary course of events, becomes a matter of some difficulty at certain moments, and so the two generals seemed to feel it, as, while desirous of showing courtesy, each scrupled at what might seem a compromise of his country's dignity. The Austrian officer was a very old man, whose soldierlike air and dignified deportment recalled the warriors of a past century. The other, who was slighter and younger, exhibited an air of easy unconcern, rather smacking of courts than camps, and vouching for a greater familiarity with salons than with soldier-life.

They uncovered and bowed respectfully to each other, and then stood, each waiting as it were for the initiative of the other.

"After you, general," said the younger, at length, and with a manner which most courteously expressed the deference he felt for age.

"I must beg *you* to go first, sir," replied the Austrian. "I stand here on the territory of my master, and I see in you all that demands the deference due to a guest."

The other smiled slightly, but obeyed without a word; and ascending the stairs, was followed by the old general into the little chamber destined for their conference. Slight and trivial as this incident was, it is worth mention, as indicating the whole tone of the interview—one characterized by a proud insistence on one side, and a certain plastic deference on the other. The Austrian spoke like one who felt authorized to dictate his terms; while the Piedmontese seemed ready to acquiesce in and accept whatever was proffered. The letters which accredited them to each other lay open on the table; but as this preliminary conversation had not assumed the formal tone of business, neither seemed to know the name or title of the other. In fact, it appeared like a part of the necessary etiquette that they were simply to regard each other as representatives of two powers, neither caring to know or recognize any personal claims.

Lists of names were produced on both sides. Muster-rolls of regiments, showing the precise ranks of individuals, and their standing in the service, all arranged with such care and accuracy as to show that the conference itself was little more than a formality. A case of brevet-rank, or the accident of a staff appointment, might now and then call for a remark or an explanation, but, except at these times, the matter went on in mere routine fashion; a mark of a pencil sufficing to break a captivity, and change the whole fate of a fellow-man!

"Our task is soon ended, sir," said the Austrian, rising at last. "It would seem that officers on both sides prefer death to captivity in this war."

"The loss has been very great indeed," said the other. "The peculiar uniform of your officers, so distinct from their men, has much exposed them."

"They met their fate honorably, at least, sir; they wore the colors of their emperor."

"Very true, general," replied the other, "and I will own to you our surprise at the fact that there have been no desertions, except from the ranks. The popular impression was, that many of the Hungarians would have joined the Italian cause. It was even said whole regiments would have gone over."

"It was a base calumny upon a faithful people and a brave soldiery," said the other. "I will not say that such a falsehood may not have blinded their eyes against their truth in their national struggle—the love of country might easily have been used to a base and treacherous purpose—but here, in this conflict, not a man will desert the cause of the emperor!" The emotion in which he spoke these words was such that he was obliged to turn away his face to conceal it.

"Your words have found an illustration amongst the number of our wounded prisoners, general," said the other—"a young fellow who, it was said, broke his arrest to join the struggle at Goito, but whose name or rank we never could find out, for, before being taken, he had torn every mark of his grade from cuff and collar."

"You know his regiment, perhaps?"

"It is said to be Prince Paul of Würtemberg's."

"What is he like—what may be his age?" asked the general, hastily.

"To pronounce from appearance, he is a mere boy—brown-haired and blue-eyed, and wears no mustache."

"Where is he, sir?" asked the old man, with a suppressed emotion.

"In this very village. He was forwarded here last night by a special order of the Duke of Savoy, who has taken a deep interest in his fate, and requested that I should take measures, while restoring him, without exchange, to mention the signal bravery of his conduct."

"The duke's conduct is worthy of a soldier prince!" said the general, with feeling, "and, in my master's name, I beg to thank him."

"The youth is at the temporary hospital, but knows nothing of these arrangements for his release. Perhaps the tidings will come more gratefully to his ears from his own countryman."

"It is kindly spoken, sir; may I have the honor of knowing the name of one who has made this interview so agreeable by his courtesy?"

"My name at this side of the Alps, general, is Count de Valetta; but I have another and better known designation, before I pronounce which, I would gladly enlist in my favor whatever I might of your good opinion."

"All this sounds like a riddle to me, Signor Conte," said the general, "and I am but a plain man, little skilled at unraveling a difficulty."

"I am addressing the General Count von Auersberg," said the other. "Well, sir, it was hearing that you were the officer selected for this duty that induced me to ask I might be appointed also. I have been most anxious to meet you, and, in the accidents of a state of war, knew not how to compass my object."

The old general bowed politely, and waited, with all patience, for further enlightenment.

"My desire for this meeting, general, proceeds from my wish to exculpate myself from what may seem to have been an unqualified wrong done to a member of your family. I am Prince Alexis Midchekoff."

Auersberg started from his chair at the words, and bent a look of angry indignation at the speaker—an expression which the Russian bore with the very calmest unconcern.

"If I am to resume this explanation," said he, coldly, "it must be when you have reseated yourself, and will condescend to hear me suitably."

"And who is to be my guarantee, sir, that I am not to listen to an insult?" cried the old general, passionately. "I see before me the man who has outraged the honor of my house. You know well, sir, the customs of your nation, and that you had no right to accept a lady's hand in betrothal without the permission of your emperor."

"I was certain to obtain it," was the calm answer.

"So certain, that it has been refused—peremptorily, flatly refused."

"Very true, general. The refusal came at my own especial request. Nay, sir, I need not tell you these words convey no insulting meaning—but hear me patiently before you pronounce. The facts are briefly these:—It came to my knowledge that this young lady's acceptance of me proceeded entirely from considerations of fortune—that she had been greatly influenced by others, and strongly urged to do that which might, at the sacrifice of herself, benefit her family. These considerations were not very flattering to me, personally; but I should have overlooked them, trusting to time and fortune for the result, had I not also learnt that her affections were bestowed upon another—a young Englishman, with whom she had been for some domesticated, whose picture she possessed, and from whom she had received letters."

"Am I to take this assertion on trust?" cried the general.

"By no means, sir. This is the picture, and here is one of the letters. I know not if there have been many others, nor can I say whether she has replied to them. It was enough for me that I discovered I had

no claim on her affection, and that our marriage would bring only misery on both sides. To have disclosed these facts before the world would of course have exculpated me, but have injured *her*. I therefore took what I deemed a more delicate course, and by providing for the imperial refusal, I solved a difficulty that must otherwise have involved her in deep reproach." The prince waited some seconds for the general to speak, but the old man stood like one stunned and stupefied, unable to utter a word. At last, Midchekoff resumed: "My master fixed a sum of eighty thousand roubles, to which I at once assented, as a settlement on Mademoiselle de Dalton; but this, I grieve to say, she has peremptorily rejected."

"Has she—has she done this?" cried the old count. "Then, by St. Stephen! she is my own dear child forever; come what may, there is no disgrace can attach to her."

"I had hoped, sir," said Midchekoff, "that you might have seen this matter as I did, and that I might have counted on your advocating what is simply a measure of justice."

"I know little of the extent to which money reparations can atone for injured feelings or wounded honor. My life has never supplied even a single lesson on that score. All I see here is an injury on either side. *Your* fault, I think, has been properly expiated; and as for *hers*, I want no other justification than what you have told me. Now, where is she? When may I see her?"

"I had given orders for her return to Vienna, with the intention of placing her under your charge; but some mistake has occurred, and her departure has been delayed. A second courier has, however, been despatched, and ere this she will have left St. Petersburg."

"You have acted well throughout, prince," said the old general, "and I shall owe you my gratitude for the remainder of my life: not for the delicacy of your reserve, still less for the generous character of your intentions, but because you have shown me that this girl has a high-hearted sense of honor, and is a thorough Dalton." The old man's eyes filled up with tears, and he had to turn away to hide his emotion.

Midchekoff rose to withdraw, affecting to busy himself with the papers on the table, while Auersberg was recovering his self-possession. This did not, however, seem an easy task, for the old general, forgetting everything save Kate, leaned his head on his hands, and was lost in thought.

The prince respected his emotion, and withdrew in silence.

So much was the old General von Auersberg absorbed in his interest for Kate, that he had not a thought to bestow upon the immediate affairs before him. It was scarcely a few weeks since he had received a few lines from herself, telling of the emperor's refusal, and asking for his advice. It needed all his long-pledged devotion to monarchy to enable him to read the lines without an outbreak of passion; and his first impulse was to seek out the man who had so grossly insulted his house, and challenge him to single combat. Later reflection showed him that this would be to arraign the conduct of the emperor, and to call in question the judgment of a crowned head. While agitated by these opposite considerations, there came another and scarcely less sad epistle to his hand; and if the writer was wanting in those claims to station and rank which had such hold upon his heart, her touching words and simple style moved him to emotions that for many a year seemed to have slept within him.

It was Nelly's account of her father's death, told in her own unpretending words, and addressed to one whom she recognized as the head of her house. She dwelt with gratitude on the old count's kindness, and said how often her father had recurred to the thought of his protection and guidance to Frank, when the time should come that would leave him fatherless. It seemed as if up to this point she had written calmly and collectedly, expressing herself in respectful distance to one so much above her. No sooner, however, had she penned Frank's name, than all this reserve gave way before the gushing torrent of her feelings, and she proceeded:

"And, oh, sir! is not the hour come when that protection is needed? Is not my poor brother a prisoner, charged with a terrible offense—no less than treason to his emperor? You, who are yourself a great soldier, can say if such is like to be the crime of one well born, generous, and noble as Frank, whose heart ever overflowed to all who served him, and who, in all the reckless buoyancy of youth, never forgot his honor. Crafty and designing men—if such there may have been around him—might possibly have thrown their snares over him; but no persuasion nor seductions could have made him a traitor. 'See what the Kaiser has made Count Stephen!' were some of the last lines he ever wrote to me, 'and, perhaps, one day, another Dalton will stand as high in the favor of his master.' His whole heart and

soul were in his soldier-life. You, sir, were his guide-star, and, thinking of you, how could he have dreamed of disloyalty? They tell me that, in troubled times like these, when many have faltered in their allegiance, such accusations are rarely well inquired into, and that courts-martial deal peremptorily with the prisoners; but you will not suffer my brother to be thus tried and judged. You will remember that he is a stranger in that land—an orphan—a mere boy, too—friendless—no, no, not friendless—forgive me the ungracious word—he who bears your name, and carries in his veins your blood, cannot be called friendless. You will say, perhaps, how defend him?—how reply to charges which will be made with all the force of witness and circumstance? I answer, hear his own story of himself; he never told a lie—remember that, count—from his infancy upwards, we, who lived with and about him, know that he never told a lie! If the accusation be just—and oh! may God avert this calamity—Frank will say so. He will tell how, and when, and why this poison of disaffection entered his heart; he will trace out his days of temptation, and struggle, and fall, without a shadow of concealment; and if this sad time is to come, even then do not desert him. Bethink you of his boyhood, his warm, ardent nature, burning for some field of glorious enterprise, and dazzled by visions of personal distinction! How could he judge the knotted questions which agitate the deepest minds of great thinkers? A mere pretense, a well-painted scene of oppression or sufferance, might easily enlist the sympathies of a boy whose impulses have more than once made him bestow on the passing beggar the little hoardings of weeks. And yet, with all these, he is not guilty—I never can believe that he could be! Oh, sir, you know not, as I know, how treason in him would be like a living falsehood; how the act of disloyalty would be the utter denial of all those dreams of future greatness which, over our humble fireside, were his world! To serve the Kaiser—the same gracious master who had rewarded and ennobled our great kinsman—to win honors and distinctions that should rival his; to make our ancient name hold a high place in the catalogue of chivalrous soldiers—these were Frank's ambitions. If you but knew how we, his sisters, weak and timid girls, seeking the quiet paths of life, where our insignificance might easiest be shrouded—if you knew how we grew to feel the ardor that glowed in his heart and actually caught up the enthusiasm that swelled the young soldier's bosom! You have seen the world well and long; and, I ask, is this the clay of which traitors are fashioned? Be a father to him, then, who has none; and may God let you feel all the happiness a child's affection can bestow in return!

"We are a sad heritage, Sir Count! for I must now plead for another, not less a prisoner than my poor brother. Kate is in a durance, which, if more splendid, is sad as his. The ceremony of betrothal—which, if I am rightly told, is a mere ceremonial—has consigned her to a distant land, and a life of dreary seclusion. There is no longer a reason for this. The sacrifice that she was willing to make can now confer no benefit on him who sleeps in the churchyard. The prince has shown towards her a degree of indifference which will well warrant this breach. There was no affection on either side, and it would be but to ratify a falsehood to pledge fidelity. You alone have influence to effect this. She will hear your counsels, and follow them with respect, and the prince will scarcely oppose what his conduct seems to favor. This done, Sir Count, let Kate be your daughter; and oh! in all the glory of your great successes, what have you gained to compare with this? She loves you already—she has told me of the affectionate gentleness of your manner, the charm of your chivalrous sentiments, and a nobility marked by every word and every gesture. Think, then, of the unbought devotion of such a child—your own by blood and adoption—loving, tending, and ministering to you. Think of the proud beating of your heart as she leans upon your arm, and think of the happiness, as she throws around your solitary fireside all the charm of a home! How seldom is it that generosity doubles itself in its reward, but here it will be so. You will be loved, and you will be happy. With two such children, guided by your influence, and elevated by your example, what would be your happiness, and what their fortune!"

In all these pleadings for those she loved so dearly, no allusion ever was made by her to her own condition. A few lines at the very end of the letter were all that referred to herself. They were couched in words of much humility, excusing herself for the boldness of the appeal she had made, and apologizing for the hardihood with which it might be said she had urged her request.

"But you will forgive—you have already forgiven me, Sir Count," wrote she; "my unlettered style and my trembling fingers have shown you that my task must have lain near to my heart, or I had not dared to undertake it. My life has been spent in a

sphere of humble duties and humble companionship. How easily, then, may I have transgressed the limits of the deference that should separate us! I can but answer for my own heart, within which there exists towards you but the one feeling of devotion—deep and hopeful.

"If in your kindness you should ever bestow a thought upon me, you will like to know that I am well and happy. Too lowly in condition, too rude in manners, to share the fortune of those I love so dearly, I would yet delight to hear of and from them, to know that they still bear me in their affection, and think with fondness on poor lame Nelly. Even the blessing of their presence would not repay me for the wrong I should do them by my companionship, for I am a peasant girl, as much from choice as nature. Still, the sister's heart throbs strongly within the coarse bodice, and, as I sit at my work, Frank and Kate will bear me company and cheer my solitary hours.

"My humble skill is amply sufficient to supply all my wants, were they far greater than habit has made them. I live in a land dear to me by associations of thought and feeling, surrounded by those of a condition like my own, and who love and regard me. I am not without my share of duties, too—your kindness would not wish more for me. Farewell, then, Sir Count. Your high-hearted nature has taught you to tread a lofty path in life, and strive—and with great success—for the great rewards of merit. It will be a pleasure to you yet to know, that in this country of your adoption there are humble prizes for humble aspirants, and that one of these has fallen to the lot of NELLY DALTON.

"Any letter addressed 'To the care of Andreas Brennen, Juden Gasse, Innspruck,' will reach me safely. I need not say with what gratitude I should receive it."

Such were the lines which reached the old count's hand on the very day he set out with his detachment for Vienna. Overcome by shame and sorrow at what he believed to be Frank Dalton's treason, he had demanded of the Minister of War his own act of retirement from the army, and for some months had passed a life of privacy in a little village on the Styrian frontier. The wide-spread disaffection of the Austrian provinces—the open revolt of Prague—the more threatening aspect of Hungary, and the formidable struggle then going on in Lombardy, had called back into active life almost all the retired servants of the monarchy. To give way to private grief at such a moment seemed like an act of disloyalty, and, throwing off every mere personal consideration, the old soldier repaired to the capital, and presented himself at the levee of the Archduke Joseph. He was received with enthusiasm. Covered with years as he was, no man enjoyed more of the confidence and respect of the soldiery, who regarded him as one tried and proved by the great wars of the empire—a colonel of Wagram was both a patriarch and a hero. It was of great consequence, too, at that precise conjuncture, to rally round the throne all that were distinguished for fealty and devotion. He was immediately appointed to the command of a division of the army, and ordered to set out for Italy.

The complicated nature of the politics of the period—the mixture of just demand and armed menace—the blending up of fair and reasonable expectations with impracticable or impossible concessions, had so disturbed the minds of men, that few were able, by their own unaided judgment, to distinguish on which side lay right and justice; nor was it easy, from the changeful councils of the monarch, to know whether the loyalty of to-day might not be pronounced treason to-morrow. Many of the minor movements of the time—even the great struggle of the Hungarians—originated in a spontaneous burst of devotion to the emperor—to be afterwards converted by the dark and wily policy of an unscrupulous leader into open rebellion. No wonder, then, if, in such difficult and embarrassing circumstances, many strayed unconsciously from the paths of duty—some, misled by specious dreams of nationality; others, from sympathy with what they thought the weaker party; and others, again, by the force of mere companionship, or contact. In this way, few families were to be found where one or more had not joined the patriotic party, and all the ties of affection were weak in comparison with the headlong force of popular enthusiasm. The old General von Auersberg knew nothing of these great changes; no news of them had reached his retirement; so that when he rejoined the army he was shocked to see how many had fallen away and deserted from the ancient standard of the Kaiser. Many a high name and many an ancient title were more than suspected amongst the Hungarian nobility; while in Italy, they who most largely enjoyed the confidence of the government were, to be found in the ranks of the insurgents.

It might be supposed that these things would have in some degree reconciled the

old count to the imputed treason of his nephew, and that he would have found some consolation at least in the generality of the misfortune. Not so, however. His mind viewed the matter in a different light. He was willing to concede much to mistaken feelings of nationality, and to associations with a time of former independence; but these motives could have no relation to one who came into the service as he himself and Frank did—soldiers by the grace and favor of the emperor.

The blot this treason left upon his name was then a sore affliction to one whose whole aim in life had been to transmit an honorable reputation and an unshaken fidelity behind him. His reasoning was thus:—"*We* have no claims of ancient services to the monarchy to adduce—*our* ancestors never proved their devotion to the house of Hapsburg in times past—we must be taken for what our own deeds stamp us." With this decisive judgment he was ready to see Frank delivered before a court, tried and sentenced, without offering one word in his behalf. "This done," thought he, "it remains but for me to show that I have made the only expiation in my power, and paid with my heart's blood for another's fault."

Such was the resolve with which he crossed the Alps—a resolve defeated for the moment by discovering that Frank was no longer a prisoner, but had made his escape in some unexplained manner on the eventful day of Goito.

This disappointment, and the still sadder tidings of the emperor's withheld permission to Kate's mariage, came to his ears the same day—the most sorrowful, perhaps, of his whole life. His honorable fame as a soldier tarnished—his high ambition for a great alliance dashed by disappointment—he fell back for consolation upon poor Nelly's letter. The weak point of his character had ever been a dread of what he called his Irish cousins—the notion that his successes and supposed wealth would draw upon him a host of hungry and importunate relatives, eager to profit by the hard-won honors of his unaided career. And although year ofter year rolled on, and no sign was made, nor any token given, that he was remembered in the land of his forefathers, the terror was still fresh in his mind; and when at last Peter Dalton's letter reached him, he read the lines in a torrent of anger—the accumulation of long years of anticipation. Nelly's epistle was a complete enigma to him—she was evidently unprotected, and yet not selfish—she was in the very humblest circumstances, and never asked for assistance—she was feelingly alive to every sorrow of her brother and sister, and had not one thought for her own calamities. What could all this mean?—was it any new phase or form of supplication, or was it really that there did exist one in the world whose poverty was above wealth, and whose simple nature was more exalted than rank or station? With all these conflicting thoughts, and all the emotions which succeeded to the various tidings he had heard, the old count sat overwhelmed by the cares that pressed upon him; nor was it for some hours after Midchekoff's departure that he could rally his faculties to be "up and doing."

The buzz and murmur of voices in an outer room first recalled him to active thought, and he learned that several officers, recently exchanged, had come to offer their thanks for his kind intervention. The duty, which was a mere ceremony, passed over rapidly, and he was once more alone, when he heard the slow and heavy tread of a foot ascending the stairs, one by one, stopping at intervals too, as though the effort was one of great labor. Like the loud ticking of a clock to the watchful ears of sickness, there was something in the measured monotony of the sounds that grated and jarred his irritated nerves, and he called out harshly.

"Who comes there?"

No answer was returned; and, after the pause of a few seconds, the same sound recurred.

"Who's there?" cried the old man, louder; and a faint, inaudible attempt at reply followed.

And now, provoked by the interruption, he arose to see the cause, when the door slowly opened, and Frank stood before him, pale and bloodless, with one arm in a sling, and supporting himself on a stick with the other. His wasted limbs but half filled his clothes; while in his lusterless eye and quivering lip there seemed the signs of coming death.

With an instinct of kindness, the old general drew out a chair and pressed the poor boy down upon it. The youth kissed the hand as it touched him, and then heaved a heavy sigh.

"This exertion was unfit for you, my poor boy," said the count, kindly. "They should not have permitted you to leave your bed."

"It was my fault, not theirs, general. I heard that you were about to leave the village without coming to the hospital, and I thought, as, perhaps—" here his voice faltered, and a gulping fullness of the

throat seemed almost to choke him—"that as, perhaps, we might never meet again in this world, I ought to make one effort to see you, and tell you that I am not, nor ever was, a traitor!"

As though the effort had exhausted all his strength, his arms dropped as he said the words; his head fell forward, and he would have fallen to the ground had not the old general caught him in his arms.

"You are too weak, too ill, for all this, my poor fellow," said the count, as he held the boy's hand in his own, and gazed affectionately at him.

"True, ever true," muttered the youth, with half-closed lids.

"I will hear all this when you are better, Frank—when you are strong, and able to declare it manfully and openly. I will bless you with my heart's warmest blessing for the words that restore us both to fair fame and honor; but you must not speak more now."

The boy bent his head, in token of submission, but never spoke.

"It will be the proudest hour of my life, Frank, when you can throw off this reproach, and stand forth a thorough Dalton, unshaken in truth and honor. But, to do this, you must be calm and quiet now—not speak, nor even think, of these things. You shall remain with me."

Here the boy's tears fell upon the old man's hand. For a second or two not a word was spoken. At last he went on:

"Yes; you shall not leave me from this hour. Our fortunes are the same. With you it remains to show that we are worthy soldiers of our Kaiser."

Frank pressed the old count's hand upon his heart, as though to call its very pulses to bear witness to his fealty. This simple action seemed to have exhausted his last energy, for he now sank back in his chair and fainted.

The excitement he had gone through appeared to have utterly prostrated him, for he now lay for hours motionless and unconscious. Except a heavy sigh at long intervals, he gave no sign of life; and the surgeons, having exhausted all their resources to stimulate him, gave but faint hope of his recovery. They who only knew the old count as the stern soldier—bold, abrupt, and peremptory—could not conceive by what magic he had been changed into a mold of almost womanly tenderness. There was no care he did not bestow on the sick youth. The first surgeons of the staff were sent for, and all that skill and affection could suggest were enlisted in his service. The case, however, was of gloomy presage. It was the relapse fever after a wound, aggravated by mental causes of deep influence.

The greatest sympathy was felt for the old count's position. His comrades came or sent frequently to him; kind messages reached him from quarters wherein once lay all his pride and glory; and a young archduke came himself to offer his new litter to convey Frank to Verona, where the imperial headquarters were stationed. These were the very flatteries which once Von Auersberg would have prized above all that wealth could give—these were the kind of recognitions by which he measured his own career in life, making him to feel where he stood; but now one grief had so absorbed him, he scarcely noticed them. He could not divest his mind, either, of the thought that the boy's fate was intended as a judgment on himself for his own cold and ungenerous treatment of him. "I forgot," would he say to himself—"I forgot that he was not a castaway like myself. I forgot that the youth had been trained up amidst the flow of affectionate intercourse, loving and beloved, and I compared his position with my own!"

And such was in reality the very error he committed. He believed that, by subjecting Frank to all the hard rubs which once had been his own fate, he was securing the boy's future success; forgetting, the while, how widely different were their two natures, and that the affections which are molded by habits of family association are very unlike the temperament of one unfriended and unaided, seeking his fortune with no other guidance than a bold heart and a strong will. The old count was not the only one, nor will he be the last, to fall into this mistake; and it may be as well to take a warning from his error, and learn that, for success in the remote and less trodden paths of life, the warm affections that attach to home and family are sad obstacles.

It was ten days before Frank could be removed, and then he was carried in a litter, arriving in Verona on the fourth day. From his watchful cares beside the sickbed, the old general was now summoned to take part in the eventful councils of the period. A great and momentous crisis had arrived, and the whole fate, not only of Austria, but of Europe, depended on the issue. The successes of the Italian arms had been, up to this point, if not decisive, at least sufficiently important to make the result a question of doubt. If the levies contributed by the States of the Church

and Tuscany were insignificant in a warlike point of view, they were most expressive signs of popular feeling at least. Austria, besides, was assailed on every flank; with open treason in her capital; and the troops which might have conquered Lombardy were marching northward on Prague, or turning eastward towards Hungary. It then became a grave question whether, even at the cost of the whole Milanais, a peace should not be at once concluded, and Austria merely stipulate for certain commercial advantages, and the undisturbed possession of the Venetian States. If the more dispassionate heads that rule cabinets saw wisdom in this plan, the warmer and less calculating hearts of soldiers deemed it a base humiliation. Long accustomed to treat the Italians with a haughty contempt, they could not endure the thought of recognizing them as equals, not to say superiors. There were thus two parties in the council: the one eager for a speedy termination of the war, and the other burning to erase the memory of late defeats, and win back the fair provinces of their emperor. To such an extent had this spirit of discordance at last gone that the cabinet orders of Vienna were more than once overruled at headquarters, and the very decrees of the government slighted by the commander-in-chief. It was a time of independent will and personal responsibility; and probably to this accident is owing the salvation of the imperial house.

At last, when the sympathies of France and England with the cause of Italy became more than a mere suspicion—when troops marched southward towards the Alps, and diplomatic messages traversed Europe, counseling, in all the ambiguous courtesy of red tape, "wise and reasonable concessions to the fair demands of a people," the Cabinet of Vienna hastily despatched an envoy to Lombardy, with orders to concert with the generals, and treat for a peace.

Had a squadron of the enemy dashed through the streets of Verona, they could not have created one half the dismay that did the arrival of the calèche which conveyed the imperial commissioner. The old field-marshal had just returned from a review of the troops, who, as usual when he appeared, were wild with enthusiasm, when an officer of his staff announced the presence of the envoy, and in a low whisper added the object of his mission. A council was speedily called, and Von Auersberg specially invited to be present and assist in its deliberations.

The discussion lasted several hours; and, however unshaken in hope and resolute in will the old marshals of the empire, they found themselves no match in argument for the wily civilian, who, displaying before them the financial embarrassments of the state, showed that war implied bankruptcy, and that even victory might mean ruin. The great questions of imperial policy, which in their zeal they had overlooked, were strongly pressed upon them, and that public opinion of Europe, which they had only fancied a bugbear and a mockery, was represented as the formidable expression of the great family of mankind, on the conduct of one of its own members. With all this, it was no easy task to reconcile a bold soldier, at the head of a splendid army, to retire from the field, to confess himself beaten, and to acknowledge defeat, with an assured sense of victory in his heart. The evening closed in, and still they sat in debate. Some had exchanged opposition for a dogged and cold silence; others had modified their views to a kind of half-concession; while a few rallied around their old chief, with a mistaken determination to have one more dash at the enemy, should the peace be ratified on the day after. It would seem as if the "commissioner" had been fully prepared for every phase of this opposition; he combated every argument in turn, and addressed himself with readiness to every objection that was offered. At last, when, in a burst of mortification and anger, the old field-marshal arose from the table, and declared that, come what might, it should never be said that *he* had lost the provinces of his master, the other stole close beside him, and whispered a few words in his ear. The old man started—his rugged, weather-beaten face twitched with a short, convulsive movement, and he threw himself down into a chair, with a muttered oath on his lips.

There was now a dead silence in the chamber; every eye was turned stealthily towards the old general, by whose counsels they were wont to be guided; but he never spoke a word, and sat with his hands resting on his sword-hilt, the rattle of the scabbard against the belt, as it shook beneath his hand, being the only sound heard.

They are dreadful moments in life when men of high and daring courage see the trust they have long reposed in bold and vigorous measures rejected, and in its stead wily and crafty counsels adopted and followed. This was such a moment; and the old warriors, tried in many a battlefield, scarcely dared to meet each other's eyes, from very shame and sorrow. It was

just then that the sharp, quick trot of horses was heard from without, and the jingling sound of bells announced a post-carriage. Scarcely had it stopped, when an aid-de-camp entered, and whispered a few words to the field-marshal.

"No, no," said the old man, peevishly; "we are marching on to dishonor fast enough. We want no priestly aid to hasten our steps!"

The young officer appeared to hesitate, and still lingered in the chamber.

"It is your friend, the abbé, has arrived," said the general, addressing the "commissioner," "and I have said we can dispense with his arguments. He can add little to what you have so ably spoken; and if we are to depose our arms, let it be at the bidding of our emperor, and not at the beck of a priest."

"But D'Esmonde must have come from the south," interposed the civilian; "he may have some tidings worth hearing."

"Let him come in, then," said the field-marshal, abruptly; and the officer retired.

D'Esmonde had scarcely passed the threshold, when his quick, keen glance around the room revealed to him the nature of their gloomy counsels. A dogged look of submission sat on every face, and the wily priest read in their fallen countenances all the bitterness of defeat.

The stern coldness of the reception that met him never abashed the abbé in the least, and he made his compliments to the principal personages of the council with a suave dignity, the very opposite to their uncourteous manner. Even when he had completed the little circle of his attentions, and stood in expectation of a request to be seated, his air was calm and unembarrassed, although not a word, or even a gesture, gave the invitation. All felt that this should come from the field-marshal himself, and none dared to usurp the prerogative of his rank. Too deeply lost in his own brooding thoughts to attend to anything else, the old general sat still, with his head bent down over the hilt of his saber.

"His Holiness commissions me to greet you, Herr Feld-Marshal," said the abbé, in a low, soft voice, "and to say that those ancient medals you once spoke of shall be speedily transmitted to your palace at Milan."

"My palace at Milan, sir!" exclaimed the old man, fiercely. "When shall I see that city again? Ask that gentleman yonder, who has just arrived from Vienna, what the Cabinet counsels are: he will tell you the glorious tidings that the army will read to-morrow in a general order!"

"I have later news than even *his!*" said the abbé, coolly seating himself at the table, and placing a roll of papers before him. "Baron Brockhausen," said he, addressing the "commissioner," "if I mistake not, left Vienna on the ninth, reached Innspruck the eleventh, stayed there till the evening of the thirteenth, and only reached here some hours ago. The Prince Minister, consequently, was unaware that, on the tenth, General Durando was recalled by the Pope; that, on the evening of the same day, Pepe received a similar order from the King of Naples; that the Tuscan Levies and the Polish Legion have been remanded; and that Piedmont stands alone in the contest, with a disorganized army and divided counsels! These!" said he, pointing to the letters before him—"these are copies of the documents I refer to. You will see from these that the right flank of the Piedmontese army is open and unprotected; that, except the banditti of Rome and Tuscany, there are no troops between this and Ferrara; and if the reinforcements that are now halted in the Tyrol be but hurried down, a great and decisive blow may be dealt at once."

"Bey'm Blitzen! you ought to have been a general of brigade, priest!" cried the old field-marshal, as he clasped his hand in both his own, and pressed it with delight. "These are the noblest words I have heard to-day. Gentlemen," said he, rising, "there is little more for a council to do. You will return at once to your several brigades. Schrann's eight battalions of infantry, with two of feld-jägers, to hold themselves in readiness to march to-morrow; the Reuss hussars to form escort to the light artillery on the Vicenza road; all the other cavalry to take up position to the right, towards Peschiera."

This means a renewal of hostilities, then?" said the commissioner.

"It means that I will win back the provinces of my emperor. Let him dispose of them after as he pleases." And, so saying, he left the room, followed by the other officers.

CHAPTER LXVII.

PLOTS, POLITICS, AND PRIESTCRAFT.

It would conduce but little to the business of our story were we to follow the changeful fortunes of the war, and trace the current of events which marked that important campaign. The struggle itself

is already well known, the secret history of the contest has yet to be written. We have hinted at some of the machinations which provoked the conflict; we have shown the deep game by which democracy was urged on to its own destruction; and, by the triumph of absolutism, the return of the Church to her ancient rule provided and secured; we have vaguely shadowed out the dark wiles by which freedom and anarchy were inseparably confounded, and the cause of liberty was made to seem the denial of all religion. It would take us too far away from the humble track of our tale were we to dwell on this theme, or stop to adduce the various evidences of the truth of our assumption. We pass on, therefore, and leave D'Esmonde the task of chronicling some of the results of that memorable period.

The letter, from which we propose to make some extracts, was addressed, like his former one, to his Irish correspondent, and opened with a kind of thanksgiving over the glorious events of the preceding few weeks, wherein victory succeeded victory, and the Austrians once again became the masters of haughty Milan. We pass over the exulting description the abbé gave of the discord and dissension in the patriotic ranks; the reckless charges of treachery made against Carlo Alberto himself, for not undertaking the defense of a city destitute of everything; and the violent insubordination of the Lombards as the terrible hour of their retribution drew nigh. We have not space for his graphic narrative of the king's escape from Milan, protected by an Austrian escort, against the murderous assaults of fellow patriots! These facts are all before the world, nor would it contribute to their better understanding were we to adduce the partisan zeal with which the priest detailed them.

"The struggle, you will thus see," wrote he, "is over. The blasphemer and the democrat have fallen together, and it will take full a century to rally from the humiliation of such a defeat. Bethink you, my dear Michel, what that same century may make the Church, and how, if we be but vigorous and watchful, every breach in the glorious fortress may be repaired, every outwork strengthened, every bastion newly mounted, and her whole garrison refreshed and invigorated. Without a great convulsion like this we were lost! The torpor of peace brought with it those habits of thought and reflection—the sworn enemies of all faith! As governments grew more popular they learned to rely less on *our* aid. The glorious sway of belief was superseded by direct appeals to what they called common-sense, and imperceptibly, but irrevocably, the world was being Protestantized. Do not fancy that my fears have exaggerated this evil. I speak of what I know thoroughly and well. Above all, do not mistake me, as though I confounded this wide-spread heresy with what you see around you in Ireland—those backslidings which you so aptly call 'soup conversions.'

"By Protestantism, I mean something more dangerous than Anglicanism, which, by the way, has latterly shown itself the very reverse of an enemy. The peril I dread is that spirit of examination and inquiry, which, emboldened by the detection of some trumpery trick, goes on to question the great dogma of our religion. And here I must say, that these miracles—as they will call them—have been most ill-judged and ill-timed. Well adapted as they are to stimulate faith and warm zeal in remote and unvisited villages, they are serious errors when they aspire to publicity and challenge detection. I have done all I could to discountenance them: but even in the Vatican, my dear Michel, there are men who fancy we are living in the sixteenth century. What are you to do with a deafness that cannot be aroused by the blast of a steam-engine, and which can sleep undisturbed by the thunder of railroads? Well! let us be thankful for a little breathing-time; the danger from these heretics is over for the present. And here I would ask of you to remark how the very same result has taken place wherever the battle was fought. The Church has been triumphant everywhere. Is this accident, my dear friend? Was it mere chance that confounded counsels here, and dealt out ruin to Ireland also? Why did our policy come to a successful issue, here, by a dangerous conflict; and, with you, by abstaining from one? Why, because it was truth—eternal, immutable truth—for which we struggled. I must say, that if *our* game called for more active exertions, and perhaps more personal hazards, *yours* in Ireland was admirably devised. There never was a more complete catastrophe than that in which you betrayed your Mitchells and Meaghers; and does not the blind credulity of such men strike you as a special and divine infliction? I own I think so. They were, with all their hot blood, and all the glow of their youth, serious thinkers and calm reasoners. They could detect the finger of *England* in every tangled scheme, and yet they never saw the shadow of *your* hand as it shook in derision over them. Yes, Michel, the game was most skilfully

played, and I anticipate largely from it. The curtain thus falls upon the first act of the drama; let us set about to prepare for its rising. I am far from saying that many errors—some of the gravest kind—have not been committed in the conduct of this affair. More than one grand opportunity has gone by, without profit; and even my suggestion about the restoration of the States of the Church to their ancient limits within the Venetian provinces: a demand which Rome has formally renewed every year since the treaty of Campo Formio, and which might now have been pressed with success—even this was neglected! But what could be done with a runaway Pope and a scattered consistory? Your letter, my dear Michel, is a perfect catechism—all questions! I must try a reply to some, at least, of its inquiries. You are anxious about the endowment of the Ursulines, and so am I; but unfortunately I can tell you little of my progress in that direction. Lady Hester Onslow would appear to have fallen into an entanglement of some sort with Lord Norwood; and although I have in my possession the means of preventing a marriage with him, or annulling it, if it should take place, yet the very exercise of this power, on my part, would as inevitably destroy all my influence over her, and be thus a mere piece of profitless malice. This, therefore, is a matter of some difficulty, increased, too, by his hasty departure from Florence—they say, for England; but I have no clue to his destination, for he left this on the very day I last wrote to you—the day of my visit to the Moskova—in which you seem to be so much interested. Strangely enough, Michel, both this man and the Russian seemed to feel that they were in the toils, and broke away, rather than hazard an encounter with me. And they were right, too! For the deep game of life, there is no teaching like that of the cloister; and if we be not omnipotent, it is owing to our weakness of purpose. Hildebrand knew this—Boniface knew it also: but we have fallen upon poor successors of these great men! What might not a great Pope be in the age we live in—one whose ambition was commensurate with his mission, and who had energy and courage for the task before him! Oh, how I felt this, some nights ago, as I sat closeted with our present ruler! Would you believe it, Michel, he has no higher guide or example than the weak and kind-hearted Pius the Seventh. To imitate *him* is the whole rule of his faith, and to resemble him, even in his misfortunes, has become an ambition. How he strung for me the commonplaces of that good man, as though they had been the distilled essences of wisdom! Alas! alas! the great heritage of the Church has not been won by Quaker Popes.

"You ask about myself. All goes well. The die is cast; and so far, at least, a great point gained. The Austrians saw the matter in its true light, and with justice perceived that diplomacy is a war of reprisals. How I glory in the anticipation of this vengeance upon England, the encourager and abettor of all the treason against our faith. How little do they suspect the storm that is gathering around them; how tranquilly are they walking over the ground that is to be earthquaken! The letters and diplomas are all prepared. The Bull itself is ready; to-morrow, if it were opportune, I might be proclaimed a prince of the Church and an archbishop of an English See! As in every great event of life the moment is everything, the question is now one of time. Guardoni—and I look upon him as the shrewdest of the cardinals—says: 'Wait! Our cause is advancing every day in England; every post brings us tidings of desertions to our army—men distinguished in rank, station, or intellect. In our controversies we have suffered no defeats, while our moderation has gained us many well-wishers; we have a tone of general liberality to work upon, that is eminently favorable to a policy, meek, lowly, and unpretending. Therefore, I say, Wait; and do not forfeit such advantages for the glory of a pageant.' Against this it might be urged that the hour is come to proclaim our victory; and that it would be a craven policy not to unfurl our banner above the walls we have won! I repose less trust in the force of this reasoning than in another view of the subject; and it is to the ricochet of our shot, Michel, that I look for the damage of our enemy. My calculation is this: the bold pretensions we advance will arouse the passions of the whole island; meetings, and addresses, and petitions, will abound. All the rampant insolence of outraged bigotry, all the blatant denunciations of insulted Protestantism, will burst forth like a torrent. We shall be assailed in pamphlets and papers; caricatured, hooted, burned in effigy. A wily and well-conducted opposition on our part will fan and feed this flame. Some amongst us will assume the moderate tone, invoke the equality that pertains to every born Briton, and ask for the mere undisturbed exercise of our faith. Others, with greater boldness, will adventure sorties against the enemy, and thus provoke

reply and discussion. To each will be assigned his suited task. All laboring for one great object—to maintain the national fever at a white heat—to suffer no interval of calm reflection to come—and to force upon the Parliament, by the pressure of outward opinion, some severe, or, at least, some galling act of legislation. This once accomplished, our game is won, and the great schism we have so long worked for, effected! It will then be the government on one side, and the Church on the other. Could you wish for anything better? For myself, I care little how the campaign be then conducted: the victory must be our own. I have told you again and again there is no such policy against England as that of hampering the course of her justice. It was O'Connell's secret; he had no other; and he never failed till he attempted something higher. First, provoke a rash legislation, and then wait for the discomfiture that will follow it! With all the boasted working of the great constitution, what a mere trifle disturbs and disjoints it! Ay, Michel, a rusty nail in the cylinder will spoil the play of the piston, although the engine be rated at a thousand-horse power. Such a conflict with Protestantism is exactly like the effect of a highly disciplined army taking the field against a mob. With *us*, all is preconcerted, prearranged, and planned; with *them*, everything is impulsive, rash, and ill-advised. This glorious prerogative of private judgment becomes a capital snare, when measures should be combined and united. Fancy—I ask of you—fancy all the splendid errors of their hot enthusiasm—think of the blunders they will commit on platform or pulpit—reflect upon the folly and absurdity that will fill the columns of the public journals, and all the bigoted balderdash the press will groan under! What coarse irony, what billingsgate, shall we hear of our Holy Church—her saints, her miracles, and her dogmas—what foul invectives against her pious women and their lives of sanctity! And then think of the glorious harvest that will follow, as we reply to insult by calm reasonings, to bigotry by words of charity and enlightenment, appealing to the nation at large for their judgment on which side truth should lie—with intolerance, or with Christian meekness and submission?

"Prepare, then, I say, for the coming day; the great campaign is about to open, and neither you nor I, Michel, will live to see the end of the battle. On this side the Alps all has happened as we wished. Italian liberalism is crushed and defeated. The Piedmontese are driven back within their frontier, their army beaten, and their finances all but exhausted, and Austria is again at the head of Northern Italy. Rome will now be grander and more glorious than ever. No more truckling to liberalism—no more faith in the false prophets of freedom. Our gorgeous 'despotism' will arise reinvigorated by its trials, and the Church will proclaim herself the Queen of Europe!

"It is an inestimable advantage to have convinced these meek and good men here that there is but one road to victory, and that all alliance with what are called politicians is but a snare and a delusion.

"The Pope sees this at last, but nothing short of wounded pride could have taught him the lesson.

"Now to your last query, my dear Michel: and I feel all gratitude for the warm interest with which you make it. What is to be done, I know not. I am utterly ignorant of my parentage—even of my birthplace. In the admission-book of Salamanca I stand thus:—'Samuel Eustace, native of Ireland, aged thirteen years and seven months; stipendiary of the second class.' There lies my whole history. A certain Mr. Godfrey had paid all the expenses of my journey from Louvain, and, up to the period of his death, continued to maintain me. From Louvain I can learn nothing. I was a 'laic,' they believed—perhaps No. 134, or 137—they do not know which; and these are but sorry facts from which to derive the baptismal registry of a future cardinal. And yet something must be done, and speedily too. On the question of birth the Sacred College is peremptory. You will say that there ought to be no difficulty in devising a genealogy where there are no adverse claims to conflict; and if I could go over to Ireland, perhaps the matter might be easy enough. At this moment, however, my presence here is all-essential, while I am not without a hope that accident may afford me a clue to what I seek. A few days ago I was sent for from Malgherra to attend the dying-bed of a young officer, whose illness had so completely disordered his brain that he forgot every word of the foreign language he was accustomed to speak, and could only understand or reply in his native English. Although I had other and more pressing cases to attend to, the order coming from an archduke made obedience imperative, and so I hastened over to Verona, where the sick youth lay. Conceive my surprise, Michel, to discover that he was the same Dalton—the boy whom I have so often adverted to, as eternally crossing my path in life—the relative of that God-

frey who was my early patron. I have already confessed to you, Michel, that I felt towards this youth in a way for which my calmest reason could render no account. Gamblers have often told me of certain antipathies they have experienced, and that the mere presence of an individual—one totally unknown to them, perhaps—has been so ominous of ill-luck that they dare not risk a bet while he remained in the room. I know you will say that men who pass their lives in the alternation of hope and fear become the slaves of every shadow that crosses the imagination, and that they are sorry pilots to trust to. So they are, Michel, they are meanly minded, they are sordid, and they are low; their thoughts never soar above the card or the hazard-table; they are dead to all emotions of family and affection; the very events that are convulsing the world are less audible to their ears than the ring of the dice-box; and yet, with all this—would you believe it ?—they are deep in the mysteries of portents. Their intense study of what we call chance has taught them to combine, and arrange, and discipline every atom and accident that can influence an event. They have their days of good and evil fortune, and they have their agencies that sway them to this side or to that. Chemistry shows us that substances that resemble metals are decomposed by the influence of light alone—do not, then, despise the working of that gleam that darts from the human eye and penetrates within the very recesses of your brain.

"Be the theory true or false, the phenomena exercise a deep influence over me, and I have never ceased to regard this boy as one inextricably interwoven with myself and my own fortunes; I felt a degree of dread at his contact, which all my conscious superiority of mind and intellect could not allay. In vain have I endeavored to reason myself out of these delusions, but in the realm of imagination reason is inoperative: as well might a painter try to commit to his palette the fleeting colors of the rainbow. Shall I own to you, that, in moments of illness or depression, this terror magnified itself to giant proportions, and a thousand wild and incongruous fancies would fill my mind. I bethought me of involving him in such difficulty that he would no longer be at large; as a prisoner or an exile, I should never see him more. Every snare I tried was a failure; the temptations that were most adapted to his nature he resisted; the wiles I threw around him he escaped from. Was there not a fate in all this? Assuredly there was and is, Michel. I cannot tell you the relief of mind I should feel if this boy had shared the fate of your patriots, and that the great sea was to roll between him and Europe forever. Twenty times a day I think of Dirk Hatteraick's expression with respect to Brown: 'That boy has been a rock ahead of me all through life;' and be assured that the characters of fiction are often powerful teachers.

"And now to my narrative. The same note which requested my visit at Verona begged of me, if I could possibly accomplish it, to provide some English person who should sit up with the sick youth and nurse him. I was not sorry to receive this commission; I wished to learn more about this boy than the confessional at such a time could teach; and could I only find a suitable agent, this would not be difficult. Chance favored me strangely enough. Amongst the prisoners taken at Ancona I found an Irish fellow, who, it appears, had taken service in the Piedmontese navy. He had been some years in America and the West Indies, and, from the scattered remarks that he let fall, I perceived that he was a man of shrewd, and not overscrupulous, nature. He comprehended me in an instant; and, although I was most guarded in giving my instructions, the fellow read my intentions at once. This shrewdness might, in other circumstances, have its inconveniences, but here it gave me no alarm. I was the means of his liberation, and, were he troublesome, I could consign him to the prison again—to the galleys, if needed. In company with this respectable ally, I set out for the headquarters. On my arrival I waited on the Count von Auersberg, in whose house the sick boy lay. This old man, who is Irish by birth, is more Austrian in nature than the members of the house of Hapsburg. I found him fully convinced that the white-coated legions had reconquered Lombardy by their own unaided valor, and I left him in the same pleasant delusion. It appeared that a certain Count von Walstein was enabled to clear young Dalton's character from all taint of treason, by exhibiting, in his own correspondence, some letters and documents that related to the events detailed in Frank's writing, and of which he could have had no possible knowledge. This avowal may be a serious thing for Walstein, but rescues the young Dalton at once, and proves that he was merely the writer of Ravitzky's sentiments—so that here, again, Michel, he escapes. Is not this more than strange?

"It was not without anxiety that I passed the threshold of the sick-chamber; but happily it was darkened, and I soon saw that the sick youth could never recognize

me, were his senses even unclouded. He lay motionless, and I thought insensible; but after I spoke to him he rallied a little, and asked after his father and his sisters. He had not yet heard that his father was dead; and it was affecting to hear the attempt he made to vindicate his honor and show that he had never been disloyal. By degrees I brought him to talk of himself. He saw that he was dying, and had no fears of death; but there seemed as if his conscience was burdened by some heavy weight, less like guilt than the clue to some strange and dark affair. The revelation—if it deserved the name, for it was made in broken sentences—now, uttered with rapid vehemence, now, scarcely audible—was of the vaguest kind. You may imagine, however, the interest I felt in the narrative as the name Godfrey passed his lips. You know my anxiety to trace some tie of family to these Godfreys. They were gentry of ancient blood and good name, and would amply satisfy the demands of the Sacred College; so that, when the boy spoke of Godfrey, I listened with intense curiosity; but—shall I own it?—all my practiced skill, all my science of the sick-bed, was unable to tell me what were the utterings of an unclouded intellect, and what the wild, fitful fancies of fever. I know, for I have repeatedly heard it from his sister's lips, that this youth has never been in Ireland, and yet he spoke of the peculiar scenery of a certain spot just as if he had traversed it yesterday. Mind that I am carefully distinguishing between what might be the impression left by often hearing of a scene from others, and that which results from personal observation. His was altogether of the latter kind. As, for instance, when describing a garden, he mentioned how the wind wafted the branches of a weeping ash across a window, so as to confuse the scene that went on within; and then he shuddered terribly, and, with a low sigh, exclaimed, 'The light went out *after* that.' These are not ravings, Michel. This boy knows something of that dark mystery I have more than once alluded to in my letters. Could it be that his own father was in some way implicated in the affair? Bear in mind how he came to live abroad, and never returned to Ireland. From all I can learn, the old Dalton was a bold and reckless character, that would scarcely have stopped at anything. Assuredly, the son's conscience is heavily burdened! Now, there is an easy way to test the truth or fallacy of all this; and herein you must aid me, Michel. I have carefully noted every word the boy spoke; I have treasured every syllable that fell from him. If his description of the scene be correct, the mystery may be unraveled. This you can speedily ascertain by visiting the spot. It is not more than twenty miles from you, and about three or four, I believe, from the little village of Inistioge; it is called Corrig-O'Neal—a place of some importance once, but now, I hear, a ruin. Go thither, Michel, and tell me correctly all these several points. First, does the character of the river scenery suddenly change at this spot, and, from an aspect of rich and leafy beauty, exhibit only dark and barren mountains without a tree or a shrub? Is the old manor-house itself only a short distance from the stream, and backed by these same gloomy mountains? The house itself, if unaltered, should be high-peaked in roof, with tall, narrow windows, and a long terrace in front; an imitation, in fact, of an old French château. These, as you will see, are such facts as might have been heard from another; but, now, I come to some less likely to have been so learned.

"From this boy's wanderings, I collect that there is a woodland path through these grounds, skirting the river in some places, and carried along the mountain-side by a track escarped in the rock itself. If this ever existed, its traces will still be visible. I am most curious to know this fact. I can see the profound impression it has made on the youth's mind, by the various ways in which he recurs to it, and the deep emotion it always evokes. At times, indeed, his revelations grow into something like actual description of an event he had witnessed; as, for instance, last night he started from his sleep, his brow all covered with perspiration, and his eyes glaring wildly: 'Hush!' he cried, 'hush! He is crossing the garden now; there he is at the door; lie still—lie still.' I tried to induce him to talk on, but he shuddered timidly, and merely said, 'It's all over, he has strewn leaves over the spot, let us go away.' You will perhaps say that I attach undue importance to what may be the mere outpourings of a fevered intellect, but there is an intensity in the feeling which accompanies them, and, moreover, there is a persistence in the way he always comes back to them, that are not like the transient terrors that haunt distracted minds. No, Michel, there is a mystery, and a dreadful one, connected with this vision. Remember! that the secret of Godfrey's death has never been cleared up: the breach which separated him from these Daltons was then at its widest. Dalton's character you are familiar with; and, al-

though abroad at that time, who can say what agencies may not have worked for him! Give your serious consideration to these facts, and tell me what you think. You know me too well and too long to suppose that I am actuated by motives of mere curiosity, or simply the desire to trace the history of a crime. I own to you that, with all my horror of blood, I scarcely grieve as I witness the fruitless attempts of English justice to search out the story of a murder. I feel a sort of satisfaction at the combat between Saxon dullness and Celtic craft—between the brute force of the conqueror, and the subtle intelligence of the conquered—that tells me of a time to come when these relations shall be reversed. Acquit me, therefore, of any undue zeal for the observance of laws that only remind me of our slavery. However clear and limpid the stream may look, I never forget that its source was in foulness! I am impelled here by a force that my reason cannot account for. My boyhood was, in some manner, bound up with Godfrey's fate. I was fatherless when he died—could he have been my father? This thought continually recurs to me! Such a discovery would be of great value to me now; the question of legitimacy would be easily got over, as I seek for none of the benefits of succession. I only want what will satisfy the Sacred College. My dear Michel, I commit all to your care and industry; give me your aid and advice. Should it happen that Dalton was involved in the affair, the secret might have its value. This old field-marshal's pride of name and family could be turned to good account.

"I must tell you that, since I have overheard this boy's ravings, I have studiously avoided introducing my Irish *protégé* into the sick-room. My friend, Paul Meekins, might be a most inconvenient confidant, and so I shall keep him under my own eye till some opportunity occurs to dispose of him. He tells me that his present tastes are all ecclesiastical. Do you want a sacristan? if so, he would be your man. There is no such trusty subordinate as the fellow with what the French call 'a dark antecedent;' and this I suspect to be his case.

"I have well wearied you, my dear friend, and yet I have not told you half of what I feel on this strange matter. I am little given to tremble at shadows, and still there are terrors over me that I cannot shake off. Write to me, then, at once; tell me all that you see—all that you can hear. Observe well the localities: it will be curious if the boy be correct. Mark particularly if there be a spot of rising ground from which the garden is visible, and the windows that look into it, and see if there be a door out of the garden, at this point. I could almost map out the scene from his description.

"I have done, and now I scarcely know whether I should feel more relief of heart to know that all this youth has said were fever wanderings, or words of solemn meaning. It is strange how tranquilly I can move through the great events of life, and yet how much a thing like this can shake my nerve; but I suppose it is ever so, and that we are great or little as the occasion makes us.

"I have just heard that Lady Hester Onslow has gone over to Ireland. She will probably be at Corrig-O'Neal. If so, you can present yourself to her as my old and intimate friend, and this will afford you an opportunity of examining the scene at leisure. I enclose you a few lines to serve as introduction. Adieu, my dear friend.

"You have often sighed over the obscurity of your position, and the unambitious life of a parish priest. Believe me, and from my heart I say it, I would willingly exchange all the rewards I have won, all that I could ever hope to win, for one week —one short week of such calm quiet as breathes under the thatched roof of your little cottage.

"I leave this for Vienna to-morrow, to thank the minister; and with good reason, too, since, without his assistance, the Pope would have shrunk from the bold policy. Thence I go to Rome; but within a fortnight I shall be back in Florence, where I hope to hear from you. If all goes well, we shall meet soon. Yours, in much affection,

"MATTHEW D'ESMONDE."

As the abbé finished this letter, he turned to look at a short note, which, having opened and scanned over, he had thrown on the table beside him. It was from Albert Jekyl, who wrote to inform him that Lord Norwood had just arrived in Florence from Ireland, where he had left Lady Hester. That so far as he, Jekyl, could make out, the viscount had made an offer of marriage, and been accepted.

"It will be for you, my dear abbé," added he, "to ascertain this fact positively, as, independently of the long journey at this inclement season, it would be a very serious injury to me were it known that I advanced pretensions that were not responded to. He who has never failed must not risk a defeat. Pray lose no time in investigating this affair, for Florence is filling fast, and my future plans will depend on your reply."

The priest bestowed little attention on

the small gossipry that filled up the page. His eye, however, caught the name of Midchekoff, and he read:

"The prince returned last Tuesday to the Moskova, but no one has seen him, nor has any one been admitted within the gates. Of course, there are a hundred rumors as to the why and the wherefore. Some, alleging that he has received orders of 'reclusion,' as they call it, from home, the emperor not being quite satisfied with his political campaign; some, that he has taken up a grudge against the court here, and shows his spleen in this fashion. But what shallow reason would this be for a hermit life; and what legitimate ground of complaint have not we, who, so to say, possess a vested interest in his truffles, and ortolans, and dry champagne? I assure you that such conduct rouses all the democracy of my nature, and I write these lines with a red silk cap on my head. After all, the real good he effected was a kind of reflected light. He crushed little people, and ground down all their puny efforts at balls, dinners and *déjeûners*. He shamed into modest insignificance such a world of snobbery, and threw an air of ridicule over 'small early partyism' and 'family-dinners.' What a world of dyspepsia has he thus averted—what heartburns and heartburnings! Oh, little people! little people! ye are a very dreadful generation, for ye muddy the waters of society, so that no man can drink thereof.

"Politically, we are calm and reactionary; and, whether it be thrashing has done it, I know not, but some of the Tuscans are 'black and yellow' already. Not that the dear Austrians promise to make Florence better or pleasanter. They mix badly with our population. It is as if you threw a spoonful of 'sauerkraut' into your 'potage à la reine!' Besides, the Italians are like the Chinese—unchanged and unchangeable—and they detest the advent of all strangers who would interfere with their own little, soft, sleepy and enervating code of wickedness.

"Pray send me three lines, just to say—Is it to be, or not to be? Rose, the tailor, is persecuting me about a mocha-brown, for a wedding garment, which certainly would harmonize well with the prevailing tints of my hair and eyebrows, but I am too prudent a diplomatist to incur extraordinaries till I be sure of 'my mission.' Therefore write at once, for such is my confidence in your skill and ability that I only wait your mandate to launch into kid gloves and lacquered leather, quite regardless of expense.

"Yours, most devotedly,

"ALBERT JEKYL.

"I open this to say, that Morlache was seen going to the Moskova last night with two caskets of jewels. Will this fact throw any light on the mysterious seclusion?"

These last two lines D'Esmonde read over several times, and then, crushing the note in his hand, he threw it into the fire. Within an hour after, he was on his way to Florence.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

A SECRET AND A SNARE.

As we draw near to the end of our voyage, we feel all the difficulty of collecting the scattered vessels of our convoy, and, while signalizing the "clippers" to shorten sail, we are calling on the heavy sailers to crowd "all their canvas."

The main interest of our story would keep us beside Frank Dalton, whose fate seemed daily to vacillate—now, threatening gloomily—now, rallying into all the brightness of hope. By slow and cautious journeys the old count proceeded to remove him to Vienna, where he expected soon to be joined by Kate. Leaving them then, to pursue their road by steps far too slow for our impatience, we hasten along with D'Esmonde, as, with all the speed he could accomplish, he made for Florence.

Occasionally he tried to amuse himself and divert his thoughts by conversing with Meekins, who accompanied him; but, although the man's shrewdness was above the common, and his knowledge of the world very considerable, D'Esmonde quickly saw that a thick cloak of reserve covered the real man on all occasions, and that his true nature lay many a fathom deep below that smooth surface. The devout respect which he felt for the abbé might, perhaps, have increased this reserve—for Meekins was an Irish peasant, and never forgot the deference due to a priest.

Accustomed to read men at sight, D'Esmonde would give himself no trouble in deciphering a page which promised little to reward the labor; and so, after a while, he left his companion to occupy the "box," while he himself followed his own thoughts alone and undisturbed. Now and then he would be aroused from his deep reveries by remarking the reverential piety of the peasants as they passed some holy shrine or some consecrated altar. Then, indeed, Meekins displayed a fervor so unlike the careless indifference of the native, that D'Esmonde was led to reflect upon the difference of their natures, and speculate on

how far this devotion of character was innate in the Irishman, or merely the result of circumstances.

There was an expression of eager, almost painful meaning, too, in the man's face as he muttered his prayers, that struck the keen eyes of the abbé; and he could not avoid saying to himself, "That fellow has a load upon his heart. Fear, and not hope, is the mainspring of his devotions." At another moment, D'Esmonde might have studied the case as a philosopher studies a problem—merely for the exercise it may give his faculties—but his own cares were too pressing and too numerous for more than a passing notice.

The night was falling as they gained the crest of the mountain over Florence; D'Esmonde stopped the carriage on the hill above the "Moskova," and gazed steadily for some moments on the spot. The villa, partly shrouded in trees, was brilliantly illuminated; the lights gleamed and sparkled through the foliage, and, as he listened, the sound of rich music came floating on the air.

"This looks like seclusion," thought he. "These are signs of some great festivity." As he drew up to the gate, however, he found it closed and locked. Not a carriage was to be seen. Even the usual lamps were unlighted, and all appeared deserted and unoccupied. D'Esmonde stood for a few seconds buried in thought; his emotion was deep and heartfelt; for, as he grasped the iron bars of the gate, his strong frame shook and trembled. "True—true!" muttered he to himself in an accent of almost bursting agony—"I could not have given thee this, Lola, and for this alone hadst thou any heart!" He leaned his face against the gate, and sobbed heavily. "What poison," cried he, in a voice of bitterness—"what poison there must be in unholy passion, when it can move a heart like mine, after years and years of time! To think that not all the glory of a great cause, all the pride of successful ambition, striving for rewards the very highest—all that I possess of power and influence—all, all should give way to the grief for a half-forgotten, unreturned love! How poor a thing the heart is, when we fancy its desires to be noblest and highest!"

This burst of passionate grief over, he slowly returned to the carriage and pursued his way to Florence; and, entering the city, he drove for the house of Racca Morlache. The Jew was not at home, but was to return by eleven o'clock, at which hour he had ordered supper for a guest and himself. D'Esmonde lay down on a sofa, and fell asleep. Wearied as he was, his watchfulness soon detected the approach of footsteps; and, as he listened, he heard the voice of a stranger in colloquy with the servant. The door opened at the same time, and Lord Norwood entered. D'Esmonde only waited for the servant to retire, when he sprang forward to salute him.

"Oh! I thought you were at the camp, or at Vienna, or somewhere to the north-'ard," said the viscount, coolly.

"I was so, my lord; and there I should have remained, if a pressing duty had not recalled me to Florence."

"You have always so many irons in the fire, abbé, that it requires some skill to keep them all hot."

"You are right, my lord; some skill and some practice, too."

"And do you never burn your fingers?" said the other, sarcastically.

"Very rarely, my lord; for, when I meddle with fire, I generally make use of my friends' hands."

"By Jove, it's not a bad plan!" cried the viscount, laughing; for, as the priest well knew, he had a most lively appreciation for every species of knavery, and entertained real respect for all who practiced it. "You *are* a very downy cove, Master D'Esmonde," said he, gazing at him; "and you'd have made a very shining figure on the turf, had your fortune thrown you in that direction."

"Perhaps so, my lord," said the abbé, carelessly. "My own notion is, that fair natural gifts are equal to any exigencies ever demanded of us; and that the man of average talent, if he have only energy and a strong will, has no superior to dread."

"That may do well enough," said Norwood, rising and pacing the room—"that may do well enough in the common occurrences of life, but it won't do on the turf, abbé. The fellows are too artful for you there. There are too many dodges, and tricks, and windings. No, no, believe me; nothing has a chance in racing matters without perfect and safe information. You know what that means."

"It is precisely the same thing in the world at large," said D'Esmonde. "The very cleverest men rush into embarrassments and involve themselves in difficulties for which there is no issue, simply for want of what you call information. Even yourself, my lord," said he, dropping his voice to a low and distinct whisper—"even yourself may discover that you owe safety to a Popish priest."

"How do you mean? What do you allude to?" cried Norwood, eagerly.

"Sit down here, my lord. Give me a patient hearing for a few minutes. We have fortunately a moment of unbroken confidence now: let us profit by it."

Norwoood seated himself beside the priest, without speaking, and, folding his arms, prepared to hear him calmly.

"My Lord Norwood," said the abbé, "I will not torture you by any prolixity, nor will I waste your time by any appeal to your forgiveness. If my own conduct in the affair I am about to relate should not meet your approval, it is enough that I have satisfied my own conscience."

"Go on—go on," said Norwood, in a tone of almost sarcasm; "I see that you have injured me: let me hear how and where."

"You shall hear both, my lord, and briefly, too. I have only to invoke your memory, and the story is told. You remember being at Salamanca, in the year 18—? You remember, too, a certain ballerina of the grand opera? You had seen her first at Seville——"

"Yes—yes," broke in Norwood, reddening deeply; "I know what you mean—the girl was my mistress."

"Stay, my lord. Do not dishonor yourself; she was your wife—legally and formally married to you—the registry of the act is in existence, and the priest who performed the ceremony now stands before you."

"By heaven!" said Norwood, springing to his feet, "you are a bold fellow to dare this game with *me!* and to try it in such a place as this!"

"Ay, my lord, the river rolls dark and silently beside us," said D'Esmonde, calmly, "and the Arno has covered up many a more dreadful deed; but I have no fears—not one. I am unarmed, in strength I am certainly not your equal, and yet, I repeat it, my heart assures me that I stand in no peril."

For an instant Norwood seemed to hesitate how to act. The great veins of his face and forehead became swollen and knotted, and he breathed with the rushing sound of severe, restrained passion. At last, as if to guard himself against any sudden impulse of anger, he walked round and seated himself at the opposite side of the table.

D'Esmonde resumed as calmly as before—"Yes, my lord, Lola took care that everything should be regular and in form; and the names of Gerald Acton and Lola de Seviglia are inscribed on the records of the Collegiate Chapel. Two of the witnesses are still living; one of them, then a poor boy carrying messages for the convent, is now captain in the Pope's guard."

"Come, come—enough of this," cried Norwood, impatiently. "I see the drift of it all. When the Church interposes her kind offices, the question resolves itself always into money. How much—how much?"

"You mistake greatly, my lord; but your error does not offend me. I know too well how men of *your* form of belief regard men of *mine!* I am not here either to combat a prejudice or assert a right. I tell you, therefore, calmly and dispassionately, that no demand is made upon you. There is no siege laid against you, in person or in purse."

"Then how does the matter concern me, if this girl be alive?—and even of that I have my doubts——"

"You need have none," said D'Esmonde, interruptingly, "Lady Norwood——"

"Stop! By heaven, if you dare to give her that name, I'll not answer for myself!"

"I call her as she styles herself—as she is called by all around her. Yes, my lord, the shame is as open as gossip and malevolence can make it. The foreigner is but too glad when he can involve an English name and title in a reproach that we are prone to cast upon him. A peeress is a high mark for scandal! Who stoops to ask how, or when, or where she became this? Who interposes a charitable word of explanation or of incredulity? From what you know of life, on what side, think you, will lie the ingenuity and craft? Whether will the evidence preponderate to prove her your wife or to exonerate *you?* At all events, how will the matter read in England? I speak not of your ruined hopes of an alliance befitting your high station. *This* is beyond repairing! But are you ready to meet the shame and ignominy of the story? Nothing is too base—nothing too infamous for an imputation. Will any one, I ask of you—will any one assert that you are ignorant of all this? Would any one believe who heard it? Will not the tale be rather circulated with all its notes and comments? Will not men fill up every blank by the devices of their own bad ingenuity? Will not some assert that you are a partner in your own infamy, and that your fingers have touched the price of your shame?"

"Stop!" cried Norwood. "Another word—one syllable more like this—and, by the heaven above us, your lips will never move again!"

"It would be a sorry recompense for my devotion to you, my lord," said the abbé, with a profound sigh.

"Devotion!" repeated Norwood, in a voice of insulting sarcasm; "as if I were to be tricked by this! Keep these artifices for some trembling devotee—some bed-ridden or palsied worshiper of saintly relics and holy legerdemain. I'm not the stuff for such deceptions!"

"And yet, my lord, what possible benefit can accrue to myself from this ungracious task? With all your ingenuity, what personal gain can result to *me?*"

"What care I for your motives, sir?" responded Norwood, fiercely. "I only know that you had never incurred so critical a hazard without an object. You either seek to exert a menace over *me*, or to be revenged on *her*."

"Alas! my lord, I see how little hope I should have of vindicating myself before you. Your estimate of the Papist suggests nothing above craft and dishonesty. You will not believe that human affections, love of country, and all the other associations of a home, are strong in hearts that beat beneath the serge frock of the priest. Still less do you know the great working principle of our faith—the law which binds us, for every unjust act we have done in life, to make an expiation in this world. For many a year has my conscience been burdened with this offense. But for my weak compliance with your request, I should never have performed this ceremony. Had *I* been firm, *you* had been saved. Nay, in my eagerness to serve you, I only worked your ruin; for, on confessing to my superior what I had done, he at once took measures to ratify the act of marriage, and my rank as a deacon took date from the day before the ceremony." D'Esmonde seemed not to notice the gesture of indignation with which Norwood heard these words, but he went on: "It is, then, to make some requital for this wrong that I now risk all that your anger may inflict upon me!"

"Where is this woman?" cried Norwood, savagely, and as if impatient at a vindication for which he felt no interest. "Where is she?"

"She is here, my lord," said the other, meekly.

"Here? How do you mean? Not in this house?"

"I mean that she is now in Florence."

"What, living openly here—calling herself by *my* name?"

"She lives in all the splendor of immense wealth, and as openly as the protection of Prince Midchekoff——"

"Midchekoff—Midchekoff, did you say?" cried Norwood, in a burst of passion.

"Yes, my lord. The haughty Russian exults in the insult that this offers to the proudest aristocracy of Europe. This is the vengeance he exacts for the cold disdain he experienced in London, and all that reserve that met his attempts in English society!"

"How came she here?—who sent for her?—who devised this scheme? Tell me the whole truth, for, by heaven, if I see you equivocate, you'll never quit this chamber living!"

"I'll tell you everything, truthfully and fairly," said the abbé, with calm dignity. And now, in a few words, he traced Nina's life, from the time of her residence under Lady Hester's roof to the moment of her return to Florence. He omitted nothing—neither her intimacy with Jekyl, nor her passion for George Onslow. Even to the incident of the torn dress on the night of the flight, he told all.

Norwood listened with the stern collectedness of one who had nerved himself for a great effort. Although the blood spurted from his compressed lips, and the nails of his fingers were buried in his hands, he uttered never a word. At last, when D'Esmonde paused, he said—

"And *you* knew all this?"

"Nothing whatever of it. I never chanced to see her at Florence, nor had I the slightest suspicion of her presence there."

"Lady Hester knew it? Miss Dalton knew it?"

"I suspect not, at that time."

"They know it *now*, then?"

"Who does not? Is not Florence ringing with the story? When has scandal fallen upon such material for its malevolence? Such *dramatis personæ* as a prince, an English peer, and his peeress, are not of every day's good fortune!"

"Be cautious how you harp on this theme, priest. In your good zeal to hammer the metal soft, you may chance to crush your own finger."

"I must be frank with you, my lord, whatever the hazard. He would be a sorry surgeon who, after giving his patient all the agony of the knife, stopped short, and left the malady unextirpated."

"Come, now, D'Esmonde," said Norwood, as with a strong grasp he drew the other down on the sofa beside him, "*you* have your debt to acquit in this matter as well as myself. I do not seek to know how, or why, or upon whom. Your priestly craft need not be called into exercise—I want nothing of your secrets—I only ask your counsel. That much in our common cause

you cannot refuse me. What shall I do in this affair? No cant—no hypocritical affectation of Christian forgiveness—none of that hackneyed advice that you dole out to your devotees; speak freely, and like a man of the world. What is to be done here?"

"If the marriage admitted of dispute or denial, I should say, disavow it," said the priest. "It is too late for this."

"Go on. What next?"

"Then comes the difficulty. To assert your own honor, you must begin by a recognition of her as your wife. This looks rash, but I see no other course. You cannot call Midchekoff to a reckoning on any other grounds. Then comes the question, is such a woman worth fighting for; or must the only consideration be the fact that she bears your name, and that she is the Viscountess Norwood in every society she can enter? How is this to be borne? The stricter code of England rejects such claimants altogether from its circle, but, on the continent, they are everywhere. Will it be possible for you to live under this open shame?"

"Your advice is, then—shoot him!" said Norwood; and he bent his eyes fixedly on the priest as he spoke. "It is my own notion, also. If the choice were open to me, D'Esmonde, I'd rather have exacted the payment of this debt from Onslow; I hated the fellow from my very heart. Not that I owe this Russian any good will. We have more than once been on the verge of a quarrel. It was not my fault if it went no further. They say, too, that he has no taste for these things. If so, one must stimulate his appetite, that's all!—eh, D'Esmonde? *Your* countrymen seldom need such provocations?"

"We have our faults, my lord; but this is scarcely amongst their number."

"You're right, D'Esmonde," said the other, pursuing his former line of thought. "It's no petty penalty to exact from a fellow with fifty thousand a year! I almost fancy I should have been a coward myself at such a price!"

"You'll have some difficulty in obtaining access to him, my lord," remarked the abbé. "He lives in strict privacy, and refuses admission to every one."

"But a letter will reach him?"

"It may, or it may not; besides, it may come to hand and yet never be acknowledged."

"What is to be done, then?"

"I'll think over it, before we separate. I'll try and suggest something. But here comes Morlache; and now be cautious. Not a word to show that you are ill at ease." The warning was scarcely spoken, when the Jew entered.

Morlache knew D'Esmonde too well to be surprised at seeing him anywhere, or at any moment. He saluted him, therefore, as though they had met the very day before, and the party sat down to supper, in all the seeming ease of unburdened minds.

They chatted over the politics of Italy, and the change that had come over Florence, since the last time they had sat together in that chamber.

"It was a noisy scene, that night," said Morlache; "but the streets are quiet enough now."

"Quiet as a corpse," said Norwood, sternly. "You had no other nostrum for tranquillity but to extinguish life."

"What you regard as death, my lord," said the abbé, "is only a trance. Italy will rise grander and more powerful than ever. One element alone has survived through all the convulsive throes, and all the changing fortunes of this land—the Papacy. The terrible wars of rival cities and states—the more bloody conquests of ambitious houses—leave not a trace behind them; but Rome holds on her proud way, and, like the great river of the poet, 'Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.'"

"To which I beg, in a less classical quotation, to rejoin—'Confound your politics,'" cried Norwood, laughing. "Come, Morlache, let us turn to a humbler theme. Whom have you got here—who are coming for the winter?"

"Say, rather, my lord, who are going away; for there is a general flight from Florence. All what hotel folk call good families are hastening off to Rome and Naples."

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

"It is not very difficult, perhaps, to explain," said the Jew; "luxuries are only the creations of mere circumstance. The rarity of one land may be the very satiety of another; and the iced-punch that tastes so exquisite at Calcutta would be but sorry tipple at Coppermine River. Hence you will see, my lord, that the English who come here for wickedness find the place too bad for them. There is no zest to their vice—they shock nobody—they outrage nothing—in fact, they are only as bad as their neighbors."

"I suppose it's neither better nor worse than I remember it these dozen years and more?" said Norwood.

"Probably not, my lord, in fact; but, in outward appearance, it has assuredly de-

generated; people behave badly everywhere, but this is the only city in Europe where it is deemed right to do so."

"Since when have you taken up the trade of moralist, Master Morlache?" said Norwood, with a sneer.

"*I*'ll answer that question," broke in D'Esmonde. "Since the exchange on England has fallen to forty-three and a half, Morlache sees his clients diminish, and is consequently as angry with vice as he had been with its opposite, if the same result had come to pass."

"I own," said the Jew, with a sneer, "the present order of things is far more profitable to the confessional than to the 'comptoir.'"

"That's the truth, I've no doubt of it," broke in Norwood, laughing. "A low tariff has given a great impulse to the trade of wickedness."

"Taking your own illustration, my lord, we are 'protectionists,'" said D'Esmonde, "whereas you Protestants are the 'free-traders' in vice."

"A plague on both your houses, say I," cried Norwood, yawning. "So, then, Morlache, neither you nor I would find this a desirable residence?"

"I fear it will not repay either of us, my lord," said the Jew, with a sly look.

"The world is growing wonderfully wide awake," said Norwood. "When I entered life, any fellow with a neat hand at billiards, a fair knowledge of écarté or short whist, good whiskers, and a well-cut waistcoat, might have eked out a very pretty existence without any risk, and very little exertion. But see what the march of intelligence has done! There's not an Eton boy—not an unfledged 'sub' in a marching regiment—not an unpaid attaché at a small court—couldn't compete with you now in any of these high acquirements. I do not fret myself usually about what is to come after *my* time, but I really wonder how the next generation will get on at all."

"Civilization moves like the pendulum, my lord," said D'Esmonde; "the next swing will be retrograde. And, by the way, that reminds me of Russia, and Russia of Prince Midchekoff. Is *it* true that he is recalled, Morlache?"

"Not that I know. That report is always circulated when there are no dinners at the villa. Just as Marshal Soult is said to have won or lost the battle of Toulouse, according to the momentary estimation he is held in."

"You'll hear for certain, my lord," said D'Esmonde, addressing Norwood; "you are going up there to-night?"

Norwood muttered an assent, and waited to see how this sally was to end.

"Ah! you are going there to-night!" repeated Morlache, in some surprise. "Are *you* one of the privileged, then?"

"Of course he is," interposed D'Esmonde, authoritatively.

"Will you do me a very great favor, then, my lord," said Morlache, "which is to take charge of this small casket? I promised to take it myself, but it is so late now, and I am so wearied, that I shall feel much bound to you for the service."

"You can easily acquit the debt of obligation, Morlache," said D'Esmonde, "for my lord was just asking me, before you came in, if he could take the liberty of begging the loan of your carriage to take him up to the Moskova. You are aware that it would not be quite proper to take a hired carriage, just now, up to the villa; that, as the prince affects to be absent——"

"To be sure," broke in Morlache. "I am but too happy to accommodate your lordship. Your precaution was both delicate and well thought of. Indeed, I greatly doubt that they would admit a 'fiacre' at all."

"I suppose I should have had to walk from the gate," said Norwood, who now saw the gist of the abbé's stratagem.

"Morlache's old grey is a passport that requires no *visé*," said D'Esmonde. "You'll meet neither let nor hindrance with him in front of you. You may parody the great statesman's peroration, and say, 'Where the king cannot enter, he can.' Such is it to be a banker's horse!"

Norwood heard little or nothing of this remark; deeply sunk in his own thoughts, he arose abruptly from the table.

"You are not going away, my lord? You are surely not deserting that flask of Marcobrunner, that we have only tasted?"

But Norwood never heard the words, and continued to follow his own train of reflection. Then, bending over D'Esmonde, he said: "In case we should require to cross the frontier at Lavenza, must we have passports?"

"Nothing of the kind. There is no police—no inquiry whatever."

"Good-bye, then. If you should not hear *from*, you will hear *of* me, abbé. There are a few things, which, in the event of accident, I will jot down in writing. You'll look to them for me. Good evening, or good morning—I scarcely know which."

And, with all the habitual indolence of his lounging manner, he departed.

D'Esmonde stood for a few seconds silent,

and then said: "Is the noble viscount deep in your books?"

"Deeper than I wish him to be," said the Jew.

"Have no fears on that account. He'll soon acquit all his debts," said the other. "Good night, Morlache." And with this abrupt leave-taking, he withdrew.

CHAPTER LXIX.

A SAD EXIT.

The French Secretary of Legation was just going to bed as his servant handed him a card from Lord Norwood, with a few words scribbled in pencil.

"Yes, by all means. Tell my lord to come in," said he; and Norwood entered.

"You remember an old pledge you once made me," said the viscount, smiling. "I have come to claim it."

"*Diantre!* the case must be pressing that would not wait till daylight."

"So it is; and so you will agree with me in thinking it, when I tell you all," said Norwood. "The first point is, may I reckon upon you?"

"Of course; my word is sacred."

"Secondly, have you pistols that you can depend upon? Mine have been stopped at Milan by the police."

"They are Jacquard's best," said the Frenchman; "and in *your* hand ought not to disgrace their maker."

"Dress, then, and come along with me. This affair must be disposed of quickly."

"I'm at your orders," said the Frenchman, gayly. "I suppose you will be kind enough to tell me something more, as we go along."

Norwood nodded an assent, and sat down before the fire, and crossed his arms on his breast.

"Was it a quarrel at play?" asked the Frenchman, after an interval of silence.

"No!" was the abrupt reply.

"All the better. It is the only affair of this kind I cannot endure. Is there a woman in it?"

"Yes."

"Ah! I perceive," said the other, with a laugh. "A married woman?"

"Yes."

"And who is the happy husband, this time?" asked he, flippantly.

"I am," replied Norwood, in a low and solemn voice.

"*You! you!* I never thought—never suspected *you* of being married, Norwood. Pray, be a little more explicit. Let me hear the whole story."

"Later on, not now. I want to think of something else, at this moment. Are your pistols fine in the trigger?"

"Excessively so; a fly would almost suffice to move them. Is he English?"

"No."

"Not a countryman of my own, I hope?"

"No. It is Midchekoff, the Russian."

"*Diantre!* what a mark to shoot at! But they tell me that he never does go out—that he refuses this kind of thing."

"He shall not do so this time," said Norwood, with a vehement energy of manner.

"Well, I'm ready now; but I must say that I should like to hear something of what we are about."

"There will be ample time for all as we go along. We shall drive to the villa. It is necessary to obtain an interview with himself. This done, I will give the provocation, showing that you are ready and in waiting; there can be no delay."

"But he will need a friend?"

"He must take one of his secretaries—his valet, if he prefer it. I'll give no time for evasive negotiation."

"I cannot be a party to an affair like this, Norwood. Whatever the wrong you seek to avenge, this is not the mode to do it."

"Say so at once, then," said Norwood, rising. "Tell me that you gave a rash promise, and are sorry for it. Better the refusal now, than when it be too late to retract."

"You mistake me; I have no wish to unsay one single word I ever spoke to you. I only ask for such an explanation as I have a right to demand."

"You shall know everything: pray spare me telling it twice over. There is no use in opening one's wound till he comes to the surgeon. Enough now, that I tell you this man owes me a full and fair reparation for a great wrong—I am equally determined on exacting it. If this does not satisfy you, step into the carriage, and you shall hear the whole story. I can tell it, perhaps, when we are rattling along over the stones in the dark." And, so saying, he sat down, and leaned his head on the table, as though he would not be disturbed. The Frenchman went on with his dressing rapidly, and at last, pronouncing himself ready, they descended the stairs together in silence, and entered the carriage.

As they drove on, Norwood never spoke; and his companion, respecting perhaps the occasion of his silence, did not utter a word. At last they arrived at the summit of the hill, and looked down upon the city, over which the grey tints of coming day were breaking. The great Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio lay in massive shadow, and it was only at intervals along the Arno that a flickering gleam of cold light fell. The scene, in all its calm and stillness, was grand and solemn.

"How unlike the Florence of sun and bright sky—how unlike the brilliant city of dissipation and pleasure!" said Norwood; "and so it is with individuals: we are just what light and shadow make us! Now, listen to me." He then related the whole story of his first meeting with Lola down to the moment of D'Esmonde's revelation. "I know well," said he, "there may be a dozen ways to look on the affair, besides that which I have chosen. I might dispute the marriage—I might disavow the whole proceeding—I might, naturally enough, leave such a woman to her fate; she never could be anything to *me;* but I cannot relinquish the opportunity of a reckoning with this Russian. The insolence of his wealth gives all the venom to this outrage, and I'll shoot him! All the splendor of his riches can avail him but little now. And, except some more gold upon his coffin, and a richer pall to cover it, he has no advantage over me, ruined and beggared as I am. As to my scores with the world at large, I am about quits. *They* cheated *me*, when I was a young, unsuspecting boy, trusting and believing every one. *I* repaid *them*, as my own time came. Men understand this thoroughly, but women never do. The moment you cease to be *their* dupe, they hate you. As to my debts, they gave me little trouble when living, they're not likely to disturb my rest in the churchyard; and as for friends, there is not one alive to whom I could send a last word of affection; and yet you'll scarce believe it, with all this, I'd like to live—although, if you ask me why, I couldn't tell it. Perhaps it is this," cried he, after a pause: "the yelping pack that cried me down in my absence will do so now without fear or restraint. The stories of me that once were whispered, will now be told aloud. Slander and calumny can go abroad without a dread of consequences. But even that is a poor thing to live for!"

The Frenchman's philosophy had taught him but few sympathies with such gloomy ideas, and he tried in every way to rally his friend; but Norwood's mind was full of very different sorrows from those he had dwelt upon. It was the canker of a disappointed, abortive life was eating into his heart. A fair fortune squandered—a noble name tarnished—a high position sacrificed—and now, an ignominious quarrel to close his career—these were the reflections which, far more imbittering than all his words, now tortured and agonized him.

"Come," said he, suddenly, "we had better move forward. It is getting nigh daybreak, and our prince will soon be retiring to his room."

They now drove rapidly on for some time, and at last reached the gate; where the porter, at once recognizing Morlache's carriage and livery, admitted them without a word.

"You'll have to wait for me here, count," said Norwood, when they stopped at the door. "I'll contrive not to keep you long; but this part of the matter I must do alone." The bell had scarcely done ringing when the door was opened. "The prince is still at table?" said Norwood, half in assertion, half in inquiry; and then, with a gesture to the servant to show the way, he overawed all scruples about admitting him. "Is he alone?" said the viscount, as they went along.

"No, sir. The countess is with him."

"Say that a person on most pressing business is here, and must speak with him at once."

"The prince always requires the name, sir. I dare not address him without it."

"Say that I am come from Morlache's—that I have something to deliver into his own hands."

Norwood placed the casket on the table as he spoke. The servant retired and speedily returned, requesting Norwood to follow him. As the door was flung open, Norwood heard voices; he stopped, and hesitated. Either an impulse of passion, or some change of purpose, worked within him, for, as he stood, he grasped the edge of the door, and swayed to and fro for some seconds.

"Let him come out—let him come here," cried he, in a loud voice.

A low murmur of persons speaking was heard within, and suddenly the rustling sound of a female dress was followed by the bang of a door; and then Norwood entered, and, closing the door, locked it behind him.

The grating sound of the key made the Russian turn his head suddenly around, and his eyes met Norwood's.

"What! my Lord Norwood!" cried he, in amazement. "They never told me——"

"If they had, in all likelihood I should

not have been admitted," was the stern reply.

"I must own it is an honor for which I was scarcely prepared, my lord," said the other.

"You never spoke more truly, sir," said Norwood. "Men like yourself fancy that their solvency in matters of money implies as much in all the various relations of life, and that, as they know not what a dun means, they are to enjoy an equal immunity from every demand of honor."

"As you are evidently speaking under some strange misapprehension, my lord, I hesitate about accepting your words in any offensive sense."

"You said you were unprepared for my visit, sir, and I believe you, as you will be, doubtless, unprepared for the object of it. Prince Midchekoff, I have come here to request your company across the Tuscan frontier; the matter is of sufficient importance to warrant the inconvenience. You will take any or as many of your household as you please, but you shall accompany me, from this spot. Come, sir, your air of easy indifference is for once mistimed. You see before you a man whose utmost effort can scarcely repress the passion that stirs within him. Neither your coolness nor your cowardice—for the quality goes by either name—can avail you here. I must and I will have reparation."

"Until I am aware of the injury—until you tell me how, or in what, I have wronged you——"

"How shall I teach you a lesson of honor, sir," cried Norwood, boiling over with rage, "so that you shall comprehend even for a moment the feeling of a gentleman? You cannot affect ignorance as to who and what is the woman that sat there. You need not drive me to the indignity of calling her my wife! You know it well, and you know all the disgrace you were heaping on a class who rejected your intimacy. None of this mock surprise, sir! If you compel me to it, I'll fling open that door, call all your household around you, and before them I'll insult you, so that even your serf-blood will rebel against the outrage."

"This is madness—downright insanity, my lord," said Midchekoff, rising and moving towards the bell.

"Not so, sir," said Norwood, interposing. "My passion is now mastered. You shall not escape on that pretense. There are my pistols—only one of them is loaded—take your choice, for I see that outside of this room I shall seek in vain for satisfaction."

"This would be a murder."

"It shall be, by heaven, if you delay!" cried Norwood. "I have the right and the will to shoot you like a dog. If there be no honor, is there not even some manhood in your heart? Take your weapon—you hesitate still—take that, then!" And he struck him with his open hand across the face.

Midchekoff snatched the pistol convulsively, and, placing the muzzle on Norwood's breast, fired. With a wild cry, he staggered, and fell dead upon the floor. The prince flung open the door, and rang the bell violently. In a moment the room was filled with servants. "Send Jocasse here," said Midchekoff; and his chief secretary entered in all haste and trepidation. "This is an affair for the police, Jocasse," said the prince, coolly. "Send for the brigadier, and let him come to my room."

"Suicide shows a great '*manque de savoir vivre*,'" said Haggerstone, as the news of the event was circulated through Florence. And the "*mot*" survived the memory of its victim.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE SUMMONS.

They who only knew Vienna in its days of splendor and magnificence could scarcely have recognized that city as it appeared on the conclusion of the great revolt which had just convulsed the empire. The great walls were riddled with shot and shell; vast breaches in them opened out a view of even more dreadful ruin within; streets choked up with fallen houses, and wide squares encumbered with blocks of masonry and blackened timbers. The terrible traces of barricade struggles still remained; but more significant than all these was the downcast, sorrow-struck look of a population, once known as the gayest and most light-hearted of Europe!

The air of suffering and poverty extended to everything. No signs of the once luxury and wealth of that rich nobility. Not an equipage was to be seen! The passing and repassing of troops gave the only movement observable in the streets. Strong guards and patrols marched past, with all the precaution and preparation of a state of war. The dragoons sat in their saddles, carbine in hand, as if but waiting for a signal to engage; while, in the half-defiant stare of the populace, might be read the

spirit of men who had not yet resigned themselves to defeat.

Most of the shops were closed, and, even of those still open, the display of wares was scanty and miserable ; rather seeming as if the effort were made to conciliate the favor of the government, than with any hope of gain. The cafés were deserted, except by the military, and they—far from indulging the jocund mirth and laughter which was their wont—were now serious and anxious-looking, regarding the passers-by with a distrustful glance, and seeming as though they felt that the interval was less peace than an armistice.

Cannon were in position on the Stephan's Platz and the Graben, and the gunners stood ready, as if on parade. Officers of the staff, too, and orderlies, rode hastily to and fro, showing that no rash reliance was placed on the quietude of the capital, and that the hour of conflict, if it were to come, should not find them unprepared. In vain the stranger might have sought for that more than feudal splendor which once was the type of this brilliant city ! The gorgeous liveries of the Bohemian—or the more tasteful grandeur of the Magyar noble, were no longer to be seen. The varied costumes of the Bahat and the Wallach, which gave such character to many a rude equipage—the barbaric finery, which recalled the old struggles with the Crescent, which marked the rank of some border chieftain—were gone ! Vienna presented nothing but its troops of soldiers, and its mournful, sad-looking population, moving listlessly about, or standing in groups to gaze on the disastrous ruins of their once proud city !

The "Ambassador Street," where formerly the armorial shields of every reigning house of Europe were wont to be displayed, was now almost untenanted.

With some, the imperial government was at open war; with others, estrangement and coldness prevailed; while some, again, were represented by officials of inferior rank—all signs of troubled and precarious times, when kings no longer knew what future awaited them!

It was here, formerly, that the most brilliant society of the capital was to be found; here, every night, the carriages were seen to throng, and the whole street glow with the glare of light from brilliant *salons*, or the red flame of the torches borne by the running footmen. The proud aristocracy of every land here met; and names that recalled the great achievements of generals and statesmen were heard in every announcement that resounded along those corridors! But a few of these palaces were now occupied, and for the most part were the quarters of the generals of the army. In front of one of the largest, at whose gate two sentinels stood, the street was littered with straw, while the closed shutters and drawn curtains showed that sickness and suffering were busy within. The frequent arrivals, and the passing and repassing of messengers, evinced the interest the sufferer's fate excited; and amongst those who dismounted at the corner of the street, and with cautious steps approached the door, more than one member of the imperial house was to be seen. He whose fortune inspired all these tokens of regard was no great or illustrious general, no proud and distinguished statesman—he was simply a young officer of hussars—a gallant soldier, whose fidelity had been proved under the most trying circumstances — our acquaintance, Frank Dalton. Relapse after relapse had reduced his strength to the very verge of debility, and each day threatened to be his last. Worn down by pain and suffering, the young soldier bore a look of calm and even happy meaning. His character for loyalty had been not only vindicated by his blood, but, through the aid of Walstein, it was shown that he could have known nothing of the conspiracy with which he was charged. Thus re-established in fair fame, he saw himself the object of every care that affection could bestow. The old count seldom quitted him—Kate never left his bedside. Every attention of kindness, every suggestion of love, was bestowed upon him; and a sick-bed was made the scene of more touching happiness than he had ever known in the proudest hours of his health and vigor. Could he have seen his dear Nelly beside him, he had no more to wish for! To die, without pressing her to his heart, without acknowledging all that he owed to her good counsels, was now his only sorrow; and if, in the stillness of the sick-room, tears would flow heavily along his cheek, and drop, one by one, on his pillow, this was their secret source.

The count had himself written to Nelly. Kate, too, had despatched a letter, telling of Frank's dangerous condition, and entreating her presence; but no reply had been returned, and they already began to fear that some mishap had occurred, and were obliged to frame all manner of excuses for her absence. Meanwhile, as his strength declined, his impatience increased, and his first question, as day broke, and his last, at night, were, "What tidings of Nelly?" All his faults and errors lay like a load upon

his heart, till he could pour out the confession to his dear sister.

The post-hour of each morning was a moment of intense anxiety to him, and the blank look which met his eager glance was the signal for a depression that weighed down his heart during the day. From long dwelling on this source of sorrow, his mind grew painfully acute as to all that bore upon it; and sometimes he fancied that his uncle and Kate knew some dreadful fact of poor Nelly, and feared to communicate it. More than once had it occurred to him that she was dead—that she had sunk, broken-hearted and deserted! He did not dare to whisper this suspicion, but he tried to insinuate his fears about in a hundred ways. To his sickly fancy, their frankness seemed dissimulation, and the very grief they displayed he read as the misery of an unrevealed calamity!

Kate, with all a woman's quickness, saw what was passing in his mind, and tried her utmost to combat it; but all in vain. To no purpose did she open her whole heart before him, telling of her own sad history and its disappointments. In vain did she point to a bright future, when, strong and in spirits, Frank should accompany her in search of Nelly through every glen and valley of the Tyrol. The impression of some concealment was more powerful than all these, and he but heard them as tales invented to amuse a sick-bed. The morbid sensibility of illness gave a significance to every trivial incident, and Kate dared not whisper in his presence, nor even exchange a look with another, without exciting a whole flood of doubt and suspicion in his mind.

To allay, so far as might be, these disordered terrors, they assumed the utmost frankness in all intercourse with him, and even took pains to exhibit an undisguised freedom on every occasion.

The letters which arrived by each morning's post were always opened in his presence, and his prying, eager glances showed that the precaution was not unneeded.

"What is that?" cried he, suddenly, as Kate, after reading the address of a letter, hastily threw it on the table, and covered it with others. "Let me see that, Kate. Whom is it for?"

"It bears your name," said she, anxiously, "and has an Irish postmark; but the hand is not known to me."

The youth took the letter in his hand, and sat gazing on it for some minutes together.

"No," said he, at length, "I do not remember to have seen the writing before. Read it, Kate."

She broke the seal, and at once exclaimed, "It is from Doctor Grounsell, Frank!—a very dear and kind friend."

She ran her eyes rapidly over the lines as she spoke, and twice her color came and went, and her hand trembled as it held the paper.

"You have bad news for me?" said the boy, with a slow but firm utterance, "but so that it be not of Nelly, I can bear anything!"

"It is not of Nelly," said Kate, in a tremulous tone.

"Then let me hear it," said he, calmly.

She tried to read, but the effort was beyond her strength; and, although her lips moved, no sound issued from them. At last she gained sufficient strength to say, "It would agitate you too much, my dear brother, to hear this now. Let us wait for a day or two, till you are stronger, and better able to think about it."

"I have told you already, that, if it be not of Nelly, I can hear it with indifference. Read on, then, Kate."

"The meaning of it is this, Frank," cried she, hastily. "There was a fearful crime committed some years back in Ireland—a relative of ours, named Godfrey, was murdered!"

"Yes—yes—I know it. Go on," said he, eagerly.

"The circumstances have never yet come to light, and now, it would appear, some efforts are being made to connect our name with this dreadful act; and—and—in fact, Frank, Doctor Grounsell wishes to learn from you where we were residing at the period in question; and if you be possessed of any letters or papers which could show the relations existing between our family and Mr. Godfrey."

"You must let me read this for myself, Kate," said Frank, calmly, taking the letter from her hands; "and now leave me for a while."

With trembling steps and a sinking heart, the young girl retired, to pass hours of intense anxiety in her chamber. At last came a servant to say that her brother desired to see her.

"I must set out for Ireland, Kate," said the sick youth, as he arose from his chair.

"For Ireland!" cried she, gazing with terror at his wasted and worn figure.

"A long journey, dearest, but I shall have strength for it, if you'll be my companion!"

"Never to leave you, Frank!" cried she; and fell sobbing into his arms.

CHAPTER LXXI.

INISTIOGE.

Rich as Ireland is in picturesque river scenery, we know nothing more beautiful than the valley through which the Nore flows between Thomastown and New Ross. The gently sloping meadows, backed by deep woods, and dotted with cheerful farm-houses, gradually give way to a bolder landscape as you descend the stream and enter a dark gorge, whose high beetling sides throw their solemn shade over the river, receding at last to form a kind of amphitheater wherein stands the little village of Inistioge.

More like a continental than an Irish hamlet, the cottages are built around a wide open space planted with tall elms and traversed by many a footpath; and here, of a summer night, are to be seen the villagers seated or strolling about in pleasant converse—a scene of rural peace and happiness such as rarely is to be met with in our land of trial and struggle. Did our time or space admit of it, we would gladly loiter in that pleasant spot, gazing from that graceful bridge on the ivy-clad towers, the tall and stately abbey, or the rich woods of that proud demesne, which in every tint of foliage encircle the picture.

That "vale and winding river" were scenes of some of our boyhood's happiest hours; and even years—those stern teachers—have not obliterated the memory! Our task is not, however, with these recollections, and we would now ask our reader to stand with us beneath the shadow of the tall elms, while the little village is locked in slumber.

It is past midnight—all is still and tranquil—a faint moonlight flickers through the leaves and plays a fitful gleam upon the river: one man alone is abroad, and he is seen to traverse the bridge with uncertain steps, stopping at moments as if to listen, and then resuming his solitary watch. A light, the only one in the village, twinkles from a window of the little inn, and the door lies open, for in his impatience he has quitted his chamber to walk abroad in the night air. As the hours wear on, his anxiety seems to increase, and he starts and pauses at every sound of the wind through the trees, and every cadence of the rushing river. At last he hears the tramp of a horse—he bends down to listen—it comes nearer and nearer, and, in his feverish impatience, he hastens in the direction of the coming noise. "Is that you, Michel?" he cries, in an eager accent.

"Yes, D'Esmonde, it is I," replies a voice; and the next moment the horseman has dismounted at his side.

"What have I not suffered since you left this, Michel," said D'Esmonde, as he rested his forehead on the other's shoulder. "There is not an image of terror my mind has not conjured up. Shame, ignominy, ruin, were all before me, and, had you stayed much longer away, my brain could not have borne it."

"But, D'Esmonde, my friend——"

"Nay, nay, do not reason with me—what I feel—what I suffer—has no relation to the calm influences of reason. I alone can pilot myself through the rocks and quicksands of this channel. Tell me of your mission—how has it fared?"

"Less well than I hoped for," said the other, slowly.

"I thought as much," replied D'Esmonde, in a tone of deep dejection. "You saw him?"

"Yes, our interview lasted nigh an hour. He received me coldly, but courteously, and entered into the question with a kind of calm acquiescence that at first gave me good encouragement."

"To end in disappointment!" cried D'Esmonde, bitterly; and the other made no reply. "Go on, Michel," said the abbé, after a pause; "tell me all."

"I began," resumed the other, "by a brief reference to Godfrey's murder, and the impenetrable mystery in which, up to this hour, it would appear to be veiled. I related all that you had told me of the relationship between him and the Daltons, and the causes which had broken off their friendship. With these he seemed conversant, though I am unable to say whether he knew more or less than what I was communicating. I dwelt as long and as forcibly as I deemed safe on the character and habits of old Dalton, hinting at his reckless, unprincipled career, and the wild and lawless notions he entertained on every subject. To my great surprise, and I confess to my discomfiture, he stopped me short by saying:

"'You would imply, then, that he was the guilty man?'

"'You go too fast, Mr. Grounsell,' said I, calmly; 'I have come to confer and take counsel with you, not to form rash or hasty notions on a matter of such deep gravity. If the circumstances I shall lay before you possess the same importance in your eyes that they do in mine, it may be that your own conclusions will be even more than suspicions.' I then entered upon the story of Meekins, and how a comrade of his, an

Irishman, called Noonan, confessed to him that he was the murderer of Mr. Godfrey: that he had never known him, nor had any intercourse with him; but was employed for the act by old Dalton, who was then residing at Bruges. This Noonan, who was possessed of several letters of Dalton's, had joined a Genoese vessel, fitted out for the slave-trade, and was killed in action. Meekins had frequent conversations with him on the subject of the murder, and, although a stranger from another country, knew every detail of the scene and locality perfectly from description.

"'Meekins is still living?' asked Doctor Grounsell.

"'Living, and now here,' replied I; at which he gave a start of surprise, and I think of alarm.

"'Is he ready to substantiate his statement on oath?' said he.

"'That he could do so, I have no doubt,' replied I; 'that he will, or that he ought, is perhaps a matter for calm reflection.'

"'How do you mean?' said he, hastily. 'If what he alleges be true, can there be any hesitation as to its publicity?'

"'On that there may be grave doubts, sir,' said I. 'They, whom the law could have held responsible, are already gone before another judgment-seat. Their guilt or innocence has been proven where deception or error exists not! It is only their blameless descendants that could now pay the penalty of their crime; and it may well be matter for consideration whether they should be exposed to the world's shame to expiate that wherein they had no share——'

"'Do you yourself believe this man's story?' asked he, abruptly.

"'I see no reason to discredit it,' was my answer. 'There are moments when doubt is more difficult than belief, and this is one of them. He has never varied in his narrative—he tells it to-day as he told it yesterday—he details family circumstances that defy invention, and mentions events and incidents that all tally with facts.'

"'Where was he himself at the time of the murder?'

"'In South America,' he says. 'He had joined one of those patriot expeditions which sailed from Ireland to join Bolivar.'

"'This he can prove, of course?' observed he, shrewdly.

"'I conclude he can,' replied I; 'it never occurred to me to question it.'

"There was an interval after this in which neither of us spoke; at last he said, 'May I ask how you became acquainted with this man—Meekins?'

"'Through a brother clergyman, who was the means of saving his life abroad.'

"'And the intention is,' rejoined he, in a slow and deliberate voice, 'that we should, while believing this man's statement, keep it secret? Would not that amount to a very grave offense—the compromise of a felony?'

"I hesitated as he said this, not knowing well which way the discussion might turn; at last I replied: 'Meekins might refuse his evidence—he might deny that he had ever made these revelations.'

"'In other words,' said he, 'he prefers to sell his testimony for a better price than a court of justice would pay for it.'

"'You do not suppose that I could be a party to——'

"'Nay, nay," cried he, interrupting me; 'not on such grounds as these, but I can well conceive your feeling strongly interested for the blameless and unhappy children. The only question is, how far such sympathies can be indulged against the direct claims of justice?'

"There was a dispassionate calmness in the tone he spoke this, that disarmed my suspicions, D'Esmonde; and it was only when I had left him and was on my way back here, that I perceived what may, perhaps, have been a very great error; for I at once proceeded to lay before him the course I would counsel, and how, by the employment of a very moderate sum, this fellow could be induced to emigrate to America, never to return. After pushing this view with all the force I could, I at last avowed, as if driven to the confession, that another motive had also its weight with me, which was, that my friend and brother priest, the same who rescued Meekins from his fate, was the natural son of Mr. Godfrey, educated and brought up at his cost, and maintained till the period of his death with every requisite of rank and station; that Meekins knew this fact, and would publish it to the world, if provoked to it, and that thus my friend's position at the Court of Rome would be utterly ruined.

"'He is a monsignore, then?' asked Grounsell.

"'He is,' replied I, 'and may even yet be more than that.'

"This was rash, Michel—this was all imprudence," said D'Esmonde, with a heavy sigh. "Go on, what said he then?"

"He waited while I told him that we sought for no advantages on the score of this relationship; that we preferred no claims whatever against the estate of Mr. Godfrey; that we only sought to bury in oblivion a

great crime, and to prevent the publicity of a great shame.

"'It is your belief, then,' said he, staring me fully in the face, "that Dalton was guilty?'

"'From what is before me,' replied I, 'it is hard to reject that conclusion.'

"'And that this was an act of pure revenge?'

"'Less that, perhaps, than the hope of succeeding to the property by some will of early date; at least such is the version Meekins's informant gave him.'

"'Ay, ay,' said he, 'that would constitute a motive, of course. Your advice is, then, that we should make terms with this fellow? Is this also your friend's counsel?'

"'I scarcely can tell you,' replied I. 'My friend is not in any sense a worldly man. His whole thoughts are centered in the cause he serves, and he could only see good or evil in its working on the Church. If his cousins——'

"'His cousins!'

"'Yes, the Daltons—for they are such—deem this the fitting course, he is ready to adopt it. If they counsel differently, I can almost answer for his compliance.'

"'You can give me time to communicate with Dalton? He is at Vienna.'

"'Yes, if you agree with me in this view of the case, and think that such will be Dalton's opinion also; otherwise it will be difficult to secure this fellow's secresy much longer. He knows that he is in possession of a deeply important fact; he feels the impunity of his own position; and to-morrow or next day he may threaten this, that, or t'other. In fact, he believes that Lady Hester Onslow herself has no title to the estate, if he were disposed to reveal all he knows."

"'Can I see him?' asked Grounsell.

"'Of course you can; but it would be useless. He would affect an utter ignorance of everything, and deny all knowledge of what we have been talking.'

"'You will give me some hours to think over this?' asked he, after a pause.

"'I had rather that you could come to a quicker resolve,' said I; 'the fellow's manner is menacing and obtrusive. I have perhaps too long delayed this visit to you; and should he suspect that we are hesitating, he may go before a magistrate, and make his deposition before we are aware of it.'

"'You shall hear from me this evening, sir. Where shall I address my note?'

"'The Rev. Michel Cahill—the Inn at Inistioge,' replied I. And so we parted."

"We must leave this at once, Michel," said D'Esmonde, after a brief interval of silence. "Grounsell may possibly come over here himself. He must not see me; still less must he meet with Meekins. We have gone too fast here—much too fast."

"But you told me that we had not a moment to lose."

"Nor have we, Michel; but it is as great an error to overrun your game as to lag behind the scent. I distrust this doctor."

"So do I, D'Esmonde. But what can he do?"

"We must quit this place," said the other, not heeding the question. "There is a small wayside public, called the 'Rore,' about five miles away. We can wait there for a day, at least. I almost wish that we had never embarked in this, Michel," said he, thoughtfully. "I am seldom faint-hearted, but I feel I know not what of coming peril. You know well that this fellow Meekins is not to be depended on. When he drinks, he would reveal any and everything. I myself cannot determine whether to credit or reject his testimony. His insolence at one moment, his slavish, abject terror at another, puzzle and confound me."

"You have been too long an absentee from Ireland, D'Esmonde, or they would present no difficulties to your judgment. At every visit I make to our county gaol I meet with the self-same natures, torn, as it were, by opposite influences—the passions of this world, and the terrors of that to come."

"Without the confessional who could read them?" exclaimed D'Esmonde.

"How true that is!" cried the other. "What false interpretations, what mistaken views, are taken of them! And so is it—we, who alone know the channel, are never to be the pilots!"

"Say not so," broke in D'Esmonde, proudly. "We are, and we shall be! Ours will be the guidance, not alone of them, but of those who rule them. Distrust what you will, Michel, be faint-hearted how you may, but never despair of the glorious Church. Her triumph is already assured. Look at Austria, at Spain, at all Northern Italy. Look at Protestant Prussia, trembling for the fate of her Rhine provinces. Look at England herself, vacillating between the game of conciliation and the perils of her unlimited bigotry. Where are we not victorious? Ours is the only despotism that ever smote two-handed—crushing a monarchy here, and a people there—proclaiming divine right, or asserting the human inheritance of freedom! Whose banner but ours ever bore the

double insignia of rule and obedience?—ours the Great Faith, equal to every condition of mankind, and to every age and every people? Never, never despair of it!"

D'Esmonde sat down, and covered his face with his hands; and when he arose, his pale features and bloodless lips showed the strong reaction from a paroxysm of intense passion.

"Let us leave this, Michel," said he, in a broken voice. "The little inn I speak of is not too distant for a walk, and if we start at once we shall reach it before daybreak. While you awake Meekins, and arrange all within, I will stroll slowly on, before." And, thus saying, D'Esmonde moved away, leaving the other to follow.

D'Esmonde was more than commonly thoughtful, even to depression. He had been but a few days in Ireland, but every hour of that time had revealed some new disappointment to him. There was all that he could wish of religious zeal, there was devotion and faith without limit amongst the people; but there was no unity of action, no combination of purpose, amongst those who led them. Discursive and rash efforts of individuals were suffered to disturb well-laid measures and reveal long-meditated plans. Vain and frivolous controversies in newspapers, petty wars of petty localities, wasted energies, and distracted counsels. There was none of that organization, that stern discipline, which at Rome regulated every step, and ordained every movement of their mighty host. "This," muttered he to himself, "is an army without field-officers. Their guerilla notions must be henceforth exchanged for habits of military obedience. Little think they that their future general is now the solitary pedestrian of a lonely road at midnight." The recurrence to himself and his own fortunes was one of those spells which seemed to possess an almost magical influence over him. From long dwelling on the theme, he had grown to believe that he was destined by heaven for the advancement, if not the actual triumph, of the great cause of the Church; and that he, whose origin was obscure and ignoble, could now sit down at the council of the princes of the faith, and be heard as one whose words were commands, was always sufficient evidence that he was reserved by fate for high achievements. Under the spell of this conviction he soon rallied from his late dejection, and his uplifted head and proud gait now showed the ambitious workings of his heart. "Ay," cried he aloud, "the first prince of the Church who for above a century has dared them to defiance! *That* is a proud thought, and well may nerve the spirit that conceives it to courageous action."

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE MANOR HOUSE OF CORRIG-O'NEAL.

WHILE we leave, for a brief space, the Abbé d'Esmonde to pursue his road, we turn once more to the peaceful scene wherein we found him. Mayhap there be in this dalliance something of that fond regret, that sorrowful lingering, with which a traveler halts, to look down upon a view he may never see again! Yes, dear reader, we already feel that the hour of our separation draws nigh, when we shall no more be fellow-journeyers, and we would fain loiter on this pleasant spot, to tarry even a few moments longer in your company.

Passing downwards beneath that graceful bridge, which with a rare felicity seems to heighten, and not to impair, the effect of the scene, the river glides along between the rich-wooded hills of a handsome demesne, and where, with the most consummate taste, every tint of foliage, and every character of verdure, has been cultivated to heighten the charm of the landscape. The spray-like larch, the wide-leaved sycamore, the solemn pine, the silver-trunked birch, all blending their various hues into one harmonious whole—the very perfection of a woodland picture. As if reluctant to leave so fair a scene, the stream winds and turns in a hundred bendings—now forming little embayments among the jutting rocks, and now, listlessly loitering, it dallies with the gnarled trunk of some giant beech that bends into the flood.

Emerging from these embowering woods, the river enters a new and totally different tract of country—the hills, bare of trees, are higher, almost mountainous in character, with outlines fantastic and rugged. These, it is said, were once wooded, too; they present, however, little remains of forest, save here and there a low oak scrub. The sudden change from the leafy groves, ringing with many a "wood note wild," to the dreary silence of the dark region, is complete as you approach the foot of a tall mountain, at whose base the river seems arrested, and is in reality obliged by a sudden bend to seek another channel. This is Corrig-O'Neal; and here, in a little amphitheater, surrounded by mountains of lesser size, stood the ancient manor of which men-

tion has been more than once made in these pages.

It is but a short time back and there stood there an ancient house, whose character, half quaint, half noble, might have made it seem a French château; the tall, high-pitched roof, pierced with many a window; the richly ornamented chimneys, the long terrace, with its grotesque statues, and the intricate traceries of the old gate itself, all evidencing a taste not native to our land. The very stiff and formal avenue of lime-trees that led direct to the door had reference to a style of landscape-gardening more consonant with foreign notions, even without the fountains, which, with various strange groups of allegorical meaning, threw their tiny jets among the drooping flowers. At the back of the house lay a large garden, or rather what constituted both garden and orchard; for, although near the windows trim flower-beds and neatly graveled walks were seen, with rare and blossoming plants, as you advanced, the turf usurped the place of the cultivated ground, and the apple, the pear and the damson formed a dense, almost impenetrable, shade.

Even on the brightest day in spring, when the light played and danced upon the shining river, with blossoming cherry trees, and yellow crocuses in the grass, and fair, soft daffodils along the water's edge, smiling like timid beauties, when the gay May-fly skimmed the rippling stream, and the strong trout splashed up to seize him—even then, with life, and light, and motion all around, there was an air of sadness on this spot—a dreary gloom, that fell upon the spirits less like sudden grief than as the memory of some old and almost forgotten sorrow. The frowning aspect of that stern mountain, which gave its name to the place, and which, in its rugged front, showed little touch of time or season, seemed to impress a mournful character on the scene. However it was, few passed the spot without feeling its influence; nor is it likely that now, when scarcely a trace of its once inhabited home remains, its aspect is more cheering.

In a dark wainscoted room of this gloomy abode, and on a raw and dreary day, our old acquaintance, Lady Hester, sat, vainly endeavoring between the fire and the screen to keep herself warm, while shawls, muffs and mantles were heaped in most picturesque confusion around her. A French novel and a Blenheim spaniel lay at her feet, a scarce-begun piece of embroidery stood at one side of her, and an untasted cup of coffee on a small table at the other. Pale, and, perhaps, seeming still more so from the effect of her deep mourning, she lay back in her chair, and, with half-closed lids and folded arms, appeared as if courting sleep—or at least unconsciousness.

She had lain thus for above half an hour when a slight rustling noise—a sound so slight as to be scarcely audible—caught her attention, and, without raising her head, she asked, in a faint tone:

"Is there any one there?"

"Yes, my lady. It is Lisa," replied her maid, coming stealthily forward, till she stood close behind her chair.

"Put some of that thing—peat, turf, or whatever it is—on the fire, child. Has the post arrived?"

"No, my lady; they say that the floods have detained the mails, and that they will be fully twelve hours late."

"Of course they will," sighed she; "and if there should be anything for *me*, they will be carried away."

"I hope not, my lady."

"What's the use of your hoping about it, child? or, if you must hope, let it be for something worth while. Hope that we may get away from this miserable place, that we may once more visit a land where there are sunshine and flowers, and live where it repays one for the bore of life."

"I'm sure I do hope it with all my heart, my lady."

"Of coure you do, child. Even you must feel the barbarism of this wretched country. Have those things arrived from Dublin yet?"

"Yes, my lady; but you never could wear them. The bonnet is a great unwieldy thing, nearly as big and quite as heavy as a life-guardsman's helmet, and the mantle is precisely like a hearth-rug with sleeves to it. They are specially commended to your ladyship's notice, as being all of Irish manufacture."

"Why need to say so?" sighed Lady Hester. "Does not every lock on every door, every scissors that will not cut, every tongs that will not hold, every parasol that turns upside down, every carriage that jolts, and every shoe that pinches you, proclaim its nationality?"

"Dr. Grounsell says, my lady, that all the fault lies in the wealthier classes, who prefer everything to native industry."

"Dr. Grounsell's a fool, Lisa. Nothing shall ever persuade me that Valenciennes and Brussels are not preferable to that ornament for fireplaces and fauteuils, called Limerick lace, and Genoa velvet a more becoming wear than the O'Connel frieze. But, have done with this discussion; you have already put me out of temper by the mention of that odious man's name."

"I at least saved your ladyship from seeing him this morning."

"How so? Has he been here?"

"Twice already, my lady; and threatens another visit. He says that he has something very important to communicate, and his pockets were stuffed with papers."

"Oh dear me! how I dread him and his parchments! Those terrible details, by which people discover how little is bequeathed to them, and how securely it is tied up against every possibility of enjoying it. I'd rather be a negro slave on a coffee plantation than a widow with what is called a 'high-principled trustee' over my fortune."

"There he comes again, my lady; see how fast he is galloping up the avenue."

"Why will that pony never stumble? Amiable and worthy folk break their necks every day of the week—fathers of families and unbeneficed clergymen. Assurance companies should certainly deal lightly with crusty old bachelors and disagreeable people, for they bear charmed lives."

"Am I to admit him, my lady?" asked the maid, moving towards the door.

"Yes—no—I really cannot—but perhaps I must. It is only putting off the evil day. Yes, Lisa, let him come in, but mind that you tell him I am very poorly—that I have had a wretched night, and am quite unfit for any unpleasant news, or indeed for anything like what he calls business. Oh dear! oh dear! the very thought of parchment will make me hate sheep to the last hour of my life, and I have come to detest the very sight of my own name, from signing 'Hester Onslow' so often."

It must be said, there was at least no hypocrisy in her ladyship's lamentations; if the cause of them was not all-sufficient, the effects were to the full what she averred, and she was, or believed herself to be, the most miserable of women. Sir Stafford's will had bequeathed to her his Irish property, on the condition of her residing upon it at least six months every two years, a clause whose cruelty she—with or without reason we know not—attributed to the suggestion of Doctor Grounsell. To secure eighteen months of unlimited liberty, she was undergoing her captivity in what, it must be acknowledged, was a spirit the reverse of that the testator intended. So far from taking any interest in the country, its people, or its prospects, she only saw in it a dreary imprisonment, saddened by bad weather, bad spirits, and solitude. Nor were her griefs all causeless. Her position was greatly fallen from the possession of a fortune almost without bounds to the changeful vicissitudes of an Irish property. Norwood's dreadful death, wrapped in all the mystery which involved it, shocked her deeply, although, in reality, the event relieved her from a bondage she had long felt to be insupportable; and lastly, the Romanism, in which she had, so to say, invested all her "loose capital" of zeal and enthusiasm, had become a terrible disappointment. The gorgeous splendor of Italian Popery found a miserable representative in Irish Catholicism. The meanly-built Irish chapel, with its humble congregation, was a sorry exchange for the architectural grandeur and costly assemblage gathered within the Duomo of Florence, or beneath the fretted roof of "St. John of Lateran."

In all the sublimity of pealing music, of full-toned choirs, of incense floating up into realms of dim distance, there were but the nasal sing-song of a parish priest, and the discordant twang of a dirty acolyte! And what an interval separated the vulgar manners of the village curate from the polished addresses of the Roman cardinal! How unlike the blended pretension and cringing slavery of the one was to the high-bred bearing and courtly urbanity of the other. A visit from "Father John" was an actual infliction. To receive his eminence was not only an honor, but a sincere pleasure. Who, like him, to discuss every topic of the world and its fashionable inhabitants; touching every incident with a suave mellowness of remark that, like the light through a stained-glass window, warmed, while it softened, that which it fell upon? Who could throw over the frailties of fashion such a graceful cloak of meek forgiveness, that it seemed actually worth while to sin to be pardoned with such affection? All the pomp and circumstance of Romanism, as seen in its own capital, associated with rank, splendor, high dignity, and names illustrious in story, form a strong contrast to its vulgar pretensions in Ireland. It is so essentially allied to ceremonial and display, that when these degenerate into poverty and meanness, the effect produced is always bordering on the ludicrous. Such, at least, became the feeling of Lady Hester as she witnessed those travesties of grandeur, the originals of which had left her awe-stricken and amazed.

Shorn of fortune, deprived of all the illusions which her newly-adopted creed had thrown around her, uncheered by that crowd of flatterers which used to form her circle, is it any wonder if her spirits and her temper gave way, and that she fancied

The return to the Ould Country.

herself the very type of misery and desertion? The last solace of such minds is in the pity they bestow upon themselves; and here she certainly excelled, and upon no occasion more forcibly than when receiving a visit from Doctor Grounsell.

"Doctor Grounsell, my lady," said a servant; and at the words, that gentleman entered.

A heavy great-coat, with numerous capes, a low-crowned glazed hat, and a pair of old-fashioned "hessians," into which his trousers were tucked, showed that he had not stooped to any artifices of toilet to win favor with her ladyship. As she bowed slightly to him, she lifted her glass to her eye, and then dropped it suddenly with a gentle simper, as though to say that another glance would have periled her gravity.

"Winter has set in early, madam," said he, approaching the fire, "and with unusual severity. The poor are great sufferers this year."

"I'm sure I agree with you," sighed Lady Hester. "I never endured such cold before!"

"I spoke of the 'poor,' madam," retorted he, abruptly.

"Well, sir, has any one a better right to respond in their name than I have? Look around you, see where I am living, and how, and then answer me!"

"Madam," said Grounsell, sternly, and fixing his eyes steadily on her as he spoke, "I have ridden for two hours of this morning over part of that tract which is your estate. I have visited more than a dozen—I will not call them houses, but hovels. There was fever in some, ague in others, and want, utter want, in all; and yet I never heard one of the sufferers select himself as the special mark of misfortune, but rather allude to his misery as part of that common calamity to which flesh is heir. 'God help the poor!' was the prayer, and they would have felt ashamed to have invoked the blessing on themselves alone."

"I must say that if you have been to see people with typhus, and perhaps small-pox, it shows very little consideration to come and visit *me* immediately after, sir."

Grounsell's face grew purple, but with a great effort he repressed the reply that was on his lips, and was silent.

"Of course, then, these poor creatures can pay nothing, sir."

"Nothing, madam."

"Che bella cosa! an Irish property!" cried she, with a scornful laugh, "and, if I mistake not, sir, it was to your kind intervention and influence that I am indebted for this singular mark of my husband's affection?"

"Quite true, madam. I had supposed it to be possible—just possible—that, by connecting your personal interest with duties, you might be reclaimed from a life of frivolity and idleness to an existence of active and happy utility, and this without any flattering estimates of your qualities, madam."

"Oh, sir, this is a very needless protest," said she, bowing and smiling.

"I repeat, madam, that, without any flattering estimate of your qualities, I saw quite enough to convince me that kindness and benevolence were just as easy to you as their opposites."

"Why, you have become a courtier, sir," said she, with a smile of sly malice.

"I'm sorry for it, madam; I'd as soon be mistaken for a hairdresser or a dancing-master. But to return. Whether I was correct or not in my theory would appear to be of little moment; another, and more pressing view of the case, usurping all our interests, which is no less, madam, than your actual right and title to this estate at all."

Lady Hester leaned forward in her chair as he said this, and in a low but unshaken voice, replied, "Do I understand you aright, sir, that the title to this property is contested?"

"Not yet, madam; there is no claim set up as yet; but there is every likelihood that there will be such. Rumors have gradually grown into open discussion—threatening notices have been sent to me by post, and stories which at first I had deemed vague and valueless, have assumed a degree of importance from the details by which they were accompanied. In fact, madam, without any clue to the nature or direct drift of the plot, I can yet see that a formidable scheme is being contrived, the great agent of which is to be menace."

"Oh dear, what a relief it would be to me were I quite certain of all this!" exclaimed Lady Hester, with a deep sigh.

"What a relief—did you say, what a relief, madam?" cried Grounsell, in amazement.

"Yes, sir, that was precisely the word I used."

"Then I must have blundered most confoundedly, madam, in my effort to explain myself. I was endeavoring to show you that your claim to the estate might be disputed!"

"Very well, sir, I perfectly understood you."

"You did, eh? You perceive that you

might possibly lose the property, and you acquiesce calmly——"

"Nay, more, sir, I rejoice sincerely at the very thought of it."

"Well, then, upon my——eh ? May the devil—I beg pardon, madam, but this is really such a riddle to me that I must confess my inability to unravel it."

"Shall I aid you, sir ?" said Lady Hester, with an easy smile on her features. "When bequeathing this estate to me, Sir Stafford expressly provided, that if, from any political convulsion, Ireland should be separated from her union with Great Britain, or if by course of law a substantial claim was established to the property by another, that I should be recompensed for the loss by an income of equal amount derived from the estate of his son, George Onslow, at whose discretion it lay to allocate any portion of his inheritance he deemed suitable for the purpose."

"All true, madam—quite true," broke in Grounsell ; "and the solicitor-general's opinion is, that the provision is perfectly nugatory—not worth sixpence. It has not one single tie of obligation, and, from its vagueness, is totally inoperative."

"In law, sir, it may be all that you say," replied Lady Hester, calmly ; "but I have yet to learn that this is the appeal to which Captain Onslow would submit it."

Grounsell stared at her ; and, for the first time in all his life, he thought her handsome. That his own features revealed the admiration he felt was also plain enough, and Lady Hester was very far from being insensible to the tribute.

"So that, madam," cried he, at length, "you prefer insecurity to certainty?"

"Say rather, sir, that I have more confidence in the honorable sentiments of an English gentleman, than I have in the solvency of a poor and wretched peasantry. Up to this very hour I have known nothing except the claims upon myself. I don't like the climate ; and I am certain that my neighbors do not like *me*—in fact, I have neither the youth nor the enterprise suited to a new country."

"Why, good heavens! madam, it isn't New Zealand we're in!" cried Grounsell, angrily.

"Perhaps not," sighed she, languidly ; "but it is just as strange to *me*."

"I see, madam," said Grounsell, rising, "my plan was a bad one : a wing in the Borghese Palace—a spacious apartment of the Corsini, on the Arno—or even the first floor of the Moncenigo, at Venice, would have been a happier choice than a gloomy old mansion on the banks of an Irish river."

"Oh ! do not speak of it, sir," cried she, enthusiastically. "Do not remind me of starry skies and the deep blue Adriatic, in this land of cloud and fog, where even the rain is 'dirty water.' Pray make the very weakest defense of my claim to this inheritance. I only ask to march out with my baggage, and do not even stipulate for the honors of war. Let me have George's address."

"You'll not need it, madam ; he will be here within a few days. He has been promoted to a majority for his conduct in the field, and returns to England, covered with praise and honors."

"What delightful news, Doctor Grounsell ! you are actually charming, this morning." The doctor bowed stiffly at the compliment, and she went on : "I often thought that you could be amiable, if you would only let yourself ; but, like the Cardinal Gualterino, you took up the character of bear, and 'bear' you would be at all times and seasons ; and then those horrid coats that you would persist in wearing—how you ever got them of that odious brown, I can't think—they must have dyed the wool to order—not but that I think your shoes were worst of all."

Grounsell understood too well the wordy absurdity with which her ladyship, on the least excitement, was accustomed to launch forth, quite forgetful of all the impertinence into which it betrayed her. He, therefore, neither interposed a remark, nor seemed in any way conscious of her observation, but coldly waiting till she had concluded, he said :

"Some other of your ladyship's friends are also expected in this neighborhood—the Daltons !"

"What—my dear Kate ?"

"Yes ; Miss Kate Dalton, accompanied by her brother and uncle. I have just been to order apartments for them in the hotel at Kilkenny."

"But they must come here. I shall insist upon it, doctor. This is a point upon which I will accept no refusal."

"The occasion which calls them to Ireland, madam, and of which you shall hear all, hereafter, would totally preclude such an arrangement."

"More mystery, sir ?" exclaimed she.

"Another side of the same one, madam," rejoined he dryly.

"What delightful news, to think I shall see my dearest Kate again! I am dying to know all about Russia, and if the ladies do wear pearls in morning toilet, and whether turquoises are only seen in fans and parasol handles. What splendor she must have seen !"

"Humph!" said Grounsell, with a short shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh! I know you despise all these things, and you hate caviare. Then I want to know about the prince; why the match was broken off; and from what cause she refused that great settlement, some thousand roubles. How much is a rouble, by the way, doctor?"

"I really cannot tell you, madam," said he, bluntly, who saw that she was once more "wide a-field."

"She'll tell me all herself, and everything about Russia. I want to hear about the knout, and the malachite, and that queer habit of gambling before dinner is announced. I'm sure I should like St. Petersburg. And the brother, what is he like?"

"I only know, madam, that he is a great invalid, not yet recovered from his wounds!"

"How interesting! he was in the patriot army, was he not?"

"He fought for the emperor, madam; pray make no mistake in that sense."

"Oh dear! how difficult it is to remember all these things; and yet I knew it perfectly when I was at Florence!—all about the Kaiser-Jägers, and the Crociati, and the Croats, and the rest of them. It was the Crociati or the Croats—I forget which—eat little children. It's perfectly true, Guardarelli, when he was a prisoner, saw an infant roasting for Radetzky's own table!"

"I would beg of you, madam, not to mention this fact to the field-marshal, Miss Kate Dalton's uncle."

"Oh! of course not; and I trust he will not expect that we could provide him with such delicacies here. Now, doctor, how shall we amuse these people; what can we do?"

"Remember, first of all, madam, that their visit to Ireland is not an excursion of pleasure——"

"Oh, I can perfectly conceive *that!*" interrupted she, with a look of irony.

"I was about to remark that an affair of deep importance was the cause of their journey——"

"More business!" broke she in, again. "After all, then, I suppose I am not much more miserable than the rest of the world. Everybody would seem to have what you call 'affairs of importance.'"

"Upon my word, madam, you have made me totally forget *mine*, then," said Grounsell, jumping up from his seat, and looking at his watch. "I came here prepared to make certain explanations, and ask your opinion on certain points. It is now two o'clock, and I have not even opened the matter in hand."

Lady Hester laughed heartily at his distress, and continued to enjoy her mirth as he packed up his scattered papers, buttoned his great-coat, and hurried away, without even the ceremony of a leave-taking.

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE RORE.

D'Esmonde and his friend Michel sat beside the fire in a small parlor of the wayside public-house called the "Rore." They were both thoughtful and silent, and in their moody looks might be read the signs of brooding care. As for the abbé, anxiety seemed to have worn him like sickness, for his jaws were sunk and hollow, while around his eyes, deep circles of a dusky purple were strongly marked.

It was not without reason that they were thus moved, since Meekins, who hitherto rarely or never ventured abroad, had, on that morning, gone to the fair of Graigue, a village some few miles away, where he was recognized by a farmer—an old man, named Lenahan—as the steward of the late Mr. Godfrey. It was to no purpose that he assumed all the airs of a stranger to the country, and asked various questions about the gentry and the people. The old farmer watched him long and closely, and went home fully satisfied that he had seen Black Sam—the popular name by which he was known on the estate. In his capacity of bailiff, Black Sam had been most unpopular in the country. Many hardships were traced to his counsels, and it was currently believed that Mr. Godfrey would never have proceeded harshly against a tenant except under his advice. This character, together with his mysterious disappearance after the murder, was quite sufficient, in peasant estimation, to connect him with the crime; and no sooner had Lenahan communicated his discovery to his friends than they, one and all, counseled him to go up to the doctor—as Grounsell was called on the property—and ask his advice.

The moment Grounsell learned that the suspected man called himself Meekins, he issued a warrant for his arrest; and so promptly was it executed, that he was taken on that very evening as he was returning to the "Rore." The tidings only reached the little inn after nightfall, and it was in gloomy confabulation over them

that the two priests were now seated. The countryman who had brought the news was present when the police arrested Sam, and was twice called back into the parlor, as D'Esmonde questioned him on the circumstance.

It was after a long interval of silence that the abbé, for the third time, summoned the peasant before him.

"You have not told me under what name they arrested him. Was it Meekins?"

"The sergeant said, 'You call yourself Meekins, my good man?' and the other said, 'Why not?' 'Oh, no reason in life,' says the sergeant; 'but you must come with us—that's all.' 'Have you a warrant for what you're doing?' says he. 'Ay,' says the polis; 'you broke yer bail——'"

"Yes, yes," broke in D'Esmonde, "you mentioned all that already. And Meekins showed no fear on being taken?"

"No more than your reverence does this minute. Indeed, I never see a man take it so easy. 'Mind what you're doing,' says he; 'for, though I'm a poor man, I have strong friends, that won't see me wronged.' And then he said something about one 'Father Matthew,' but whether it was you, or that other clergyman there, I don't know."

"They took him to Thomastown?"

"No, your reverence—to Kilkenny."

"That will do, my good man," said D'Esmonde, with a nod of his head. And then, as the door closed behind him, added: "You see, Michel, I was right in my fears of this doctor. The evasive terms of his note, too, confirmed my suspicions—that 'desire for further time in a matter of such great difficulty.' We have thrown him on the scent, and he is now in full cry after the game. Shame upon us!—shame! that such as he can foil us at our own weapons. I see his plan clearly enough. He is either in possession of some secret fact of this man's early life, which can be employed as a menace to extort a confession from him, or he is about to work on him by bribery. Now, as to the former, I am perfectly at ease. What I, with every agency of the Church, have failed to elicit, I can safely defy the layman's craft to detect. As to the effect of a bribe, I am far from being so certain."

"And in either case the result concerns you but little," said Cahill. "The fellow has nothing in his power against *you*."

"Nothing," said D'Esmonde. "I never left myself in the hands of such as he! It will, of course, be disagreeable to me that our intercourse should be made public. The Orange press will know how to connect our intimacy with a thousand schemes and subtleties that I never dreamed of; and, more offensive still, the assumed relationship to Mr. Godfrey will assume a fruitful theme for sneer and sarcasm! I foresee it all, my good Michel, and, worst of all, I perceive how this publicity will mar higher and nobler objects. The Sacred College will never make a prince of the Church of one whose name has been sullied by the slang of journalism! These are the dangers to be averted here. You must contrive to see this man at once—to assure him of our interest and protection, if he be but discreet and careful. He may safely deny all knowledge of the circumstances to which we alluded. We are the only persons to whom he made these revelations. He has only to assume an ignorance of everything. Impress this upon him, Michel; for, if they can involve him in a narrative, be it ever so slight or vague, these lawyers exercise a kind of magic power, in what is called cross-examination, and can detect a secret fact by tests as fine as those by which the chemist discovers a grain of poison. Would that I could see him myself! but this might be imprudent."

"Trust all to me, D'Esmonde; and believe me, that, with men like him, habit has taught me better how to deal, than you, with all your higher skill, could accomplish. I will contrive to see him to-night, or early to-morrow. The under-turnkey was from my own parish, and I can make my visit as if to *him*."

"How humiliating is it," cried D'Esmonde, rising and pacing the room—"how humiliating to think that incidents like these are to sway and influence us in our road through life; but so it is, the great faults that men commit are less dangerous than are imprudent intimacies and ill-judged associations. It is not on the high bluff or the bold headland that the craft is shipwrecked, but on some small sunken rock—some miserable reef beneath the waves! Could we but be 'penny wise' in morals, Michel, how rich we should be in knowledge of life! I never needed this fellow—never wanted his aid in any way! The unhappy mention of Godfrey's name—the spell that in some shape or other has worked on my heart through life—first gave him an interest in my eyes, and so, bit by bit, I have come to be associated with him, till—would you believe it?—I cannot separate myself from him. Has it ever occurred to you, Michel, that the evil one sometimes works his ends by infusing into the nature of some chance intimate that species of temptation by which

courageous men are so easily seduced—I mean that love of hazard—that playing with fire, so intoxicating in its excitement? I am convinced that to *me* no bait could be so irresistible. Tell me that the earth is mined, and you invest it with a charm that all the verdure of 'Araby the Blest' could never give it! I love to handle steel when the lightning is playing; not, mark me, from any contempt of life, far less in any spirit of blasphemous defiance, but simply for the glorious sentiment of peril. Be assured, that when all other excitements pall upon the mind, this one survives in all its plenitude, and, as the poet says of avarice, becomes a good 'old gentlemanly vice.'"

"You will come along with me, D'Esmonde?" said the other, whose thoughts were concentrated on the business before him.

"Yes, Michel, I am as yet unknown here; and it may be, too, that this Meekins might wish to see me. We must take good care, while we avoid any public notice, that this fellow should not think himself deserted by us."

"The very point on which I was reflecting, D'Esmonde. We can talk over this as we go along."

As the two priests affected to be engaged on a kind of mission to collect subscriptions for some sacred purpose, their appearance or departure excited no feeling of astonishment, and the landlord of "The Rore" saw them prepare to set out without expressing the least surprise. The little low-backed car, the common conveyance of the people at fair and market, was soon at the door; and, seated in this, and well protected against the weather by rugs and blankets, they began their journey.

"This is but a sorry substitute for the scarlet-paneled coach of the cardinal, D'Esmonde," said his companion, smiling.

A low, faint sigh was all the answer the other made, and so they went their way in silence.

The day broke drearily and sad-looking; a thin, cold rain was falling, and, from the leaden sky above to the damp earth beneath, all was gloomy and depressing. The peasantry they passed on the road were poor-looking and meanly clad; the houses on the wayside were all miserable to a degree; and while his companion slept, D'Esmonde was deep in his contemplation of these signs of poverty. "No!" said he, at last, as if summing up the passing reflections in his own mind, "this country is not ripe for the great changes we are preparing. The gorgeous splendor of the Church would but mock this misery. The rich robe of the cardinal would be but an insult to the ragged coat of the peasant! England must be our field. Ireland must be content with a missionary priesthood! Italy, indeed, has poverty, but there is an intoxication in the life of that land which defies it. The sun, the sky, the blue water, the vineyards, the groves of olive and the fig—the light-headedness that comes of an existence where no fears invade—no gloomy to-morrow has ever threatened—these are the elements to baffle all the cares of narrow fortune, and hence the gifts which make men true believers! In climates such as this, men brood, and think, and ponder. Uncheered from without they turn within, and then come doubts and hesitations—the fatal craving to know that which they may not! Of a truth these regions of the north are but ill suited to our glorious faith, and Protestantism must shun the sun, as she does the light of reason itself."

"What! are you preaching, D'Esmonde?" cried his friend, waking up at the energetic tone of the abbé's voice. "Do you fancy yourself in the pulpit? But here we are, close to the town. We had better dismount now, and proceed on foot."

Having dismissed their humble equipage, the two friends walked briskly along, and entered the city, which, even at this early hour, was filling for its weekly market.

D'Esmonde took up his quarters at once at a small inn close by the castle gate, and the priest Cahill immediately proceeded to the gaol. He found no difficulty in obtaining access to his acquaintance, the under-turnkey, but, to his disappointment, all approach to Meekins was strictly interdicted. "The magistrates were here," said the turnkey, "till past midnight with him, and that English agent of the Corrig-O'Neal estate was along with them. What took place I cannot even guess, for it was done in secret. I only overheard one of the gentlemen remark, as he passed out, 'That fellow is too deep for us all; we'll make nothing of him.'"

Cahill questioned the man closely as to what the arrest related, and whether he had heard of any allegation against Meekins; but he knew nothing whatever, save that he had broken his bail some years before. The strictest watch was enjoined over the prisoner, and all intercourse from without rigidly denied. To the priest's inquiries about Meekins himself, the turnkey replied by saying that he had never seen any man with fewer signs of fear or trepidation. "Whatever they have against him," added he, "he's either innocent, or he defies them to prove him guilty."

Cahill's entreaties were all insufficient to make the turnkey disobey his orders. Indeed, he showed that the matter was one of as much difficulty as danger, the chief gaoler being specially interested in the case by some observation of one of the justices.

"You can at least carry a message for me?" said the priest, at last.

"It's just as much as I dare do," replied the other.

"You incur no risk whatever, so far," continued Cahill. "The poor man is my sacristan, and I am deeply interested for him. I only heard of his being arrested last night, and you see I've lost no time in coming to see after him. Tell him this. Tell him that I was here at daybreak, and that I'll do my best to get leave to speak with him during the day. Tell him, moreover, that, if I shouldn't succeed in this, not to be downhearted, for that we—a friend of mine and myself—will not desert him nor see him wronged. And, above all, tell him to say nothing whatever to the magistrates. Mind me well—not a syllable of any kind."

"I mistake him greatly," said the turnkey, "or he's the man to take a hint quick enough, particularly if it's for his own benefit."

"And so it is—his own, and no other's," rejoined the priest. "If he but follow this advice, I'll answer for his being liberated before the week ends. Say, also, that I'd send him some money, but that it might draw suspicion on him; and for the present it is better to be cautious."

Before Cahill left the prison, he reiterated all his injunctions as to caution, and the turnkey faithfully pledged himself to enforce them on the prisoner.

"I will come again this evening," said the priest, "and you can tell me what he says; for, as he has no friend but myself, I must not forsake him."

As Cahill gained the street, a heavy traveling-carriage, whose lumbering build bespoke a foreign origin, passed by with four posters, and, sweeping across the market-place, drew up at the chief inn of the town. The priest, in idle curiosity, mingled with the lounging crowd that immediately gathered around the strange-looking equipage, where appliances for strength and comfort seemed blended, in total disregard to all facilities for motion. A bustling courier, with all the officiousness of his craft, speedily opened the door and banged down the steps, and a very tall old man, in what appeared to be an undress military frock, descended, and then assisted a young lady to alight. This done, they both gave their arm to a young man, whose wasted form and uncertain step bespoke long and severe illness. Supporting him at either side, they assisted him up the steps and into the hall, while the bystanders amused themselves in criticising the foreigners, for such their look and dress declared them.

"The ould fellow with a white beard over his lip is a Roosian or a Proosian," cried one, who aspired to no small skill in continental nationalities.

"Faix! the daughter takes the shine out of them all," cried another. "She's a fine crayture!"

"The brother was a handsome man before he had that sickness," observed a third. "'Tis no use of his legs he has!"

These frank commentaries on the new arrivals were suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the old man on the steps of the hall door, where he stood gazing down the street, and totally unconscious of the notice he was attracting.

"What's that building yonder?" cried he to the waiter at his side; and his accent, as he spoke, betrayed a foreign tongue. "The town hall!—ah, to be sure, I remember it now; and, if I be not much mistaken, there is—at least there was—an old rickety stair to a great left overhead, where a strange fellow lived, who made masks for the theater—what's this his name was?" The bystanders listened to these reminiscences in silent astonishment, but unable to supply the missing clue to memory. "Are none of you old enough to remember Jack Ruth, the huntsman?" cried he aloud.

"I have heard my father talk of him," said a middle-aged man, "if it was the same that galloped down the mountain of Corrig O'Neal and swam the river at the foot of it."

"The very man," broke in the stranger. "Two of the dogs, but not a man, dared to follow! I have seen some bold feats since that day, but I scarcely think I have ever witnessed a more dashing exploit. If old Jack has left any of his name and race behind him," said he, turning to the waiter, "say that there's one here would like to see him;" and with this, he re-entered the inn.

"Who is this gentleman that knows the country so well?" asked the priest.

"Count Dalton von Auersberg, sir," replied the courier. "His whole thoughts are about Ireland now, though I believe he has not been here for upwards of sixty years."

"Dalton!" muttered the priest to him-

self, "what can have brought them to Ireland? D'Esmonde must be told of this at once!" And he pushed through the crowd and hastened back to the little inn.

The abbé was engaged in writing as Cahill entered the room.

"Have you seen him, Michel?" cried he, eagerly, as he raised his head from the table.

"No. Admission is strictly denied——"

"I thought it would be so—I suspected what the game would be. This Grounsell means to turn the tables, and practice upon *us* the menace that was meant for *him*. I foresee all that he intends, but I'll foil him! I have written here to Wallace, the queen's counsel, to come down here at once. This charge against old Dalton, in hands like his, may become a most formidable accusation."

"I have not told you that these Daltons have arrived here——"

"What! Of whom do you speak?"

"The old Count von Dalton, with a niece and a nephew."

"D'Esmonde sprang from his seat, and for some seconds stood still and silent.

"This is certain, Michel? You know this to be true?"

"I saw the old general myself, and heard him talk with the waiter."

"The combat will, then, be a close one," muttered D'Esmonde. "Grounsell has done this, and it shall cost them dearly. Mark me, Michel—all that the rack and the thumb-screw were to our ancestors, the system of a modern trial realizes, in our day. There never was a torture, the invention of man's cruelty, as terrible as cross-examination! I care not that this Dalton should have been as innocent as you are of this crime—it matters little if his guiltlessness appear from the very outset. Give me but two days of searching inquiry into his life, his habits, and his ways. Let me follow him to his fireside, in his poverty, and lay bare all the little straits and contrivances by which he eked out existence, and maintained a fair exterior. Let me show them to the world, as I can show them, with penury within, and pretension without. These disclosures cannot be suppressed as irrelevant—they are the alleged motives of the crime. The family that sacrifices a child to a hateful alliance—that sells to Austrian bondage the blood of an only son—and consigns to menial labor a maimed and sickly girl, might well have gone a step further in crime."

"D'Esmonde! D'Esmonde!" cried the other, as he pressed him down into a seat, and took his hand between his own, "these are not words of calm reason, but the outpourings of passion." The abbé made no answer, but his chest heaved and fell, and his breath came with a rushing sound, while his eyes glared like the orbs of a wild animal.

"You are right, Michel," said he, at last, with a faint sigh. "This was a paroxysm of that hate which, stronger than all my reason, has actuated me through life. Again and again have I told you that towards these Daltons I bear a kind of instinctive aversion. These antipathies are not to be combated—there are brave men who will shudder if they see a spider. I have seen a courageous spirit quail before a worm. These are not caprices, to be laughed at—they are indications full of pregnant meaning, could we but read them aright. How my temples throb—my head seems splitting. Now leave me, Michel, for a while, and I will try to take some rest."

CHAPTER LXXIV.

A TALK OVER "BYGONES."

It was with a burst of joy that Lady Hester heard the Daltons had arrived. In the wearisome monotony of her daily life, anything to do, anywhere to go, any one to see, would have been esteemed boons of great price: what delight, then, was it to meet those with whom she could converse of "bygone times" and other lands!—"that dear Kate," whom she really liked as well as it was in her nature to love anything, from whom she now anticipated so much of that gossip, technically called "news," and into whose confiding heart she longed to pour out her own private woes!

The meeting was, indeed, affectionate on both sides; and, as Lady Hester was in her most gracious of moods, Frank thought her the very type of amiability, and the old count pronounced her manners fit for the high ordeal of Vienna itself. Perhaps our reader will be grateful if we leave to his imagination all the changeful moods of grief and joy, surprise, regret, and ecstasy, with which her ladyship questioned and listened to Kate Dalton's stories; throwing out, from time to time, little reflections of her own, as though incidentally, to show how much wiser years had made her. There are people who ever regard the misfortunes of others as mere key-notes to elicit their own sufferings; and thus, when Kate spoke of Russia, Lady Hester quoted Ireland.

Frank's sufferings reminded her of her own "nerves;" and poor Nelly's unknown fate was precisely "the condition of obscurity to which Sir Stafford's cruel will had consigned herself."

Kate's mind was very far from being at ease, and yet it was with no mean pleasure she found herself seated beside Lady Hester, talking over the past with all that varying emotion which themes of pleasure and sadness call up. Who has not enjoyed the delight of such moments, when, living again bygone days, we laugh or sigh over incidents wherein once as actors we had moved and felt? If time has dimmed our perceptions of pleasure, it has also softened down resentments and allayed asperities. We can afford to forgive so much, and we feel, also, so confident of others' forgiveness; and if regrets do steal over us that these things have passed away forever, there yet lurks the flattering thought that we have grown wiser than we then were. So is it the autobiographies of the fireside are pleasant histories, whose vanities are all pardonable, and whose trifling is never ungraceful! Memory throws such a softened light on the picture, that even bores become sufferable, and we extract a passing laugh from the most tiresome of our quondam "afflictives."

Had her ladyship been less occupied with herself and her own emotions, she could not have failed to notice the agitation under which Kate suffered at many of her chance remarks. The levity too, with which she discussed her betrothal to Midchekoff, almost offended her. The truth was, Kate had half forgotten the reckless, unthinking style of her friend's conversation, and it required a little practice and training to grow accustomed to it again.

"Yes, my dear," she went on, "I have had such trouble to persuade people that it was no marriage at all, but a kind of engagement; and when that horrid emperor wouldn't give his consent, of course there was an end of it. You may be sure, my sweet child, I never believed one syllable of that vile creature's story about George's picture; but somehow it has got abroad, and that odious Heidendorf goes about repeating it everywhere. I know well that you never cared for poor dear George! Indeed, I told him as much when he was quite full of admiration for you. It is so stupid in men! their vanity makes them always believe that, if they persist, just persevere, in their attachment, the woman will at last succumb. Now, we have a better sense of these things, and actually adore the man that shows indifference to us—at least, I am sure that I do. Such letters as the poor boy keeps writing about you! And about five months ago, when he was so badly wounded, and did not expect to recover, he actually made his will, and left you all he had in the world. Oh dear!" said she, with a heavy sigh, "they have generous moments, these men, but they never last; and, by the way, I must ask your advice—though I already guess what it will be—about a certain friend of ours, who has had what I really must call the presumption—for, after all, Kate, I think you'll agree with me it is a very great presumption—is it not, dear?"

"Until you tell me a little more," replied Kate, with a sigh, "I can scarcely answer."

"Well, it's Mr. Jekyl—you remember that little man that used to be so useful at Florence; not but he has very pretty manners, and a great deal of tact in society. His letters, too, are inimitably droll. I'll show you some of them."

"Oh! then, you are in correspondence with him?" said Kate, slyly.

"Yes; that is, he writes to *me*—and I—I sometimes send *him* a short note. In fact, it was the Abbé D'Esmonde induced me to think of it at all; and I was bored here, and so unhappy, and so lonely."

"I perceive," said Kate; "I trust that there is nothing positive—nothing like an engagement?"

"And why, dear?—whence these cautious scruples?" said Lady Hester, almost peevishly.

"Simply because he is very unworthy of you," said Kate, bluntly, and blushing deep at her own hardihood.

"Oh, I'm quite sure of that," said Lady Hester, casting down her eyes. "I know—I feel that I am mistaken and misunderstood. The world has always judged me unfairly! You alone, dearest, ever comprehended me; and even you could not guess of what I am capable! If you were to read my journal—if you were just to see what sufferings I have gone through! And then that terrible shock! though, I must say, D'Esmonde's mode of communicating it was delicacy itself. A very strange man that abbé is, Kate. He now and then talks in a way that makes one suspect his affections are or have been engaged."

"I always believed him too deeply immersed in other cares."

"Oh, what a shortsighted judgment, child! These are the minds that always feel most! I know this by myself—during the last two years especially! When I think what I have gone through! The fate, not

alone of Italy, but of Europe, of the world, I may say, discussed and determined at our fireside! Yes, Kate, I assure you, so it was. D'Esmonde referred many points to me, saying, 'that the keener perception of a female mind must be our pilot here.' Of course, I felt all the responsibility, but never, never was I agitated. How often have I held the destiny of the imperial house in my hands! How little do they suspect what they owe to my forbearance! But these are not themes to interest you, dearest, and, of course, your prejudices are all Austrian. I must say, Kate, 'the uncle' is charming! Just that kind of dear old creature so graceful for a young woman to lean upon; and I love his long white mustache! His French, too, is admirable—that Madame de Sévigné turn of expression, so unlike modern flippancy, and so respectful to women!"

"I hope you like Frank!" said Kate, with artless eagerness in her look.

"He's wonderfully good-looking without seeming to know it; but, of course, one cannot expect that to last, Kate."

"Oh! you cannot think how handsome he was before this illness; and then he is so gentle and affectionate."

"There—there, child, you must not make me fall in love with him, for you know all my sympathies are Italian; and, having embroidered that beautiful banner for the 'Legion of Hope'—pretty name, is it not?—I never could tolerate the 'Barbari.'"

"Pray do not call them such to my uncle," said Kate, smiling.

"Never fear, dearest. I'm in the habit of meeting all kinds of horrid people without ever offending a prejudice; and, besides, I am bent on making a conquest of 'mon oncle;' he is precisely the species of adorer I like best. I hope he does not take snuff?"

Kate laughed, as she shook her head in sign of negative.

From this Lady Hester diverged to all manner of reflections about the future—as to whether she ought or ought not to know Michekoff when she met him; if the villa of La Rocca were really Kate's, or hers, or the property of somebody else; who was Jekyl's father, or if he ever had such an appendage; in what part of the Tyrol Nelly was then sojourning; was it possible that she was married to the dwarf, and ashamed to confess it?—and a vast variety of similar speculations, equally marked by a bold indifference as to probability, and a total disregard to the feelings of her companion. Kate was, then, far from displeased when a messenger came to say that the general was alone in the drawing-room, and would esteem it a favor if the ladies would join him.

"How do you mean, alone?" asked Lady Hester. "Where is Mr. Dalton?"

"Dr. Grounsell came for him, my lady, and took him away in a carriage."

"Poor Frank, he is quite unequal to such fatigue," exclaimed Kate.

"It is like that horrid doctor. His cruelties to me have been something incredible; at the same time, there's not a creature on my estate he does not sympathize with! You'll see how it will be, dearest; he'll take your dear brother somewhere where there's a fever, or perhaps the plague, for I believe they have it here; and in his delicate state he's sure to catch it and die! Mark my words, dearest Kate, and see if they'll not come true." And with this reassuring speech, she slipped her arm within her companion's and moved out of the room.

It may be conjectured that it was not without weighty reasons Grounsell induced Frank, weary and exhausted as he was, to leave his home and accompany him on a cold and dreary night to the city gaol. Although declining to enter upon the question before a third party, no sooner were they alone together than the doctor proceeded to an explanation. Meekins, who, it appeared, showed the greatest indifference at first, had, as the day wore on, grown restless and impatient. This irritability was increased by the want of his accustomed stimulant of drink, in which, latterly, he had indulged freely, and it was in such a mood he asked for pen and paper, and wrote a few lines to request that young Mr. Dalton would visit him. Grounsell, who made a point to watch the prisoner from hour to hour, no sooner heard this, than he hastened off to the inn with the intelligence.

"There is not a moment to be lost," said he. "This fellow, from all that I can learn, is but the tool of others, who are bent on bringing before the world the whole story of this terrible crime. A priest, named Cahill, and who for some time back has been loitering about the neighborhood, was at the gaol this morning before daybreak. Later on, he posted a letter for Dublin, the address of which I was enabled to see. It was to the eminent lawyer in criminal cases, Mr. Wallace.

"That some great attack is in preparation, I have, then, no doubt; the only question is, whether the object be to extort money by threats of publicity, or is there some deep feeling of revenge against your name and family?

"The gaoler, who is in my interest,

gives me the most accurate detail of the prisoner's conduct, and although I am fully prepared to expect every species of duplicity and deceit from a fellow of this stamp, yet it is not impossible that, seeing himself to a certain extent in our power, he may be disposed to desert to our ranks.

"He asks you to come alone, and of course you must comply. Whatever be the subject of his revelations, be most guarded in the way you receive them. Avow utter ignorance of everything, and give him reason to suppose that your great object here is to prevent the exposure and disgrace of a public trial. This may make him demand higher terms; but at the same time he will be thrown upon fuller explanations to warrant them. In fact, you must temper your manner between a conscious power over the fellow, and an amicable desire to treat with him.

"He has heard, within the last half-hour, that he has been recognized here by a former acquaintance, whose account of him includes many circumstances of deep suspicion. It may have been this fact has induced him to write to you. This you will easily discover in his manner. But here we are at the gates, and once more, I say, be cautious and guarded in everything."

"Well, Mr. Gray," said Grounsell to the gaoler, "you see we have not delayed very long. Ill as he is, Mr. Dalton has accepted this invitation."

"And he has done well, sir," replied the gaoler. "The man's bearing is greatly changed since morning: some panic has evidently seized him. There's no saying how long this temper may last; but you are quite right to profit by it while there is yet time."

"Is he low and depressed, then?"

"Terribly so, sir. He asked a while ago if any one had called to see him. Of course we guessed whom he meant, and said that a priest had been at the gaol that morning, but only to learn the charge under which he was apprehended. He was much mortified on being told that the priest neither expressed a wish to see nor speak with him."

Grounsell gave a significant glance towards Frank, who now followed the gaoler to the prisoner's cell.

"He's crying, sir; don't you hear him?" whispered the gaoler to Frank, as they stood outside the door. "You couldn't have a more favorable moment." And, thus saying, he rattled the heavy bunch of keys, in order to give the prisoner token of his approach; and then, throwing open the door, called out, "Here's the gentleman you asked for, Meekins; see that you don't keep him long in this cold place, for he is not very well."

Frank had but time to reach the little settle on which he sat down, when the door was closed, and he was alone with the prisoner.

CHAPTER LXXV.

THE GAOL.

Frank Dalton was in no wise prepared for the quiet and easy self-possession with which Meekins, after asking pardon for the liberty of his note, took a seat in front of him. Smoothing down his short and glossy black hair with his hand, he seemed to wait for Frank to open the conversation; and, while there was nothing of insolence in his manner, there was an assured calmness, far more distressing to a young and nervous invalid.

"You wished to see me, Meekins," said Frank, at last; "what can I do for you?"

The man bent slightly forward on his chair, and fixing his keen and penetrating eyes, continued steadily to stare at him for several seconds.

"You're too young and too generous to have a double in you," said he, after a long pause, in which it seemed as if he were scanning the other's nature; "and before we say any more, just tell me one thing. Did any one advise you to come here to-night?"

"Yes," said Frank, boldly.

"It was that doctor—the man they call the agent—wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied the youth, in the same tone.

"Now, what has he against *me?*—what charge does he lay to me?"

"I know nothing about it," said Frank; "but if our interview is only to consist in an examination of myself, the sooner it ends the better."

"Don't you see what I'm at, sir?—don't you perceive that I only want to know your honor's feelings towards me, and whether what I'm to say is to be laid up in your heart, or taken down in writing, and made into an indictment?"

"My feeling towards you is easily told. If you be an honest man, and have any need of me, I'll stand by you; if you be not an honest man, but the dishonesty only affects myself and my interests, show me anything that can warrant it, and I'm ready to forgive you."

The prisoner hung down his head, and for some minutes seemed deeply immersed in reflection.

"Mr. Dalton," said he, drawing his chair closer to the bed, "I'll make this business very short, and we needn't be wasting our time talking over what is honesty and what is roguery — things every man has his own notions about, and that depends far more upon what he has in his pocket than what he feels in his heart. I can do *you* a good turn, *you* can do *me* another. The service I can render you will make you a rich man, and put you at the head of your family, where you ought to be. All I ask in return is, a free discharge from this gaol, and money enough to go to America. There never was a better bargain for you! As for myself, I could make more of my secret if I liked—more, both in money—and—and in other ways."

As he said these last few words, his cheek grew scarlet, and his eyes seemed to glisten.

"I scarcely understand you," said Frank. "Do you mean——"

"I'll tell you what I mean, and so plainly that you can't mistake me. I'll make you what you have good right to be—the 'Dalton of Corrig-O'Neal,' the ould place, that was in your mother's family for hundreds of years back. It isn't taking service in a foreign land you need be, but an Irish gentleman, living on his own lawful estate."

"And for this you ask——"

"Just what I told you — an open door and two hundred pounds down," said the fellow, with a rough boldness that was close on insolence. "I've told you already, that if I only wanted a good bargain, there's others would give more—but that's not what I'm looking for. I'm an old man," added he, in a softened voice, "and who knows when I may be called away to the long account!" Then suddenly, as it were, correcting himself for a weak admission, he went on more firmly: "That's neither here nor there; the matter is just this: Will you pay the trifle I ask, for three thousand a year, if it isn't more?"

"I must first of all consult with some friend——"

"There! that's enough. You've said it now! Mr. Dalton, I've done with you forever," said the fellow, rising, and walking to the window.

"You have not heard me out," said Frank, calmly. "It may be that I have no right to make such a compact; it may be that by such a bargain I should be compromising the just claims of the law, not to vindicate my own rights alone, but to seek an expiation of a dreadful murder!"

"I tell you again, sir," said the fellow, with the same sternness as before—"I tell you again, sir, that I've done with you forever. The devil a day you'll ever pass under that same roof of Corrig-O'Neal as the master of it; and, if you wish me to swear it, by the great——"

"Stop!" cried Frank, authoritatively. "You have either told me too much, or too little, my good man; do not let your passion hurry you to greater peril."

"What do you mean by that?" cried the other, turning fiercely round, and bending over the back of the chair, with a look of menace. "What do you mean by too much or too little?"

"This has lasted quite long enough," said Frank, rising slowly from the bed. "I foresee little benefit to either of us from protracting it further."

"You think you have me now, Mr. Dalton," said Meekins, with a sardonic grin, as he placed his back against the door of the cell. "You think you know enough, now, as if I wasn't joking all the while. Sure what do I know of your family or your estate, except what another man told me? Sure I've no power to get back your property for you. I'm a poor man, without a friend in the world" — here his voice trembled and his cheek grew paler—"it isn't thinking of this life I am at all, but what's before me in the next!"

"Let me pass out," said Frank, calmly.

"Of course I will, sir—I won't hinder you," said the other, but still not moving from the spot. "You said a while ago, that I told you too much, or too little. Just tell me what that means before you go?"

"Stand aside, sir," said Frank, sternly.

"Not till you answer my question. Don't think you're back with your white-coated slaves again, where a man can be flogged to death for a look! I'm your equal here, though I am in prison. Maybe, if you provoke me to it, I'd show myself more than your equal!" There was a menace in the tone of these last words that could not be mistaken, and Frank quickly lifted his hand to his breast; but, quick as was the gesture, the other was too speedy for him, and caught his arm before he could seize the pistol. Just at this critical moment the key was heard to turn in the lock, and the heavy door was slowly opened. "There, take my arm, sir," said Meekins, slipping his hand beneath Frank's, "you're far too weak to walk alone."

CHAPTER LXXVI.

FENCING MATCH.

"You came in time—the very nick, Mr. Gray," said Frank, with a quiet smile.

"My friend here and I had said all we had to say to each other."

"Maybe you'd come again—maybe you'd give me five minutes another time?" whispered Meekins, submissively, in Frank's ear.

"I think not," said Frank, with an easy significance in his look; "perhaps, on reflection, you'll find that I have come once too often!" And with these words he left the cell, and, in silent meditation, returned to his companion.

"The fellow's voice was loud and menacing when I came to the door," said Gray, as they walked along.

"Yes, he grew excited just at that moment; he is evidently a passionate man," was Frank's reply; and he relapsed into his former reserve.

Grounsell, who at first waited with most exemplary patience for Frank to narrate the substance of his interview, at last grew weary of his reserve, and asked him what had occurred between them.

Frank paid no attention to the question, but sat with his head resting on his hand, and evidently deep in thought. At last he said, slowly:

"Can you tell me the exact date of Mr. Godfrey's murder?"

"To the day—almost to the hour," replied Grounsell. Taking out his pocket-book, he read: "It was on a Friday, the 11th of November, in the year 18—."

"Great God!" cried Frank, grasping the other's arm, while his whole frame shook with a strong convulsion. "Was it, then, on that night?"

"Yes," said the other, "the murder took place at night. The body, when discovered the next morning, was perfectly cold."

"Then that was it!" cried Frank, wildly. "It was then—when the light was put out—when he crossed the garden—when he opened the wicket——" A burst of hysterical laughter broke from him, and muttering, "I saw it—I saw it all," he fell back fainting into Grounsell's arms.

All the doctor's care and judicious treatment were insufficient to recall the youth to himself. His nervous system, shattered and broken by long illness, was evidently unequal to the burden of the emotions he was suffering under, and before he reached the hotel his mind was wandering away in all the incoherency of actual madness.

Next to the unhappy youth himself, Grounsell's case was the most pitiable. Unable to account for the terrible consequences of the scene whose events were a secret to himself, he felt all the responsibility of a calamity he had been instrumental in producing. From Frank it was utterly hopeless to look for any explanation; already his brain was filled with wild images of war and battle, mingled with broken memories of a scene which none around his bed could recognize. In his distraction Grounsell hurried to the goal, to see and interrogate Meekins. Agitated and distracted as he was, all his prudent reserve and calm forethought were completely forgotten. He saw himself the cause of a dreadful affliction, and already cursed in his heart the wiles and snares in which he was engaged. "If this boy's reasons be lost forever, I, and I only, am in fault," he went on repeating as he drove in mad haste back to the prison.

In a few and scarcely coherent words he explained to Gray his wish to see the prisoner, and although apprised that he had already gone to rest, he persisted strongly, and was at length admitted into the cell.

Meekins started at the sound of the opening door, and called out gruffly, "Who's there?"

"It's your friend," said Grounsell, who had already determined on any sacrifice of his policy which should give him the hope of aiding Frank.

"My friend!" said Meekins, with a dry laugh. "Since when, sir?"

"Since I have begun to believe I may have wronged you, Meekins," said Grounsell, seating himself at the bedside.

"I see, sir," rejoined the other, slowly; "I see it all. Mr. Dalton has told you what passed between us, and you are wiser than he was."

"He has not told me everything, Meekins—at least not so fully and clearly as I wish. I want you, therefore, to go over it all again for me, omitting nothing that was said on either side."

"Ay," said the prisoner, dryly, "I see. Now, what did Mr. Dalton say to you? I'm curious to know—I'd like to hear how he spoke of me."

"As of one who was well disposed to serve him, Meekins, said Grounsell, hesitatingly, and in some confusion.

"Yes, to be sure" said the fellow, with a keen glance beneath his gathering brows. "And he told you, too, that we parted good friends—at least, as much so as a poor man like myself could be to a born gentleman like him."

"That he did," cried Grounsell, eagerly; "and young Mr. Dalton is not the man to think the worse of your friendship because you are not his equal in rank."

"I see—I believe I see it all," said

Meekins, with the same sententious slowness as before. "Now, look, doctor," added he, fixing a cold and steady stare on the other's features, "it is late in the night—not far from twelve o'clock—and I ask you, wouldn't it be better for you to be asleep in your bed, and leave me to rest quietly in mine, rather than be fencing—ay, fencing here—with one another, trying who is the deepest? Just answer me that, sir."

"You want to offend me," said Grounsell, rising.

"No, sir; but it would be offending yourself to suppose that it was worth your while to deceive the like of *me*—a poor, helpless man, without a friend in the world."

"I own I don't understand you, Meekins," said Grounsell, reseating himself.

"There's nothing so easy, sir, if you want to do it. If Mr. Dalton told you what passed between us to-night, you know what advice you gave him; and if he did not tell you, faix! neither will I—that's all. *He* knows what I have in my power. He was fool enough not to take me at my word. Maybe I wouldn't be in the same mind again."

"Come, come," said Grounsell, good-humoredly, "this is not spoken like yourself. It can be no object with you to injure a young gentleman who never harmed you; and if, in serving him, you can serve yourself, the part will be both more sensible and more honorable."

"Well, then," said Meekins, calmly, "I *can* serve him; and now comes the other question, 'What will he do for *me*?'"

"What do you require from him?"

"To leave this place at once—before morning," said the other, earnestly. "I don't want to see them that might make me change my mind; to be on board of a ship at Waterford, and away out of Ireland forever, with three hundred pounds—I said two, but I'll want three—and for that—for that"—here he hesitated for some seconds—"for that I'll do what I promised."

"And this business will never be spoken of more."

"Eh! what?" cried Meekins, starting.

"I mean that when your terms are complied with, what security have we that you'll not disclose the secret hereafter?"

Meekins slowly repeated the other's words twice over to himself, as if to weigh every syllable of them, and then a sudden flashing of his dark eyes showed that he had caught what he suspected was their meaning.

"Exactly so; I was coming to that," cried he. "We'll take an oath on the Gospel—Mr. Frank Dalton and myself—that never, while there's breath in our bodies, will we ever speak to man or mortal about this matter. I know a born gentleman wouldn't perjure himself, and, as for me, I'll swear in any way, and before any one, that your two selves appoint."

"Then, there's this priest," said Grounsell, doubtingly. "You have already told him a great deal about this business."

"If he hasn't me to the fore to prove what I said, *he* can do nothing; and, as to the will, he never heard of it."

"The will!" exclaimed Grounsell, with an involuntary burst of surprise. And, brief as it was, it yet revealed a whole world of dissimulation to the acute mind of the prisoner.

"So, doctor," said the fellow, slowly, "I was right after all. You *were* only fencing with me."

"What do you mean?" cried Grounsell.

"I mean just this—that young Dalton never told you one word that passed between us—that you came here to pump me, and find out all I knew—that, 'cute as you are, there's them that's equal to you, and that you'll go back as wise as you came."

"What's the meaning of this change, Meekins?"

"It well becomes you—a gentleman, and a justice of the peace—to come to the cell of a prisoner in the dead of the night, and try to worm out of him what you want for evidence. Won't it be a fine thing to tell before a jury the offers you made me this night? Now, mind me, doctor, and pay attention to my words. This is twice you tried to trick me, for it was you sent that young man here. We've done with each other now; and may the flesh rot off my bones, like a bit of burnt leather, if I ever trust you again!"

There was an insolent defiance in the way these words were uttered that told Grounsell all hopes of negotiation had gone. And the unhappy doctor sat overwhelmed by the weight of his own incapacity and unskillfulness.

"There now, sir, leave me alone. To-morrow I'll find out if a man is to be treated in this way. If I'm not discharged out of this gaol before nine o'clock, *I*'ll know why, and *you*'ll never forget it, the longest day you live."

Crestfallen and dispirited, Grounsell retired from the cell and returned to the inn.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

A STEP IN VAIN.

GROUNSELL lost no time in summoning to his aid Mr. Hipsley, one of the leading members of the Irish bar; but while he awaited his coming, difficulties gathered around him from every side. Lenahan, the old farmer, who was at first so positive about the identity of the prisoner, began to express some doubts and hesitations on the subject. "It was so many years back since he had seen him, that it was possible he might be mistaken." And, in fact, he laid far more stress on the fashion of a certain fustian jacket that the man used to wear than on any marks and signs of personal resemblance.

The bold defiance of Meekins, and his insolent threats to expose the Daltons to the world, assailed the poor doctor in various ways, and, although far from feeling insensible to the shame of figuring on a trial as having terrorized over a prisoner, the greater ruin that impended on his friends absorbed all his sorrows.

Had he been the evil genius of the family, he could scarcely have attained a greater degree of unpopularity. Frank's illness—for since the night at the gaol his mind had not ceased to wander—was, in Kate's estimation, solely attributable to Grounsell's interference—all the more unpardonable because inexplicable. Lady Hester regarded him as the disturber of all social relations, who, for some private ends, was involving everybody in lawsuits; and the old count had most natural misgivings about a man who, having assumed the sole direction of a delicate affair, now confessed himself utterly unable to see the way before him.

To such an extent had mortification and defeat reduced the unhappy doctor, that when Hipsley arrived he was quite unable to give anything like a coherent statement of the case, or lay before the astute lawyer the points whereon he desired guidance and direction. Meanwhile, the enemy were in a state of active and most menacing preparation. Meekins, discharged from gaol, was living at an inn in the town, surrounded by a strong staff of barristers, whose rank and standing plainly showed that abundant pecuniary resources supplied every agency of battle.

Numerous witnesses were said to have been summoned to give their evidence, and the rumor ran that the most ardent votary of private scandal would be satiated with the tales and traits of domestic life the investigation would expose to the world.

Hipsley, who with practiced tact soon saw the game about to be played, in vain asked Grounsell for some explanation of its meaning. There was a degree of malignity in all the proceedings which could only be accounted for on the supposition of a long-nourished revenge. How was he to understand this? Alas! poor Grounsell knew nothing, and remembered nothing. Stray fragments of conversation, and scattered passages of bygone scenes, were jumbled up incoherently in his brain, and it was easy to perceive that very little was wanting to reduce his mind to the helpless condition of Frank Dalton's.

The charge of a conspiracy to murder his relative brought against a gentleman of fortune and position was an accusation well calculated to excite the most painful feelings of public curiosity, and such was now openly avowed to be the allegation about to be brought to issue; and however repugnant to credulity the bare assertion might appear at first, the rumor was artfully associated with a strong array of threatening circumstances. Every trivial coldness or misunderstanding between Dalton and his brother-in-law, Godfrey, was now remembered and revived. All the harsh phrases, by which old Peter used to speak of the other's character and conduct—Dalton's constant use of the expression, "What's the use of his money—will he ever enjoy it?"—was now cited as but too significant of a dreadful purpose; and, in a word, the public, with a casuistry which we often see, was rather pleased to credit what it flattered its own ingenuity to combine and arrange. Dalton was well known to have been a passionate, headstrong man, violent in his resentments, although ready to forgive and forget injuries the moment after. This temper, and his departure for the continent, from which he never returned, were all the substantial facts on which the whole superstructure was raised.

If Hipsley saw that the array of evidence was far from bringing guilt home to Dalton, he also perceived that the exposure alone would be a terrible blow to the suffering family. The very nature of the attack evinced a deep and hidden vengeance. To avert this dreadful infliction seemed then his first duty, and he endeavored by every means in his power to ascertain who was the great instigator of the proceeding, in which it was easy to see Meekins was but a subordinate. The name of Father Cahill had twice or thrice been mentioned by Grounsell, but with a vague-

ness of which little advantage could be taken. Still, even with so faint a clue, Hipsley was fain to be content, and after several days' ineffectual search, he at last discovered that this priest, in company with another, was residing at the little inn of the Rore.

Having communicated his plan to the old general, who but half assented to the idea of negotiating with the enemy, Hipsley set out for the Rore, after a long day of fatiguing labor. "An inaccurate and insufficient indictment," repeated the lawyer to himself: "the old and hackneyed resource to balk the prurient curiosity of the public, and cut off the scent, when the gossiping pack are in full cry—this is all that we have now left to us. We must go into court: the only thing is to leave it as soon as we are able."

It was not till he was within half a mile of the little inn that Hipsley saw all the difficulty of what he was engaged in: for, in what way, or on what pretext, was he to address Cahill in the matter, or by what right connect him with the proceedings? The hardihood by which he had often suggested to a witness what he wanted to elicit stood his part now, and he boldly passed the threshold, and asked for Father Cahill. Mistaking him for the chief counsel on the other side, the landlord bowed obsequiously, and, without further parley, introduced him into the room where D'Esmonde and Cahill were then sitting.

"I see, gentlemen," said Hipsley, bowing politely to each, "that I am not the person you expected, but may I be permitted to enjoy an advantage which good fortune has given me, and ask of you a few moments' conversation? I am the counsel engaged by Mr. Dalton, in the case which on Tuesday next is to be brought to trial, and having learned from Mr. Grounsell that I might communicate with you in all freedom and candor, I have come to see if something cannot be done to rescue the honor of a family from the shame of publicity, and the obloquy that attends the exposure of a criminal court."

D'Esmonde took up a book as Hipsley began this address, and affected to be too deeply engaged in his reading to pay the least attention to what went forward, while Cahill remained standing, as if to intimate to the stranger the propriety of a very brief interruption.

"You must have mistaken the person you are addressing, sir," said the priest, calmly. "My name is Cahill."

"Precisely, sir; and to the Reverend Mr. Cahill I desire to speak. It is about ten days or a fortnight since you called on Dr. Grounsell with a proposition for the settlement of this affair. I am not sufficiently conversant with the details of what passed to say on which side the obstacle stood, whether *he* was indisposed to concede enough, or that *you* demanded too much. I only know that the negotiation was abortive, and it is now with the hope of resuming the discussion——"

"Too late, sir—too late," said the priest, peremptorily, while a very slight but decisive motion of D'Esmonde's brows gave him encouragement to be bold. "I did, it is true, take the step you allude to: a variety of considerations had their influence over me. I felt interested about the poor man Meekins, and was naturally anxious to screen from the consequences of shame a very old and honored family of the country——" Here he hesitated, for a warning glance from the abbé recalled him to caution.

"And you were about to allude to that more delicate part of the affair which relates to Mr. Godfrey's son, sir?" interposed Hipsley, while, by an unmistakable gesture, he showed his consciousness of D'Esmonde's presence.

"I find, sir," said Cahill, coldly, "that we are gradually involving ourselves in the very discussion I have already declined to engage in. It is not here, nor by us, this cause must be determined. It would be hard to persuade me that you should even counsel an interference with the course of public justice."

"You are quite right, sir, in your estimate of me," said Hipsley, bowing; "nor should I do so if I saw anything in this case but needless exposure and great cruelty towards those who must necessarily be guiltless, without one single good end obtained, except you could so deem the gratification of public scandal by the harrowing tale of family misfortune. Bear with me one moment more," said he, as a gesture of impatience from Cahill showed that he wished an end of the interview. "I will concede what I have no right to concede, and what I am in a position to refute thoroughly—the guilt of the party implicated: upon whom will the punishment fall? on the aged uncle, a brave and honored soldier, without the shadow of stain on his fair fame—on a young and beautiful girl, whose life has already compassed more real sorrow than old men like myself have ever known in all their career—and on a youth, now stretched upon his sick-bed, and for whom humanity would rather wish death itself than to

come back into a world he must shrink from with shame!"

"'Filius peccatoris exardebit in crimine patris'—'The son of the sinful man shall burn out in his father's shame!'" said D'Esmonde, reading aloud from the volume in his hand.

Hipsley almost started at the solemnity with which these awful words were uttered, and stood for a few seconds gazing on the pale and thoughtful face which was still bent over the book.

"My mission has then failed!" said the lawyer, regretfully. "I am sorry it should be so."

A cold bow was the only reply Cahill returned to this speech, and the other slowly withdrew and took his way back to Kilkenny, the solemn and terrible denunciation still ringing in his ears as he went.

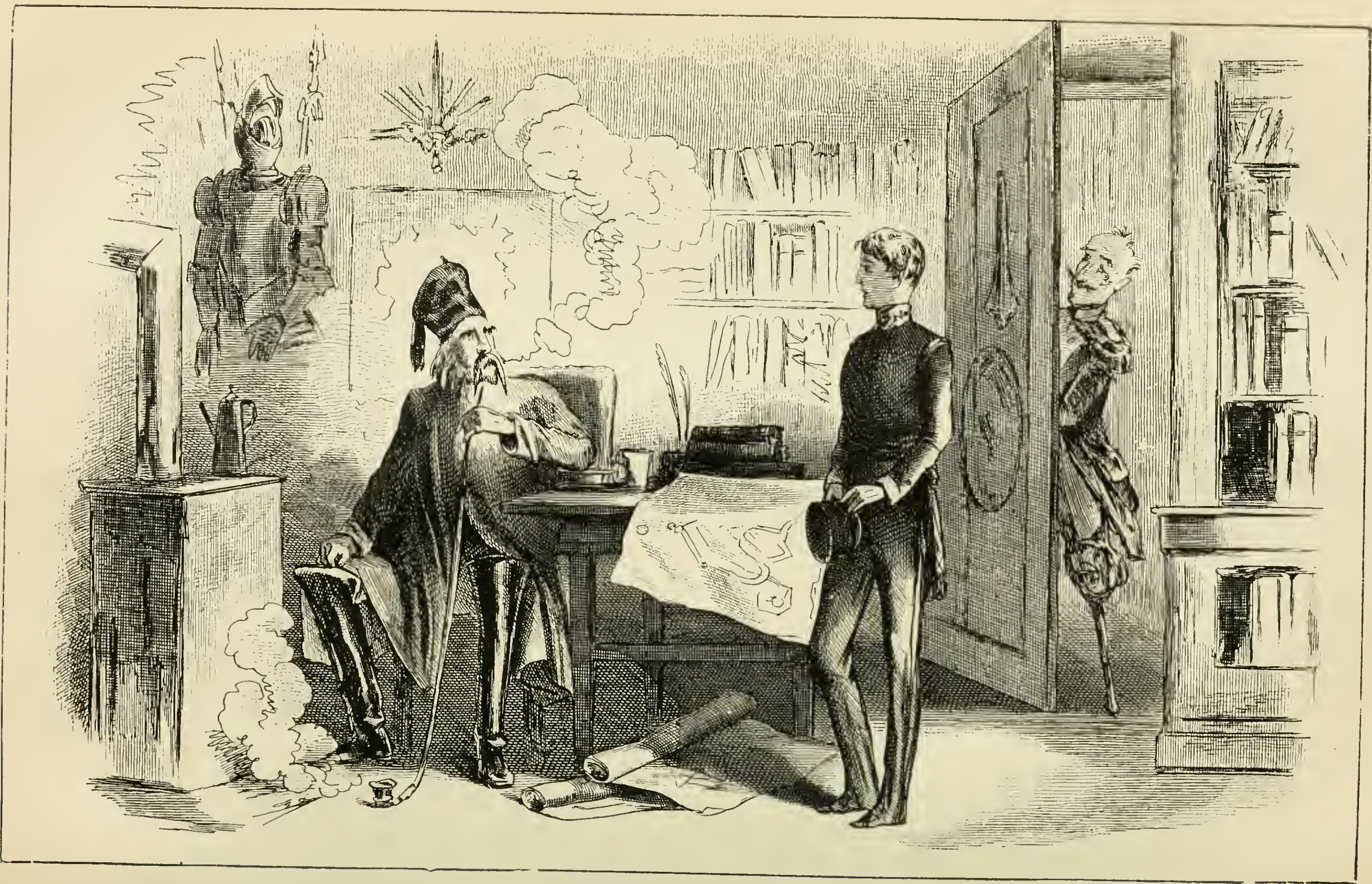
CHAPTER LXXVIII.

THE COURT-HOUSE OF KILKENNY.

THE character of crime in Ireland has preserved for some years back a most terrible consistency. The story of every murder is the same. The same secret vengeance; the same imputed wrong; the same dreadful sentence issued from a dark and bloody tribunal; the victim alone is changed, but all the rest is unaltered; and we read, over and over again, of the last agonies on the high road and in the noonday, till, sated and wearied, we grow into a terrible indifference as to guilt, and talk of the "wild justice of the people" as though amongst the natural causes which shorten human life. If this be so—and to its truth we call to witness those who, in every neighborhood, have seen some fearful event—happening, as it were, at their very doors—deplored to-day, almost forgotten to-morrow; and, while such is the case, the public mind is painfully sensitive as to the details of any guilt attended with new and unaccustomed agencies. In fact, with all the terrible catalogue before us, we should be far from inferring a great degree of guiltiness to a people in whom we see infinitely more of misguided energies and depraved passions, than of that nature whose sordid incentives to crime constitute the bad of other countries. We are not, in this, the apologist for murder. God forbid that we should ever be supposed to palliate, by even a word, those brutal assassinations which make every man blush to call himself an Irishman! We would only be understood as saying that these crimes, dark, fearful, and frequent as they are, do not argue the same hopeless debasement of our population as the less organized guilt of other countries; and, inasmuch as the vengeance even of the savage is a nobler instinct than the highwayman's passion for gain, so we cherish a hope that the time is not distant when the peasant shall tear out of his heart the damnable delusion of vindication by blood—when he will learn a manly fortitude under calamity, a generous trust in those above him, and, better again, a freeman consciousness that the law will vindicate him against injury, and that we live in an age when the great are powerless to do wrong, unless when their inhumanity be screened behind the darker shadow of the murder that avenges it! Then, indeed, we have no sympathy for all the sufferings of want, or all the miseries of fever; then, we forget the dreary hovel, the famished children, the palsy of age, and the hopeless cry of starving infancy—we have neither eyes nor ears but for the sights and sounds of murder!

We have said that amidst all the frequency of crime there is no country of Europe where any case of guilt accompanied by new agencies, or attended by any unusual circumstances, is sure to excite so great and wide-spread interest. The very fact of an accusation involving any one in rank above the starving cottier is looked upon as almost incredible, and far from feeling sensibility dulled by the ordinary recurrence of bloodshed, the crime becomes associated in our minds with but one class, and as originating in one theme.

We have gradually been led away by these thoughts from the remark which first suggested them, and now we turn again to the fact, that the city of Kilkenny became a scene of the most intense anxiety as the morning of that eventful trial dawned. Visitors poured in from the neighboring counties, and even from Dublin. The case had been widely commented on by the press; and although with every reserve as regarded the accused, a most painful impression against old Mr. Dalton had spread on all sides. Most of his own contemporaries had died; of the few who remained, they were very old men, fast sinking into imbecility, and only vaguely recollecting "wild Peter" as one who would have stopped at nothing. The new generation, then, received the impressions of the man thus unjustly; nor were their opinions more lenient that they lived in an age which no longer tolerated the excesses of the one that preceded it. Gossip, too, had circu



Frank visits his Uncle.

[THE DALTONS. p. 379.]

lated its innumerable incidents on all the personages of this strange drama; and from the venerable Count Stephen down to the informer Meekins, every character was now before the world.

That the Daltons had come hundreds of miles, and had offered immense sums of money to suppress the exposure, was among the commonest rumors of the time, and that the failure of this attempt was now the cause of the young man's illness and probable death. Meekins's character received many commentaries and explanations. Some alleged that he was animated by an old grudge against the family, never to be forgiven. Others said that it was to some incident of the war abroad that he owed his hatred to young Dalton; and lastly, it was rumored that, having some connection with the conspiracy, he was anxious to wipe his conscience of the guilt before he took on him the orders of some lay society, whose vows he professed. All these mysterious and shadowy circumstances tended to heighten the interest of the coming event, and the city was crowded in every part by strangers, who not only filled the court-house, but thronged the street in front, and even occupied the windows and roofs of the opposite houses.

From daylight the seats were taken in the galleries of the court; the most distinguished of the neighboring gentry were all gathered there, while in the seats behind the bench were ranged several members of the peerage, who had traveled long distances to be present. To the left of the presiding judge sat Count Stephen, calm, stern, and motionless, as if on parade. If many of the ceremonials of the court and the general aspect of the assemblage were new and strange to his eyes, nothing in his bearing or manner bespoke surprise or astonishment. As little, too, did he seem aware of the gaze of that crowded assembly, who, until the interest of the trial called their attention away, never ceased to stare steadfastly at him.

At the corner of the gallery facing the jury-box D'Esmonde and Cahill were seated. The abbé, dressed with peculiar care, and wearing the blue silk collar of an order over his white cravat, was recognized by the crowd beneath as a personage of rank and consideration, which, indeed, his exalted and handsome features appeared well to corroborate. He sustained the strong stare of the assemblage with a calm but haughty self-possession, like one well accustomed to the public eye, and who felt no shrinking from the gaze of a multitude. Already the rumor ran that he was an official high in the household of the Pope, and many strange conjectures were hazarded on the meaning of his presence at the trial.

To all the buzz of voices, and the swaying, surging motion of a vast crowd, there succeeded a dead silence and tranquillity, when the judges took their seats on the bench. The ordinary details were all gone through with accustomed formality: the jury sworn, and the indictment read aloud by the clerk of the crown, whose rapid enunciation and monotonous voice took nothing from the novelty of the statement that was yet to be made by counsel. At length Mr. Wallace rose, and now curiosity was excited to the utmost. In slow and measured phrase he began by bespeaking the patient and careful attention of the jury to the case before them. He told them that it was a rare event in the annals of criminal law to arraign one who was already gone before the greatest of all tribunals; but that such cases had occurred, and it was deemed of great importance, not alone to the cause of truth and justice, that these investigations should be made, but that a strong moral might be read, in the remarkable train of incidents by which these discoveries were elicited, and men were taught to see the hand of Providence in events, which, to unthinking minds, had seemed purely accidental and fortuitous. After dwelling for some time on this theme, he went on to state the great difficulty and embarrassment of his own position, called upon as he was to arraign less the guilty man than his innocent and blameless descendants, and to ask for the penalties of the law on those who had not themselves transgressed it.

"I do not merely speak here," said he, "of the open shame and disgrace the course of this trial will proclaim—I do not simply allude to the painful exposure you will be obliged to witness—I speak of the heavy condemnation with which the law of public opinion visits the family of a felon, making all contact with them a reproach, and denying them even its sympathy. These would be weighty considerations if the course of justice had not far higher and more important claims, not the least among which is the assertion to the world at large that guilt is never expiated without punishment, and that the law is inflexible in its denunciation of crime."

He then entered upon a narrative of the case, beginning with an account of the Dalton family, and the marriage which

connected them with the Godfreys. He described most minutely the traits of character which separated the two men and rendered them uncompanionable one to the other. Of Godfrey he spoke calmly and without exaggeration; but when his task concerned Peter Dalton, he drew the picture of a reckless, passionate, and unprincipled man, in the strongest colors, reminding the jury that it was all-important to carry with them through the case this view of his character, as explaining and even justifying many of the acts he was charged with. "You will," said he, "perceive much to blame in him, but also much to pity, and, even where you condemn deeply, you will deplore the unhappy combination of events which perverted what may have been a noble nature, and degraded by crime what was meant to have adorned virtue! From the evidence I shall produce before you will be seen the nature of the intimacy between these two men, so strikingly unlike in every trait of character; and although this be but the testimony of one who heard it himself from another, we shall find a strong corroboration of all in the consistency of the narrative and the occasional allusion to facts provable from other sources. We shall then show you how the inordinate demands of Dalton, stimulated by the necessity of his circumstances, led to a breach with his brother-in-law, and subsequently to his departure for the continent; and, lastly, we mean to place before you the extraordinary revelation made to the witness Meekins by his comrade, William Noonan, who, while incriminating himself, exhibited Dalton as the contriver of the scheme by which the murder was effected.

"It would be manifestly impossible, in a case like this, when from the very outset the greatest secrecy was observed, and over whose mystery years have accumulated clouds of difficulty, to afford that clear and precise line of evidence, which in a recent event might naturally be looked for. But you will learn enough, and more than enough, to satisfy your minds on every point. Meekins shall be subjected to any cross-examination my learned brother may desire, and I only ask for him so much of your confidence as a plain, unvarying statement warrants. He is a stranger in this country; and although it has been rumored, from his resemblance to a man formerly known here, that he has been recognized, we shall show you that for upwards of thirty years he has been in foreign countries; and while he understands that his parents were originally from the south of Ireland, he believes himself to have been born in America. These facts will at once disabuse your minds of the suspicion that he can have been actuated by any malicious or revengeful feelings towards the Daltons. We shall, also, show that the most strenuous efforts have been made to suppress his testimony; and while it may be painful to exhibit one charged with the administration of justice as having plotted to subvert or distort it, we shall produce on the witness-table the individual who himself made these very overtures of corruption."

A long and minute narrative followed—every step of the conspiracy was detailed—from the first communication of Dalton with Noonan, to the fatal moment of the murder. Noonan's own subsequent confession to Meekins was then related; and, lastly, the singular accident by which Meekins came in contact with the Abbé D'Esmonde, and was led to a revelation of the whole occurrence. The lawyer at last sat down, and, as he did so, a low, murmuring sound ran through the crowded assemblage, whose mournful cadence bespoke the painful acquiescence in the statement they had heard. More than one eager and sympathizing look was turned to where the old count sat; but his calm, stern features were passive and immovable as ever; and although he listened with attention to the address of the advocate, not a semblance of emotion could be detected in his manner.

Meekins was now called to the witness-box, and as he made his way through the crowd, and ascended the table, the most intense curiosity to see him was displayed. Well dressed, and with a manner of decent and respectful quietude, he slowly mounted the stairs, and saluted the bench and jury. Although an old man, he was hale and stout-looking, his massive broad forehead and clear grey eye showing a character of temperament well able to offer resistance to time.

There was an apparent frankness and simplicity about him that favorably impressed the court, and he gave his evidence with that blended confidence and caution which never fails to have its effect on a jury. He owned, too, that he once speculated on using the secret for his own ad vantage, and extorting a considerable sum from old Dalton's fears, but that, on second thoughts, he had decided on abandoning this notion, and resolved to let the mystery die with him. The accidental circumstance of meeting with the Abbé D'Esmonde, at Venice, changed the determination, and it was while under the religious

teachings of this good priest that he came to the conviction of his sad duty. His evidence occupied several hours, and it was late in the afternoon when the cross-examination began.

Nothing within the reach of a crafty lawyer was left undone. All that practiced skill and penetration could accomplish was exhibited, but the testimony was unshaken in every important point; and save when pushing the witness as to his own early life and habits, not a single admission could be extorted to his discredit. But even here his careless, easy manner rescued him; and when he alleged that he never very well knew where he was born, or who were his parents, nor had he any very great misgivings about having served on board a slaver, and "even worse," the jury only smiled at what seemed the frank indifference of an old sailor. Noonan had given him a few scraps of Mr. Dalton's writing. He had lost most of them, he said; but of those which remained, although unsigned, the authenticity was easily established. Old Peter's handwriting was familiar to many, and several witnesses swore to their being genuine. In other respects, they were of little importance. One alone bore any real significance, and it was the concluding passage of a letter, and ran thus: "So that, if I'm driven to it at last, Godfrey himself is more to blame than *me*." Vague as this menacing sentence was, it bore too home upon the allegations of the witness not to produce a strong effect, nor could any dexterity of the counsel succeed in obliterating its impression.

Seeing that the counsel for the prosecution had not elicited the testimony he promised, respecting the attempted subornation of Meekins, the defense rashly adventured upon that dangerous ground, and too late discovered his error, for the witness detailed various conversations between Grounsell and himself, and gave with terrible effect a scene that he swore had occurred between young Dalton and him in the gaol. It was in vain to remind the jury that he, who alone could refute this evidence, was stretched on a bed of sickness. The effect was already made.

When questioned as to the reasons Dalton might have for conspiring against his brother-in-law, he confessed that Noonan only knew that Godfrey had refused him all assistance, and that he believed that, after his death, he, Dalton, would inherit the property. His own impression was, however, that it was more vengeance than anything else. The Daltons were living in great poverty abroad; there was scarcely a privation which they had not experienced; and the imbittering stings of their misery were adduced as the mainspring of old Peter's guilt. This allusion to the private life of the Dalton family was eagerly seized on by Mr. Wallace, who now "begged to ascertain certain facts on a subject, which, but for his learned brother's initiative, he would have shrunk from exhibiting in open court." Meekins could, of course, but give such details as he had learned from Noonan, but they all described a life of suffering and meanness. Their contrivances and their straits—their frequent change of place, as debt accumulated over them—their borrowings and their bills—and lastly, the boastful pretexts they constantly brought forward, on the rank of their uncle, Count Dalton, as a guarantee of their solvency and respectability. So unexpected was the transition to the mention of this name, that the whole assembly suddenly turned their eyes to where the old general sat, mute and stern; but the look he returned might well have abashed them, so haughty and daring was its insolence.

Apparently to show the knowledge possessed by the witness on matters of private detail—but, in reality, to afford an occasion for dilating on a painful subject—the whole history of the family was raked up, and all the sad story of Nelly's toil, and Kate's menial duties, paraded in open court, wound up, at last, with what was called young Frank's enlistment "as a common soldier of the Austrian army."

The greater interests of the trial were all forgotten in these materials for gossip, and the curiosity of the listeners was excited to its highest pitch when he came to tell of that mingled misery and ambition, that pride of name, and shameless disregard of duty, which he described as characterizing them; nor was the craving appetite for scandal half appeased when the court interrupted the examination, and declared that it was irrelevant and purposeless.

Meekins at last descended from the table, and Michael Lenahan was called up. The important fact he had so resolutely sworn to, some weeks before, he had already shown a disinclination to confirm, and all that he could now be brought to admit was, that he had believed Meekins was his old acquaintance, Black Sam; but the years that had elapsed since he saw him before, change of dress, and the effect of time on each of them, might well shake a better memory than his own.

"Jimmy Morris might know him again,

my lord," said he, "for he never forgot anybody—but *he* isn't to the fore."

"I have the happiness to say that he is," said Hipsley. "He has arrived from Cove, here, this morning. Call James Morris," crier;" and soon after, a very diminutive old man, with a contracted leg, mounted the table. He was speedily sworn, and his examination commenced. After a few questions as to his trade—he was a tailor—and where he had lived latterly, he was asked whether he remembered, amongst his former acquaintance, a certain bailiff on the Corrig-O'Neal estate, commonly called Black Sam?

"By coorse I do," said he; "he was always making mischief between Mr. Godfrey and ould Peter."

"You have not been asked that question, sir," interposed Wallace.

"No, but he shall be, by and by," cried Hipsley. "Tell me, now, what kind of a man was this same Black Sam?"

"As cruel a man as ever you seen."

"That is not exactly what I am asking. I want to hear what he was like."

"He was like the greatest villain——"

"I mean, was he short or tall; was he a big man and a strong man, or was he a little fellow, like you or *me?*"

"Devil a bit like either of us. He'd bate us both with one hand—ay, and that fellow there with the wig that's laughing at us, into the bargain."

"So, then, he was large and powerful?"

"Yes, that he was."

"Had he anything remarkable about his appearance—anything that might easily distinguish him from other men?"

"'Tis, maybe, his eyes you mane?"

"What about his eyes, then?"

"They could be lookin' at ye when ye'd sware they were only lookin' at the ground; and he'd a thrick of stopping himself when he was laughing hearty by drawing the back of his hand over his mouth, this way."

As the witness accompanied these words by a gesture, a low murmur of astonishment ran through the court, for more than once during the morning Meekins had been seen to perform the very act described.

"You would probably be able to know him again if you saw him?"

"That I would."

"Look around you, now, and tell me if you see him here. No, no, he's not in the jury-box; still less likely it is that you'd find him on the bench."

The witness, neither heeding the remark nor the laughter which followed it, slowly rose and looked around him.

"Move a little to one side, if ye plaze," said he to a member of the inner bar. "Yes, that's him." And he pointed to Meekins, who, with crossed arms and lowering frown, stood still and immovable.

The bystanders all fell back at the same instant, and now he remained isolated in the midst of that crowded scene, every eye bent upon him.

"You're wearing well, Sam," said the witness, addressing him familiarly. "Maybe it's the black wig you've on; but you don't look a day oulder than when I seen you last."

This speech excited the most intense astonishment in the court, and many now perceived, for the first time, that Meekins did not wear his own hair.

"Are you positive, then, that this man is Black Sam?"

"I am."

"Are you prepared to swear to it on your solemn oath, taking all the consequences false evidence will bring down upon you?"

"I am."

"You are quite certain that it's no accidental resemblance, but that this is the very identical man you knew long ago?"

"I'm certain sure. I'd know him among a thousand, and, be the same token, he has the mark of a cut on the crown of his head, three inches long. See, now, if I'm not right."

Meekins was now ordered to mount the witness-table, and remove his wig. He was about to say something, but Wallace stopped him, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"I would beg to observe," said the lawyer, "that if an old cicatrix is to be the essential token of recognition, few men who have lived the adventurous life of Meekins will escape calumny."

"'Tis a mark like the letter V," said "Jimmy," "for it was ould Peter himself gave it him, one night, with a brass candlestick. There it is!" cried he, triumphantly; "didn't I tell true?"

The crowded galleries creaked under the pressure of the eager spectators, who now bent forward and gazed on this strong proof of identification.

"Is there any other mark by which you could remember him?"

"Sure, I know every fayture of his face—what more d'ye want?"

"Now, when did you see him last—I mean before this day?"

"The last time I seen him was the mornin' he was taken up."

"How do you mean, 'taken up'?"

"Taken up by the polis."

"Taken by the police—for what?"

"About the murder, to be sure."

A thrill of horror pervaded the court as these words were spoken, and Meekins, whose impassive face had never changed before, became now pale as death.

"Tell the jury what you saw on the morning you speak of?"

"I was at home, workin', when the polis passed by. They asked me where Black Sam lived. 'Up the road,'" says I.

"How far is your house from his?"

"About fifty perches, your honer, in the same boreen, but higher up."

"So that, in going from Mr. Godfrey's to his own house, Sam must have passed your door?"

"Yes, sir."

"This he did every day—two or three times—didn't he?"

"He did, sir."

"Did you usually speak to each other as he went by?"

"Yes, sir; we always would say, 'God save you,' or the like."

"How was he dressed on these occasions?"

"The way he was always dressed, how would he be?"

"That's exactly what I'm asking you."

"Faix! he had his coat and breeches, like any other man."

"I see. He had his coat and breeches, like any other man—now, what color was his coat?"

"It was grey, sir—blue-grey. I know it well."

"How do you come to know it well?"

"Bekase my own boy, Ned, sir, bought one off the same piece before he 'listed, and I couldn't forget it."

"Where were you the day after the murder, when the policemen came to take Sam Eustace?"

"I was sitting at my own door, smoking a pipe, and I see the polis comin', and so I went in and shut the door."

"What was that for? You had no reason to fear them?"

"Ayeh!—who knows—the polis is terrible!"

"Well, after that?"

"Well, when I heard them pass, I opened the door, and then, I saw enough. They were standing at Sam's house; one of them talking to Sam, and the other two rummaging about, sticking poles into the thatch, and tumbling over the turf in the stack."

"'Isn't this a pretty business?' says Sam, calling out to me. 'The polis is come to take me off to prison, because some one murdered the master.' 'Well, his soul's in glory, anyhow,' says I, and I shut the doore."

"And saw nothing more?"

"Only the polis lading Sam down the boreen betune them."

"He made no resistance, then?"

"Not a bit: he went as quiet as a child. When he was going by the doore, I remember he said to one of the polis, 'Would it be plazing to ye to help me wid my coat, for I cut my finger yesterday?'"

"Didn't I say it was with a reaping-hook?" cried Meekins, who, in all the earnestness of anxiety, followed every word that fell from the witness.

His counsel sprang to his feet, and pulled him back by the arm, but not before the unguarded syllables had been heard by every one around. Such was the sensation now produced, that for several minutes the proceedings were interrupted; while the counsel conferred in low whispers together, and all seemed thunderstruck and amazed. Twice Meekins stood forward to address the court, but on each occasion he was restrained by the counsel beside him, and it was only by the use of menaces that Wallace succeeded in enforcing silence on him. "When the moment of cross-examination arrives," said he to the jury, "I hope to explain every portion of this seeming difficulty. Have you any further questions to ask the witness?"

"A great many more," said Hipsley. "Now, Morris, attend to me. Sam asked the police to assist him, as he had cut his hand with a reaping-hook?"

"He did, indeed, sir," said the witness; "and a dreadful cut it was. It was hard for him to get his hand into the sleeve of the jacket."

"I perceive he had difficulty in putting on the jacket, but the policemen helped him?"

"They did, sir, and one of them was hurting him, and Sam called out, 'Take care—take care. It's better to cut the ould sleeve; it's not worth much, now.'"

"And did they cut it?"

"They did, sir; they ripped it up all the way to the elbow."

"That was a pity, wasn't it, to rip up a fine frieze coat like that?"

"Oh, it wasn't his coat at all, sir. It was only a flannel jacket he had for working in."

"So, then, he did not wear the blue-grey frieze like your son's when he went to gaol?"

"No, sir; he wore a jacket."

"Now, why was that?"

"Sorrow one o' me knows; but I remember he didn't wear it."

"Didn't I say that I left my coat at the bog, and that I was ashamed to go in the ould jacket?" screamed out Meekins, whose earnestness was above all control.

"If this go on, it is impossible that I can continue to conduct this case, my lord," said Wallace. "While no attempt has been made to refute one tittle of the great facts I have mentioned, a system of trick has been resorted to, by which my client's credit is sought to be impugned. What care I, if he was known by a hundred nicknames? He has told the court already that he has lived a life of reckless adventure—that he has sailed under every flag, and in every kind of enterprise. Mayhap, amid his varied characters, he has played that of a land bailiff; nor is it very strange that he should not wish to parade before the world the fact of his being arrested, even under a false accusation, for he was discharged, as he has just told you, two days after."

A large bundle, carefully sealed, was now carried into the court, and deposited before Mr. Hipsley, who, after a few seconds' consultation with Grounsell, rose and addressed the court.

"My learned friend complains of being surprised; he will, perhaps, have a better right to be so in a few moments hence. I now demand that this man be consigned to the dock. These affidavits are all regular, my lord, and the evidence I purpose to lay before you will very soon confirm them."

The judge briefly scanned the papers before him, and, by a gesture, the command was issued, and Meekins, who never uttered a word, was conducted within the dock.

"I will merely ask the witness two or three questions more," added Hipsley, turning toward the gaoler, who alone, of all the assembly, looked on without any wonderment.

"Now, witness, when did you see the prisoner wear the blue-grey coat? After the death of Mr. Godfrey, I mean."

"I never seen him wear it again," was the answer.

"How could ye?" cried Meekins, in a hoarse voice. "How could ye? I sailed for America the day after I was set at liberty."

"Be silent, sir," said the prisoner's counsel, who, suffering greatly from the injury of these interruptions, now assumed a look of angry impatience, while, with the craft of his calling, he began already to suspect that a mine was about to be sprung beneath him.

"You have told us," said Hipsley—and, as he spoke, his words came with an impressive slowness that made them fall deep into every heart around—"you have told us that the coat worn habitually by the prisoner, up to the day of Mr. Godfrey's murder, you never saw on him after that day. Is that true?"

"It is, sir."

"You have also said that this coat—part of a piece from which your son had a coat—was of a peculiar color?"

"It was, sir; and, more than that, they had both the same cut—only Sam's had horn buttons and my son's was metal."

"Do you think, then, from these circumstances you have just mentioned, that you could know that coat if you were to see it again?"

A pause followed; and the witness, instead of answering, sat with his eyes fixed upon the dock, where the prisoner, with both hands grasping the iron spikes, stood, his glaring eyeballs riveted upon the old man's face, with an expression of earnestness and terror actually horrible to witness.

"Look at me, Morris," said Hipsley, "and answer my question. Would you know this coat again?"

"That is, would you swear to it?" interposed the opposite counsel.

"I believe I would, sir," was the answer.

"You must be sure, my good man. Belief is too vague for us here," said the prisoner's lawyer.

"Is this it?" said the solicitor, as, breaking the seals of the parcel before him, he held up a coat, which, ragged and eaten by worms, seemed of a far darker color than that described by the witness.

The old man took it in his hands, and examined it over carefully, inspecting with all the minute curiosity of age every portion of the garment. The suspense at this moment was terrible—not a syllable was spoken—not a breath stirred—nothing but the long-drawn respirations of the prisoner, who, still leaning on the iron railing of the dock, watched the old man's motions with the most harrowing intensity.

"Let me see it on him," said the witness, at last.

"Prisoner, put on that coat," said the judge.

Meekins tried to smile as he proceeded to obey, but the effort was too much, and the features became fixed into one rigid expression, resembling the look of hysteric laughter.

"Well, do you know me now?" cried he, in a voice whose very accent rang with a tone of intimidation and defiance.

"I do," said the witness, boldly. "I'll swear to that coat, my lord, and I'll prove

I'm right. It was the same stuffing put into both collars; and, if I'm telling the truth, it's a piece of ould corduroy is in that one there."

The very grave was not more still than the court as the officer of the gaol, taking off the coat, ripped up the collar, and held up in his hand a small piece of tarnished corduroy.

"My lord!—my lord! will you let a poor man's life be swore away——"

"Silence, sir! Be still, I say!" cried the prisoner's counsel, who saw the irremediable injury of these passionate appeals. "I am here to conduct your defense, and I will not be interfered with. Your lordship will admit that this proceeding has all the character of a surprise. We were perfectly unprepared for the line my learned friend has taken——"

"Permit me to interrupt the counsel, my lord. I need scarcely appeal to this court to vindicate me against any imputation such as the learned gentleman opposite would apply to me. Your lordship's venerable predecessors on that bench have more than once borne witness to the fairness and even the lenity of the manner in which the crown prosecutions have been conducted. Any attempt to surprise, any effort to entrap a prisoner, would be as unworthy of us as it would be impossible in a court over which you preside. The testimony which the witness has just given, the extraordinary light his evidence has just shown, was only made available to ourselves by one of those circumstances in which we see a manifestation of the terrible judgment of God upon him who sheds the blood of his fellow-man. Yes, my lord, if any case can merit the high designation of providential intervention, it is this one. Every step of this singular history is marked by this awful characteristic. It is the nephew of the murdered man by whom the first trace of crime has been detected. It is by him that we have been enabled to bring the prisoner into that dock; it is by him that a revelation has been made which, had it not occurred in our own days, and under our own eyes, we should be disposed to class amongst the creations of fiction. The learned counsel has told you that these articles of clothing have been produced here by surprise. This affidavit is the shortest answer to that suspicion. From this you will see that, early this morning, young Mr. Dalton requested that two magistrates of the city should be brought to his bedside, to take down the details of an important declaration. The fever, which for several days back had oppressed him, had abated for the time, and he was, although weak and low, calm and collected in all his faculties. It was then, with remarkable accuracy, and in a manner totally free from agitation, that he made the following singular revelation." The counsel then recited, at more length than would suit our reader's patience to follow, the story of Frank's visit to Ireland when a boy, and his accidental presence in the grounds of Corrig-O'Neal on the very night of the murder. "At first the magistrates were disposed to regard this revelation as the mere dream of an erring intellect; but when he described every feature of the locality, and the most intricate details of scenery, their opinion was changed; and when, at last, he designated the exact spot where he had seen a large bundle buried, it only needed that this should be confirmed to establish the strict truth of all he alleged. With every care and precaution against deception, the magistrates proceeded to visit the place. They were accompanied by several persons of character and station, in presence of whom the examination was made. So accurate was the narrative, that they found the spot without difficulty, and, on digging down about two feet, they came upon the articles which you now see before you. These, without any examination, they at once sealed up, in presence of the witnesses, and here, for the first time, have they been displayed to view."

As the counsel had reached thus far, the fall of a heavy body resounded through the court, and the cry was raised that the prisoner had been seized with a fit.

"No, my lord," exclaimed the lawyer; "fatigue and weariness alone have produced this effect. My unhappy client is no more proof against exhaustion than against slander."

"My lord! my lord!" cried the prisoner, as, holding by the spikes of the dock, he leaned forward over it, "can't I get justice? Is it my coat——"

"Sit down, sir," said his counsel, angrily; "leave this to *me*."

"What do you care what becomes of me?" cried the other, rudely. "Where's Father Cahill? Where's——" At this instant his eyes met those of D'Esmonde, as, seated in the gallery immediately above him, he watched the proceedings with an agonizing interest only second to the prisoner's own. "Oh, look what you've brought me to!" cried he, in an accent of heartbroken misery; "oh, see where I'm standing now!"

The utterance of these words sent a thrill through the court, and the judge

was obliged to remind the prisoner that he was but endangering his own safety by these rash interruptions.

"Sure I know it, my lord; sure I feel it," cried he, sobbing; "but what help have I? Is there one to stand by me? You're looking for marks of blood, ain't ye?" screamed he to the jury, who were now examining the coat and cap with great attention—"and there it is now—there it is!" cried he, wildly, as his eyes detected a folded paper that one of the jurymen had just taken from the coat-pocket. "What could I get by it?—sure the will could'nt do me any harm."

"This *is* a will, my lord," said the foreman, handing the document down to the bench. "It is dated, too, on the very night before Mr. Godfrey's death."

The judge quickly scanned the contents, and then passed it over to Mr. Hipsley, who, glancing his eyes over it, exclaimed: "If we wanted any further evidence to exculpate the memory of Mr. Dalton, it is here. By this will, signed, sealed, and witnessed in all form, Mr. Godfrey bequeathed to his brother-in-law his whole estate of Corrig-O'Neal, and, with the exception of some trifling legacies, names him heir to all he is possessed of."

"Let me out of this—leave me free!" shouted the prisoner, whose eyeballs now glared with the red glow of madness. "What brought me into your schemes and plots?—why did I ever come here? Oh, my lord, don't see a poor man come to harm that has no friends. Bad luck to them here and hereafter, the same Daltons! It was ould Peter turned me out upon the world, and Godfrey was no better. Oh, my lord! oh, gentlemen! if ye knew what druv me to it—but I didn't do it—I never said I did. I'll die innocent!"

These words were uttered with a wild volubility, and, when over, the prisoner crouched down in the dock, and buried his face in his hands. From that instant he never spoke a word. The trial was prolonged till late into the night; a commission was sworn and sent to the inn, to examine young Dalton, and interrogate him on every point. All that skill and address could do were exerted by the counsel for the defense; but, as the case proceeded, the various facts only tended to strengthen and corroborate each other, and long before the jury retired their verdict was certain.

"Guilty, my lord." And, well known and anticipated as the words were, they were heard in all that solemn awe their terrible import conveys.

The words seemed to rouse the prisoner from his state, for, as if with a convulsive effort, he sprang to his legs and advanced to the front of the dock. To the dreadful question of the judge, as to what he had to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him, he made no answer, and his wild gaze and astonished features showed an almost unconsciousness of all around him. From this state of stupor he soon rallied, and, grasping the iron spikes with his hands, he protruded his head and shoulders over the dock, while he carried his eyes over the assembled crowd, till at last they lighted on the spot where Cahill and D'Esmonde were seated. The former, pale and anxious-looking—the latter, with his head buried in his hands. The prisoner nodded with an insolent air of familiarity to the priest, and muttered a few broken words in Irish. Again was the terrible demand made by the judge; and now the prisoner turned his face towards the bench, and stood as if reflecting on his reply.

"Go on," cried he at last, in a tone of rude defiance; and the judge, in all the passionless dignity of his high station, calmly reviewed the evidence in the case, and gave his full concurrence to the verdict of the jury.

"I cannot conclude," said he, solemnly, "without adverting to that extraordinary combination of events by which this crime, after a long lapse of years, has been brought home to its guilty author. The evidence you have heard to-day from Mr. Dalton—the singular corroboration of each particular stated by him in the very existence of the will, which so strongly refutes the motive alleged against the late Mr. Dalton—were all necessary links of the great chain of proof; and yet all these might have existed in vain were it not for another agency—too eventful to be called an accident—I allude to the circumstance by which this man became acquainted with one who was himself peculiarly interested in unfathoming the mystery of this murder: I mean the Abbé D'Esmonde. The name of this gentleman has been more than once alluded to in this trial, but he has not been brought before you, nor was there any need that he should. Now the abbé, so far from connecting the prisoner with the crime, believed him to be the agency by which it might have been fastened on others; and to this end he devoted himself with every zeal to the inquiry. Here, then, amidst all the remarkable coincidences of this case, we find the very strangest of all, for this same abbé—

the accidental means of rescuing the prisoner from death at Venice, and who is the chief agent in now bringing him to punishment here—this abbé is himself the natural son of the late Mr. Godfrey. Sent when a mere boy to St. Omer and Louvain to be educated for the Roman Catholic priesthood, he was afterwards transferred to Salamanca, where he graduated, and took deacon's orders. Without any other clue to his parentage than the vague lines of admission in the conventual registry, the cheques for money signed and forwarded by Mr. Godfrey, this gentleman had risen by his great talents to a high and conspicuous station before he addressed himself to the search after his family. I have no right to pursue this theme further; nor had I alluded to it at all, save as illustrating in so remarkable a manner that direct and unmistakable impress of the working of Providence in this case, showing how, amidst all the strange chaos of a time of revolution and anarchy—when governments were crumbling, and nations rending asunder—this one blood-spot—the foul deed of murder—should cry aloud for retribution, and, by a succession of the least likely incidents, bring the guilty man to justice."

After a careful review of all the testimony against the prisoner—the conclusiveness of which left no room for a doubt—he told him to abandon all hope of a pardon in this world, concluding, in the terrible words of the law, by the sentence of death:

"You, Samuel Eustace, will be taken from the bar of this court to the place from whence you came, the gaol, and thence to the place of execution—there to be hung by the neck till you are dead——"

"Can I see my priest—may the priest come to me?" cried the prisoner, fiercely, for not even the appalling solemnity of the moment could repress the savage energy of his nature.

"Miserable man," said the judge, in a faltering accent, "I beseech you to employ well the few minutes that remain to you in this world, and carry not into the next that spirit of defiance by which you would brave an earthly judgment-seat. And may God have mercy on your soul!"

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE RETRIBUTION.

The sudden flash of intelligence by which young Frank was enabled to connect the almost forgotten incidents of boyhood with the date and the other circumstances of the murder, had very nearly proved fatal to himself. His brain was little able to resist the influence of all these conflicting emotions, and for some days his faculties wandered away in the wildest and most incoherent fancies. It was only on the very morning of the trial that he became self-possessed and collected. Then it was that he could calmly remember every detail of that fatal night, and see their bearing on the mysterious subject of the trial. At first Grounsell listened to his story as a mere raving; but when Frank described with minute accuracy the appearance of the spot—the old orchard, the stone stair that descended into the garden, and the little door which opened into the wood—he became eagerly excited; and, anxious to proceed with every guarantee of caution, he summoned two other magistrates to the bedside to hear the narrative. We have already seen the event which followed that revelation, and by which the guilt of the murderer was established.

From hour to hour, as the trial proceeded, Frank received tidings from the court-house. The excitement, far from injuring, seemed to rally and reinvigorate him; and although the painful exposure of their domestic circumstances was cautiously slurred over to his ears, it was plain to see the indignant passion with which he heard of Nelly and Kate being dragged before the public eye. It was, indeed, a day of deep and terrible emotion, and, when evening came, he sank into the heavy sleep of actual exhaustion. While nothing was heard in the sick-room save the long-drawn breathings of the sleeper, the drawing-rooms of the hotel were crowded with the gentry of the neighborhood, all eager to see and welcome the Daltons home again. If the old were pleased to meet with the veteran Count Stephen, the younger were no less delighted with even such casual glimpses as they caught of Kate, in the few moments she could spare from her brother's bedside. As for Lady Hester, such a torrent of sensations, such a perfect avalanche of emotion, was perfect ecstasy; perhaps not the least agreeable feeling being the assurance that she no longer possessed any right or title to Corrig-O'Neal, and was literally unprovided for in the world.

"One detests things by halves," said she; but to be utterly ruined is quite charming."

The country visitors were not a little surprised at the unfeigned sincerity of her enjoyment, and still more, perhaps, at the warm cordiality of her manner towards them—she who, till now, had declined all proffers

of acquaintanceship, and seemed determined to shun them.

Consigning to her care all the duties of receiving the crowd of visitors which old Count Stephen was but too happy to see, Kate only ventured for a few minutes at a time to enter the drawing-room. It was while hastening back from one of these brief intervals that she heard her name spoken in a low but distinct voice. She turned round and saw a man closely enveloped in a large cloak, beside her.

"It is I, Miss Dalton—the Abbé D'Esmonde," said he. "May I speak with your brother?"

Kate could scarcely answer him from terror. All the scenes in which she had seen him figure rose before her view, and the man was, to her eyes, the very embodiment of peril.

"My brother is too ill, sir, to receive you," said she. "In a few days hence——"

"It will then be too late, Miss Dalton," said he, mournfully. "The very seconds as they pass, now, are as days to one who stands on the brink of eternity."

"Is there anything which I could communicate to him myself? for I am fearful of what might agitate or excite him."

"If it must be so," said he, sighing, and as if speaking to himself. "But could you not trust me to say a few words? I will be most cautious."

"If, then, to-morrow——"

"To-morrow! It must be now—at this very instant!" cried he, eagerly. "The life of one who is unfit to go hence depends upon it." Then, taking her hand, he continued: "I have drawn up a few lines, in shape of a petition for mercy to this wretched man. They must be in London by to-morrow night, to permit of a reprieve before Saturday. Your brother's signature is all-essential. For this I wished to see him, and to know if he has any acquaintanceship with persons in power which could aid the project. You see how short the time is—all depends upon minutes. The Secretary of State can suspend the execution, and in the delay a commutation of the sentence may be obtained."

"Oh, give it to me!" cried she, eagerly. And, snatching the paper from his hands, she hurried into the chamber.

Frank Dalton was awake, but in all the languor of great debility. He scarcely listened to his sister, till he heard her pronounce the name of the Abbé D'Esmonde.

"Is he here, Kate?—is he here?" cried he, eagerly.

"Yes, and most anxious to see and speak with you."

"Then let him come in, Kate. Nay, nay, it will not agitate me."

Kate noiselessly retired, and beckoning the abbé to come forward, she left the room, and closed the door.

D'Esmonde approached the sick-bed with a cautious, almost timid, air, and seated himself on a chair, without speaking.

"So, then, we are cousins, I find," said Frank, stretching out his wasted hand towards him. "They tell me you are a Godfrey, abbé?"

D'Esmonde pressed his hand in token of assent, but did not utter a word.

"I have no wish—I do not know if I have the right—to stand between you and your father's inheritance. If I am destined to arise from this sick-bed, the world is open to me, and I am not afraid to encounter it. Let us be friends, then, D'Esmonde, in all candor and frankness."

"Willingly—most willingly. There need be but one rivalry between us," said D'Esmonde, with a voice of deep feeling—"in the struggle who shall best serve the other. Had we known of this before—had I suspected how our efforts might have been combined and united—had I but imagined you as my ally, and not my—— But these are too exciting themes to talk upon. You are not equal to them."

"Not so; it is in such moments that I feel a touch of health and vigor once again. Go on, I beseech you."

"I will speak of that which more immediately concerns us," said the abbé. "This wretched man stands for execution on Saturday. Let us try to save him. His guilt must have already had its expiation in years of remorse and suffering. Here is a petition I have drawn up to the Secretary of State. It has been signed by several of the jury who tried the cause. We want your name, also, to it. Such a commutation as may sentence him to exile is all we pray for."

"Give me the pen; I'll sign it at once."

"There—in that space," said the abbé, pointing with his finger. "How your hand trembles. This cannot be like your usual writing."

"Let me confirm it by my seal, then. You'll find it on the table yonder."

D'Esmonde melted the wax, and stood beside him, while the youth pressed down the seal.

"Even that," said the abbé, "might be disputed. There's some one passing in the corridor; let him hear you acknowledge it as your act and hand." And, so saying, he hastened to the door, and made a sign to the waiter to come in. "Mr. Dalton de-

sires you to witness his signature," said he to the man.

"I acknowledge this as mine," said Frank, already half exhausted by the unaccustomed exertion.

"Your name, there, as witnessing it," whispered D'Esmonde; and the waiter added his signature.

"Have you hope of success, abbé?" said Frank, faintly.

"Hope never fails me," replied D'Esmonde, in a voice of bold and assured tone. "It is the only capital that humble men like myself possess; but we can draw upon it without limit. The fate of riches is often ruin, but there is no bankruptcy in hope. Time presses now," said he, as if suddenly remembering himself; "I must see to this at once. When may I come again?"

"Whenever you like. I have much to say to you. I cannot tell you, now, how strangely you are mixed up in my fancy—it is but fancy, after all—with several scenes of terrible interest."

"What—how do you mean?" said D'Esmonde, turning hastily about.

"I scarcely know where to begin, or how to separate truth from its counterfeit. Your image is before me, at times and in places where you could not have been. Ay, even in the very crash and tumult of battle, as I remember once at Varenna, beside the Lake of Como. I could have sworn to have seen you cheering on the peasants to the attack."

"What strange tricks imagination will play upon us!" broke in D'Esmonde; but his voice faltered, and his pale cheek grew paler as he said the words.

"Then, again, in the Balbi Palace at Milan, where I was brought as a prisoner, I saw you leave the council-chamber arm-in-arm with an Austrian archduke. When I say I saw you, I mean as I now see you here—more palpable to my eyes than when you sat beside my sick-bed at Verona."

"Dreams — dreams," said D'Esmonde. "Such illusions bespeak a mind broken by sickness. Forget them, Dalton, if you would train your thoughts to higher uses." And so saying, in a tone of pride, the abbé bowed, and passed out.

As D'Esmonde passed out into the street, Cahill joined him.

"Well," cried the latter, "is it done?"

"Yes, Michel," was the answer; "signed, and sealed, and witnessed, in all form. By this document I am recognized as a member of his family, inheriting that which I shall never claim. No," cried he, with exaltation of voice and manner, "I want none of their posesssions; I ask but to be accounted of their race and name; and yet the time may come when these conditions shall be reversed, and they who would scarcely own me to-day may plot and scheme to trace our relationship. Now for Rome. To-night—this very night—I set out. With this evidence of my station and fortune there can be no longer any obstacle. The struggle is past—now to enjoy the victory!"

"You will see him before you go, D'Esmonde? A few minutes is all he asks."

"Why should I? What bond is there between us, now? The tie is loosened forever; besides, he deceived us, Michel—deceived us in everything."

"Be it so," said the other; "but remember, that it is the last prayer of one under sentence of death—the last wish of one who will soon have passed away hence."

"Why should I go to hear the agonizing entreaties for a mercy that cannot be granted—the harrowing remorse of a guilty nature?"

"Do not refuse him, D'Esmonde. He clings to this object with a fixed purpose, that turns his mind from every thought that should become the hour. In vain I speak to him of the short interval between him and the grave. He neither hears nor heeds me. His only question is, 'Is he coming—will he come to me?'"

"To lose minutes, when every one of them is priceless—to waste emotions, when my heart is already racked and tortured—why should I do this?" cried D'Esmonde, peevishly.

"Do not refuse *me*, D'Esmonde," said Cahill, passionately. "I despair of recalling the miserable man to the thought of his eternal peril till this wish be satisfied."

"Be it so, then," said the abbé, proudly; and he walked along beside his friend in silence.

They traversed the streets without a word spoken. Already D'Esmonde had assumed an air of reserve, which seemed to mark the distance between himself and his companion; the thoughtful gravity of his look savored no less of pride than reflection. In such wise did Cahill read his manner, and by a cautious deference appear to accept the new condition of their intimacy.

"The prisoner has not uttered a word since you were here, sir," said the gaoler, as they entered the gate. "He shows the greatest anxiety whenever the door opens; but, as if disappointed on not seeing whom he expected, relapses at once into his silent reserve."

"You see that he still expects you," whispered Cahill to the abbé; and the other assented with a faint nod of the head.

"No, sir; this way," said the gaoler; "he is now in the condemned cell." And, so saying, he led the way along the corridor.

By the faint light of a small lamp, fixed high up in the wall, they could just detect the figure of a man, as he sat crouched on the low settle-bed, his head resting on his arms as they were crossed over his knees. He never moved as the grating sound of the heavy door jarred on the stillness, but sat still and motionless.

"The Abbé D'Esmonde has come to see you, Eustace," said the gaoler, tapping him on the shoulder. "Wake up, man, and speak to him."

The prisoner lifted his head and made an effort to say something, but, though his lips moved, there came no sounds from them. At last, with an effort that was almost convulsive, he pointed to the door, and said, "Alone—alone!"

"He wants to speak with you alone, sir," whispered the gaoler, "and so we will retire."

D'Esmonde could not see them leave the cell without a sense of fear—less the dread of any personal injury than the strange terror so inseparable to any close communion with one convicted of a dreadful crime—and he actually shuddered as the massive door was banged to.

"You are cold, sir!" said the prisoner, in a hollow, sepulchral voice.

"No, it was not cold!" replied D'Esmonde.

"I can guess what it was, then!" said the other, with an energy to which passion seemed to contribute. "But I'll not keep you long here. Sit down, sir. You must sit beside me, for there is no other seat than the settle-bed. But there is nobody here to see the great Abbé D'Esmonde side by side with a murderer."

"Wretched man," said D'Esmonde, passionately, "by what fatality did you rush upon your fate? Why did you ever return to this country?"

"It is to tell you that—ay, that very thing—I asked you to come here to-night," said the prisoner, with a firm, full voice. "I came here for *you*—just so—for *you yourself*. There, there," continued he, haughtily, "don't look as if I wanted to trick you. Is it here, is it now, that a lie would serve me? Listen to me, and don't stop me, for I want to turn my thoughts to something else when this is off my heart. Listen to me. Very soon after you saved me at Venice, I knew all about you; who you were, and what you were planning—ay, deep as you thought yourself, I read every scheme in you, and opened every letter you wrote or received. You don't believe me. Shall I give you a proof? Did you accept eight bills for money Morlache the Jew sent you, from Florence, in March last? Did Cardinal Antinori write to say that the Bull that named you cardinal must have your birth set forth as noble? Did the Austrian field-marshal send you the cross of St. Joseph, and did you not return it, as to wear it would unmask you to the Italians?"

"What if all this were true?" said D'Esmonde, proudly. "Is it to one like you I am to render account for my actions? What is it to you if——"

"What is it to *me*?" cried the other, fiercely—"what is it to me? Isn't it everything? Isn't it what brought me here, and what in three days more will bring me to the gallows? I tell you again, I saw what you were bent on, and I knew you'd succeed—ay, that I did. If it was good blood you wanted to be a cardinal, I was the only one could help you."

"You knew the secret of my birth, then?" cried D'Esmonde, in deep earnestness. "You could prove my descent from the Godfreys?"

"No! but I could destroy the only evidence against it," said the other, in a deep, guttural voice. "I could tear out of the parish registry the only leaf that could betray you; and it was for that I came back here; and it was for that I'm now here. And I did do it. I broke into the vestry of the chapel at midnight, and I tore out the page, and I have it here, in my hand, this minute. There was a copy of this same paper at the college at Louvain, but I stole that, too; for I went as porter there, just to get an opportunity to take it—that one I destroyed."

"But whence this interest in my fortunes?" said D'Esmonde, half proudly, for he was still slow to believe all that he heard.

"The paper will tell you that," said the other, slowly unfolding it, and flattening it out on his knee. "This is the certificate of your baptism! Wait—stop a minute," cried he, catching D'Esmonde arm, as, in his impatience, he tried to seize the paper. "This piece of paper is the proof of what you are, and, moreover, the only proof that will soon exist to show it."

"Give it to me—let me see it!" cried D'Esmonde, eagerly. "Why have you withheld till this time what might have spared me anxious days and weary nights; and by what right have you mixed yourself up with my fortunes?"

"By what right is it—by what right?"

cried the other, in a voice which passion rendered harsh and discordant. "Is that what you want to know?" and, as he spoke, he bent down and fixed his eyes on the abbé with a stern stare. "You want to know what right I have?" said he, and his face became almost convulsed with passion. "There's my right—read that!" cried he, holding out the paper before D'Esmonde's eyes. "There's your birth proved and certified: 'Matthew, son of Samuel and Mary Eustace, of Ballykinnon, baptized by me this 10th day of April, 18—. Joseph Barry, P.P.' There's the copy of your admission into the convent, and here's the superior's receipt for the first quarter's payment as a probationer. Do you know who you are now? or do you still ask me what right I have to meddle in your affairs?"

"And you—and you—you——" cried D'Esmonde, gasping.

"I am your father. Ay, you can hear the words here, and needn't start at the sound of them. We're in the condemned cell of a gaol, and nobody near us. You are my son. Mr. Godfrey paid for you as a student till—till—— But it's all over now. I never meant you to know the truth; but a lie wouldn't serve you any longer. Oh, Matthew, Matthew!" cried he—and of a sudden his voice changed, and softened to accents of almost choking sorrow—"haven't you one word for me?—one word of affection for him that you brought to this, and who forgives you for it—one word, even to call me your own father?" He fell at the other's feet, and clasped his arms around his knees as he spoke, but the appeal was unheard.

Pale as a corpse, with his head slightly thrown forward, and his eyes wildly staring before him, D'Esmonde sat, perfectly motionless. At last the muscles of his mouth fashioned themselves into a ghastly smile, a look of mockery so dreadful to gaze upon, that the prisoner, terror-stricken at the sight, rushed to the door, and beat loudly against it, as he screamed for help. It was opened on the instant, and the gaoler, followed by two others, entered.

"He's ill; his reverence is taken bad," said the old man, while he trembled from head to foot with agitation.

"What's this paper? What is he clutching in his hands?" cried the gaoler.

D'Esmonde started at the words. For the first time a gleam of intelligence shot over his features, and as suddenly he bent a look of withering hate on the speaker; and then, with a passionate vehemence that told of a frantic brain, he tore the paper into fragments, and, with a wild yell, as if of triumph, he fell senseless on the ground. When they lifted him up, his features were calm, but passionless, his eye was vacant, and his lips slightly parted. An expression of weariness and exhaustion, rather than of actual pain, pervaded the face. He never spoke again. The lamp of intellect was extinguished forever, and not even a flicker nor a spark remained to cheer the darkness within him. Hopeless and helpless idiotcy was ever after the lot of one whose mind, once stored with the most lofty ambitions, never scrupled, at any cost, to attain its object. And he whose proud aspirings soared to the very grandest of earthly prizes, who gave his counsel among princes, now lives on, bereft of mind and intelligence; without consciousness of the past, or a hope for the future.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE END.

With the sad episode which closes our last chapter we would fain let fall the curtain on this history. Very few words will now suffice to complete the narrative of those with whom we have so long sojourned. The discovery which revealed the murder of Mr. Godfrey restored Frank Dalton to the home and fortune of his family; and although the trying scenes through which he had passed made deep and dangerous inroads on his health, youth and hope, and the watchful care of Kate, restored him; and after the lapse of some weeks, he was enabled to be about once more, recalling to the recollection of many the handsome figure and manly bearing of his father.

For many a year before, Corrig-O'Neal had not seen such a party beneath its roof, nor had those gloomy old walls echoed to such sounds as now were heard within them. In addition to Lady Hester, George Onslow, now a colonel, was the guest of the Daltons. Scarcely arrived in England, he quitted London at the moment when the tidings of his gallant achievements had made him the hero of the day, and hurried to see *her*, who, through every change of his fortunes, had been the dearest object of his heart.

What tender reproaches — what heart-warm confessions—did those old woods hear, as, side by side, the lovers walked along, revealing the secret sorrows of the past, and recalling each incident which once had cheered with hope or shadowed with despair! But it is not in such com-

pany we would play the "eavesdropper," nor watch for the changeful blushes of that soft cheeck where tears of joy and grief are mingled. Neither would we care to accompany Grounsell, as with deeds and bonds, codicils and conveyances, he actually hunted poor Frank from place to place, urgently impressing on him the necessity for those "business habits," the sad neglect of which had been the ruin of all the Daltons. As little inducement is there to follow Lady Hester, whose restless activity was interfering with every one and everything, taking the most lively interest in the property the very moment it ceased to be her own, and devoted to all the charities which no longer could lay claim to being duties.

Pleasanter, perhaps, would it be to follow the old count, as he sauntered alone for hours, trying to trace out in the long-forgotten scenes the stories of his boyhood. What pleasant reveries they were!—what glorious compensations for all the tumultuous passages of an eventful life! And so he felt them! And so he recognized with grateful heart the happy destiny which had befallen him, to close his days where he had begun them—in the midst of his own—loving and beloved.

And yet with such scenes and emotions we must not dally. Story-tellers, like Mother Carey's chickens, have no sympathies with sunny skies and soft airs—their province is amidst the hurricane and the storm. In truth, too, it is the very essence of tranquil enjoyment, that it must be left to the imagination of each to conceive.

But one care weighed on all, and that was the absence of poor Nelly. Why was she not amongst them, to see their happiness, and heighten its enjoyment by all the benevolence of her kindly nature? It was true they were relieved of all anxiety regarding her by a letter, which had followed them from Vienna, and which told how she had arrived in that city a few days after they had left it.

"I stood," she said, "looking at the great palace where they told me Count Stephen lived, and could not bring myself to think it was not a dream that such as *I* should have business there!

"I sat down on the steps of a church in front of it, and gazed for hours long at the great door, through which you must have passed so often, and the windows which doubtless you stood at—perhaps thinking of poor Nelly! At last came Hanserl to say that he had obtained leave to see the palace; and oh, how my heart beat at the words—for there was pride as well as humiliation in the thought—and so we went in, and crossing the great court, ascended the wide staircase! How beautiful it all was, those marble statues—the rich frescoes of the ceilings—the gorgeous lamps, all emblazoned with armorial emblems; and yet I thought less of these than the polished steps which your feet had trodden, and which I could have kissed for your sake.

"I had not imagined so much magnificence. You will smile, perhaps, at my simplicity, but so did not that kind old soldier with the wooden leg, who took such pains to show us everything. He was evidently pleased to witness our admiring wonder, and actually laughed at Hanserl's enthusiasm for all those bright scimetars and shields of Turkish make, the horse-tailed banners, and other emblems of Austrian victory; while I stole away silently into a little chamber all hung with blue damask, over the mantelpiece of which was a portrait of our own dear Frank. How I felt that the room was yours, Kate—how my heart told me each object you had touched—and how they all became to my delighted senses like precious relics, revealing stores of affection laid up in your bosom, and showing a wealth of love I was not conscious of till then! Oh no, dearest sister, I never knew, till then, how things without life themselves can be the links between beating hearts! I looked everywhere for a portrait of yourself, and it was only by asking the old corporal that I succeeded in finding it. 'The Gräfin's picture is in the field-marshal's own room,' said he, with pride, and led the way towards it. Oh, Kate, how beautiful!—nay, it is Nelly, your own stern Nelly, who never flattered you herself, nor could bear others to do so—it is Nelly, the same Nelly, unchanged, save in being less trustful, less impulsive, less forgiving than you knew her, and *she* tells you that at sight of such loveliness she stood wonderstruck and fascinated. Had you been really then before me, such as the picture represented, I had not dared to approach you; there was that of nobility and grandeur that had appalled my poor peasant heart, unused to the glitter of diamonds and the queenly air of high-born beauty; but, as I gazed on the likeness, long and steadily, this expression faded away, and, as though the lineaments were changing, I thought the eyes grew softer; they seemed to moisten, the lips trembled, the bosom heaved and fell, and it was you—you! as I had pressed you to my heart a thousand times—my own! my own!

"I know not what foolish words I may

have uttered, nor to what excess my rapture carried me, but I was weeping bitterly as they led me away—ay, bitterly, Kate; for such ecstasy as I felt finds its true vent in sorrow! But now I am happy once more—happy that I have seen you and dear Frank—happy that each of us in life has trodden the path that best became him! and so I came away, with many a lingering look, and many a backward glance, at what I was never to see again.

"Here, in my mountain home, once more I can sit, alone, and think of you for days long. You wander through all my thoughts, the characters of endless stories, in every imaginable vicissitude, and with every change of fortune; but throughout all, Kate—good and beautiful—truthful, too, as you ever were. There, my tears have blotted out what I tried to say, nor dare I trust myself with more. My school children are already coming through the vineyard; I hear their song—it was your own long ago:

"Da sind die Täge lang genuch,
Da sind die Nächte milde.

"Good-bye, good-bye, my sister—my dear sister.

"N. D.

"Meran."

"Oh! let us hasten thither at once," cried Kate, in rapture. "Oh! dear uncle, let us away to Meran!"

"Not till after Tuesday, Kate," whispered George, passionately; and the words covered her cheeks with blushes as she heard them.

The reader knows now all that we care to tell him. Time was when story-tellers wound up with the kind wish that, "if they were not happy, that you and I may be." Nor am I quite certain that we are wiser in our vocation than when those words were in vogue.

We are not vain enough to suppose that we have inspired an interest for any of those characters who have supported the minor parts of our drama. Should such good fortune have happily attended us, let us say, once for all, that Messrs. Haggerstone, Jekyl, and Purvis yet survive; that the Ricketts family are in excellent health, autograph-gathering and duke-courting, poetizing and painting, and pilfering, with all the ardor of youth, untouched by years, and unrestrained by conscience. Lady Hester, too, is again living abroad, and, after trying three new changes of religion, is in treaty with a Heidelberg professor for a "spick-and-span" new faith, which will transcend everything hitherto known, and make even Mormonism ashamed of itself.

As for Prince Midchekoff, he and my Lady Norwood are the delight of a foreign city which shall be nameless, and their receptions nightly crowded by all the fashionable celebrities and distinguished visitors of that favored region.

" I rode into the little stable yard of the 'Lamb.'"

[A DAY'S RIDE — FRONTISPIECE. p. 407.]

A DAY'S RIDE:

A LIFE'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

I PREPARE TO SEEK ADVENTURES.

It has been said that any man, no matter how small and insignificant the post he may have filled in life, who will faithfully record the events in which he has borne a share, even though incapable of himself deriving profit from the lessons he has learned, may still be of use to others—sometimes a guide, sometimes a warning. I hope this is true. I like to think it so, for I like to think that even I—A. S. P.—if I cannot adorn a tale, may at least point a moral.

Certain families are remarkable for the way in which peculiar gifts have been transmitted for ages. Some have been great in arms, some in letters, some in statecraft, displaying in successive generations the same high qualities which had won their first renown. In an humble fashion, I may lay claim to belong to this category. My ancestors have been apothecaries for one hundred and forty odd years. Joseph Potts, "drug and condiment man," lived in the reign of Queen Anne, at Lower Liffey Street, No. 87; and to be remembered passingly, has the name of Mr. Addison amongst his clients; the illustrious writer having, as it would appear, a peculiar fondness for "Potts's linature," whatever that may have been; for the secret died out with my distinguished forefather. There was Michael Joseph Potts, "licensed for chemicals," in Mary's Abbey, about thirty years later; and so we come on to Paul Potts and Son, and then to Launcelot Peter Potts, "Pharmaceutical Chemist to his Excellency and the Irish Court," the father of him who now bespeaks your indulgence.

My father's great misfortune in life was the ambition to rise above the class his family had adorned for ages. He had, as he averred, a soul above senna, and a destiny higher than black drop. He had heard of a tailor's apprentice becoming a great general. He had himself seen a wig-maker elevated to the woolsack; and he kept continually repeating, "Mine is the only walk in life that leads to no high rewards. What matters it whether my mixtures be addressed to the refined organization of rank, or the *dura ilia rasorum*—I shall live and die an apothecary. From every class are men selected for honors save mine, and though it should rain baronetcies, the bloody hand would never fall to the lot of a compounding chemist."

"What do you intend to make of Algernon Sydney, Mr. Potts?" would say one of his neighbors. "Bring him up to your own business? A first-rate connection to start with in life."

"My own business, sir? I'd rather see him a chimney-sweep."

"But, after all, Mr. Potts, being, so to say, at the head of your profession——"

"It is not a profession, sir. It is not even a trade. High science and skill have long since left our insulted and outraged ranks; we are mere commission agents for the sale of patent quackeries. What respect has the world any longer for the great phials of ruby, and emerald, and marine blue, which, at nightfall, were once the magical emblems of our mysteries, seen afar through the dim mists of louring atmospheres, or throwing their lurid glare upon the passers-by? What man, now, would have the courage to adorn his surgery—I suppose you would prefer I should call it a 'shop'—with skeleton fishes, snakes, or a stuffed alligator? Who, in this age of chemical infidelity, would surmount his door with the ancient symbols of our art—the golden pestle and mortar? Why, sir, I'd as soon go forth to apply leeches on a herald's tabard, or a suit of Milan mail. And what have they done, sir?" he would

ask, with a roused indignation—"what have they done by their reforms? In invading the mystery of medicine, they have ruined its prestige. The precious drops you once regarded as the essence of an elixir vitæ, and whose efficacy lay in your faith, are now so much strychnine, or creosote, which you take with fear and think over with foreboding."

I suppose it can only be ascribed to that perversity which seems a great element in human nature, that, exactly in the direct ratio of my father's dislike to his profession, was *my* fondness for it. I used to take every opportunity of stealing into the laboratory, watching intently all the curious proceedings that went on there, learning the names and properties of the various ingredients, the gases, the minerals, the salts, the essences; and although, as may be imagined, science took, in these narrow regions, none of her loftiest flights, they were to me the most marvelous and high-soaring efforts of human intelligence. I was just at that period of life—the first opening of adolescence—when fiction and adventure have the strongest hold upon our nature, my mind filled with the marvels of Eastern romance, and imbued with a sentiment, strong as any conviction, that I was destined to a remarkable life. I passed days in dreamland—what I should do in this or that emergency; how rescue myself from such a peril; how profit by such a stroke of fortune; by what arts resist the machinations of this adversary; how conciliate the kind favor of that. In the wonderful tales that I read, frequent mention was made of alchemy and its marvels; now, the search was for some secret of endless wealth; now, it was for undying youth or undecaying beauty; while, in other stories, I read of men who had learned how to read the thoughts, trace the motives, and ultimately sway the hearts of their fellow-men, till life became to them a mere field for the exercise of their every will and caprice, throwing happiness and misery about them as the humor inclined. The strange life of the laboratory fitted itself exactly to this phase of my mind.

The wonders it displayed, the endless combinations and transformations it effected, were as marvelous as any that imaginative fiction could devise; but even these were nothing compared to the mysterious influence of the place itself upon my nervous system, particularly when I found myself there alone. In the tales with which my head was filled, many of them the wild fancies of Grimm, Hoffman, or Musæus, nothing was more common than to read how some eager student of the black art, deep in the mystery of forbidden knowledge, had, by some chance combination, by some mere accidental admixture of this ingredient with that, suddenly arrived at the great SECRET, that terrible mystery which for centuries and centuries had evaded human search. How often have I watched the fluid as it boiled and bubbled in the retort, till I thought the air globules, as they came to the surface, observed a certain rhythm and order. Were these words? Were they symbols of some hidden virtue in the liquid? Were there intelligences to whom these could speak, and thus reveal a wondrous history? And then, again, with what an intense eagerness have I gazed on the lurid smoke that arose from some smelting mass, now fancying that the vapor was about to assume form and substance, and now imagining that it lingered lazily, as though waiting for some cabalistic word of mine to give it life and being? How heartily did I censure the folly that had ranked alchemy amongst the absurdities of human invention. Why rather had not its facts been treasured and its discoveries recorded, so that, in some future age a great intelligence, arising, might classify and arrange them, showing, at least, what were practicable, and what were only evasive. Alchemists were, certainly, men of pure lives, self-denying and humble. They made their art no stepping-stone to worldly advancement or success, they sought no favor from princes, nor any popularity from the people; but, retired and estranged from all the pleasures of the world, followed their one pursuit, unnoticed and unfriended. How cruel, therefore, to drag them forth from their lonely cells, and expose them to the gaping crowd as devil-worshipers! How inhuman to denounce men whose only crimes were lives of solitude and study! The last words of Peter von Vordt, burned for a wizard, at Haarlem, in 1306, were, "Had they left this poor head a little longer on my shoulders, it would have done more for human happiness than all this bonfire!"

How rash and presumptuous is it, besides, to set down any fixed limits to man's knowledge! Is not every age an advance upon its predecessors, and are not the commonest acts of our present civilization perfect miracles as compared with the usages of our ancestors? But why do I linger on this theme, which I only introduce to illustrate the temper of my boyish days? As I grew older, books of chivalry and romance took possession of my mind,

and my passion grew for lives of adventure. Of all kinds of existence, none seemed to me so enviable as that of those men, who, regarding life as a vast ocean, hoisted sail, and set forth, not knowing nor caring whither, but trusting to their own manly spirit for extrication out of whatever difficulties might beset them. What a narrow thing, after all, was our modern civilization, with all its forms and conventionalities, with its gradations of rank and its orders! How hopeless for the adventurous spirit to war with the stern discipline of an age that marshaled men in ranks like soldiers, and told that each could only rise by successive steps! How often have I wondered was there any more of adventure left in life! Were there incidents in store for him who, in the true spirit of an adventurer, should go in search of them? As for the newer worlds of Australia and America, they did not possess for me much charm. No great association linked them with the past; no echo came out of them of that heroic time of feudalism, so peopled with heart-stirring characters. The life of the bush or the prairie had its incidents, but they were vulgar and commonplace; and worse, the associates and companions of them were more vulgar still. Hunting down Pawnees or buffaloes was as mean and ignoble a travesty of feudal adventure as were the gold diggings at Bendigo of the learned labors of the alchemist. The perils were unexciting; the rewards prosaic and commonplace. No. I felt that Europe—in some remote regions—and the East—in certain less visited tracts—must be the scenes best suited to my hopes. With considerable labor I could spell my way through a German romance, and I saw, in the stories of Fouqué, and even of Goethe, that there still survived in the mind of Germany many of the features which gave the coloring to a feudal period. There was, at least, a dreamy indifference to the present, a careless abandonment to what the hour might bring forth, so long as the dreamer was left to follow out his fancies in all their mysticism, that lifted men out of the vulgarities of this work-o'-day world; and I longed to see a society where learning consented to live upon the humblest pittance, and beauty dwelt unflattered in obscurity.

I was now entering upon manhood, and my father—having, with that ambition so natural to an Irish parent who aspires highly for his only son, destined me for the bar—made me a student of Trinity College, Dublin.

What a shock to all the romance of my life were the scenes into which I now was thrown! With hundreds of companions to choose from, I found not one congenial to me. The reading men, too deeply bent upon winning honors, would not waste a thought upon what could not advance their chances of success. The idle, only eager to get through their career undetected in their ignorance, passed lives of wild excess or stupid extravagance.

What was I to do amongst such associates? What I did do—avoid them, shun them, live in utter estrangement from all their haunts, their ways, and themselves. If the proud man who has achieved success in life encounters immense difficulties when, separating himself from his fellows, he acknowledges no companionship, nor admits any to his confidence, it may be imagined what must be the situation of one who adopts this isolation without any claim to superiority whatever. As can easily be supposed, I was the butt of my fellow-students, the subject of many sarcasms and practical jokes. The whole of my freshman year was a martyrdom. I had no peace, was rhymed on by poetasters, caricatured by draughtsmen, till the name of Potts became proverbial for all that was eccentric, ridiculous, and absurd.

Curran has said, "One can't draw an indictment against a nation:" in the same spirit did I discover, "One cannot fight his whole division." For a while I believe I experienced a sort of heroism in my solitary state; I felt the spirit of a Coriolanus in my heart, and muttered, "I banish *you!*" but this self-supplied esteem did not last long, and I fell into a settled melancholy. The horrible truth was gradually forcing its way slowly, clearly, through the mists of my mind, that there might be something in all this sarcasm, and I can remember to this hour the day—ay, and the very place—wherein the questions flashed across me: Is my hair as limp, my nose as long, my back as arched, my eyes as green as they have pictured them? Do I drawl so fearfully in my speech? Do I drag my heavy feet along so ungracefully? Good heavens! have they possibly a grain of fact to sustain all this fiction against me?

And if so—horrible thought—am I the stuff to go forth and seek adventures? Oh, the ineffable bitterness of this reflection! I remember it in all its anguish, and even now, after years of such experiences as have befallen few men, I can recall the pain it cost me. While I was yet in the paroxysm of that sorrow which assured me that I

was not made for doughty deeds, nor to captivate some fair princess. I chanced to fall upon a little German volume entitled "Wald Wandelungen und Abentheure, von Heinrich Stebbe." Forest rambles and adventures, and of a student, too! for so Herr Stebbe announces himself, in a short introduction to the reader. I am not going into any account of his book. It is in Voss's Leipzig Catalogue, and not unworthy of perusal by those who are sufficiently imbued with Germanism to accept the changeful moods of a mystical mind, with all its visionary glimpses of light and shade, its doubts, fears, hopes and fancies, in lieu of real incidents and actual events. Of adventures, properly speaking, he had none. The people he met, the scenes in which he bore his part, were as commonplace as need be. The whole narrative never soared above that bread-and-butter life — Butter-brod Leben — which Germany accepts as romance; but meanwhile the reflex of whatever passed around him in the narrator's own mind was amusing; so ingeniously did he contrive to interweave the imaginary with the actual, throwing over the most ordinary pictures of life a sort of hazy indistinctness—meet atmosphere for mystical creation.

If I did not always sympathize with him in his brain-wrought wanderings, I never ceased to take pleasure in his description of scenery, and the heartfelt delight he experienced in journeying through a world so beautiful and so varied. There was also a little woodcut frontispiece which took my fancy much, representing him as he stood leaning on his horse's mane, gazing rapturously on the Elbe, from one of the cliffs off the Saxon Switzerland. How peaceful he looked, with his long hair waving gracefully on his neck, and his large soft eyes turned on the scene beneath him! His clasped hands, as they lay on the horse's mane, imparted a sort of repose, too, that seemed to say, "I could linger here ever so long." Nor was the horse itself without a significance in the picture: he was a long-maned, long-tailed, patient-looking beast, well befitting an enthusiast, who doubtless took but little heed of how he went or where. If his lazy eye denoted lethargy, his broad feet and short legs vouched for his sure-footedness.

Why should not I follow Stebbe's example? Surely there was nothing too exalted or extravagant in his plan of life. It was simply to see the world as it was, with the aid of such combinations as a fertile fancy could contribute; not to distort events, but to arrange them, just as the landscape painter in the license of his craft moves that massive rock more to the foreground, and throws that stone pine a little farther to the left of his canvas. There was, indeed, nothing to prevent my trying the experiment. Ireland was not less rich in picturesque scenery than Germany, and if she boasted no such mighty stream as the Elbe, the banks of the Blackwater and the Nore were still full of woodland beauty; and, then, there was lake scenery unrivaled throughout Europe.

I turned to Stebbe's narrative for details of his outfit. His horse he bought at Nordheim for two hundred and forty gulden—about ten pounds; his saddle and knapsack cost him a little more than forty shillings; with his map, guide-book, compass and some little extras, all were comprised within twenty pounds sterling—surely not too costly an equipage for one who was adventuring on a sea wide as the world itself.

As *my* trial was a mere experiment, to be essayed on the most limited scale, I resolved not to buy, but only hire, a horse, taking him by the day, so that, if any change of mind or purpose supervened, I should not find myself in any embarrassment.

A fond uncle had just left me a legacy of a hundred pounds, which, besides, was the season of the long vacation; thus did every thing combine to favor the easy execution of a plan which I had determined forthwith to put into practice.

"Something quiet and easy to ride, sir, you said?" repeated Mr. Dycer after me, as I entered his great establishment for the sale and hire of horses. "Show the gentleman four hundred and twelve."

"Oh, heaven forbid!" I exclaimed, in my ignorance; "such a number would only confuse me."

"You mistake me, sir," blandly interposed the dealer; "I meant the horse that stands at that number. Lead him out, Tim. He's gentle as a lamb, sir, and, if you find he suits you, he can be had for a song—I mean a ten-pound note."

"Has he a long mane and tail?" I asked, eagerly.

"The longest tail and the fullest mane I ever saw. But here he comes." And with the word, there advanced towards us, at a sort of easy amble, a small-sized, cream-colored horse, with white mane and tail. Knowing nothing of horseflesh, I was fain to content myself with such observations as other studies might supply me with; and so I closely examined his head, which was largely developed in the frontal regions, with moral qualities fairly displayed. He had memory large, and individuality strong; nor was wit, if it exist in the race, deficient.

Over the orbital region the depressions were deep enough to contain my closed fist, and when I remarked upon them to the groom, he said, "'Tis his teeth will tell you the rayson of that:" a remark which I suspect was a sarcasm upon my general ignorance.

I liked the creature's eye. It was soft, mild and contemplative; and, although not remarkable for brilliancy, possessed a subdued luster that promised well for temper and disposition.

"Ten shillings a day—make it three half-crowns by the week, sir. You'll never hit upon the like of him again," said the dealer, hurriedly, as he passed me, on his other avocations.

"Better not lose him, sir; he's well known at Batty's, and they'll have him in the circus again, if they see him. Wish you saw him with his fore-legs on a table, ringing the bell for his breakfast."

"I'll take him by the week; though, probably, a day or two will be all I shall need."

"Four hundred and twelve for Mr. Potts," Dycer screamed out. "Shoes removed, and to be ready in the morning."

CHAPTER II.

BLONDEL AND I SET OUT.

I HAD heard and read frequently of the exhilarating sensations of horse exercise. My fellow-students were full of stories of the hunting-field and the race-course. Wherever, indeed, a horse figured in a narrative, there was an almost certainty of meeting some incident to stir the blood and warm up enthusiasm. Even the passing glimpses one caught of sporting prints in shop-windows were suggestive of the pleasure imparted by a noble and chivalrous pastime.

I never closed my eyes all night, revolving such thoughts in my head. I had so worked up my enthusiasm, that I felt like one who is about to cross the frontier of some new land where people, language, ways, and habits are all unknown to him. "By this hour to-morrow night," thought I, "I shall be in the land of strangers, who have never seen, nor so much as heard of me. There, will invade no traditions of the scoffs and gibes I have so long endured; none will have received the disparaging estimate of my abilities, which my class-fellows love to propagate; I shall simply be the traveler who arrived at sundown mounted on a cream-colored palfrey—a stranger, sad-looking, but gentle withal, of courteous address, blandly demanding lodging for the night. "Look to my horse, ostler," shall I say, as I enter the honeysuckle-covered porch of the inn. "Blondel"—I will call him Blondel—"is accustomed to kindly usage." With what quiet dignity, the repose of a conscious position, do I follow the landlord as he shows me to my room. It is humble, but neat and orderly. I am contented. I tell him so. I am sated and wearied of luxury; sick of a gilded and glittering existence. I am in search of repose and solitude. I order my tea: and, if I ask the name of the village, I take care to show by my inattention that I have not heard the answer, nor do I care for it.

Now I should like to hear how they are canvassing me in the bar, and what they think of me in the stable. I am, doubtless, a peer, or a peer's eldest son. I am a great writer, the wondrous poet of the day; or the pre-Raphaelite artist; or I am a youth heart-broken by infidelity in love; or, mayhap, a dreadful criminal. I liked this last the best, the interest was so intense; not to say that there is, to men who are not constitutionally courageous, a strong pleasure in being able to excite terror in others.

But I hear a horse's feet on the silent street. I look out. Day is just breaking. Tim is holding Blondel at the door. My hour of adventure has struck, and noiselessly descending the stairs, I issue forth.

"He is a trifle tender on the fore-feet, your honor," said Tim, as I mounted, "but when you get him off the stones on a nice piece of soft road, he'll go like a four-year old."

"But he *is* young, Tim, isn't he?" I asked, as I tendered him my half-crown.

"Well, not to tell your honor a lie, he is not," said Tim, with the energy of a man whose veracity had cost him little less than a spasm.

"How old would you call him, then?" I asked in that affected ease that seemed to say, "Not that it matters to me if he were Methuselah."

"I couldn't come to his age exactly, your honor," he replied, "but I remember seeing him, fifteen years ago, dancing a hornpipe, more by token for his own benefit; it was at Cooke's Circus, in Abbey Street, and there wasn't a hair's difference between him now and then, except, perhaps, that he had a star on the forehead, where you just see the mark a little darker now."

"But that is a star, plain enough," said I, half vexed.

"Well, it is, and it is not," muttered Tim, doggedly, for he was not quite satisfied with my right to disagree with him.

"He's gentle, at all events?" I said, more confidently.

"He's a lamb!" replied Tim. "If you were to see the way he lets the Turks run over his back, when he's wounded in Timour the Tartar, you wouldn't believe he was a livin' baste."

"Poor fellow!" said I, caressing him. He turned his mild eye upon me, and we were friends from that hour.

What a glorious morning it was, as I gained the outskirts of the city, and entered one of those shady alleys that lead to the foot of the Dublin mountains! The birds were opening their morning hymn, and the earth, still fresh from the night dew, sent up a thousand delicious perfumes. The road on either side was one succession of handsome villas or ornamental cottages, whose grounds were laid out in the perfection of landscape gardening. There were but few persons to be seen at that early hour, and in the smokeless chimneys and closed shutters I could read that all slept—slept in that luxurious hour when nature unveils, and seems to revel in the sense of unregarded loveliness. "Ah, Potts," said I, "thou hast chosen the wiser part; thou wilt see the world after thine own guise, and not as others see it." Has my reader not often noticed that in a picture gallery the slightest change of place, a move to the left or right, a chance approach or retreat, suffices to make what seemed a hazy confusion of color and gloss a rich and beautiful picture? So is it in the actual world; and just as much depends on the point from which objects are viewed. Do not be discouraged, then, by the dark aspects of events. It may be that, by the slightest move to this side or to that, some unlooked-for sunlight shall slant down and light up all the scene. Thus musing, I gained a little grassy strip that ran along the roadside, and, gently touching Blondel with my heel, he broke out into a delightful canter. The motion, so easy and swimming, made it a perfect ecstasy to sit there floating at will through the thin air, with a moving panorama of wood, water, and mountain around me.

Emerging at length from the thickly wooded plain, I began the ascent of the Three Rock Mountain, and, in my slackened speed, had full time to gaze upon the bay beneath me, broken with many a promontory, backed by the broad bluff of Howth, and the more distant Lambay. No, it is *not* finer than Naples. I did not say it was; but, seeing it as I then saw it, I thought it could not be surpassed. Indeed, I went further, and defied Naples in this fashion:

> Though no volcano's lurid light
> Over thy blue sea steals along,
> Nor Pescator beguiles the night
> With cadence of his simple song;
>
> Though none of dark Calabria's daughters
> With tinkling lute thy echoes wake,
> Mingling their voices with the waters,
> As 'neath the prow the ripples break;
>
> Although no cliffs, with myrtle crown'd,
> Reflected in thy tide are seen,
> Nor olives, bending to the ground,
> Relieve the laurel's darker green;
>
> Yet—yet——

Ah, there was the difficulty—I had begun with the plaintiff, and I really hadn't a word to say for the defendant; and so, voting comparisons odious, I set forward on my journey.

As I rode into Enniskerry to breakfast, I had the satisfaction of overhearing some very flattering comments upon Blondel, which rather consoled me for some less laudatory remarks upon my own horsemanship. By the way, can there possibly be a more ignorant sarcasm than to say a man rides like a tailor? Why, of all trades, who so constantly sits straddle-legged as a tailor? and yet he is the especial mark of this impertinence.

I pushed briskly on after breakfast, and soon found myself in the deep shady woods that lead to the Dargle. I hurried through the picturesque demesne, associated as it was with a thousand little vulgar incidents of city junketings, and rode on for the Glen of the Downs. Blondel and I had now established a most admirable understanding with each other. It was a sort of reciprocity by which *I* bound myself never to control *him*, he in turn consenting not to unseat *me*. He gave the initiative to the system, by setting off at his pleasant little rocking canter whenever he chanced upon a bit of favorable ground, and invariably pulled up when the road was stony and uneven; thus showing me that he was a beast with what Lord Brougham would call "a wise discretion." In like manner he would halt to pluck any stray ears of wild oats that grew along the hedge sides, and occasionally slake his thirst at convenient streamlets. If I dismounted to walk at his side, he moved along unheld,

his head almost touching my elbow, and his plaintive blue eye mildly beaming on me with an expression that almost spoke—nay, it did speak. I'm sure I felt it, as though I could swear to it, whispering: "Yes, Potts, two more friendless creatures than ourselves are not easy to find. The world wants not either of us; not that we abuse it, despise it, or treat it ungenerously—rather the reverse, we incline favorably towards it, and would, occasion serving, befriend it—but we are not, so to say, 'of it.' There may be, here and there, a man or a horse that would understand or appreciate us, but they stand alone—they are not belonging to classes. They are, like ourselves, exceptional." If his expression said this much, there was much unspoken melancholy in his sad glance, also, which seemed to say: "What a deal of sorrow could I reveal if I might—what injuries—what wrong—what cruel misconceptions of my nature and disposition—what mistaken notions of my character and intentions! What pretentious stupidity, too, have I seen preferred before me—creatures with, mayhap, a glossier coat or a more silky forelock——" "Ah, Blondel, take courage—men are just as ungenerous, just as erring!" "Not that I have not had my triumphs, too," he seemed to say, as, cocking his ears, and ambling with a more elevated toss of the head, his tail would describe an arch like a waterfall; "no salmon-colored silk stockings danced sarabands on *my* back; I was always ridden in the Haute Ecole by Monsieur l'Etrier himself, the stately gentleman in jack-boots and long-waisted dress-coat, whose five minutes no persuasive bravos could ever prolong." I thought—nay, I was certain at times—that I could read in his thoughtful face the painful sorrows of one who had outlived popular favor, and who had survived to see himself supplanted and dethroned.

There are no two destinies which chime in so well together as that of him who is beaten down by sheer distrust of himself, and that of the man who has seen better days. Although the one be just entering on life, while the other is going out of it, if they meet on the threshold, they stop to form a friendship. Now, though Blondel was not a man, he supplied to my friendlessness the place of one.

The sun was near its setting, as I rode down the little hill into the village of Ashford, a picturesque little spot in the midst of mountains, and with a bright clear stream bounding through it, as fearlessly as though in all the liberty of open country. I tried to make my entrance what stage people call effective. I threw myself, albeit a little jaded, into an attitude of easy indifference, slouched my hat to one side, and suffered the sprig of laburnum, with which I had adorned it, to droop in graceful guise over one shoulder. The villagers stared; some saluted me; and taken, perhaps, by the cool acquiescence of my manner, as I returned the courtesy, seemed well disposed to believe me of some note.

I rode into the little stable-yard of the "Lamb" and dismounted. I gave up my horse, and walked into the inn. I don't know how others feel it—I greatly doubt if they will have the honesty to tell—but, for myself, I confess that I never entered an inn or an hotel without a most uncomfortable conflict within: a struggle made up of two very antagonistic impulses—the wish to seem something important, and a lively terror lest the pretense should turn out to be costly. Thus swayed by opposing motives, I sought a compromise by assuming that I was incog.—for the present a nobody, to be treated without any marked attention, and to whom the acme of respect would be a seeming indifference.

"What is your village called?" I said, carelessly, to the waiter, as he laid the cloth.

"Ashford, your honor. 'Tis down in all the books," answered the waiter.

"Is it noted for anything, or is there anything remarkable in the neighborhood?"

"Indeed, there is, sir, and plenty. There's Glenmalure and the Devil's Glen; and there's Mr. Snow Malone's place, that everybody goes to see; and there's the fishing of Doyle's river—trout, eight, nine, maybe twelve, pounds' weight; and there's Mr. Reeve's cottage—a Swiss cottage belike—at Kinmacreedy; but, to be sure, there must be an order for that."

"I never take much trouble," I said, indolently. "Whom have you got in the house at present?"

"There's young Lord Keldrum, sir, and two more with him, for the fishing; and the next room to you here, there's Father Dyke, from Inistioge, and he's going, by the same token, to dine with the lord to-day."

"Don't mention to his lordship that I am here," said I, hastily. "I desire to be quite unknown down here." The waiter promised obedience, without vouchsafing any misgivings as to the possibility of his disclosing what he did not know.

To his question as to my dinner, I carelessly said, as if I were in a West-end club, "Never mind soup—a little fish—a cutlet and a partridge. Or order it yourself—I

am indifferent." The waiter had scarcely left the room when I was startled by the sound of voices so close to me as to seem at my side. They came from a little wooden balcony to the adjoining room, which, by its pretentious bow-window, I recognized to be the state apartment of the inn, and now in the possession of Lord Keldrum and his party. They were talking away in that gay, rattling, discursive fashion very young men do amongst each other, and discussed fishing-flies, the neighboring gentlemen's seats, and the landlady's niece.

"By the way, Kel," cried one, "it was in your visit to the bar that you met your priest, wasn't it?"

"Yes; I offered him a cigar, and we began to chat together, and so I asked him to dine with us to-day."

"And he refused?"

"Yes; but he has since changed his mind, and sent a message to say he'll be with us at eight."

"I should like to see your father's face, Kel, when he heard of your entertaining the Reverend Father Dyke at dinner."

"Well I suppose he would say it was carrying conciliation a little too far; but, as the adage says, *A la guerre*——"

At this juncture, another burst in amongst them, calling out, "You'd never guess who's just arrived here, in strict incog., and having bribed Mike, the waiter, to silence. Burgoyne!"

"Not Jack Burgoyne?"

"Jack himself. I had the portrait so correctly drawn by the waiter, that there's no mistaking him—the long hair, green complexion, sheepish look, all perfect. He came on a hack, a little cream-colored pad he got at Dycer's, and fancies he's quite unknown."

"What *can* he be up to now?"

"I think I have it," said his lordship. "Courtenay has got two three-year-olds down here at his uncle's, one of them under heavy engagements for the spring meetings. Master Jack has taken a run down to have a look at them.

"By Jove, Kel, you're right! he's always wide-awake, and that stupid, leaden-eyed look he has, has done him good service in the world."

"I say, old Oxley, shall we dash in and unearth him? Or shall we let him fancy that we know nothing of his being here at all."

"What does Hammond say?"

"I'd say, leave him to himself," replied a deep voice; "you can't go and see him, without asking him to dinner; and he'll walk into us after, do what we will."

"Not, surely, if we don't play," said Oxley.

"Wouldn't he though? Why he'd screw a bet out of a bishop."

"I'd do with him as Tomkinson did," said his lordship; "he had him down at his lodge in Scotland, and he bet him fifty pounds that he couldn't pass a week without a wager. Jack booked the bet and won it, and Tomkinson franked the company."

"What an artful villain my counterpart must be!" I said. I stared in the glass to see if I could discover the sheepishness they laid such stress on. I was pale, to be sure, and my hair a light brown, but so was Shelly's; indeed, there was a wild, but soft, expression in my eyes that resembled his, and I could recognize many things in our natures that seemed to correspond. It was the poetic dreaminess, the lofty abstractedness from all the petty cares of every-day life, which vulgar people set down as simplicity; and thus—

> "The soaring thoughts that reached the stars,
> Seemed ignorance to *them*."

As I uttered the consolatory lines, I felt two hands firmly pressed over my eyes, while a friendly voice called out, "Found out, old fellow!—run fairly to earth!"

"Ask him if he knows you," whispered another, but in a voice I could catch.

"Who am I, Jack?" cried the first speaker.

"Situated as I now am," I replied, "I am unable to pronounce; but of one thing I am assured—I am certain I am not called Jack."

The slow and measured intonation of my voice seemed to electrify them, for my captor relinquished his hold and fell back, while the two others, after a few seconds of blank surprise, burst into a roar of laughter: a sentiment which the other could not refrain from, while he struggled to mutter some words of apology.

"Perhaps I can explain your mistake," I said, blandly. "I am supposed to be extremely like the Prince of Salms Hökinshauven——"

"No, no!" burst in Lord Keldrum, whose voice I recognized, "we never saw the prince. The blunder of the waiter led us into this embarrassment. We fancied you were——"

"Mr. Burgoyne," I chimed in.

"Exactly; Jack Burgoyne. But you're not a bit like him."

"Strange, then; but I'm constantly mistaken for him, and, when in London, I'm actually persecuted by people calling out, 'When did you come up, Jack?' 'Where

do you hang out?' 'How long do you stay?' 'Dine with me to-day—to-morrow—Saturday?' and so on. And although, as I have remarked, these are only so many embarrassments for me, they all show how popular must be my prototype." I had purposely made this speech of mine a little long, for I saw by the disconcerted looks of the party that they did not see how to wind up "the situation," and, like all awkward men, I grew garrulous where I ought to have been silent. While I rambled on, Lord Keldrum exchanged a word or two with one of his friends; and, as I finished, he turned towards me, and, with an air of much courtesy, said—

"We owe you every apology for this intrusion, and hope you will pardon it. There is, however, but one way in which we can certainly feel assured that we have your forgiveness—that is, by your joining us. I see that your dinner is in preparation, so pray let me countermand it, and say that you are our guest."

"Lord Keldrum," said one of the party, presenting the speaker. "My name is Hammond, and this is Captain Oxley, Coldstream Guards."

I saw that this move required an exchange of ratifications, and so I bowed, and said, "Algernon Sydney Potts."

"There are Staffordshire Pottses?"

"No relation," I said, stiffly. It was Hammond who made the remark, and with a sneering manner that I could not abide.

"Well, Mr. Potts, it is agreed," said Lord Keldrum, with his peculiar urbanity, "we shall see you at eight. No dressing. You'll find us in this fishing costume you see now."

I trust my reader, who has dined out any day he pleased, and in any society he has liked, these years past, will forgive me if I do not enter into any detailed account of my reasons for accepting this invitation. Enough if I freely own that to me, A. S. Potts, such an unexpected honor was about the same surprise as if I had been announced governor of a colony, or bishop in a new settlement.

"At eight sharp, Mr. Potts."

"The next door down the passage."

"Just as you are, remember," were the three parting admonitions with which they left me.

CHAPTER III.

TRUTH NOT ALWAYS IN WINE.

Who has not experienced the charm of the first time in his life, when, totally removed from all the accidents of his station, the circumstance of his fortune, and his other belongings, he has taken his place amongst perfect strangers, and been estimated by the claims of his own individuality? Is it not this which gives the almost ecstasy of our first tour—our first journey? There are none to say, "Who is this Potts that gives himself these airs?" "What pretension has he to say this, or order that?" "What would old Peter say if he saw his son to-day?" with all the other "What-has-the-world-come-tos?" and "What-are-we to-see-nexts?" I say it is with a glorious sense of independence that one sees himself emancipated from all these restraints, and recognizes his freedom to be that which nature has made him.

As I sat on Lord Keldrum's left—Father Dyke was on his right—was I in any real quality other than I ever am? Was my nature different, my voice, my manner, my social tone, as I received all the bland attentions of my courteous host? And yet, in my heart of hearts, I felt that if it were known to that polite company I was the son of Peter Potts, 'pothecary, all my conversational courage would have failed me. I would not have dared to assert fifty things I now declared, nor vouched for a hundred that I as assuredly guaranteed. If I had had to carry about me traditions of the shop in Mary's Abbey, the laboratory, and the rest of it, how could I have had the nerve to discuss any of the topics on which I now pronounced so authoritatively? And yet, these were all accidents of my existence—no more ME than was the color of *his* whiskers mine who vaccinated me for cow-pox. The man Potts was himself through all; he was neither compounded of senna and salts, nor amalgamated with sarsaparilla and the acids; but by the cruel laws of a harsh conventionality it was decreed otherwise, and the trade of the father descends to the son in every estimate of all he does, and says, and thinks. The converse of the proposition I was now to feel in the success I obtained in this company. I was, as the Germans would say, "Der Herr Potts SELBST, nicht nach seinen Begebenheiten"—the man Potts, not the creature of his belongings.

The man thus freed from his "antecedents," and owning no "relatives," feels like one to whom a great, a most unlimited, credit has been opened, in matter of opinion. Not reduced to fashion his sentiments by some supposed standard becoming his station, he roams at will over the broad prairie of life, enough if he can show cause why he says this or thinks that, without

having to defend himself for his parentage, and the place he was born in. Little wonder if, with such a sum to my credit. I drew largely on it; little wonder if I were dogmatical and demonstrative; little wonder if, when my reason grew wearied with facts, I reposed on my imagination in fiction.

Be it remembered, however, that I only became what I have set down here after an excellent dinner, a considerable quantity of champagne, and no small share of claret, strong-bodied enough to please the priest. From the moment we sat down to table, I conceived for him a sort of distrust. He was painfully polite and civil; he had a soft slippery, Clare accent; but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye that showed he was by nature satirical. Perhaps because we were more reading men than the others that it was we soon found ourselves pitted against each other in argument, and this not upon one, but upon every possible topic that turned up. Hammond, I found, also, stood by the priest; Oxley was *my* backer; and his lordship played umpire. Dyke was a shrewd, sarcastic dog in his way, but he had no chance with me. How mercilessly I treated his Church!—he pushed me to it—what an *exposé* did I make of the Pope and his government, with all their extortions and cruelties! how ruthlessly I showed them up as the sworn enemies of all freedom and enlightenment! The priest never got angry. He was too cunning for that, and he even laughed at some of my anecdotes, of which I related a great many.

"Don't be so hard on him, Potts," whispered my lord, as the day wore on; "he's not one of us, you know!"

This speech put me into a flutter of delight. It was not alone that he called me Potts, but there was also an acceptance of me as one of his own set. We were, in fact, henceforth *nous autres*. Enchanting recognition, never to be forgotten!

"But what would you do with us?" said Dyke, mildly remonstrating against some severe measures we of the landed interest might be yet driven to resort to.

"I don't know—that is to say—I have not made up my mind whether it were better to make a clearance of you altogether, or to bribe you."

"Bribe us by all means, then!" said he, with a most serious earnestness.

"Ah! but could we rely upon you?" I asked.

"That would greatly depend upon the price."

"I'll not haggle about terms, nor I'm sure would Keldrum," said I, nodding over to his lordship.

"You are only just to me, in that," said he, smiling.

"That's all fine talking for you fellows who had the luck to be first on the list, but what are poor devils like Oxley and myself to do?" said Hammond. "Taxation comes down to second sons."

"And the *Times* says that's all right," added Oxley.

"And I say it's all wrong; and I say more," I broke in—"I say that, of all the tyrannies of Europe, I know of none like that newspaper. Why, sir, whose station, I would ask, nowadays, can exempt him from its impertinent criticisms? Can Keldrum say — can I say — that to-morrow or next day we shall not be arraigned for this, that, or t'other? I choose, for instance, to manage my estate—the property that has been in my family for centuries—the acres that have descended to us by grants as old as Magna Charta. I desire, for reasons that seem sufficient to myself, to convert arable into grass land. I say to one of my tenant-farmers—it's Hedgeworth—no matter, I shall not mention names, but I say to him——"

"I know the man," broke in the priest; "you mean Hedgeworth Davis, of Mount Davis."

"No, sir, I do not," said I, angrily, for I resented this attempt to run me to earth.

"Hedgeworth! Hedgeworth! It ain't that fellow that was in the Rifles; the second battalion, is it?" said Oxley.

"I repeat," said I, "that I will mention no names."

"My mother had some relatives—Hedgeworths: they were from Herefordshire. How odd, Potts, if we should turn out to be connections! you said that these people were related to you?"

"I hope," I said, angrily, "that I am not bound to give the birth, parentage and education of every man whose name I may mention in conversation. At least, I would protest that I have not prepared myself for such a demand upon my memory."

"Of course not, Potts. It would be a test no man could submit to," said his lordship.

"That Hedgeworth, who was in the Rifles, exceeded all the fellows I ever met in drawing the long bow. There was no country he had not been in, no army he had not served with; he was related to every celebrated man in Europe; and, after all, it turned out that his father was an attorney at Market Harborough, and subagent to one of our fellows who had some

property there." This was said by Hammond, who directed the speech entirely to me.

"Confound the Hedgeworths, all together," Oxley broke in. "They have carried us miles away from what we were talking of."

This was a sentiment that met my heartiest concurrence, and I nodded in friendly recognition to the speaker, and drank off my glass to his health.

"Who can give us a song? I'll back his reverence here to be a vocalist," cried Hammond. And sure enough, Dyke sang one of the national melodies with great feeling and taste. Oxley followed with something in less perfect taste, and we all grew very jolly. Then there came a broiled bone and some deviled kidneys, and a warm brew which Hammond himself concocted—a most insidious liquor, which had a strong odor of lemons, and was compounded, at the same time, of little else than rum and sugar.

There is an adage that says "in vino veritas," which I shrewdly suspect to be a great fallacy: at least, as regards my own case, I know it to be totally inapplicable. I am, in my sober hours—and I am proud to say that the exceptions from such are of the rarest—one of the most veracious of mortals; indeed, in my frank sincerity, I have often given offense to those who like a courteous hypocrisy better than an ungraceful truth. Whenever, by any chance, it has been my ill-fortune to transgress these limits, there is no bound to my imagination. There is nothing too extravagant or too vainglorious for me to say of myself. All the strange incidents of romance that I have read, all the travelers' stories, newspaper accidents, adventures by sea and land, wonderful coincidences, unexpected turns of fortune, I adapt to myself, and coolly relate them as personal experiences. Listeners have afterwards told me that I possess an amount of consistence, a verisimilitude in these narratives perfectly marvelous, and only to be accounted for by supposing that I myself must, for the time being, be the dupe of my own imagination. Indeed, I am sure such must be the true explanation of this curious fact. How, in any other mode, explain the rash wagers, absurd and impossible engagements I have contracted in such moments, backing myself to leap twenty-three feet on the level sward; to dive in six fathoms water and fetch up heaven knows what of shells and marine curiosities from the bottom; to ride the most unmanageable of horses; and, single-handed and unarmed, to fight the fiercest bulldog in England? Then, as to intellectual feats, what have I not engaged to perform! Sums of mental arithmetic; whole newspapers committed to memory after one reading; verse compositions, on any theme, in ten languages; and once a written contract to compose a whole opera, with all the scores, within twenty-four hours. To a nature thus strangely constituted, wine was a perfect magic wand, transforming a poor, weak, distrustful modest man into a hero; and yet, even with such temptations, my excesses were extremely rare and unfrequent. Are there many, I would ask, that could resist the passport to such a dreamland, with only the penalty of a headache the next morning? Some one would, perhaps, suggest that these were enjoyments to pay forfeit on. Well, so they were; but I must not anticipate. And now to my tale.

To Hammond's brew there succeeded one by Oxley, made after an American receipt, and certainly both fragrant and insinuating, and then came a concoction made by the priest, which he called "Father Hosey's pride." It was made in a bowl, and drunk out of lemon-rinds, ingeniously fitted into the wine-glasses. I remember no other particulars about it, though I can call to mind much of the conversation that preceded it. How I gave a long historical account of my family, that we came originally from Corsica, the name Potts being a corruption of Pozzo, and that we were of the same stock as the celebrated diplomatist, Pozzo di Borgo. Our unclaimed estates in the island were of fabulous value, but in asserting my right to them I should accept thirteen mortal duels, the arrears of a hundred and odd years unscored off, in anticipation of which I had at one time taken lessons from Angelo in fencing, which led to the celebrated challenge they might have read in *Galignani*, where I offered to meet any swordsman in Europe for ten thousand napoleons, giving choice of the weapon to my adversary. With a tear to the memory of the poor French colonel that I killed at Sedan, I turned the conversation. Being in France, I incidentally mentioned some anecdotes of military life, and how I had invented the rifle called after Minié's name, and, in a moment of good-nature, given that excellent fellow my secret.

"I will say," said I, "that Minié has shown more gratitude than some others nearer home, but we'll talk of rifled cannon another time."

In an episode about bear-shooting, I mentioned the Emperor of Russia, poor

dear Nicholas, and told how we had once exchanged horses, mine being more strong-boned and a weight-carrier, his a light Caucasian mare, of purest breed, the "dam of that creature you may see below in the stable now," said I, carelessly. "'Come and see me one of these days, Potts,' said he, in parting; 'come and pass a week with me at Constantinople.' This was the first intimation he had ever given of his project against Turkey, and when I told it to the Duke of Wellington, his remark was a muttered 'Strange fellow, Potts—knows everything!" though he made no reply to me at the time."

It was somewhere about this period that the priest began with what struck me as an attempt to outdo me as a story-teller, an effort I should have treated with the most contemptuous indifference but for the amount of attention bestowed on him by the others. Nor was this all; but actually I perceived that a kind of rivalry was attempted to be established, so that we were pitted directly against each other. Amongst the other self-delusions of such moments was the profound conviction I entertained that I was master of all games of skill and address, superior to Major A. at whist, and able to give Staunton a pawn and the move at chess. The priest was just as vainglorious. "He'd like to see the man who'd play him a game of 'spoiled five'"—whatever that was—"or draughts; ay, or, though it was not his pride, a bit of backgammon."

"Done, for fifty pounds; double on the gammon!" cried I.

"Fifty fiddlesticks!" cried he; "where would you or I find as many shillings?"

"What do you mean, sir?" said I, angrily. "Am I to suppose that you doubt my competence to risk such a contemptible sum, or is it to your own ability alone you would testify?"

A very acrimonious dispute followed, of which I have no clear recollection. I only remember how Hammond was out-and-out for the priest, and Oxley too tipsy to take *my* part with any efficiency. At last—how arranged I can't say—peace was restored, and the next thing I can recall was listening to Father Dyke giving a long, and of course a most fabulous, history of a ring that he wore on his second finger. It was given by the Pretender, he said, to his uncle, the celebrated Carmelite monk, Lawrence O'Kelly, who for years had followed the young prince's fortunes. It was an onyx, with the letters C. E. S. engraved on it. Keldrum took an immense fancy to it; he protested that everything that attached to that unhappy family possessed in his eye an uncommon interest. "If you have a fancy to take up Potts's wager," said he, laughingly, "I'll give you fifty pounds for your signet ring."

The priest demurred—Hammond interposed—then there was more discussion, now warm, now jocose. Oxley tried to suggest something, which we all laughed at. Keldrum placed the backgammon board meanwhile, but I can give you no clear account of what ensued, though I remember that the terms of our wager were committed to writing by Hammond, and signed by Father D. and myself, and in the conditions there figured a certain ring, guaranteed to have belonged to, and been worn by, his Royal Highness Charles Edward, and a cream-colored horse, equally guaranteed as the produce of a Causasian mare presented by the late Emperor Nicholas to the present owner. The document was witnessed by all three, Oxley's name written in two letters, and a flourish.

After that, I played, and lost!

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT REFLECTIONS ON AWAKING.

I CAN recall to this very hour the sensations of headache and misery with which I awoke the morning after this debauch. Racking pain it was, with a sort of tremulous beating all through the brain, as though a small engine had been set to work there, and that piston, and boiler, and connecting rod were all banging, fizzing, and vibrating amid my fevered senses. I was, besides, much puzzled to know where I was, and how I had come there. Controversial divinity, genealogy, horse-racing, the peerage, and "double sixes" were dancing a wild cotillon through my brain; and although a waiter more than once cautiously obtruded his head into the room, to see if I were asleep, and as guardedly withdrew it again, I never had energy to speak to him, but lay passive and still, waiting till my mind might clear, and the cloud-fog that obscured my faculties might be wafted away.

At last—it was towards evening—the man, possibly becoming alarmed at my protracted lethargy, moved somewhat briskly through the room, and with that amount of noise that showed he meant to arouse me, disturbed chairs and fire-irons indiscriminately.

"Is it late or early?" asked I, faintly.

"'Tis near five, sir, and a beautiful evening," said he, drawing nigh, with the air of one disposed for colloquy.

I didn't exactly like to ask where I was, and tried to ascertain the fact by a little circumlocution. "I suppose," said I, yawning, "for all that is to be done in a place like this, when up, one might just as well stay abed, eh?"

"'Tis the snuggest place, anyhow," said he, with that peculiar disposition to agree with you so characteristic in an Irish waiter.

"No society?" sighed I.

"No, indeed, sir."

"No theater?"

"Devil a one, sir."

"No sport?"

"Yesterday was the last of the season, sir; and signs on it, his lordship and the other gentlemen was off immediately after breakfast."

"You mean Lord—Lord——" A mist was clearing slowly away, but I could not yet see clearly.

"Lord Keldrum, sir; a real gentleman every inch of him."

"Oh! yes, to be sure—a very old friend of mine," muttered I. "And so he's gone, is he?"

"Yes, sir; and the last word he said was about your honor."

"About me—what was it?"

"Well, indeed, sir," replied the waiter, with a hesitating and confused manner, "I didn't rightly understand it; but as well as I could catch the words, it was something about hoping your honor had more of that wonderful breed of horses the Emperor of Roosia gave you."

"Oh yes! I understand," said I, stopping him abruptly. "By the way, how is Blondel—that is, my horse—this morning?"

"Well, he looked fresh and hearty, when he went off this morning at daybreak——"

"What do you mean?" cried I, jumping up in my bed. "Went off? where to?"

"With Father Dyke on his back; and a neater hand he couldn't wish over him. 'Tim,' says he to the hostler, as he mounted, 'there's a five-shilling piece for you, for hansel, for I won this baste last night, and you must drink my health and wish me luck with him.'"

I heard no more, but sinking back into the bed, I covered my face with my hands, overcome with shame and misery. All the mists that had blurred my faculties had now been swept clean away, and the whole history of the previous evening was revealed before me. My stupid folly, my absurd boastfulness, my egregious story-telling—not to call it worse—were all there; but—shall I acknowledge it?—what pained me not less poignantly was the fact that I ventured to stake the horse I had merely hired, and actually lost him at the play-table.

As soon as I rallied from this state of self-accusation, I set to work to think how I should manage to repossess myself of my beast, my loss of which might be converted into a felony. To follow the priest and ransom Blondel was my first care. Father Dyke would most probably not exact an unreasonable price; he, of course, never believed one word of my nonsensical narrative about Schamyl and the Caucasus, and he'd not revenge upon Potts sober the follies of Potts tipsy. It is true, my purse was a very slender one, but Blondel, to any one unacquainted with his pedigree, could not be a costly animal; fifteen pounds—twenty, certainly—ought to buy what the priest would call "every hair on his tail."

It was now too late in the evening to proceed to execute the measures I had resolved on, and so I determined to lie still and ponder over them. Dismissing the waiter, with an order to bring me a cup of tea about eight o'clock, I resumed my cogitations. They were not pleasant ones: Potts a byword for the most outrageous and incoherent balderdash and untruth—Potts in the *Hue and Cry*—Potts in the dock—Potts in the pillory—Potts paragraphed in *Punch*—portrait of Potts, price one penny!—these were only a few of the forms in which the descendant of the famous Corsican family of Pozzo di Borgo now presented himself to my imagination.

The courts and quadrangles of Old Trinity ringing with laughter, the coarse exaggerations of tasteless scoffers, the jokes and sneers of stupidity, malice, and all uncharitableness, rang in my ears as if I heard them. All possible and impossible versions of the incident passed in review before me: my father, driven distracted by impertinent inquiries, cutting me off with a shilling, and then dying of mortification and chagrin—rewards offered for my apprehension—descriptions, not in any way flatteries, of my personal appearance—paragraphs of local papers hinting that the notorious Potts was supposed to have been seen in our neigborhood yesterday, with sly suggestions about looking after stable-doors, etc. I could bear it no longer. I jumped up, and rang the bell violently.

"You know this Father Dyke, waiter? In what part of the country does he live?"

"He's parish priest of Inistioge," said he; "the snuggest place in the whole county."

"How far from this may it be ?"

"It's a matter of five-and-forty miles; and, by the same token, he said he'd not not draw bridle till he got home to-night, for there was a fair at Grague to-morrow, and if he wasn't pleased with the baste he'd sell him there."

I groaned deeply, for here was a new complication entirely unlooked for. "You can't possibly mean," gasped I out, "that a respectable clergyman would expose for sale a horse lent to him casually by a friend ?" for the thought struck me that this protest of mine should be thus early on record.

The waiter scratched his head and looked confused. Whether another version of the event possessed him, or that my question staggered his convictions, I am unable to say, but he made no reply. "It is true," continued I, in the same strain, "that I met his reverence last night for the first time. My friend, Lord Keldrum, made us acquainted; but seeing him received at my noble friend's board, I naturally felt, and said to myself, 'The man Keldrum admits to his table is the equal of any one.' Could anything be more reasonable than that ?"

"No, indeed, sir; nothing," said the waiter, obsequiously.

"Well, then," resumed I, "some day or other it may chance that you will be called on to remember and recall this conversation between us; if so, it will be important that you should have a clear and distinct memory of the fact, that when I awoke in the morning, and asked for my horse, the answer you made me was——What was the answer you made me ?"

"The answer I med was this," said the fellow, sturdily, and with an effrontery I can never forget—"the answer I med was, that the man that won him took him away."

"You're an insolent scoundrel," cried I, boiling over with passion, "and if you don't ask pardon for this outrage on your knees, I'll include you in the indictment for conspiracy."

So far from proceeding to the penitential act I proposed, the fellow grinned from ear to ear, and left the room. It was a long time before I could recover my wonted calm and composure. That this rascal's evidence would be fatal to me if the question ever came to trial, was as clear as noonday; not less clear was it that he knew this himself.

"I must go back at once to town," thought I. "I will surrender myself to the law. If a compromise be impossible, I will perish at the stake."

I forgot there was no stake, but there were wool-carding, and oakum-picking, and wheel-treading, and oyster-shell pounding, and other small plays of this nature, infinitely more degrading to humanity than all the cruelties of our barbarous ancestors.

Now, in no record of lives of adventure had I met any account of such trials as these. The Silvio Pellicos of Pentonville are yet unwritten martyrs. Prison discipline would vulgarize the grandest epic that ever was conceived. "Anything rather than this," said I aloud. "Proscribed, outlawed, hunted down, but never, grey-coated and hairclipped, shall a Potts be sentenced to the 'crank,' or blackholed as refractory!—Bring me my bill," cried I, in a voice of indignant anger. "I will go forth into the world of darkness and tempest—I will meet the storm and the hurricane; better all the conflict of the elements than man's—than man's——" I wasn't exactly sure what, but there was no need of the word, for a gust of wind had just flattened my umbrella in my face as I issued forth, and left me breathless, as the door closed behind me.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROSARY AT INISTIOGE.

As I walked onward against the swooping wind and the plashing rain, I felt a sort of heroic ardor in the notion of breasting the adverse waves of life so boldly. It is not every fellow could do this: throw his knapsack on his shoulder, seize his stick, and set out in storm and blackness. No, Potts, my man; for downright inflexibility of purpose, for bold and resolute action, you need yield to none. It was, indeed, an awful night; the thunder rolled and crashed with scarce an interval of cessation; forked lightning tore across the sky in every direction; while the wind swept through the deep glen, smashing branches and uplifting large trees like mere shrubs. I was soon completely drenched, and my soaked clothes hung around with the weight of lead; my spirits, however, sustained me, and I toiled along, occasionally in a sort of wild bravado, giving a cheer as the thunder rolled close above my head, and trying to sing, as though my heart were as gay and

my spirits as light as in an hour of happiest abandonment.

Jean Paul has somewhere the theory that our good genius is attached to us from our birth by a film fine as gossamer, and which few of us escape rupturing in the first years of youth, thus throwing ourselves at once without chart or pilot upon the broad ocean of life. He, however, more happily constituted, who feels the guidance of his guardian spirit, recognizes the benefits of its care, and the admonitions of its wisdom —*he* is destined to great things. Such men discover new worlds beyond the seas, carry conquest over millions, found dynasties, and build up empires; they whom the world regards as demigods having simply the wisdom of being led by fortune, and not severing the slender thread that unites them to their destiny. Was I, Potts, in this glorious category? Had the lesson of the great moralist been such a warning to me that I had preserved the filmy link unbroken? I really began to think so; a certain impulse, a whispering voice within, that said, "Go on!" On, ever onward! seemed to be the accents of that fate, which had great things in store for me, and would eventually make me illustrious.

No illusions of your own, Potts, no phantasmagoria of your own poor heated fancy, must wile you away from the great and noble part destined for you. No weakness, no faintheartedness, no shrinking from toil, nor even peril. Work hard to know thoroughly for what fate intends you; read your credentials well, and then go to your post unflinchingly. Revolving this theory of mine, I walked ever on. It opened a wide field, and my imagination disported in it, as might a wild mustang over some vast prairie. The more I thought over it, the more did it seem to me the real embodiment of that superstition which extends to every land and every family of men. We are lucky when, submitting to our good genius, we suffer ourselves to be led along unhesitatingly; we are unlucky when, breaking our frail bonds, we encounter life unguided and unaided.

What a docile, obedient, and believing pupil did I pledge myself to be! Fate should see that she had no refractory nor rebellious spirit in me, no self-indulgent voluptuary, seeking only the sunny side of existence, but a nature ready to confront the rugged conflict of life, and to meet its hardships, if such were my allotted path.

I applied the circumstances in which I then found myself to my theory, and met no difficulty in the adaptation. Blondel was to perform a great part in my future. Blondel was a symbol selected by fate to indicate a certain direction. Blondel was a lamp by which I could find my way in the dark paths of the world. With Blondel my good genius would walk beside me, or occasionally get up on the crupper, but never leave me or desert me. In the high excitement of my mind, I felt no sense of bodily fatigue, but walked on, drenched to the skin, alternately shivering with cold or burning with all the intensity of fever. In this state was it that I entered the little inn of Ovoco soon after daybreak, and stood dripping in the bar, a sad spectacle of exhaustion and excitement. My first question was, "Has Blondel been here?" and, before they could reply, I went on with all the rapidity of delirium to assure them that deception of me would be fruitless; that fate and I understood each other thoroughly, traveled together on the best of terms, never disagreed about anything, but, by a mutual system of give-and-take, hit it off like brothers. I talked for an hour in this strain, and then my poor faculties, long struggling and sore pushed, gave way completely, and I fell into brain-fever.

I chanced upon kind and good-hearted folk, who nursed me with care and watched me with interest; but my illness was a severe one, and it was only in the sixth week that I could be about again, a poor, weak, emaciated creature, with failing limbs and shattered nerves. There is an indescribable sense of weariness in the mind after fever, just as if the brain had been enormously overtaxed and exerted, and that, in the pursuit of all the wild and fleeting fancies of delirium, it had traveled over miles and miles of space. To the depressing influence of this sensation is added the difficulty of disentangling the capricious illusions of the sick-bed from the actual facts of life; and in this maze of confusion my first days of convalescence were passed. Blondel was my great puzzle. Was he a reality, or a mere creature of imagination? Had I really ridden him as a horse, or only as an idea? Was he a quadruped with mane and tail, or an allegory invented to typify destiny? I cannot say what hours of painful brain-labor this inquiry cost me, and what intense research into myself! Strange enough, too, though I came out of the investigation convinced of his existence, I arrived at the conclusion that he was a "horse, and something more." Not that I am able to explain myself more fully on that head, though, if I were writing this portion of my memoirs in German, I suspect I could convey enough of my mean-

ing to give a bad headache to any one indulgent enough to follow me.

I set out once more upon my pilgrimage on a fine day of June, my steps directed to the village of Inistioge, where Father Dyke resided. I was too weak for much exertion, and it was only after five days of the road I reached at nightfall the little glen in which the village stood. The moon was up, streaking the wide market-places with long lines of yellow light between the rows of tall elm-trees, and tipping with silvery sheen the bright eddies of the beautiful river that rolled beside it. Over the granite cliffs that margined the stream, laurel, and arbutus, and wild-holly clustered in wild luxuriance, backed higher up again by tall pine-trees, whose leafy summits stood out against the sky; and lastly, deep within a waving meadow, stood an old ruined abbey, whose traceried window was now softly touched by the moonlight. All was still and silent, except the rush of the rapid river, as I sat down upon a stone bench to enjoy the scene and luxuriate in its tranquil serenity. I had not believed Ireland contained such a spot, for there was all the trim neatness and careful propriety of an English village, with that luxuriance of verdure and wild beauty so eminently Irish. How was it that I had never heard of it before? Were others aware of it, or was the discovery strictly my own? Or can it possibly be that all this picturesque loveliness is but the effect of a mellow moon? While I thus questioned myself, I heard the sound of a quick footstep rapidly approaching, and soon afterwards the pleasant tone of a rich voice humming an opera air. I arose, and saw a tall, athletic-looking figure, with rod and fishing-basket, approaching me.

"May I ask you, sir," said I, addressing him, "if this village contains an inn?"

"There is, or rather there was, a sort of inn here," said he, removing his cigar as he spoke; "but the place is so little visited that I fancy the landlord found it would not answer, and so it is closed at this moment."

"But do visitors—tourists—never pass this way?"

"Yes, and a few salmon-fishers, like myself, come occasionally in the season; but then we dispose ourselves in little lodgings, here and there, some of us with the farmers, one or two of us with the priest."

"Father Dyke?" broke I in.

"Yes; you know him, perhaps?"

"I have heard of him, and met him, indeed," added I, after a pause. "Where may his house be?"

"The prettiest spot in the whole glen. If you'd like to see it in this picturesque moonlight, come along with me."

I accepted the invitation at once, and we walked on together. The easy, half-careless tone of the stranger, the loose, lounging stride of his walk, and a certain something in his mellow voice, seemed to indicate one of those natures which, so to say, take the world well—temperaments that reveal themselves almost immediately. He talked away about fishing as he went, and appeared to take a deep interest in the sport, not heeding much the ignorance I betrayed on the subject, nor my ignoble confession that I had never adventured upon anything higher than a worm and a quill.

"I'm sure," said he, laughingly, "Tom Dyke never encouraged you in such sporting tackle, glorious fly-fisher as he is."

"You forget, perhaps," replied I, "that I scarcely have any acquaintance with him. We met once only at a dinner party."

"He's a pleasant fellow," resumed he; "devilish wide-awake, one must say; up to most things in this same world of ours."

"That much my own brief experience of him can confirm," said I, dryly, for the remark rather jarred upon my feelings.

"Yes," said he, as though following out his own train of thought. "Old Tom is not a bird to be snared with coarse lines. The man must be an early riser that catches him napping."

I cannot describe how this irritated me. It sounded like so much direct sarcasm upon my weakness and want of acuteness.

"There's the 'Rosary;' that's his cottage," said he, taking my arm, while he pointed upward to a little jutting promontory of rock over the river, surmounted by a little thatched cottage almost embowered in roses and honeysuckles. So completely did it occupy the narrow limits of ground, that the windows projected actually over the stream, and the creeping plants that twined through the little balconies hung in tangled masses over the water. "Search where you will through the Scottish and Cumberland scenery, I defy you to match that," said my companion; "not to say that you can hook a four-pound fish from that little balcony on any summer evening while you smoke your cigar."

"It is a lovely spot, indeed," said I, inhaling with ecstasy the delicious perfume which, in the calm night air, seemed to linger in the atmosphere.

"He tells me," continued my companion—"and I take his word for it, for I am no florist—that there are seventy varie-

ties of the rose on and around that cottage. I can answer for it that you can't open a window without a great mass of flowers coming, in showers, over you. I told him, frankly, that if I were his tenant for longer than the fishing season, I'd clear half of them away."

"You live there, then?" asked I, timidly.

"Yes, I rent the cottage, all but two rooms, which he wished to keep for himself, but which he now writes me word may be let, for this month and the next, if a tenant offer. Would you like them?" asked he, abruptly.

"Of all things—that is—I think so—I should like to see them first!" muttered I, half startled by the suddenness of the question.

"Nothing easier," said he, opening a little wicket as he spoke, and beginning to ascend a flight of narrow steps cut in the solid rock. "This is a path of my designing," continued he, "the regular approach is on the other side; but this saves fully half a mile of road, though it be a little steep."

As I followed him up the ascent I proposed to myself a variety of questions, such as, where and how I was to procure accommodation for the night, and in what manner to obtain something to eat, of which I stood much in need? and I had gained a little flower-garden at the rear of the cottage before I had resolved any of these difficult points.

"Here we are," said he, drawing a long breath. "You can't see much of the view at this hour; but to-morrow, when you stand on this spot, and look down that reach of the river, with Mont Alto in the background, you'll tell me if you know anything finer!"

"Is that Edward?" cried a soft voice; and at the same instant a young girl came hastily out of the cottage, and throwing her arms around my companion, exclaimed, "How you have alarmed me! What could possibly have kept you out so late?"

"A broad-shouldered fish, a fellow weighing twelve pounds at the very least, and, who after nigh three hours' playing, got among the rocks and smashed my tackle."

"And you lost him?"

"That did I, and some twenty yards of gut, and the top splice of my best rod, and my temper besides. But I'm forgetting; Mary, here is a gentleman who will, I hope, not refuse to join us at supper. My sister."

By the manner of presentation, it was clear that he expected to hear my name, and so I interposed, "Mr. Potts—Algernon Sydney Potts."

The young lady curtseyed slightly, muttered something like a repetition of the invitation, and led the way into the cottage.

My astonishment was great at the "interior" now before me; for, though all the arrangements bespoke habits of comfort and even luxury, there was a studious observance of cottage style in everything, the bookshelves, the tables, the very pianoforte, being all made of white unvarnished wood; and I now perceived that the young lady herself, with a charming coquetry, had assumed something of the costume of the Oberland, and wore her bodice laced in front, and covered with silver embroidery both tasteful and becoming.

"My name is Crofton," said my host, as he disengaged himself of his basket and tackle; "we are almost as much strangers here as yourself. I came here for the fishing, and mean to take myself off when it's over."

"I hope not, Edward," broke in the girl, who was now, with the assistance of a servant woman, preparing the table for supper; "I hope you'll stay till we see the autumn tints on those trees."

"My sister is just as great an enthusiast about sketching as I am for salmon-fishing," said he, laughingly; "and for my own part, I like scenery and landscape very well, but think them marvelously heightened by something like sport. Are you an angler?"

"No," said I; "I know nothing of the gentle craft."

"Fond of shooting, perhaps? Some men think the two sports incompatible."

"I am as inexpert with the gun as the rod," said I, diffidently.

I perceived that the sister gave a sly look under her long eyelashes towards me, but what its meaning, I could not well discover. Was it depreciation of a man who avowed himself unacquainted with the sports of the field, or was it a quiet recognition of claims more worthy of regard? At all events, I perceived that she had very soft, gentle-looking grey eyes, a very fair skin, and a profusion of beautiful brown hair. I had not thought her pretty at first. I now saw that she was extremely pretty, and her figure, though slightly given to fullness, the perfection of grace.

Hungry, almost famished as I was, with a fast of twelve hours, I felt no impatience so long as she moved about in preparation for the meal. How she disposed the little table equipage, the careful solicitude with which she arranged the fruit and the

flowers—not always satisfied with her first dispositions, but changing them for something different—all interested me vastly, and when at last we were summoned to table, I actually felt sorry and disappointed.

Was it really so delicious, was the cookery so exquisite? I own frankly that I am not a trustworthy witness, but if my oath could be taken, I am willing to swear that I believe there never were such salmon-steaks, such a pigeon-pie, and such a damson-tart served to mortals as these. My enthusiasm, I suspect, must have betrayed itself in some outward manifestation, for I remember Crofton laughingly having remarked—

"You will turn my sister's head, Mr. Potts, by such flatteries; all the more, since her cookery is self-taught."

"Don't believe him, Mr. Potts; I have studied all the great masters of the art, and you shall have an omelette to-morrow for breakfast Brillat Savarin himself would not despise."

I blushed at the offer of an hospitality so neatly and delicately insinuated, and had really no words to acknowledge it, nor was my confusion unfavorably judged by my hosts. Crofton marked it quickly and said—

"Yes, Mr. Potts, and I'll teach you to hook a trout afterwards. Meanwhile, let us have a glass of Sauterne together; we drink it out of green glasses, to cheat ourselves into the fancy that it's Rhenish."

"'Am Rhein, am Rhein, da wachsen unsere Reben,'" said I, quoting the students' song.

"Oh, have you been in Germany?" cried she, eagerly.

"Alas! no," said I. "I have never traveled." I thought she looked disappointed as I said this. Indeed, I already wished it unsaid, but her brother broke in with—

"We are regular vagabonds, Mr. Potts. My sister and myself have had a restless paroxysm for the last three years of life, and what with seeking cool spots for the summer and hot climates for the winter, we are scarcely ever off the road."

"Like the gentleman, I suppose, who ate oysters for appetite, but carried his system so far as to induce indigestion." My joke failed; nobody laughed, and I was overwhelmed with confusion, which I was fain to bury in my strawberries and cream.

"Let us have a little music, Mary," said Crofton. "Do you play or sing, Mr. Potts?"

"Neither. I do nothing," cried I, in despair. "As Sydney Smith says, 'I know something about the Romans,' but for any gift or grace which could adorn society, or make time pass more pleasantly, I am an utter bankrupt."

The young girl had, while I was speaking, taken her place at the pianoforte, and was half listlessly suffering her hands to fall in chords over the instrument.

"Come out upon this terrace, here," cried Crofton to me, "and we'll have our cigar. What I call a regular luxury after a hard day is to lounge out here in the cool night air, and enjoy one's weed while listening to Spohr or Beethoven."

It was really delightful. The bright stars were all reflected in the calm river down below, and a thousand odors floated softly on the air as we sat there.

Are there not in every man's experience short periods in which he seemed to have lived longer than during whole years of life? They tell us there are certain conditions of the atmosphere, inappreciable as to the qualities, which seem to ripen wines, imparting to young fresh vintages all the mellow richness of age, all the depth of flavor, all the velvety softness of time. May there not possibly be influences which similarly affect our natures? May there not be seasons in which changes as great as these are wrought within us? I firmly believe it, and as firmly that such a period was that in which I sat on the balcony over the Nore, listening to Mary Crofton as she sang, but just as often lost to every sound, and deep in a heaven of blended enjoyments, of which no one ingredient was in the ascendant. Starry sky, rippling river, murmuring night winds, perfumed air, floating music, all mingling as do the odors of an incense, and, like an incense, filling the brain with a delicious intoxication.

Hour after hour must have passed with me in this half-conscious ecstasy, for Crofton at last said—

"There, where you see that pinkish tint through the grey, that's the sign of breaking day, and the signal for bedtime. Shall I show you your room?"

"How I wish this could last forever!" cried I, rapturously; and then, half ashamed of my warmth, I stammered out a good-night, and retired.

CHAPTER VI.

MY SELF-EXAMINATION.

Our life at the Rosary—for it was *our* life now of which I have to speak—was one of unbroken enjoyment. On fine days we fished—that is, Crofton did—and I loitered

along some river's bank till I found a quiet spot to plant my rod, and stretch myself on the grass, now reading, oftener dreaming, such glorious dreams as only come in the leafy shading of summer time, to a mind enraptured with all around it. The lovely scenery and the perfect solitude of the spot ministered well to my fanciful mood, and left me free to weave the most glittering web of incident for my future. So utterly was all the past blotted from my memory, that I recalled nothing of existence more remote than my first evening at the cottage. If for a passing instant a thought of bygones would obtrude, I hastened to escape from it as from a gloomy reminiscence. I turned away as would a dreamer who dreaded to awaken out of some delicious vision, and who would not face the dull aspect of reality. Three weeks thus glided by of such happiness as I can scarcely yet recall without emotion! The Croftons had come to treat me like a brother; they spoke of family events in all freedom before me; talked of the most confidential things in my presence, and discussed their future plans and their means as freely in my hearing as though I had been kith and kin with them. I learned that they were orphans, educated and brought up by a rich, eccentric uncle, who lived in a sort of costly reclusion in one of the Cumberland dales; Edward, who had served in the army, and been wounded in an Indian campaign, had given up the service in a fit of impatience of being passed over in promotion. His uncle resented the rash step by withdrawing the liberal allowance he had usually made him, and they quarreled. Mary Crofton, espousing her brother's side, quitted her guardian's roof to join his, and thus had they rambled about the world for two or three years, on means scanty enough, but still sufficient to provide for those who neither sought to enter society nor partake of its pleasures.

As I advanced in the intimacy, I became depositary of the secrets of each. Edward's was the sorrow he felt for having involved his sister in his own ruin, and been the means of separating her from one so well able and so willing to befriend her. Hers was the more bitter thought that their narrow means should prejudice her brother's chances of recovery, for his chest had shown symptoms of dangerous disease requiring all that climate and consummate care might do to overcome. Preyed on incessantly by this reflection, unable to banish it, equally unable to resist its force, she took the first and only step she had ever ventured without his knowledge, and had written to her uncle a long letter of explanations and entreaty.

I saw the letter, and read it carefully. It was all that sisterly love and affection could dictate, accompanied by a sense of dignity, that if her appeal should be unsuccessful, no slight should be passed upon her brother, who was unaware of the step thus taken. To express this sufficiently, she was driven to the acknowledgment that Edward would never have himself stooped to the appeal; and so careful was she of his honor in this respect, that she repeated—with what appeared to me unnecessary insistence—that the request should be regarded as hers, and hers only. In fact, this was the uppermost sentiment in the whole epistle. I ventured to say as much, and endeavored to induce her to moderate in some degree the amount of this pretension; but she resisted firmly and decidedly. Now, I have recorded this circumstance here—less for itself than to mention how by its means this little controversy led to a great intimacy between us—inducing us, while defending our separate views, to discuss each other's motives, and even characters, with the widest freedom. I called her enthusiast, and in return she styled me worldly and calculating; and, indeed, I tried to seem so, and fortified my opinions by prudential maxims and severe reflections I should have been sorely indisposed to adopt in my own case. I believe she saw all this. I am sure she read me aright, and perceived that I was arguing against my own convictions. At all events, day after day went over, and no answer came to the letter. I used to go each morning to the post in the village to inquire, but always returned with the same disheartening tidings, "Nothing to-day!"

One of these mornings it was that I was returning disconsolately from the village, Crofton, whom I believed at the time miles away on the mountains, overtook me. He came up from behind, and passing his arm within mine, walked on some minutes without speaking. I saw plainly there was something on his mind, and I half dreaded lest he might have discovered his sister's secret and disapproved of my share in it.

"Algy," said he, calling me by my Christian name, which he very rarely did, "I have something to say to you. Can I be quite certain that you'll take my frankness in good part?"

"You can," I said, with a great effort to seem calm and assured.

"You give me your word upon it?"

"I do," said I, trying to appear bold; "and my hand be witness of it."

"Well," he resumed, drawing a long breath, "here it is: I have remarked that for above a week back you have never waited for the postboy's return to the cottage, but always have come down to the village yourself."

I nodded assent, but said nothing.

"I have remarked, besides," said he, "that, when told at the office there was no letter for you, you came away sadlooking and fretted, scarcely spoke for some time, and seemed altogether downcast and depressed."

"I don't deny it," I said, calmly.

"Well," continued he, "some old experiences of mine have taught me that this sort of anxiety has generally but one source, with fellows of *our* age, and which simply means that the remittance we have counted upon as certain has been, from some cause or other, delayed. Isn't that the truth?"

"No," said I, joyfully, for I was greatly relieved by his words; "no, on my honor, nothing of the kind."

"I may not have hit the thing exactly," said he, hurriedly, "but I'll be sworn it is a money matter, and if a couple of hundred pounds be of the least service——"

"My dear, kind-hearted fellow," I broke in, "I can't endure this longer; it is no question of money; it is nothing that affects my means, though I half wish it were, to show you how cheerfully I could owe you my escape from a difficulty—not, indeed, that I need another tie to bind me to you——" But I could say no more, for my eyes were swimming over, and my lips trembling.

"Then," cried he, "I have only to ask pardon for thus obtruding upon your confidence."

I was too full of emotion to do more than squeeze his hand affectionately, and thus we walked along, side by side, neither uttering a word. At last, as it were with an effort, by a bold transition to carry our thoughts into another, and very different channel, he said, "Here's a letter from old Dyke, our landlord. The worthy father has been enjoying himself in a tour of English watering-places, and has now started for a few weeks up the Rhine. His account of his holiday, as he calls it, is amusing; nor less so is the financial accident to which he owes the excursion. Take it, and read it," added he, giving me the epistle. "If the style be the man, his reverence is not difficult to decipher."

I bestowed little attention on this speech, uttered, as I perceived, rather from the impulse of starting a new topic, than anything else, and taking the letter half mechanically, I thrust it in my pocket. One or two efforts we made at conversation were equally failures, and it was a relief to me when Crofton, suddenly remembering some night-lines he had laid in a mountain lake a few miles off, hastily shook my hand, and said, "Good-bye till dinner-time."

When I reached the cottage, instead of entering, I strolled into the garden, and sought out a little summer-house of sweet-brier and honeysuckle, on the edge of the river. Some strange, vague impression was on me, that I needed time and place to commune with myself and be alone; that a large unsettled account lay between me and my conscience, which could not be longer deferred; but, of what nature, how originating, and how tending, I know nothing whatever.

I resolved to submit myself to a searching examination, to ascertain what I might about myself. In my favorite German authors I had frequently read that men's failures in life were chiefly owing to neglect of this habit of self-investigation; that, though we calculate well the dangers and difficulties of an enterprise, we omit the more important estimate of what may be our capacity to effect an object, what are our resources, wherein our deficiencies.

"Now for it," I thought, as I entered the little arbor,—"now for it, Potts; kiss the book, and tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

As I said this, I took off my hat and bowed respectfully around to the members of an imaginary court. "My name," said I, in a clear and respectful voice, "is Algernon Sydney Potts. If I be pushed to the avowal, I am sorry it *is* Potts! Algernon Sydney can do a deal, but they can't do everything—not to say that captious folk see a certain bathos in the collocation with my surname. Can a man hope to make such a name illustrious? Can he aspire to the notion of a time when people will allude to the great Potts, the celebrated Potts, the immortal Potts?" I grew very red, I felt my cheek on fire as I uttered this, and I suddenly bethought me of Mr. Pitt, and I said aloud: "And if Pitt, why not Potts?" That was a most healing recollection. I reveled in it for a long time. "How true is it," I continued, "that the halo of greatness illumines all within its circle, and the man is merged in the grandeur of his achievements! The men who start in life with high-sounding designations have but to fill a foregone pledge—to pay the bill that fortune has endorsed. Not so was our case, Pitt. To

us is it to lay every foundation-stone of our future greatness. There was nothing in *your* surname to foretell you would be a Minister of State at one-and-thirty—there is no letter of *mine* to indicate what I shall be. But what is it that I am to be? Is it poet, philosopher, politician, soldier or discoverer? Am I to be great in art, or illustrious in letters? Is there to be an ice tract of Behring's Straits called Potts's Point, or a planet styled Pottsium Sidus? And when centuries have rolled over, will historians have their difficulty about the first Potts, and what his opinions were on this subject or that?"

Then came a low, soft sound of half suppressed laughter, and then the rustle of a muslin dress hastily brushing through the trees. I rushed out from my retreat, and hurried down the walk. No one to be seen —not a soul; not a sound, either, to be heard.

"No use hiding, Mary," I called out, "I saw you all the time; my mock confession was got up merely to amuse you. Come out boldly and laugh as long as you will." No answer. This refusal amazed me. It was like a disbelief in my assertion. "Come, come!" I cried, "you can't pretend to think I was serious in all this vainglorious nonsense. Come, Mary, and let us enjoy the laugh at it together. If you don't, I shall be angry. I'll take it ill—very ill."

Still no reply. Could I, then, have been deceived? Was it a mere delusion? But no; I heard the low laugh, and the rustle of the dress, and the quick tread upon the gravel, too plainly for any mistake, and so I returned to the cottage in chagrin and ill-temper. As I passed the open windows of the little drawing-room I saw Mary seated at her work, with, as was her custom, an open book on a little table beside her. Absorbed as she was, she did not lift her head, nor notice my approach till I entered the room.

"You have no letter for me?" she cried, in a voice of sorrowful meaning.

"None," said I, scrutinizing her closely, and sorely puzzled what to make of her calm deportment. "Have you been out in the garden this morning?" I asked, abruptly.

"No," said she, frankly.

"Not quitted the house at all?"

"No. Why do you ask?" cried she, in surprise.

"I'll tell you," I said, sitting down at her side, and speaking in a low and confidential tone; "a strange thing has just happened to me." And with that I narrated the incident, glossing over, as best I might, the absurdity of my soliloquizing, and the nature of the self-examination I was engaged in. Without waiting for me to finish, she broke in suddenly with a low laugh, and said—

"It must have been Rose."

"And who is Rose?" I asked, half sternly.

"A cousin of ours, a mere school-girl, who has just arrived. She came by the mail this morning, when you were out. But here she is, coming up the walk. Just step behind that screen, and you shall have your revenge. I'll make her tell everything."

I had barely time to conceal myself, when, with a merry laugh, a fresh, girlish voice called out, "I've seen him! I have seen him, Mary! I was sitting on the rock beside the river, when he came into the summer-house, and, fancying himself alone and unseen, proceeded to make his confession to himself."

"His confession! What do you mean?"

"I don't exactly know whether that be the proper name for it, but it was a sort of self-examination, not very painful, certainly, inasmuch as it was rather flattering than otherwise."

"I really cannot understand you, Rose."

"I'm not surprised," said she, laughing again. "It was some time before I could satisfy myself that he was not talking to somebody else, or reading out of a book, and when, peeping through the leaves, I perceived he was quite alone, I almost screamed out with laughing."

"But why, child? What was the absurdity that amused you?"

"Fancy the creature. I need not describe him, Molly. You know him well, with his great staring light-green eyes, and his wild yellow hair. Imagine his walking madly to and fro, tossing his long arms about in uncouth gestures, while he asked himself seriously whether he wouldn't be Shakespeare, or Milton, or Michael Angelo, or Nelson. Fancy his gravely inquiring of himself what remarkable qualities predominated in his nature: was he more of a sculptor, or a politician, or had fate destined him to discover new worlds, or to conquer the old ones? If I hadn't been actually listening to the creature, and occasionally looking at him, too, I'd have doubted my senses. Oh, dear! shall I ever forget the earnest absurdity of his manner as he said something about the 'immortal Potts.'"

The reminiscence was too much for her, for she threw herself on a sofa and

laughed immoderately. As for me, unable to endure more, and fearful that Mary might finish by discovering me, I stole from the room, and rushed out into the wood.

What is it that renders ridicule more insupportable than vituperation? Why is the violence of passion itself more easy to endure than the sting of sarcastic satire? What weak spot in our nature does this peculiar passion assail? And again, why are all the noble aspirations of high-hearted enthusiasm, the grand self-reliance of daring minds, ever to be made the theme of such scoffings? Have the scorners never read of Wolfe, Murat, or of Nelson? Has not a more familiar instance reached them of one who foretold to an unwilling senate the time when they would hang in expectancy on his words, and treasure them as wisdom? Cruel, narrow-minded and unjust world, with whom nothing succeeds except success.

The man who contracts a debt is never called cheat till his inability to discharge it has been proven clearly and beyond a doubt; but he who enters into an engagement with his own heart to gain a certain prize, or reach a certain goal, is made a mockery and a sneer by all whose own humble faculties represent such striving as impossible. From thoughts like these I went on to speculate whether I should ever be able, in the zenith of my great success, to forgive those captious and disparaging critics who had once endeavored to damp my ardor and bar my career. I own I find it exceedingly difficult to be generous, and in particular to that young minx of sixteen who had dared to make a jest of my pretensions.

I wandered along thus for hours. Many a grassy path of even sward led through the forest, and taking one of those which skirted the stream, I strolled along, unconscious alike of time and place. Out of the purely personal interests which occupied my mind sprang others, and I bethought me with a grim satisfaction of the severe lesson Mary must have, ere this, read Rose upon her presumption and her flippancy, telling her in stern accents, how behind that screen the man was standing she had dared to make the subject of her laughter. Oh, how she blushes! what flush of crimson shame spreads over her face, her temple and her neck; what large tears overflow her lids, and fall along her cheeks! I actually pity her suffering, and am pained at her grief.

"Spare her, dear Mary!" I cried out; "after all, she is but a child. Why blame her that she cannot measure greatness, as philosophers measure mountains, by the shadow."

Egotism, in every one of its moods and tenses, must have a strong fascination. I walked on for many a mile while thus thinking, without the slightest sense of weariness, or any want of food. The morning glided over, and the hot noon was passed, and the day was sobering down into the more solemn tints of coming evening, and I still loitered, or lay in the tall grass deep in my musings.

In taking my handkerchief from my pocket, I accidentally drew forth the priest's letter, and in a sort of half-indolent curiosity, proceeded to read it. The hand was cramped and rugged, the writing that of a man to whom the manual part of correspondence is a heavy burden, and who consequently incurs such labor as rarely as possible. The composition had all the charm of ease, and was as unstudied as need be; the writer being evidently one who cared little for the graces of style, satisfied to discuss his subject in the familiar terms of his ordinary conversation.

Although I did not mean to impose more than an extract from it on my reader, I must reserve even that much for my next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER DYKE'S LETTER.

FATHER DYKE was one of those characters which Ireland alone produces—a sporting priest. In France, Spain, or Italy, the type is unknown. Time was when the *abbé*, elegant, witty, and well-bred, was a great element of polished life; when his brilliant conversation and his insidious address threw all the charm of culture over a society which was only rescued from coarseness by the marvelous dexterity of such intellectual gladiators. They have passed away, like many other things brilliant and striking: the gilded coach, the red-heeled slipper and the supper of the regency; the powdered marquise, for a smile of whose dimpled mouth the deadly rapier has flashed in the moonlight; the perfumed beauty, for one of whose glances a poet would have racked his brain to render worthily in verse; the gilded *salon* where, in a sort of incense, all the homage of genius was offered up before the altar of loveliness—gone are they all!

Au fond, the world is pretty much the same, although we drive to a club-dinner

in a one-horse brougham; and if we meet the *curé* of St. Roch, we find him to be rather a morose middle-aged man with a taste for truffles, and a talent for silence. It is not as the successor of the witty *abbé* that I adduce the sporting priest, but simply as a variety of the ecclesiastical character which, doubtless, a very few more years will have consigned to the realm of history. He, too, will be a bygone! Father Tom, as he was popularly called, never needing any more definite designation, was *tam Marte quam Mercurio,* as much poacher as priest, and made his sporting acquirements subservient to the demands of an admirable table. The thickest salmon, the curdiest trout, the fattest partridge, and the most tender woodcock, smoked on his board, and rumor said, cooked with a delicacy that more pretentious houses could not rival. In the great world, nothing is more common than to see some favored individual permitted to do things which, by common voice, are proclaimed impracticable or improper. With a sort of prescriptive right to outrage the ordinances of society, such people accept no law but their own inclination, and seem to declare that they are altogether exempt from the restraints that bind other men. In a small way, and an humble sphere, Father Tom enjoyed this privilege, and there was not in his whole county to be found one man churlish or ungenerous enough to dispute it; and thus was he suffered to throw his line, snap his gun, or unleash his dog in precincts where many with higher claims had been refused permission.

It was not alone that he enjoyed the invigorating pleasure of field sports in practice, but he delighted in everything which bore any relationship to them. There was not a column of *Bell's Life* in which he had not his sympathy — the pigeon match, the pedestrian, the Yankee trotter, the champion for the silver sculls at Chelsea, the dog "Billy," were all subjects of interest to him. Never did the most inveterate bluestocking more delight in the occasion of meeting a great celebrity of letters, than did he when chance threw him in the way of the jock who rode the winner at the Oaks, or the "Game Chicken" who punished the "Croydon Pet" in the prize ring. But now for the letter, which will as fully reveal the man as any mere description. It was a narrative of races he had attended, and rowing matches he had witnessed, with little episodes of hawking, badger-drawing, and cock-fighting intermixed:—

"I came down here—Brighton—to swim for a wager of five-and-twenty sovereigns against a Major Blayse, of the Third Light Dragoon Guards; we made the match after mess at Aldershot, when neither of us was anything to speak of too sober; but as we were backed strongly—he rather the favorite —there was no way of drawing the bet. I beat him after a hard struggle—we were two hours and forty minutes in the water—and netted about sixty pounds besides. We dined with the depôt in the evening, and I won a ten-pound note on a question of whether there ought to be saffron in the American drink called 'greased lightning;' but this was not the only piece of luck that attended me, as you shall hear. As I was taking my morning canter on the Downs, I perceived that a stranger — a jockey-like fellow, not quite a gentleman, but near it—seemed to keep me in view; now riding past; now behind me, and always bestowing his whole attention on my nag. Of course, I showed the beast off to the best, and handled him skillfully. I thought to myself, he likes the pony; he'll be for making me an offer for him. I was right. I had just seated myself at breakfast, when the stranger sent his card, with a request to speak to me. He was a foreigner, but spoke very correct English, and his object was to learn if I would sell my horse. It is needless to say that I refused at once. The animal suited me, and I was one of those people who find it excessively difficult to be mounted to their satisfaction. I needed temper, training, action, gentleness, beauty, high courage, and perfect steadiness, and a number of such like seeming incongruities. He looked a little impatient at all this; he seemed to say, 'I know all this kind of nonsense; I have heard shiploads of such gammon before. Be frank, and say what's the figure; how much do you want for him?' He looked this, I say, but he never uttered a word, and at last I asked him—

"'Are you a dealer?'

"'Well,' said he, with an arch smile, 'something in that line.'

"'I thought so,' said I. 'The pony is a rare good one.'

"He nodded assent.

"'He can jump a bar of his own height?'

"Another nod.

"'And he's as fresh on his legs——'

"'As if he were not twenty-six years old,' he broke in.

"'Twenty-six fiddlesticks! Look at his mouth; he has an eight-year-old mouth.'

"I know it,' said he, dryly; 'and so he had fourteen years ago. Will you take fifty sovereigns for him?' he added,

drawing out a handful of gold from his pocket.

"'No,' said I, firmly; 'nor sixty, nor seventy, nor eighty.'

"'I am sorry to have intruded upon you,' said he, rising, 'and I beg you to excuse me. The simple fact is, that I am one who gains his living by horses, and it is only possible for me to exist by the generosity of those who deal with me.'

"This appeal was a home thrust, and I said, 'What can you afford to give?'

"'All I have here,' said he, producing a handful of gold, and spreading it on the table.

"We set to counting, and there were sixty-seven sovereigns in the mass. I swept off the money into the palm of my hand, and said, 'The beast is yours.'

"He drew a long breath, as if to relieve his heart of a load of care, and said, 'Men of *my* stamp, and who lead such lives as I do, are rarely superstitious.'

"'Very true,' said I, with a nod of encouragement for him to go on.

"'Well,' said he, resuming, 'I never thought for a moment that any possibility could have made me so. If ever there was a man that laughed at lucky and unlucky days, despised omens, sneered at warnings, and scorned at predictions, I was he; and yet I have lived to be the most credulous and the most superstitious of men. It is now fourteen years and twenty-seven days—I remember the time to an hour—since I sold that pony to the Prince Ernest von Saxenhausen, and since that day I never had luck. So long as I owned him all went well with me. I ought to tell you that I am the chief of a company of equestrians, and one corps, known as Klam's Kunst-Reiters, was the most celebrated on the continent. In three years I made three hundred thousand guilders, and if the devil had not induced me to sell "Schatzchen"—that was his name—I should be this day as rich as Heman Rothschild! From the hour he walked out of the circus our calamities began. I lost my wife by fever at Wiesbaden, the most perfect high-school horsewoman in Europe; my son, of twenty years of age, fell, and dislocated his neck; one year after, at Vienna, my daughter Gretchen was blinded riding through a fiery hoop at Homburg; and four years later, all the company died of yellow-fever at the Havannah, leaving me utterly beggared and ruined. Now, these, you would say, though great misfortunes, are all in the course of common events. But what will you say when, on the eve of each of them Schatzchen appeared to me in a dream, performing some well-known feat or other, and bringing down, as he ever did, thunders of applause; and never did he so appear without disaster coming after. I struggled hard before I suffered this notion to influence me. It was years before I even mentioned it to any one; and I used for a while to make a jest of it in the circus, saying, "Take care of yourselves to-night for I saw Schatzchen." Of course they were not the stuff to be deterred by such warnings, but they became so at last. That they did, and were so terrified, so thoroughly terrified, that the day after one of my visions not a single member of the troupe would venture on a hazardous feat of any kind; and if we performed at all, it was only some commonplace exercises, with few risks, and no daring exploits whatever. Worn out with evil fortune, crushed and almost broken-hearted, I struggled on for years, secretly determining, if ever I should chance upon him, to buy back Schatzchen with my last penny in the world. Indeed, there were moments in which such was the intense excitement of my mind, I could have committed a dreadful crime to regain possession of him. We were on the eve of embarking for Ostend the other night, when I saw you riding on the Downs, and I came ashore at once to track you out, for I knew him, though fully half a mile away. None of my comrades could guess what detained me, nor understand why I asked each of them in turn to lend me whatever money he could spare. It was in this way I made up the little purse you see. It was thus provided that I dared to present myself to-day before you.'

"As he gave me this narrative his manner grew more eager and excited, and I could not help feeling that his mind, from the long-continued pressure of one thought, had received a serious shock. It was exactly one of those cases which physicians describe as leaving the intellect unimpaired, while some one faculty is under the thraldom of a dominant and all-pervading impression. I saw this, more palpably, when, having declined to accept more than his original offer of fifty pounds, I replaced the remainder in his hand, he evinced scarcely any gratitude for my liberality, so totally was he engrossed by the idea that the horse was now his own, and that fortune would no longer have any pretext for using him so severely as before.

"'I don't know—I cannot know,' said he, 'if fortune means to deal more kindly by me than heretofore, but I feel a sort of confidence in the future now; I have a kind of trustful courage as to what may come,

that tells me no disaster will deter me, no mishap cast me down.'

"These were his words as he arose to take his leave. Of his meeting with the pony I am afraid to trust myself to speak. It was such an overflow of affection as one might witness from a long-absent brother on being once again restored to his own. I cannot say that the beast knew him, nor would I go so far as to assert that he did not, for certainly some of his old instincts seemed gradually to revive within him on hearing certain words; and when ordered to take a respectful farewell of me, the pony planted a foreleg on each of his master's shoulders, and taking off his hat with his teeth, bowed twice or thrice in the most deferential fashion. I wished them both every success in life, and we parted. As I took my evening's stroll on the pier, I saw them embark for Ostend, the pony sheeted most carefully, and every imaginable precaution taken to insure him against cold. The man himself was poorly clad and indifferently provided against the accidents of the voyage. He appeared to feel that the disparity required a word of apology, for he said, in a whisper: '*It*'ll soon furnish me with a warm cloak; it'll not leave me long in difficulties!' I assure you, my dear Crofton, there was something contagious in the poor fellow's supersition, for, as he sailed away, the thought lay heavily on my heart, 'What if I, too, should have parted with my good luck in life? How if I have bartered my fortune for a few pieces of money?' The longer I dwelt on this theme, the more forcibly did it strike me. My original possession of the animal was accomplished in a way that aided the illusion. It was thus I won him on a hit of backgammon!"

As I read thus far, the paper dropped from my hands, my head reeled, and in a faint, dreamy state, as if drugged by some strong narcotic, I sank, I know not how long, unconscious. The first thing which met my eyes on awakening was the line, "I won him on a hit of backgammon!" The whole story was at once before me. It was of Blondel I was reading! Blondel was the beast whose influence had swayed one man's destiny. So long as he owned him the world went well and happily with him; all prospered and succeeded. It was a charm like the old lamp of Aladdin. And this was the treasure I had lost. So far from imputing an ignorant superstition to the German, I concurred in every speculation, every theory, of his invention. The man had evidently discovered one of those curious problems in what we rashly call the doctrine of chances. It was not the animal himself that secured good fortune, it was that, in his "circumstances," what Strauff calls "die umringende begebenheiten" of his lot, this creature was sure to call forth efforts and develop resources in his possessor, of which, without his aid, he would have gone all through life unconscious.

The vulgar notion that our lives are the sport of accident—the minute too early or too late—the calm that detained us—the snow-storm that blockaded the road—the chance meeting with this or that man, which we lay so much stress on—what are they in reality but trivial incidents without force or effect, save that they impel to action? They call out certain qualities in our nature by which our whole characters become modified. Your horse balks at a fence and throws you over his head; the fall is not a very grave one, and you are scarcely hurt; you have fallen in a turnip-field, and the honest fellow, who is hoeing away near, comes kindly to your aid, and, in good Samaritan fashion, bathes your temples and restores you. When you leave him at last, you go forth with a kindlier notion of human nature; you recognize the tie "that makes the whole world kin," and you seem to think that hard toil hardens not the heart, nor a life of labor shuts out generous sympathies—the lesson is a life one. But suppose that in your fall you alight on a bed of choice tulips, you descend in the midst of a rich parterre of starry anemones, and that your first conscious struggles are met with words of anger and reproach; instead of sorrow for your suffering, you hear sarcasms on your horsemanship, and insults on your riding—no sympathy, no kindness, no generous anxiety for your safety, but all that irritate and offend—more thought, in fact, for the petals of a flower than for the ligaments of your knee—then, too, is the lesson a life one, and its fruits will be bitter memories for many a year. The events of our existence are in reality nothing, save in our treatment of them. By Blondel I recognized one of those suggestive influences which mould fate by moulding temperament. The deep reflecting German saw this: it was clear *he* knew that in that animal was typified all that his life might become. Why should not I contest the prize with him? Blondel was charged with another destiny as well as his.

I turned once more to the letter, but I could not bear to read it; so many were the impertinent allusions to myself, my manner, my appearance and my conversation. Still more insulting were the speculations

as to what class or condition I belonged to. "He puzzled us completely," wrote the priest, "for, while unmistakably vulgar in many things, there were certain indications of reading and education about him that refuted the notion of his being what Keldrum thought—an escaped counter-jumper! The guardsman insisted he was a valet; my own impression was the fellow had kept a small circulating library, and gone mad with the three-volume novels. At all events, I have given him a lessson which, whether profitable or not to *him*, has turned out tolerably well for *me*. If ever you chance to hear of him—his name was Podder or Pedder—pray let me know, for my curiosity is still unslaked about him." He thence went off to a sort of descriptive catalogue of my signs and tokens, so positively insulting that I cannot recall it; the whole winding up: "Add to all these an immense pomposity of tone, with a lisp, and a Dublin accent, and you can scarcely mistake him." Need I say, benevolent reader, that fouler calumnies were never uttered, nor more unfounded slanders ever pronounced?

It is not in this age of photography that a man need defend his appearance. By the aid of sun and collodion, I may, perhaps, one day convince you that I am not so devoid of personal graces as this foul-mouthed priest would persuade you. I am, possibly, in this pledge, exceeding the exact limits which this publication may enable me to sustain. I may be contracting an engagement which cannot be, consistent with its principles, fulfilled. If so, I must be your artist; but I swear to you that I shall not flatter. Potts, painted by himself, shall be a true portrait. Meanwhile, I have time to look out for my canvas, and you will be patient enough to wait till it be filled.

Again to this confounded letter:

"There is another reason" (wrote Dyke) "why I should like to chance upon this fellow." ("This fellow" meant me.) "I used to fancy myself unequaled in the imaginative department of conversation—by the vulgar called lying. Here, I own, with some shame, he was my match. A more fearless, determined, go-ahead liar, I never met. Now, as one who deems himself no small proficient in the art, I would really like to meet him once more. We could approach each other like the augurs of old, and agree to be candid and free-spoken together, exchanging our ideas on this great topic, and frankly communicating any secret knowledge each might deem that he possessed. I'd go a hundred miles to pass an evening with him alone, to hear from his own lips the sort of early training and discipline his mind went through: who were his first instructors, what his original inducements. Of one thing I feel certain: a man thus constituted has only to put the curb upon his faculty to be most successful in life, his perils will all lie in the exuberance of his resources: let him simply bend himself to believe in some of the impositions he would force upon others. Let him give his delusions the force acquired by convictions, and there is no limit to what he may become. Be on the look out, therefore, for him, as a great psychological phenomenon, the man who outlied

"Your sincerely attached friend,

"THOMAS DARCY DYKE.

"P. S.—I have just remembered his name. It was Potts: the villain said from the Pozzo di Borgo family. I'm sure with this hint you can't fail to run him to earth; and I entreat of you, spare no pains to do it."

There followed here some more impertinent personalities as clues to my discovery, which my indulgent reader will graciously excuse me if I do not stop to record; enough to say they were as unfounded as they were scurrilous.

Another and very different train of thought, however, soon banished these considerations. This letter had been given me by Crofton, who had already read it; he had perused all this insolent narrative about me before handing it to me, and, doubtless, in so doing, had no other intention than to convey, in the briefest and most emphatic way, to me, that I was found out. It was simply saying, in the shortest possible space, "Thou art the man!" Oh, the ineffable shame and misery of that thought! Oh, the bitterness of feeling! How my character should now be viewed and my future discussed! "Only think, Mary," I fancied I heard him say—"only think who our friend should turn out to be—this same Potts: the fellow that vanquished Father Dyke in story-telling, and outlied the priest! And here we have been lavishing kindness and attentions upon one who, after all, is little better than a swindler, sailing under false colors and fictitious credentials: for who can now credit one syllable about his having written those verses he read for us, or composed that tale of which he told us the opening? What a lesson in future about extending confidence to utter strangers! What caution and reserve should it not teach us! How

guarded should we be not to suffer ourselves to be fascinated by the captivations of manner and the insinuating charms of address! If Potts had been less prepossessing in appearance, less gifted and agreeable—if, instead of being a consummate man of the world, with the breeding of a courtier and the knowledge of a scholar, he had been a pedantic puppy with a lisp and a Dublin accent——" Oh, ignominy and disgrace! these were the very words of the priest in describing me, which came so aptly to my memory, and I grew actually sick with shame as I recalled them. I next became angry. Was this conduct of Crofton's delicate or considerate? Was it becoming in one who had treated me as his friend thus abruptly to conclude our intimacy by an insult? Handing me such a letter was saying, "There's a portrait: can you say any one it resembles?" How much more generous had he said, "Tell me all about this wager of yours with Father Dyke—I want to hear *your* account of it, for old Tom is not the most veracious of mortals, nor the most mealy-mouthed of commentators. Just give me *your* version of the incident, Potts, and I am satisfied it will be the true one." That's what he might, that's what he ought to, have said. I can swear it is what I, Potts, would have done by *him*, or by any other stranger whose graceful manners and pleasing qualities had won my esteem and conciliated my regard. I'd have said, "Potts, I have seen enough of life to know how unjust it is to measure men by one and the same standard. The ardent, impassioned nature cannot be ranked with the cold and calculating spirit. The imaginative man has the same necessity for the development of his creative faculty as the strongly muscular man of bodily exercise. He must blow off the steam of his invention, or the boiler will not contain it. You and Le Sage and Alexandre Dumas are a category. You are not the clerks of a census commission, or masters in equity. You are the chartered libertines of fiction. Shake out your reefs, and go free—free as the winds that waft you!"

To all these reflections came the last one: "I must be up and doing, and that speedily! I will recover Blondel, if I devote my life to the task. I will regain him, let the cost be what it may. Mounted upon that creature, I will ride up to the Rosary; the time shall be evening; a sun just sunk behind the horizon shall have left in the upper atmosphere a golden and rosy light, which shall tip his mane with a softened luster, and shed over my own features a rich Titian-like tint. 'I come,' will I say, 'to vindicate the fair fame of one who once owned your affection. It is Potts, the man of impulse, the child of enthusiasm, who now presents himself before you. Poor, if you like to call him so, in worldly craft or skill; poor in its possessions, but rich, boundlessly rich, in the stores of an ideal wealth. Blondel and I are the embodiment of this idea. These fancies you have stigmatized as lies are but the pilot balloons by which great minds calculate the currents in that upper air they are about to soar in.'"

And, last of all, there was a sophistry that possessed a great charm for my mind, in this wise: to enable a man, humble as myself, to reach that station in which a career of adventure should open before him, some ground must be won, some position gained. That I assume to be something that I am not, is simply to say that I trade upon credit. If my future transactions be all honorable and trustworthy—if by a fiction, only known to my own heart, I acquire that eminence from which I can distribute benefits to hundreds—who is to stigmatize me as a fraudulent trader?

Is it not a well-known fact that many of those now acknowledged as the wealthiest of men, might, at some time or other of their lives, have been declared insolvent had the real state of their affairs been known? The world, however, had given them its confidence, and time did the rest. Let the same world be but as generous towards *me!* The day will come—I say it confidently and boldly—the day will come when I can "show my books," and "point to my balance-sheet." When Archimedes asked for a base on which to rest his lever, he merely uttered the great truth, that some one fixed point is essential to the success of a motive power.

It is by our use or abuse of opportunity we are either good or bad men. The physician is not less conversant with noxious drugs than the poisoner; the difference lies in the fact that the one employs his skill to alleviate suffering, the other, to work out evil and destruction. If I, therefore, but make some feigned station in life the groundwork from which I can become the benefactor of my fellow-men, I shall be good and blameless. My heart tells me how well and how fairly I mean by the world: I would succor the weak, console the afflicted, and lift up the oppressed; and, if to carry out grand and glorious conceptions of this kind all that be needed is a certain self-delusion which may extend

its influence to others, "Go in," I say, "Potts; be all that your fancy suggests:

"'Dives, honoratus, pulcher, rex denique regum—
Be rich, honored and fair, a prince or a begum—'

but, above all, never distrust your destiny, or doubt your star."

CHAPTER VIII.

IMAGINATION STIMULATED BY BRANDY AND WATER.

So absorbed was I in the reflections of which my last chapter is the record, that I utterly forgot how time was speeding, and perceived at last, to my great surprise, that I had strayed miles away from the Rosary, and that evening was already near. The spires and roofs of a town were distant about a mile at a bend of the river, and for this I now made, determined on no account to turn back, for how could I ever again face those who had read the terrible narrative of the priest's letter, and before whom I could only present myself as a cheat and impostor?

"No," thought I, "my destiny points onward—and to Blondel; nothing shall turn me from my path." Less than an hour's walking brought me to the town, of which I had but time to learn the name—New Ross. I left it in a small steamer for Waterford, a little vessel in correspondence with the mail packet for Milford, and which I learned would sail that evening at nine.

The same night saw me seated on the deck, bound for England. On the deck, I say, for I had need to husband my resources, and travel with every imaginable economy, not only because my resources were small in themselves, but that, having left all that I possessed of clothes and baggage at the Rosary, I should be obliged to acquire a complete outfit on reaching England.

It was a calm night, with a starry sky and a tranquil sea, and, when the cabin passengers had gone down to their berths, the captain did not oppose my stealing "aft" to the quarter-deck, where I could separate myself from the somewhat riotous company of the harvest laborers that thronged the forepart of the vessel. He saw, with that instinct a sailor is eminently gifted with, that I was not of that class by which I was surrounded, and with a ready courtesy he admitted me to the privilege of isolation.

"You are going to enlist, I'll be bound," said he, as he passed me in his short deck walk. "Ain't I right?"

"No," said I: "I'm going to seek my fortune."

"Seek your fortune!" he repeated, with a slighting sort of laugh. "One used to read about fellows doing that in story books when a child, but it's rather strange to hear of it nowadays."

"And may I presume to ask why should it be more strange now than formerly? Is not the world pretty much what it used to be? Is not the drama of life the same stock piece our forefathers played ages ago? Are not the actors and actresses made up of the precise materials their ancestors were? Can you tell me of a new sentiment, a new emotion, or even a new crime? Why, therefore, should there be a seeming incongruity in reviving any feature of the past?"

"Just because it won't do, my good friend," said he, bluntly. "If the law catches a fellow lounging about the world in these times, it takes him up for a vagabond."

"And what can be finer, grander, or freer than a vagabond?" I cried, with enthusiasm? "Who, I would ask you, sees life with such philosophy? Who views the wiles, the snares, the petty conflicts of the world with such a reflective calm as his? Caring little for personal indulgence, nor solicitous for self-gratification, he has both the spirit and the leisure for observation. Diogenes was the type of the vagabond, and see how successive ages have acknowldeged his wisdom."

"If I had lived in *his* day, I'd have set him picking oakum for all that!" he replied.

"And probably, too, would have sent the 'blind old bard to the crank,'" said I.

"I'm not quite sure of whom you are talking," said he; "but if he was a good ballad-singer, I'd not be hard on him."

"'O! Menin aeide Thea Peleiadeo Achilleos!'" spouted I out, in rapture.

"That ain't high Dutch," asked he, "is it?"

"No," said I, proudly. "It is ancient Greek—the godlike tongue of an immortal race."

"Immortal rascals!" he broke in. "I was in the fruit trade up in the Levant there, and such scoundrels as these Greek fellows I never met in my life."

"By what and whom made so?" I exclaimed, eagerly. "Can you point to a people in the world who have so long resisted the barbarizing influence of a base oppression? Was there ever a nation so

imbued with high civilization, as to be enabled for centuries of slavery to preserve the traditions of its greatness? Have we the record of any race but this, who could rise from the slough of degradation to the dignity of a people?"

"You've been a play-actor, I take it?" asked he, dryly.

"No, sir, never!" replied I, with some indignation.

"Well, then, in the Methody line? You've done a stroke of preaching, I'll be sworn."

"You would be perjured in that case, sir," I rejoined, as haughtily.

"At all events, an auctioneer," said he, fairly puzzled in his speculations.

"Equally mistaken there," said I, calmly; "bred in the midst of abundance, nurtured in affluence, and educated with all the solicitous care that a fond parent could bestow——"

"Gammon!" said he, bluntly. "You are one of the swell mob in distress!"

"Is this like distress?" said I, drawing forth my purse in which were seventy-five sovereigns, and handing it to him. "Count over that, and say how just and how generous are your suspicions."

He gravely took the purse from me, and, stooping down to the binnacle light, counted over the money, scrutinizing carefully the pieces as he went.

"And who is to say this isn't swag?" said he, as he closed the purse.

"The easiest answer to that," said I, "is, would it be likely for a thief to show his booty, not merely to a stranger, but to a stranger who suspects him?"

"Well, that is something, I confess," said he, slowly.

"It ought to be more—it ought to be everything. If distrust were not a debasing sentiment, obstructing the impulses of generosity, and even invading the precincts of justice, you would see far more reason to confide in, than to disbelieve, me."

"I've been done pretty often afore now," he muttered, half to himself.

"What a fallacy that is!" cried I, contemptuously. "Was not the pittance that some crafty impostor wrung from your compassion well repaid to you in the noble self-consciousness of your generosity? Did not your venison on that day taste better when you thought of his pork chop? Had not your Burgundy gained flavor by the memory of the glass of beer that was warming the half chilled heart in *his* breast? Oh, the narrow mockery of fancying that we are not better by being deceived!"

"How long is it since you had your head shaved?" he asked, dryly.

"I have never been the inmate of an asylum for lunatics," said I, divining and answering the impertinent insinuation.

"Well, I own you are a rum 'un," said he, half musingly.

"I accept even this humble tribute to my originality," said I, with a sort of proud defiance. "I am well aware how *he* must be regarded who dares to assert his own individuality."

"I'd be very curious to know," said he, after a pause of several minutes, "how a fellow of your stamp sets to work about gaining his livelihood? What's his first step? how does he go about it?"

I gave no other answer than a smile of scornful meaning.

"I meant nothing offensive," resumed he, "but I really have a strong desire to be enlightened on this point."

"You are doubtless impressed with the notion," said I, boldly, "that men possessed of some distinct craft, or especial profession, are alone needed by the world of their fellows. That one must be doctor, or lawyer, or baker, or shoemaker, to gain his living, as if life had no other wants than to be clothed, and fed, and physicked, and litigated. As if humanity had not its thousand emotional moods, its wayward impulses, its trials and temptations, all of them more needing guidance, support, direction, and counsel, than the sickest patient needs a physician. It is on this world that I throw myself; I devote myself to guide infancy, to console age, to succor the orphan, and support the widow—morally, I mean."

"I begin to suspect you are a most artful vagabond," said he, half angrily.

"I have long since reconciled myself to the thought of an unjust appreciation," said I. "It is the consolation dull men accept when confronted with those of original genius. You can't help confessing that all your distrust of me has grown out of the superiority of my powers, and the humble figure you have presented in comparison with me."

"Do you rank modesty amongst these same powers?" he asked, slyly.

"Modesty I reject," said I, "as being a conventional form of hypocrisy."

"Come down below," said he, "and take a glass of brandy-and-water. It's growing chilly here, and we shall be the better of something to cheer us."

Seated in his comfortable little cabin, and with a goodly array of liquors before me to choose from, I really felt a self-confidence

in the fact, that, if I were not something out of the common, I could not then be there. "There must be in my nature," thought I, "that element which begets success, or I could not always find myself in situations so palpably beyond the accidents of my condition."

My host was courtesy itself; no sooner was I his guest than he adopted towards me a manner of perfect politeness. No more allusions to my precarious mode of life, never once a reference to my adventure. Indeed, with an almost artful exercise of good breeding, he turned the conversation towards himself, and gave me a sketch of his own life.

It was not in any respects a remarkable one; though it had its share of those mishaps and misfortunes which every sailor must have confronted. He was wrecked in the Pacific, and robbed in the Havannah; had his crew desert him at San Francisco, and was boarded by Riff pirates, and sold in Barbary just as every other blue jacket used to be; and I listened to the story, only marveling what a dreary sameness pervades all these narratives. Why, for one trait of the truthful to prove his tale, I could have invented fifty. There were no little touches of sentiment or feeling; no relieving lights of human emotion in his story. I never felt, as I listened, any wish that he should be saved from shipwreck, baffle his persecutors, or escape his captors; and I thought to myself, "This fellow has certainly got no narrative gusto." Now for *my* turn: we had each of us partaken freely of the good liquor before us. The captain in his quality of talker, I, in my capacity of listener, had filled and refilled several times. There was not anything like inebriety, but there was that amount of exaltation, a stage higher than mere excitement, which prompts men, at least men of temperaments like mine, not to suffer themselves to occupy rear rank positions, but at any cost to become foreground and prominent figures.

"You have heard of the M'Gillicuddys, I suppose?" asked I. He nodded and I went on. "You see, then, at this moment before you the last of the race. I mean, of course, of the elder branch, for there are swarms of the others, well to do and prosperous also, and with fine estated properties. I'll not weary you with family history. I'll not refer to that remote time when my ancestors wore the crown, and ruled the fair kingdom of Kerry. In the 'Annals of the Four Masters,' and also in the 'Chronicles of Thealbogh O'Faudlemh,' you'll find a detailed account of our house. I'll simply narrate for you the immediate incident which has made me what you see me—an outcast and a beggar:

"My father was the tried and trusted friend of that noble-hearted, but mistaken man, Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The famous attempt of the year 'eight was concerted between them; and all the causes of its failure, secret as they are and forever must be, are known to him who now addresses you. I dare not trust myself to talk of these times or things, lest I should by accident let drop what might prove strictly confidential. I will but recount one incident, and that a personal one, of the period. On the night of Lord Edward's capture, my father, who had invited a friend—deep himself in the conspiracy—to dine with him, met his guest on the steps of his hall door. Mr. Hammond—this was his name—was pale and horror-struck, and could scarcely speak, as my father shook his hand. 'Do you know what has happened, Mac?' said he to my father. 'Lord Edward is taken, Major Sirr and his party have tracked him to his hiding-place; they have got hold of all our papers, and we are lost. By this time to-morrow every man of us will be within the walls of Newgate.'"

"'Don't look so gloomy, Tom,' said my father, 'Lord Edward will escape them yet; he's not a bird to be snared so easily; and after all we shall find means to slip our cables, too. Come in, and enjoy your sirloin and a good glass of port, and you'll view the world more pleasantly.' With a little encouragement of this sort he cheered him up, and the dinner passed off agreeably enough; but still my father could see that his friend was by no means at his ease, and at every time the door opened he would start with a degree of surprise that augured anxiety of some coming event. From these and other signs of uneasiness in his manner, my father drew his own conclusions, and with a quick intelligence of look communicated his suspicions to my mother, who was herself a keen and shrewd observer.

"'Do you think, Matty,' said he, as they sat over their wine, 'that I could find a bottle of the old green seal if I was to look for it in the cellar? It has been upwards of forty years there, and I never touch it save on especial occasions; but an old friend like Hammond deserves such a treat.'

"My father fancied that Hammond grew paler as he thus alluded to their old friendship, and he gave my mother a rapid glance of his sharp eye, and, taking the cellar key, he left the room. Immediately out-

side the door, he hastened to the stable, and saddled and bridled a horse, and slipping quietly out, he rode for the sea-coast, near the Skerries. It was sixteen miles from Dublin, but he did the distance within the hour. And well was it for him that he employed such speed! With a liberal offer of money and the gold watch he wore, he secured a small fishing-smack to convey him over to France, for which he sailed immediately. I have said it was well that he employed such speed; for, after waiting with suppressed impatience for my father's return from the cellar, Hammond expressed to my mother his fears lest my father might have been taken ill. She tried to quiet his apprehensions, but the very calmness of her manner served only to increase them. 'I can bear this no longer,' cried he, at last, rising, in much excitement, from his chair; 'I must see what has become of him!' At the same moment the door was suddenly flung open, and an officer of police, in full uniform, presented himself. 'He has got away, sir,' said he, addressing Hammond; 'the stable-door is open, and one of the horses missing.'

"My mother, from whom I heard the story, had only time to utter a 'Thank God!' before she fainted. On recovering her senses, she found herself alone in the room. The traitor Hammond and the police had left her without even calling the servants to her aid."

"And your father—what became of him?" asked the skipper, eagerly.

"He arrived in Paris in sorry plight enough; but, fortunately, Clarke, whose influence with the emperor was unbounded, was a distant connection of our family. By his intervention my father obtained an interview with his majesty, who was greatly struck by the adventurous spirit and daring character of the man; not the less so because he had the courage to disabuse the emperor of many notions and impressions he had conceived about the readiness of Ireland to accept French assistance.

"Though my father would much have preferred taking service in the army, the emperor, who had strong prejudices against men becoming soldiers who had not served in every grade from the ranks upward, opposed this intention, and employed him in a civil capacity. In fact, to his management were intrusted some of the most delicate and difficult secret negotiations; and he gained a high name for acuteness and honorable dealing. In recognition of his services, his name was inscribed in the Grand Livre for a considerable pension; but at the fall of the dynasty, this, with hundreds of others equally meritorious, was annulled; and my father, worn out with age and disappointment together, sank at last, and died at Dinant, where my mother was buried but a few years previously. Meanwhile, he was tried and found guilty of high-treason in Ireland, and all his lands and other property forfeited to the crown. My present journey was simply a pilgrimage to see the old possessions that once belonged to our race. It was my father's last wish that I should visit the ancient home of our family, and stand upon the hills that once acknowledged us as their ruler. He never desired that I should remain a French subject; a lingering love for his own country mingled in his heart with a certain resentment towards France, who had certainly treated him with ingratitude; and almost his last words to me were, 'Distrust the Gaul.' When I told you a while back that I was nurtured in affluence, it was so to all appearance; for my father had spent every shilling of his capital on my education, and I was under the firm conviction that I was born to a very great fortune. You may judge the terrible revulsion of my feelings when I learned that I had to face the world almost, if not actually, a beggar.

"I could easily have attached myself as a hanger-on of some of my well-to-do relations. Indeed, I will say for them, that they showed the kindest disposition to befriend me; but the position of a dependent would have destroyed every chance of happiness for me, and so I resolved that I would fearlessly throw myself upon the broad ocean of life, and trust that some sea current or favoring wind would bear me at last into a harbor of safety."

"What can you do?" asked the skipper, curtly.

"Everything, and nothing! I have, so to say, the 'sentiment' of all things in my heart, but am not capable of executing one of them. With the most correct ear, I know not a note of music; and though I could not cook you a chop, I have the most excellent appreciation of a well-dressed dinner."

"Well," said he, laughing, "I must confess I don't suspect these to be exactly the sort of gifts to benefit your fellow-man."

"And yet," said I, "it is exactly to individuals of this stamp that the world accords its prizes. The impresario that provides the opera could not sing nor dance. The general who directs the campaign might be sorely puzzled how to clean his musket or pipeclay his belt. The great minister

who imposes a tax might be totally unequal to the duty of applying its provisions. Ask him to gauge a hogshead of spirits, for instance. *My* position is like *theirs.* I tell you, once more, the world wants men of wide conceptions and far-ranging ideas—men who look to great results and grand combinations."

"But, to be practical, how do you mean to breakfast to-morrow morning?"

"At a moderate cost, but comfortably: tea, rolls, two eggs, and a rumpsteak with fried potatoes."

"What's your name?" said he, taking out his note-book. "I mustn't forget you when I hear of you next."

"For the present I call myself Potts—Mr. Potts, if you please."

"Write it here yourself," said he handing me the pencil. And I wrote in a bold, vigorous hand, "Algernon Sydney Potts," with the date.

"Preserve that autograph, captain," said I; "it is in no spirit of vanity I say it, but the day will come you'll refuse a ten-pound note for it."

"Well, I'd take a trifle less just now," said he, smiling.

He sat for some time gravely contemplating the writing, and, at length, in a sort of half soliloquy, said, "Bob would like him—he would suit Bob." Then, lifting his head, he addressed me: "I have a brother in command of one of the P. and O. steamers—just the fellow for *you.* He has got ideas pretty much like your own about success in life, and won't be persuaded that he isn't the first seaman in the English navy; or that he hasn't a plan to send Cherbourg and its breakwater sky-high, at twenty-four hours' warning."

"An enthusiast—a visionary, I have no doubt," said I, contemptuously.

"Well, I think you might be more merciful in your judgment of a man of your own stamp," retorted he, laughing. "At all events, it would be as good as a play to see you together. If you should chance to be at Malta or Marseilles, when the *Clarence* touches there, just ask for Captain Rogers; tell him you know me, that will be enough."

"Why not give me a line of introduction to him?" said I, with an easy indifference. "These things serve to clear away the awkwardness of a self-presentation."

"I don't care if I do," said he, taking a sheet of paper, and beginning "Dear Bob," after which he paused and deliberated, muttering the words "Dear Bob" three or four times over below his breath.

"'Dear Bob,'" said I, aloud, in the tone of one dictating to an amanuensis—"'This brief note will be handed to you by a very valued friend of mine, Algernon Sydney Potts, a man so completely after your own heart that I feel a downright satisfaction in bringing you together.'"

"Well, that ain't so bad," said he, as he uttered the last words which fell from his pen—"'in bringing you together.'"

"Go on," said I, dictatorially, and continued: "Thrown, by a mere accident, myself into his society, I was so struck by his attainments, the originality of his views, and the wide extent of his knowledge of life——' Have you *that* down?"

"No," said he, in some confusion; "I am only at 'entertainments.'"

"I said '*at*-tainments,' sir," said I, rebukingly, and then repeating the passage word for word till he had written it—"'that I conceived for him a regard and an esteem rarely accorded to other than our oldest friends.' One word more: 'Potts, from certain circumstances, which I cannot here enter upon, may appear to you in some temporary inconvenience as regards money ——'"

Here the captain stopped, and gave me a most significant look: it was at once an appreciation and an expression of drollery.

"Go on," said I, dryly. "'If so,'" resumed I, "'be guardedly cautious neither to notice his embarrassment nor allude to it: above all, take especial care that you make no offer to remove the inconvenience, for he is one of those whose sensibilities are so fine, and whose sentiments so fastidious, that he could never recover, in his own esteem, the dignity compromised by such an incident.'"

"Very neatly turned," said he, as he re-read the passage. "I think that's quite enough."

"Ample. You have nothing more to do than sign your name to it."

He did this, with a verificatory flourish at foot, folded and sealed the letter, and handed it to me, saying—

"If it weren't for the handwriting, Bob would never believe all that fine stuff came from *me;* but you'll tell him it was after three glasses of brandy-and-water that I dashed it off. That will explain everything."

I promised faithfully to make the required explanation, and then proceeded to make some inquiries abou this brother Bob, whose nature was in such a close affinity with my own. I could learn, however, but little beyond the muttered acknowledgment that Bob was a "queer 'un," and that there was never his equal for "falling upon good luck, and spending it after"—a

description which, when applied to my own conscience, told an amount of truth that was actually painful.

"There's no saying," said I, as I pocketed the letter, "if this epistle should ever reach your brother's hand—my course in life is too wayward and uncertain for me to say in what corner of the earth fate my find me—but if we *are* to meet, you shall hear of it. Rogers"—I said this in all the easy familiarity which brandy inspired—"I'll tell your brother of the warm and generous hospitality you extended to me at a time that, to all seeming, I needed such attentions—at a time, I say, when none but myself could know how independently I stood as regarded means; and of one thing be assured, Rogers, he whose caprice it now is to call himself Potts is your friend, your fast friend, for life."

He wrung my hand cordially—perhaps it was the easiest way for an honest sailor, as he was, to acknowledge the patronizing tone of my speech—but I could plainly see that he was sorely puzzled by the situation, and possibly very well pleased that there was no third party to be a spectator of it.

"Throw yourself there on that sofa," said he, "and take a sleep." And with that piece of counsel he left me, and went up on deck.

CHAPTER IX.

MY INTEREST IN A LADY FELLOW-TRAVELER.

NEXT mornings are terrible things, whether one awakes to the thought of some awful run of ill-luck at play, or with the racking headache of new port, or a very "fruity" Burgundy. They are dreadful, too, when they bring memories—vague and indistinct, perhaps—of some serious altercations, passionate words exchanged, and expressions of defiance reciprocated; but, as a measure of self-reproach and humiliation, I know not any distress can compare with the sensation of awaking to the consciousness that our cups have so ministered to imagination, that we have given a mythical narrative of ourself and our belongings, and have built up a card edifice of greatness that must tumble with the first touch of truth.

It was a sincere satisfaction to me that I saw nothing of the skipper on that "next morning." He was so occupied with all the details of getting into port, that I escaped his notice, and contrived to land unremarked. Little scraps of my last night's biography would obtrude themselves upon me, mixed up strangely with incidents of the same skipper's life, so that I was actually puzzled at moments to remember whether *he* was not the descendant of the famous rebel friend of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, and *I* it was who was sold in the public square at Tunis.

These dissolving views of an evening before are very difficult problems—not to *you*, most valued reader, whose conscience is not burglariously assaulted by a riotous imagination, but to the poor, weak Potts-like organizations—the men who never enjoy a real sensation, or taste a real pleasure, save on the hypothesis of a mock situation.

I sat at my breakfast in the "Goat," meditating these things. The grand problem to resolve was this: Is it better to live a life of dull incidents and commonplace events in one's own actual sphere, or creating, by force of imagination, an ideal status, to soar into a region of higher conceptions and more pictorial situations? What could existence in the first case offer me? A wearisome, beaten path, with nothing to interest, nothing to stimulate, me. On the other side, lay glorious regions of lovely scenery, peopled with figures the most graceful and attractive. I was at once the associate of the wise, the witty, and the agreeable, with wealth at my command, and great prizes within my reach. Illusions all—to be sure! But what are not illusions, if by that word you take mere account of permanence? What is it in this world that we love to believe real is not illusionary—the question of duration being the only difference? Is not beauty perishable? Is not wit soon exhausted? What becomes of the proudest physical strength after middle life is reached? What of eloquence, when the voice fails or loses its facility of inflexion?

All these considerations, however convincing to myself, were not equally satisfactory as regarded others, and so I sat down to write a letter to Crofton, explaining the reasons of my sudden departure, and enclosing him Father Dyke's epistle, which I had carried away with me. I began this letter with the most firm resolve to be truthful and accurate. I wrote down not only the date, but the day, "'Goat,' Milford," followed, and then: "My dear Crofton: It would ill become one who has partaken of your generous hospitality, and who, from an unknown stranger, was admitted to the privilege of your intimacy, to quit the roof beneath which the happiest hours of his life were passed, without expressing the deep shame and sorrow such a step has cost him, while he bespeaks your

indulgence to hear the reason." This was my first sentence, and it gave me uncommon trouble. I desired to be dignified, yet grateful, proud in my humility, grieved over an abrupt departure, but sustained by a manly confidence in the strength of my own motives. If I read it over once, I read it twenty times—now deeming it too diffuse, now fearing lest I had compressed my meaning too narrowly. Might it not be better to open thus: "Strike, but hear me, dear Crofton; or, before condemning the unhappy creature whose abject cry for mercy may seem but to increase the presumption of his guilt, and in whose faltering accents may appear the signs of a stricken conscience, read over, dear friend, the entire of this letter, weigh well the difficulties and dangers of him who wrote it, and say, Is he not rather a subject for pity than rebuke? Is not this more a case for a tearful forgiveness than for chastisement and reproach?"

Like most men who have little habit of composition, my difficulties increased with every new attempt, and I became bewildered and puzzled what to choose. It was vitally important that the first lines of my letter should secure the favorable opinion of the reader; by one unhappy word, one ill-selected expression, a whole case might be prejudiced. I imagined Crofton angrily throwing the epistle from him with an impatient "Stuff and nonsense! a practiced humbugger!" or, worse, again calling out, "Listen to this, Mary. Is not Master Potts a cool hand? Is not this brazening it out with a vengeance?" Such a thought was agony to me; the very essence of my theory about life was to secure the esteem and regard of others. I yearned after the good opinion of my fellow-men, and there was no amount of falsehood I would not incur to obtain it. No, come what would of it, the Croftons must not think ill of me. They must not only believe me guiltless of ingratitude, but some one whose gratitude was worth having. It will elevate them in their own esteem if they suppose that the pebble they picked up in the highway turned out to be a ruby. It will open their hearts to fresh impulses of generosity; they will not say to each other, "Let us be more careful another time; let us be guarded against showing attention to mere strangers: remember how we were taken in by that fellow Potts: what a specious rascal he was—how plausible, how insinuating!" but rather: "We can afford to be confiding: our experiences have taught us trustfulness. Poor Potts is a lesson that may inspire a hopeful belief in others." How little benefit can any one in his own individual capacity confer upon the world, but what a large measure of good may be distributed by the way he influences others! Thus, for instance, by one well-sustained delusion of mine, I inspire a fund of virtues which, in my merely truthful character, I could never pretend to originate. "Yes," thought I, "the Croftons shall continue to esteem me; Potts shall be a beacon to guide, not a sunken rock to wreck, them."

Thus resolving, I sat down to inform them that, on my return from a stroll, I was met by a man bearing a telegram, informing me of the dying condition of my father's only brother, my sole relative on earth; that, yielding only to the impulse of my affection, and not thinking of preparation, I started on board of a steamer for Waterford, and thence for Milford, on my way to Brighton. I vaguely hinted at great expectations, and so on, and then, approaching the difficult problem of Father Dyke's letter, I said, "I enclose you the priest's letter, which amused me much. With all his shrewdness, the worthy churchman never suspected how completely my friend Keldrum and myself had humbugged him, nor did he discover that our little dinner and the episode that followed it were the subjects of a wager between ourselves. His marvelous cunning was thus for once at fault, as I shall explain to you more fully when we meet, and prove to you that, upon this occasion at least, he was not deceiver, but dupe!" I begged to have a line from him to the "Crown Hotel, Brighton," and concluded.

With this act, I felt I had done with the past, and now addressed myself to the future. I purchased a few cheap necessaries for the road, as few and as cheap as was well possible. I said to myself, fortune shall lift you from the very dust of the high road, Potts; not one advantageous adjunct shall aid your elevation!

The train by which I was to leave did not start till noon, and to while away time I took up a number of the *Times*, which the "Goat" appeared to receive at third or fourth hand. My eye fell upon that memorable second column, in which I read the following:—

"Left his home in Dublin on the 8th ult., and not since been heard of, a young gentleman, aged about twenty-two years, five feet nine and a quarter in height, slightly formed, and rather stooped in the shoulders; features pale and melancholy; eyes greyish, inclining to hazel; hair light brown, and worn long behind. He had on at his departure——"

I turned impatiently to the foot of the

advertisement, and found that to any one giving such information as might lead to his discovery was promised a liberal reward, on application to Messrs. Potts and Co., compounding chemists and apothecaries, Mary's Abbey. I actually grew sick with anger as I read this. To what end was it that I built up a glorious edifice of imaginative architecture, if by one miserable touch of coarse fact it would crumble into clay? To what purpose did I intrigue with fortune to grant me a special destiny, if I were thus to be classed with runaway traders or strayed terriers? I believe in my heart I could better have borne all the terrors of a charge of felony than the lowering, debasing, humiliating condition of being advertised for on a reward.

I had long since determined to be free as regarded ties of country. I now resolved to be equally so with respect to those of family. I will be Potts no longer. I will call myself for the future—let me see—what shall it be, that will not involve a continued exercise of memory, and the troublesome task of unmarking my linen? I was forgetting in this that I had none, all my wearables being left behind at the Rosary. Something with an initial P was requisite; and after much canvassing, I fixed on Pottinger. If by an unhappy chance I should meet one who remembered me as Potts, I reserved the right of mildly correcting him, by saying, "Pottinger, Pottinger! the name of Potts was given me when at Eaton for shortness." They tell us that, amongst the days of our exaltation in life, few can compare with that in which we exchange a jacket for a tailed coat. The spring from the tadpole to the full-grown frog, the emancipation from boyhood into adolescence, is certainly very fascinating. Let me assure my reader that the bound from a monosyllabic name to a high-sounding epithet of three syllables is almost as enchanting as this assumption of the *toga virilis.* I had often felt the terrible brevity of Potts; I had shrunk from answering the question, "What name, sir?" from the indescribable shame of saying, "Potts;" but Pottinger could be uttered slowly and with dignity. One could repose on the initial syllable, as if to say, "Mark well what I am saying; this is a name to be remembered." With that, there must have been great and distinguished Pottingers, rich men, men of influence and acres; from these I could at leisure select a parentage.

"Do you go by the twelve-fifteen train, sir?" asked the waiter, breaking in upon these meditations. "You have no time to lose, sir."

With a start, I saw it was already past twelve, so I paid my bill with all speed, and, taking my knapsack in my hand, hurried away to the train. There was considerable confusion as I arrived, a crush of cabs, watermen, and porters blocked the way, and the two currents of an arriving and departing train struggled against and confronted each other. Amongst those who, like myself, were bent on entering the station-house, was a young lady in deep mourning, whose frail proportions and delicate figure gave no prospect of resisting the shock and conflict before her. Seeing her so destitute of all protection, I espoused her cause, and after a valorous effort and much buffeting, I fought her way for her to the ticket window, but only in time to hear the odious crash of a great bell, the bang of a glass door, and the cry of a policeman on duty, "No more tickets, gentlemen; the train is starting."

"Oh! what shall I do?" cried she, in an accent of intense agony, inadvertently addressing the words to myself—"What shall I do?"

"There's another train to start at three-forty," said I, consolingly. "I hope that waiting will be no inconvenience to you. It is a slow one, to be sure, stops everywhere, and only arrives in town at two o'clock in the morning."

I heard her sob—I distinctly heard her sob behind her thick black veil as I said this; and to offer what amount of comfort I could, I added, "I, too, am disappointed, and obliged to await the next departure, and if I can be of the least service in any way——"

"Oh, no, sir! I am very grateful to you, but there is nothing—I mean—there is no help for it!" And here her voice dropped to a mere whisper.

"I sincerely trust," said I, in an accent of great deference and sympathy, "that the delay may not be the cause of grave inconvenience to you; and although a perfect stranger, if any assistance I can offer——"

"No, sir; there is really nothing I could ask from your kindness. It was in turning back to bid good-bye a second time to my mother——" Here her agitation seemed to choke her for she turned away and said no more.

"Shall I fetch a cab for you?" I asked. "Would you like to go back till the next train starts?"

"Oh, by no means, sir! We live three miles from Milford; and, besides, I could not bear——" Here again she broke down, but added, after a pause, "it is the first time I have been away from home!"

With a little gentle force, I succeeded in inducing her to enter the refreshment room of the station, but she would take nothing; and after some attempts to engage her in conversation to while away the dreary time, I perceived that it would be a more true politeness not to obtrude upon her sorrow; and so I lighted my cigar, and proceeded to walk up and down the long terrace of the station. Three trunks, or rather two and a hat-box, kept my knapsack company on the side of the tramway, and on these I read, inscribed in a large hand, "Miss K. Herbert, per steamer *Ardent*, Ostend." I started. Was it not in that direction my own steps were turned? Was not Blondel in Belgium, and was it not in search of him that I was bent? "Oh, fate!" I cried, "what subtle device of thine is this? What wily artifice art thou now engaged in? Is this a snare, or is it an aid! Hast thou any secret purpose in this rencontre? for with thee there are no chances, no accidents in thy vicissitudes; all is prepared and fitted, like a piece of door carpentry." And then I fell into weaving a story for the young lady. She was an orphan. Her father, the curate of the little parish she lived in, had just died, leaving herself and her mother in direst distress. She was leaving home—the happy home of her childhood (I saw it all before me—cottage, and garden, and little lawn, with its one cow and two sheep, and the small green wicket beside the road), and she was leaving all these to become a governess to an upstart, mill-owning, vulgar family at Brussels. Poor thing! how my heart bled for her! What a life of misery lay before her—what trials of temper and of pride! The odious children—I know they are odious—will torture her to the quick; and Mrs. Treddles, or whatever her detestable name is, will lead her a terrible life from jealousy; and she'll have to bear everything, and cry over it in secret, remembering the once happy time in that honeysuckled porch where poor papa used to read Wordsworth for them.

What a world of sorrow on every side; and how easily might it be made otherwise! What gigantic efforts are we forever making for something which we never live to enjoy. Striving to be freer, greater, better governed, and more lightly taxed, and all the while forgetting that the real secret is to be on better terms with each other; more generous, more forgiving, less apt to take offense, or bear malice. Of mere material goods, there is far more than we need. The table would accommodate more than double the guests, could we only agree to sit down in orderly fashion; but here we have one occupying three chairs, while another crouches on the floor, and some even prefer smashing the furniture to letting some more humbly born take a place near them. I wish they would listen to me on this theme. I wish, instead of all this social-science humbug and art-union balderdash, they would hearken to the voice of a plain man, saying: Are you not members of one family—the individuals of one household? Is it not clear to you, if you extend the kindly affections you now reserve for the narrow circle wherein you live to the wider area of mankind, that, while diffusing countless blessings to others, you will yourself become better, more charitable, more kind-hearted, wider in reach of thought, more catholic in philanthropy? I can imagine such a world, and feel it to be a paradise—a world with no social distinctions, no inequalities of condition, and, consequently, no insolent pride of station, nor any degrading subserviency of demeanor, no rivalries, no jealousies—love and benevolence everywhere. In such a sphere, the calm equanimity of mind by which great things are accomplished would in itself constitute a perfect heaven. No impatience of temper, no passing irritation——

"Where the —— are you driving to, sir?" cried I. as a fellow with a brass-bound trunk in a hand-barrow came smash against my shin.

"Don't you see, sir, the train is just starting?" said he, hastening on; and I perceived that such was the case, and that I had barely time to rush down to the pay-office and secure my ticket.

"What class, sir?" cried the clerk.

"Which has she taken?" said I, forgetting all save the current of my own thoughts.

"First or second, sir?" repeated he, impatiently.

"Either, or both," replied I, in confusion, and he flung me back some change and a blue card, closing the little shutter with a bang that announced the end of all colloquy.

"Get in, sir!"

"Which carriage?"

"Get in, sir!"

"Second-class? Here you are!" called out an official, as he thrust me almost rudely into a vile mob of travelers.

The bell rang out, and two snorts and a scream followed, then a heave and jerk, and away we went. As soon as I had time to look around me, I saw that my compan-

ions were all persons of an humble order of the middle class—the small shopkeepers and traders, probably, of the locality we were leaving. Their easy recognition of each other, and the natural way their conversation took up local matters, soon satisfied me of this fact, and reconciled me to fall back upon my own thoughts for occupation and amusement. This was with me the usual prelude to a sleep, to which I was quietly composing myself soon after. The droppings of the conversation around me, however, prevented this; for the talk had taken a discussional tone, and the differences of opinion were numerous. The question debated was, Whether a certain Sir Samuel Somebody was a great rogue, or only unfortunate? The reasons for either opinion were well put and defended, showing that the company, like most others of that class in life in England, had cultivated their faculties of judgment and investigation by the habit of attending trials or reading reports of them in newspapers.

After the discussion on his morality, came the question, Was he alive or dead?

"Sir Samuel never shot himself, sir," said a short pluffy man with an asthma. "I've known him for years, and I can say he was not a man to do such an act."

"Well, sir, the Ostrich and the United Brethren offices are both of your opinion," said another; "they'll not pay the policy on his life."

"The law only recognizes death on production of the body," sagely observed a man in shabby black, with a satin neckcloth, and who I afterwards perceived was regarded as a legal authority.

"What's to be done, then, if a man be drowned at sea, or burned to a cinder in a lime-kiln?"

"Ay, or by what they call spontaneous combustion, that doesn't leave a shred of you?" cried three objectors in turn.

"The law provides for these emergencies with its usual wisdom, gentlemen. Where death may not be actually proven, it can be often inferred."

"But who says that Sir Samuel is dead?" broke in the asthmatic man, evidently impatient at the didactic tone of the attorney. "All we know of the matter is a letter of his own signing, that 'when these lines are read I shall be no more.' Now, is that sufficient evidence of death to induce an insurance company to hand over some eight or ten thousand pounds to his family?"

"I believe you might say thirty thousand, sir," suggested a mild voice from the corner.

"Nothing of the kind," interposed another; "the really heavy policies on his life were held by an old Cumberland baronet, Sir Elkanah Crofton, who first established Whalley in the iron trade. I've heard it from my father fifty times, when a child, that Sam Whalley entered Milford in a fustian jacket, with all his traps in a handkerchief."

At the mention of Sir Elkanah Crofton, my attention was quickly excited; this was the uncle of my friends at the Rosary, and I was at once curious to hear more of him.

"Fustian jacket or not, he has a good head on his shoulders," remarked one.

"And luck, sir—luck which is better than any head," sighed the meek man, sorrowfully.

"I deny that, deny it totally," broke in he of the asthma. "If Sam Whalley hadn't been a man of first-rate order, he never could have made that concern what it was—the first foundry in Wales."

"And what is it now, and where is he?" asked the attorney, triumphantly.

"At rest, I hope," murmured the sad man.

"Not a bit of it, sir," said the wheezing voice, in a tone of confidence; "take *my* word for it, he's alive and hearty, somewhere or other, ay, and we'll hear of him one of these days: he'll be smelting metals in Africa, or cutting a canal through the isthmus of heaven knows what, or prime minister of one of those rajahs in India. He's a clever dog, and he knows it too. I saw what he thought of himself the day old Sir Elkanah came down to Fair Bridge."

"To be sure, you were there that morning," said the attorney; "tell us about that meeting."

"It's soon told," resumed the other. "When Sir Elkanah Crofton arrived at the house we were all in the garden. Sir Samuel had taken me there to see some tulips, which he said were the finest in Europe, except some at the Hague. Maybe it was that the old baronet was vexed at seeing nobody come to meet him, or that something else had crossed him, but, as he entered the garden, I saw he was sorely out of temper.

"'How d'ye do, Sir Elkanah?' said Whalley to him, coming up pleasantly. 'We scarcely expected you before dinner-time. My wife and my daughters,' said he, introducing them; but the other only removed his hat ceremoniously, without ever noticing them in the least.

"'I hope you had a pleasant journey, Sir Elkanah?' said Whalley after a pause, while, with a short jerk of his head, he made signs to the ladies to leave them.

"'I trust I am not the means of breaking up a family party?' said the other, half sarcastically. 'Is Mrs. Whalley——'

"'Lady Whalley, with your good permission, sir,' said Samuel, stiffly.

"'Of course—how stupid of me! I should remember you had been knighted. And, indeed, the thought was full upon me as I came along, for I scarcely suppose that, if higher ambitions had not possessed you, I should find the farm buildings and the outhouse in the state of ruin I see them.'

"'They are better by ten thousand pounds than the day on which I first saw them; and I say it in the presence of this honest townsman here, my neighbor'—meaning *me*—'that both *you* and they were very creaky concerns when I took you in hand.'

"I thought the old baronet was going to have a fit at these words, and he caught hold of my arm and swayed backward and forward all the time, his face purple with passion.

"'Who made you, sir? who made you?' cried he, at last, with a voice trembling with rage.

"'The same hand that made us all,' said the other, calmly. 'The same wise Providence that, for his own ends, creates drones as well as bees, and makes rickety old baronets as well as men of brains and industry.'

"'You shall rue this insolence—it shall cost you dearly, by heaven!' cried out the old man, as he gripped me tighter. 'You are a witness, sir, to the way I have been insulted. I'll foreclose your mortgage—I'll call in every shilling I have advanced—I'll sell the house over your head——'

"'Ay! but the head without a roof over it will hold itself higher than your own, old man. The good faculties and good health God has given me are worth all your title-deeds twice told. If I walk out of this town as poor as the day I came into it, I'll go with the calm certainty that I can earn my bread—a process that would be very difficult for *you* when you could not lend out money on interest.'

"'Give me your arm, sir, back to the town,' said the old baronet to me; 'I feel myself too ill to go all alone.'

"'Get him to step into the house and take something,' whispered Whalley in my ear, as he turned away and left us. But I was afraid to propose it—indeed, if I had I believe the old man would have had a fit on the spot, for he trembled from head to foot, and drew long sighs as if recovering out of a faint.

"'Is there an inn near this,' asked he, 'where I can stop? and have you a doctor here?'

"'You can have both, Sir Elkanah,' said I.

"'You know me, then?—you know who I am?' said he, hastily, as I called him by his name.

"'That I do, sir, and I hold my place under you; my name is Shore.'

"'Yes, I remember,' said he, vaguely, as he moved away. When we came to the gate on the road he turned around full and looked at the house, overgrown with that rich red creeper that was so much admired. 'Mark my words, my good man,' said he—'mark them well, and as sure as I live, I'll not leave one stone on another of that dwelling there.'"

"He was promising more than he could perform," said the attorney.

"I don't know that," sighed the meek man; "there's very little that money can't do in this life."

"And what became of Whalley's widow—if she be a widow?" asked one.

"She's in a poor way. She's up at the village yonder, and, with the help of one of her girls, she's trying to keep a children's school."

"Lady Whalley's school?" exclaimed one, in half sarcasm.

"Yes; but she has taken her maiden name again since this disaster, and calls herself Mrs. Herbert."

"Has she more than one daughter, sir?" I asked of the last speaker.

"Yes, there are two girls; the younger one, they tell me, is going, or gone abroad, to take some situation or other—a teacher, or a governess."

"No, sir," said the pluffy man, "Miss Kate has gone as companion to an old widow lady at Brussels—Mrs. Keats. I saw the letter that arranged the terms—a trifle less per annum than her mother gave to her maid."

"Poor girl!" sighed the sad man. "It's a dreary way to begin life!"

"I nodded assentingly to him, and with a smile of gratitude for his sympathy. Indeed, the sentiment had linked me to him, and made me wish to be beside him. The conversation now grew discursive, on the score of all the difficulties that beset women when reduced to make efforts for their own support; and though the speakers were men well able to understand and pronounce upon the knotty problem, the subject did not possess interest enough to turn my mind from the details I had just been hearing. The name of Miss Herbert on the trunks showed me now who was the young lady I had met, and I reproached myself

bitterly with having separated from her, and thus forfeited the occasion of befriending her on her journey. We were to sup somewhere about eleven, and I resolved that I should do my utmost to discover her, if in the train; and I occupied myself now with imagining numerous pretexts for presuming to offer my services on her behalf. She will readily comprehend the disinterested character of my attentions. She will see that I come in no spirit of levity, but moved by a true sympathy and the respectful sentiment of one touched by her sorrows. I can fancy her coy diffidence giving way before the deferential homage of my manner; and in this I really believe I have some tact. I was not sorry to pursue this theme undisturbed by the presence of my fellow-travellers, who had now got out at a station, leaving me all alone to meditate and devise imaginary conversations with Miss Herbert. I rehearsed to myself the words by which to address her, my bow, my gesture, my faint smile, a blending of melancholy with kindliness, my whole air a union of the deference of the stranger with something almost fraternal. These pleasant musings were now rudely routed by the return of my fellow-travelers, who came hurrying back to their places at the banging summons of a great bell.

"Everything cold as usual. It is a perfect disgrace how the public are treated on this line!" cried one.

"I never think of anything but a biscuit and a glass of ale, and they charged me elevenpence halfpenny for that."

"The directors ought to look to this. I saw those ham-sandwiches when I came down here last Tuesday week."

"And though the time-table gives us fifteen minutes, I can swear, for I laid my watch on the table, that we only got nine and a half."

"Well, I supped heartily off that spiced round."

"Supped, supped! Did you say you had supped here, sir?" asked I, in anxiety.

"Yes, sir; that last station was Trentham. They give us nothing more now till we reach town."

I lay back with a faint sigh, and, from that moment, took no note of time till the guard cried "London!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PERILS OF MY JOURNEY TO OSTEND.

"Young lady in deep mourning, sir—crape shawl and bonnet, sir," said the official, in answer to my question, aided by a shilling fee; "the same as asked where was the station for the Dover line?"

"Yes, yes; that must be she."

"Got into a cab, sir, and drove off straight for the Sou'Eastern."

"She was quite alone?"

"Quite, sir; but she seems used to traveling—got her traps together in no time, and was off in a jiffy."

"Stupid dog!" thought I; "with every advantage position and accident can confer, how little this fellow reads of character. In this poor forlorn, heart-weary orphan, he only sees something like a commercial traveler!"

"Any luggage, sir? Is this yours?" said he, pointing to a woolsack.

"No," said I, haughtily; "my servants have gone forward with my luggage. I have nothing but a knapsack," and with an air of dignity I flung it into a hansom, and ordered the driver to set me down at the South-Eastern. Although using every exertion, the train had just started when I arrived, and a second time was I obliged to wait some hours at a station. Resolving to free myself from all the captivations of that tendency to day-dreaming—that fatal habit of suffering my fancy to direct my steps, as though in pursuit of some settled purpose—I calmly asked myself whither I was going—and for what? Before I had begun the examination, I deemed myself a most candid, truth-observing, frank witness, and now I discovered that I was casuistical and "dodgy" as an Old Bailey lawyer. I was haughty and indignant at being so catechized. My conscience, on the shallow pretext of being greatly interested about me, was simply prying and inquisitive. Conscience is all very well when one desires to appeal to it, and refer some distinct motive or action to its appreciation; but it is scarcely fair, and certainly not dignified, for conscience to go about seeking for little accusations of this kind or that. What liberty of action is there, besides, to a man who carries a "detective" with him wherever he goes? And lastly conscience has the intolerable habit of obtruding its opinion upon details, and will not wait to judge by results. Now, when I have won the race, come in first, amid the enthusiastic cheers of thousands, I don't care to be asked, however privately, whether I did not practice some little bit of rather unfair jockeyship. I never could rightly get over my dislike to the friend who would take this liberty with me; and this is exactly the part conscience plays, and with an insufferable air of superiority, too, as though to

say, "None of your shuffling with *me*, Potts! That will do all mighty well with the outer world, but *I* am not to be humbugged. You never devised a scheme in your life that I was not by at the cookery, and saw how you mixed the ingredients and stirred the pot! No, no, old fellow, all your little secret rogueries will avail you nothing here!"

Had these words been actually addressed to me by a living individual, I could not have heard them more plainly than now they fell upon my ear, uttered, besides, in a tone of cutting, sarcastic derision. "I will stand this no longer!" cried I, springing up from my seat and flinging my cigar angrily away. "I'm certain no man ever accomplished any high and great destiny in life who suffered himself to be bullied in this wise; such irritating, pestering impertinence would destroy the temper of a saint, and break down the courage and damp the ardor of the boldest. Could great measures of statecraft be carried out—could battles be won—could new continents be discovered, if, at every strait and every emergency, one was to be interrupted by a low voice, whispering, 'Is this *all* right? Are there no flaws here? You live in a world of frailties, Potts. You are playing at a round game, where every one cheats a little, and where the rogueries are never remembered against him who wins. Bear that in your mind, and keep your cards "up."' "

When I was about to take my ticket, a dictum of the great moralist struck my mind: "Desultory reading has slain its thousands and tens of thousands;" and if desultory reading, why not infinitely more so desultory acquaintance. Surely, our readings do not impress us as powerfully as the actual intercourse of life. It must be so. It is in this daily conflict with our fellow-men that we are moulded and fashioned, and the danger is, to commingle and confuse the impressions made upon our hearts—to cross the writing on our natures so often that nothing remains legible! "I will guard against this peril," thought I. "I will concentrate my intentions and travel alone." I slipped a crown into a guard's hand and whispered, "Put no one in here if you can help it." As I jogged along, all by myself, I could not help feeling that one of the highest privileges of wealth must be, to be able always to buy solitude—to be in a position to say, "None shall invade me. The world must contrive to go round without a kick from *me*. I am a self-contained and self-suffering creature." If I were Rothschild I'd revel in this sentiment; it places one so immeasurably above that busy ant-hill where one sees the creatures hurrying, hastening, and fagging, "till their hearts are broken." One feels himself a superior intelligence—a being above the wants and cares of the work-a-day world around him.

"Any room here?" cried a merry voice, breaking in upon my musing, and at the same instant a young fellow, in a grey traveling suit and a wideawake, flung a dressing-bag and a wrapper carelessly into the carriage, and so recklessly as to come tumbling over me. He never thought of apology, however, but continued his remarks to the guard, who was evidently endeavoring to induce him to take a place elsewhere. "No, no!" cried the young man; "I'm all right here, and the cove with the yellow hair won't object to my smoking."

I heard these words as I sat in the corner, and I need scarcely say how grossly the impertinence offended me. That the privacy I had paid for should be invaded was bad enough, but that my companion should begin acquaintance with an insult was worse again, and so I determined on no account, nor upon any pretext, would I hold intercourse with him, but maintain a perfect silence and reserve so long as our journey lasted.

There was an insufferable jauntiness and self-satisfaction in every movement of the new arrival, even to the reckless way he pitched into the carriage three small white canvas bags, carefully sealed and docketed; the address—which I read—being, "To H.M.'s Minister and Envoy at——, by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché," etc. So, then, this was one of the young guard of diplomacy, one of those sucking Talleyrands, which form the hope of the Foreign Office and the terror of middle-class English abroad.

"Do you mind smoking?" asked he, abruptly, as he scraped his lucifer match against the roof of the carriage, showing, by the promptitude of his action, how little he cared for my reply.

"I never smoke, sir, except in the carriages reserved for smokers," was my rebukeful answer.

"And I always do," said he, in a very easy tone.

Not condescending to notice this rude rejoinder, I drew forth my newspaper, and tried to occupy myself with its contents.

"Anything new?" asked he, abruptly.

"Not that I am aware, sir. I was about to consult the paper."

"What paper is it?"

"It is the *Banner*, sir—at your service," said I, with a sort of sarcasm.

"Rascally print—a vile, low, radical, mill-owning organ. Pitch it away!"

"Certainly not, sir. Being for *me* and *my* edification, I will beg to exercise my own judgment as to how I deal with it."

"It's deuced low, that's what it is, and that's exactly the fault of all our daily papers. Their tone is vulgar; they reflect nothing of the opinions one hears in society. Don't you agree with me?"

I gave a sort of muttering dissent, and he broke in quickly—

"Perhaps not; it's just as likely *you* would not think them low, but take *my* word for it, *I*'m right."

I shook my head negatively, without speaking.

"Well, now," cried he, "let us put the thing to the test. Read out one of those leaders. I don't care which, or on what subject. Read it out, and I pledge myself to show you at least one vulgarism, one flagrant outrage on good breeding, in every third sentence."

"I protest, sir," said I, haughtily, "I shall do no such thing. I have come here neither to read aloud nor take up the defense of the public press."

"I say, look out!" cried he; "you'll smash something in that bag you're kicking there. If I don't mistake, it's Bohemian glass. No, no; all right," said he, examining the number, "it's only Yarmouth bloaters."

"I imagined these contained despatches, sir," said I, with a look of what he ought to have understood as withering scorn.

"You did, did you?" cried he, with a quick laugh. "Well, I'll bet you a sovereign I make a better guess about *your* pack than you've done about *mine*."

"Done, sir; I take you," said I, quickly.

"Well; you're in cutlery, or hardware, or lace goods, or ribbons, or alpaca cloth, or drugs, ain't you?"

"I am not, sir," was my stern reply.

"Not a bagman?"

"Not a bagman, sir."

"Well, you're an usher in a commercial academy, or 'our own correspondent,' or a telegraph clerk?"

"I'm none of these, sir. And I now beg to remind that you, instead of one guess, you have made a dozen."

"Well, you've won, there's no denying it," said he, taking a sovereign from his waistcoat pocket and handing it to me. "It's deuced odd how I should be mistaken. I'd have sworn you were a bagman!" But for the impertinence of these last words I should have declined to accept his lost bet, but I took it now as a sort of vindication of my wounded feelings. "Now it's all over and ended," said he, calmly, "what are you? I don't ask out of any impertinent curiosity, but that I hate being foiled in a thing of this kind. What are you?"

"I'll tell you what I am, sir," said I, indignantly, for now I was outraged beyond endurance—"I'll tell you, sir, what I am, and what I feel myself—one singularly unlucky in a traveling companion."

"Bet you a five-pound note you're not," broke he in. "Give you six to five on it, in anything you like."

"It would be a wager almost impossible to decide, sir."

"Nothing of the kind. Let us leave it to the first pretty woman we see at the station, the guard of the train, the fellow in the pay office, the stoker, if you like."

"I must own, sir, that you express a very confident opinion of your case."

"Will you bet?"

"No, sir, certainly not."

"Well, then, shut up, and say no more about it. If a man won't back his opinion, the less he says the better."

I lay back in my place at this, determined that no provocation should induce me to exchange another word with him. Apparently, he had not made a like resolve, for he went on: "It's all bosh about appearances being deceptive, and so forth. They say, 'Not all gold that glitters;' my notion is, that with a fellow who really knows life, no disguise that was ever invented will be successful: the way a man wears his hair"—here he looked at mine—"the sort of gloves he has, if there be anything peculiar in his waistcoat, and, above all, his boots. I don't believe the devil was ever more revealed in his hoof than a snob by his shoes." A most condemnatory glance at my extremities accompanied this speech.

"Must I endure this sort of persecution all the way to Dover?" was the question I asked of my misery.

"Look out, you're on fire!" said he, with a dry laugh. And, sure enough, a spark from his cigarette had fallen on my trousers, and burned a round hole in them.

"Really, sir," cried I, in passionate warmth, "your conduct becomes intolerable."

"Well, if I knew you preferred being singed, I'd have said nothing about it. What's this station here? Where's your 'Bradshaw'?"

"I have got no 'Bradshaw,' sir," said I, with dignity.

"No 'Bradshaw!' A bagman without

'Bradshaw!' Oh, I forgot, you ain't a bagman. Why are we stopping here? Something smashed, I suspect. Eh! what! isn't that she? Yes, it is! Open the door!—let me out, I say! Confound the lock!—let me out!" While he uttered these words, in an accent of the wildest impatience, I had but time to see a lady, in deep mourning, pass on to a carriage in front, just as, with a preliminary snort, the train shook, then backed, and at last set out on its thundering course again. "Such a stunning fine girl!" said he, as he lighted a fresh cigar; "saw her just as we started, and thought I'd run her to earth in this carriage. Precious mistake I made, eh, wasn't it? All in black—deep black—and quite alone!"

I had to turn towards the window, not to let him see how his words agitated me, for I felt certain it was Miss Herbert he was describing, and I felt a sort of revulsion to think of the poor girl being subjected to the impertinence of this intolerable puppy.

"Too much style about her for a governess; and yet, somehow, she wasn't, so to say—you know what I mean—she wasn't altogether *that;* looked frightened, and people of real class never look frightened."

"The daughter of a clergyman, probably," said I, with a tone of such reproof as I hoped must check all levity.

"Or a flash maid! some of them, nowadays, are wonderful swells; they've got an art of dressing and making up that is really surprising."

"I have no experience of the order, sir," said I, gravely.

"Well, so I should say. *Your* beat is in the haberdashery or hosiery line, eh?"

"Has it not yet occurred to you, sir," said I, sternly, "that an acquaintanceship brief as ours should exclude personalities, not to say——" I wanted to add "impertinences," but his grey eyes were turned full on me, with an expression so peculiar, that I faltered, and could not get the word out.

"Well, go on—out with it. Not to say what?" said he, calmly.

I turned my shoulder towards him, and nestled down into my place.

"There's a thing, now," said he, in a tone of the coolest reflection—"there's a thing, now, that I never could understand, and I have never met the man to explain it. Our nation, as a nation, is just as plucky as the French—no one disputes it; and yet, take a Frenchman of *your* class—the *commis-voyageur,* or anything that way—and you'll just find him as prompt on the point of honor as the best noble in the land. He never utters an insolent speech without being ready to back it."

I felt as if I were choking, but I never uttered a word.

"I remember meeting one of those fellows—traveler for some house in the wine trade—at Avignon. It was at *table d'hôte,* and I said something slighting about Communism, and he replied, '*Monsieur, je suis Fouriériste,* and you insult me.' Thereupon, he sent me his card by the waiter—'Paul Deloge, for the house of Gougon, *père et fils.*' I tore it, and threw it away, saying, 'I never drink Bordeaux wines.' 'What do you say to a glass of Hermitage, then?' said he, and flung the contents of his own in my face. Wasn't that very ready? *I* call it as neat a thing as could be."

"And you bore that outrage?" said I, in triumphant delight. "You submitted to a flagrant insult like that at a public table?"

"I don't know what you call 'bearing it'!" said he. "The thing was done, and I had only to wipe my face with my napkin."

"Nothing more?" said I, sneeringly.

"We went out, afterwards, if you mean *that,*" said he, quietly, "and he ran me through here." As he spoke, he proceeded, in leisurely fashion, to unbutton the wrist of his shirt, and, baring his arm midway, showed me a pinkish cicatrice of considerable extent. "It went, the doctor said, within a hair's breadth of the artery."

I made no comment upon this story. From the moment I heard it, I felt as though I was traveling with the late Mr. Palmer, of Rugeley. I was, as it were, in the company of one who never would have scrupled to dispose of me at any moment and in any way that his fancy suggested. My code respecting the duel was to regard it as the last, the very last, appeal in the direst emergency of dishonor. The men who regarded it as the settlement of slight differences, I deemed assassins. They were no more safe associates for peaceful citizens than a wolf was a meet companion for a flock of South Downs. The more I ruminated on this theme, the more indignant grew my resentment, and the question assumed the shape of asking, "Is the great mass of mankind to be hectored and bullied by some half-dozen scoundrels with skill at the small sword?" Little knew I that in the ardor of my indignation I had uttered these words aloud—spoken them with an earnest vehemence, looking my fellow-traveler full in the face, and frowning.

"Scoundrel is strong, eh?" said he, slowly. "*Very* strong!"

"Who spoke of a scoundrel?" asked I, in terror, for his confounded calm, cold manner made my very blood run chill.

"Scoundrel is exactly the sort of word," added he, deliberately, "that once uttered can only be expiated in one way. You do not give me the impression of a very bright individual, but certainly you can understand so much."

I bowed a dignified assent; my heart was in my mouth as I did it, and I could not, to save my life, have uttered a word. My predicament was highly perilous; and all incurred by what?—that passion for adventure that had led me forth out of a position of easy obscurity into a world of strife, conflict, and difficulty. Why had I not stayed at home? What foolish infatuation had ever suggested to me the Quixotism of these wanderings? Blondel had done it all. Were it not for Blondel, I had never met Father Dyke, talked myself into a stupid wager, lost what was not my own; in fact, every disaster sprang out of the one before it, just as twig adheres to branch and branch to trunk. Shall I make a clean breast of it, and tell my companion my whole story? Shall I explain to him that at heart I am a creature of the kindliest impulses and most generous sympathies, that I overflow with good intentions towards my fellows, and that the problem I am engaged to solve is how shall I dispense most happiness? Will he comprehend me? Has he a nature to appreciate an organization so fine and subtle as mine? Will he understand that the fairy who endows us with our gifts at birth is reckoned to be munificent when she withholds only one high quality, and with me that one was courage? I mean the coarse, vulgar, combative sort of courage that makes men prize-fighters and bargees; for, as to the grander species of courage, I imagine it to be my distinguishing feature.

The question is, will he give me a patient hearing, for my theory requires nice handling, and some delicacy in the developing? He may cut me short in his bluff, abrupt way, and say, "Out with it, old fellow, you want to sneak out of this quarrel." What am I to reply? I shall rejoin: "Sir, let us first inquire if it be a quarrel. From the time of Atrides down to the Crimean war, there has not been one instance of a conflict that did not originate in misconceptions, and has not been prolonged by delusions! Let us take the Peloponnesian war." A short grunt beside me here cut short my argumentation. He was fast, sound asleep, and snoring loudly. My thoughts at once suggested escape. Could I but get away I fancied I could find space in the world, never again to see myself his neighbor.

The train was whirling along between deep chalk-cuttings, and at a furious pace; to leap out was certain death. But was not the same fate reserved for me if I remained? At last I heard the crank-crank of the brake! We were nearing a station; the earth walls at either side receded; the view opened; a spire of a church, trees, houses appeared; and our speed diminishing, we came bumping, throbbing, and snorting into a little trim garden-like spot, that at the moment seemed to me a paradise.

I beckoned to the guard to let me out—to do it noiselessly I slipped a shilling into his hand. I grasped my knapsack and my wrapper, and stole furtively away. Oh, the happiness of that moment as the door closed without awakening him!

"Anywhere—any carriage—what class you please," muttered I. "There, yonder," broke I in, hastily—"where that lady in mourning has just got in."

"All full there, sir," replied the man; "step in here." And away we went.

My compartment contained but one passenger; he wore a gold band round his oil-skin cap, and seemed the captain of a mail steamer, or admiralty agent; he merely glanced at me as I came in, and went on reading his newspaper.

"Going north, I suppose?" said he, bluntly, after a pause of some time. "Going to Germany?"

"No," said I, rather astonished at his giving me this destination. "I'm for Brussels."

"We shall have a rough night of it, outside; glass is falling suddenly, and the wind has chopped round to the south'ard and east'ard!"

"I'm sorry for it," said I. "I'm but an indifferent sailor."

"Well I'll tell you what to do: just turn into my cabin, you'll have it all to yourself; lie down flat on your back the moment you get on board: tell the steward to give you a strong glass of brandy-and-water—the captain's brandy say, for it is rare old stuff, and a perfect cordial, and my name ain't Slidders if you don't sleep all the way across."

I really had no words for such unexpected generosity: how was I to believe my ears at such a kind proposal from a perfect stranger? Was it anything in my appearance that could have marked me out as an object for these attentions? "I don't know how to thank you enough," said I,

in confusion; "and when I think that we meet now for the first time——"

"What does that signify?" said he, in the same short way. "I have met pretty nigh all of you by this time. I've been a matter of eleven years on this station!"

"Met pretty nigh all of us!" What does that mean? Who and what are we? He can't mean the Pottses, for I am the first who ever traveled even thus far! But I was not given leisure to follow up the inquiry, for he went on to say how in all that time of eleven years he had never seen threatenings of a worse night than that before us.

"Then why venture out?" asked I, timidly.

"They must have the bags over there, that's the reason," said he, curtly; "besides, who's to say when he won't meet dirty weather at sea—one takes rough and smooth in this life, eh?"

The observation was not remarkable for originality, but I liked it. I like the reflective turn, no matter how beaten the path it may select for its exercise.

"It's a short trip—some five or six hours at most," said he; "but it's wonderful what ugly weather one sees in it. It's always so in these narrow seas."

"Yes," said I, concurringly, "these petty channels, like the small events of our life, are often the sources of our greatest perils."

He gave a little short grunt; it might have been assent, and it might possibly have been a rough protest against further moralizing; at all events, he resumed his paper, and read away without speaking. I had time to examine him well, now, at my leisure, and there was nothing in his face that could give me any clue to the generous nature of his offer to me. No, he was a hardfeatured, weatherbeaten, rather stern sort of man, verging on fifty-seven or eight. He looked neither impulsive nor confiding, and there was in the shape of his mouth, and the curve of the lines around it, that peremptory and almost cruel decision that marks the sea-captain. "Well," thought I, "I must seek the explanation of the riddle elsewhere. The secret sympathy that moved him must have its root in *me;* and, after all, history has never told that the dolphins who were charmed by Orpheus were peculiar dolphins, with any special fondness for music, or an ear for melody; they were ordinary creatures of the deep—fish, so to say, taken *ex medio acervo* of delphinity. The marvel of their captivation lay in the spell of the enchanter. It was the thrilling touch of *his* fingers, the tasteful elegance of *his* style, the voluptuous enthralment of the sounds *he* awakened, that worked the miracle. This man of the sea has, therefore, been struck by something in my air, bearing, or address; one of those mysterious sympathies which are the hidden motives that guide half our lives, had drawn him to me, and he said to himself: 'I like that man. I have met more pretentious people, I have seen persons who desire to dominate and impose more than he, but there is that about him that, somehow, appeals to the instincts of my nature, and I can say I feel myself his friend already.'"

As I worked at my little theory, with all the ingenuity I know how to employ on such occasions, I perceived that he had put up his newspaper, and was gathering together, in old-traveler fashion, the odds and ends of his baggage.

"Here we are," said he, as we glided into the station, "and in capital time, too. Don't trouble yourself about your traps. My steward will be here presently, and take all your things down to the packet along with my own. Our steam is up, so lose no time in getting aboard."

I had never less inclination to play the loiterer. The odious *attaché* was still in my neighborhood, and until I had got clear out of his reach I felt anything but security. *He*, I remembered, was for Calais, so that, by taking the Ostend boat, I was at once separating myself from his detestable companionship. I not only, therefore, accepted the captain's offer to leave all my effects to the charge of the steward, but no sooner had the train stopped, than I sprang out, hastened through the thronged station, and made at all my speed for the harbor.

Is it to increase the impediments to quitting one's country, and, by interposing difficulties, to give the exile additional occasion to think twice about expatriating himself, that the way from the railroad to the dock at Dover is made so circuitous and almost impossible to discover? Are these obstacles invented in the spirit of those official details which make banns on the church-door, and a delay of three weeks precede a marriage—as though to say, Halt, impetuous youth, and bethink you whither you are going? Are these amongst the wise precautions of a truly paternal rule? If so, they must occasionally even transcend the original intention; for, when I reached the pier, the packet had already begun to move, and it was only by a vigorous leap that I gained the paddle-box, and thus scrambled on board.

"Like every one of you," growled out

my weatherbeaten friend; "always within an ace of being left behind."

"Every one of us!" muttered I. "What can he have known of the Potts family, that he dares to describe us thus characteristically? And who ever presumed to call us loiterers or sluggards?"

"Step down below, as I told you," whispered he. "It's a dirty night, and we shall have bucketing weather outside." And with this friendly hint I at once complied, and stole down the ladder. "Show that gentleman into my stateroom, steward," called he out from above. "Mix him something warm, and look after him."

"Ay, ay, sir," was the brisk reply, as the bustling man of brandy and basins threw open a small door, and ushered me into a little den, with a mingled odor of tar, Stilton, and wet mackintoshes. "All to yourself here, sir," said he, and vanished.

CHAPTER XI.

JEALOUS HUSBAND.

I TAKE it for granted that all special "charities" have had their origin in some specific suffering. At least, I can aver that my first thought on landing at Ostend was, "Why has no great philanthropist thought of establishing such an institution as a refuge for the sea-sick?" I declare this publicly, that, if I ever become rich—a consummation, which, looking to the general gentleness of my instincts, the wide benevolence of my nature, and the kindliness of my temperament, mankind might well rejoice at—if, I repeat, I ever become rich, one of the first uses of my affluence will be to endow such an establishment. I will place it in some one of our popular ports, say Southampton. Surrounded with all the charms of inland scenery, rich in every rustic association, the patient shall never be reminded of the scene of his late sufferings. A velvety turf to stroll on, with a leafy shade above his head, the mellow lowing of cattle in his ears, and the fragrant odors of meadow-sweet and hawthorn around, I would recall the sufferer from the dread memories of the slippery deck, the sea-washed stairs, or the sleepy stateroom. For the rattle of cordage, and the hoarse trumpet of the skipper, I would substitute the song of the thrush or the blackbird; and, instead of the thrice odious steward and his basin, I would have trim maidens of pleasing aspect to serve him with syllabubs. I will not go on to say the hundred devices I would employ to cheat memory out of a gloomy record, for I treasure the hope that I may yet live to carry out my theory, and have a copyright in my invention.

It was with sentiments deeply tinctured by the above that I tottered, rather than walked, towards the Hôtel Royal. It was a bright moonlight night, and, as if in mockery of the weather outside, as still and calm as might be. Many a picturesque effect of light and shade met me as I went: quaint old gables, flaring in a strong flood of moonlight, showed outlines the strangest and oddest; twinkling lamps shone out of tall, dark-sided old houses, from which strains of music came plaintively enough in the night air; the sounds of a prolonged revel rose loudly out of that deep-pillared château-like building in the Place, and in the quiet alley adjoining I could catch the low song of a mother as she tried to sing her baby to sleep. It was all human in every touch and strain of it. And did I not drink it in with rapture? Was it not in a transport of gratitude that I thanked fortune for once again restoring me to land? "O Earth, Earth!" says the Greek poet, "how art thou interwoven with that nature that first came from thee!" Thus musing, I reached the inn, where, though the hour was a late one, the household was all active and astir.

"Many passengers arrived, waiter?" said I, in the easy, careless voice of one who would not own to sea-sickness.

"Very few, sir; the severe weather has deterred several from venturing across."

"Any ladies?"

"Only one, sir; and, poor thing! she seems to have suffered fearfully. She had to be carried from the boat, and, when she tried to walk upstairs, she almost fainted. There might have been some agitation, however, in that, for she expected some one to have met her here; and when she heard that he had not arrived, she was completely overcome."

"Very sad, indeed," said I, examining the *carte* for supper.

"Oh yes, sir; and being in deep mourning, too, and a stranger away for the first time from her country."

I started, and felt my heart bounding against my side.

"What was it you said about deep mourning, and being young and beautiful?" asked I, eagerly.

"Only the mourning, sir—it was only the mourning I mentioned; for she kept her veil close down, and would not suffer her face to be seen."

"Bashful as beautiful! modest as she is fair!" muttered I. "Do you happen to know whither she is going?"

"Yes, sir; her luggage is marked 'Brussels'"

"It is she! It is herself!" cried I, in rapture, as I turned away, lest the fellow should notice my emotion. "When does she leave this?"

"She seems doubtful, sir; she told the landlady that she is going to reside at Brussels; but never having been abroad before, she is naturally timid about traveling even so far alone."

"Gentle creature! why should she be exposed to such hazards? Bring me some of this fricandeau with chicory, waiter, and a pint of Beaune; fried potatoes, too.—Would that I could tell her to fear nothing!" thought I. "Would that I could just whisper, 'Potts is here; Potts watches over you; Potts will be that friend, that brother, that should have come to meet you! Sleep soundly, and with a head at ease. You are neither friendless nor forsaken!'" I feel I must be naturally a creature of benevolent instincts; for I am never so truly happy as when engaged in a work of kindness. Let me but suggest to myself a labor of charity, some occasion to sorrow with the afflicted, to rally the weak-hearted, and to succor the wretched, and I am infinitely more delighted than by all the blandishment of what is called "society." Men have their allotted parts in life, just as certain fruits are meet for certain climates. Mine was the grand comforting line. Nature meant me for a consoler. I have none of those impulsive temperaments which make what are called jolly fellows. I have no taste for those excesses which go by the name of conviviality. I can, it is true, be witty, anecdotic, and agreeable; I can spice conversation with epigram, and illustrate argument by apt example; but my forte is tenderness.

"Is not this veal a little tough, waiter?" said I, in gentle remonstrance.

"Monsieur is right," said he, bowing; "but if a morsel of cold pheasant would be acceptable—mademoiselle, the lady in mourning, has just taken a wing of it——"

"Bring it directly.—Oh, ecstasy of ecstasies! We are then, as it were, supping together—served from the same dish!—May I have the honor?" said, I, filling out a glass of wine and bowing respectfully and with an air of deep devotion across the table. The pheasant was exquisite, and I ate with an epicurean enjoyment. I called for another pint of Beaune, too. It was an occasion for some indulgence, and I could not deny myself. No sooner had the waiter left me alone, than I burst into an expansive acknowledgment of my happiness. "Yes, Potts," said I, "you are richer in that temperament of yours than if you owned half California. That boundless wealth of good intentions is a well no pumping can exhaust. Go on doing imaginary good forever. You are never the poorer for all the orphans you support, all the distresses you relieve. You rescue the mariner from shipwreck without wetting your feet. You charge at the head of a squadron without the peril of a scratch. All blessed be the gift which can do these things!"

You call these delusions; but is it a delusion to be a king, to deliver a people from slavery, to carry succor to a drowning crew? I have done all of these; that is, I have gone through every changeful mood of hope and fear that accompanies these actions, sipping my glass of Beaune between whiles.

When I found myself in my bedroom I had no inclination for sleep; I was in a mood of enjoyment too elevated for mere repose. It was so delightful to be no longer at sea, to feel rescued from the miseries of the rocking ship and the reeking cabin, that I would not lose the rapture of forgetfulness. I was in the mood for great things, too, if I only knew what they were to be. "Ah!" thought I, suddenly, "I will write to *her*. She shall know that she is not the friendless and forsaken creature that she deems herself; she shall hear that, though separated from home, friends and country, there is one near to watch over and protect her, and that Potts devotes himself to her service." I opened my desk, and in all the impatience of my ardor began:—

"'DEAR MADAM'——Quære: Ought I to say 'dear'? We are not acquainted, and can I presume upon the formula that implies acquaintanceship? No. I must omit 'dear;' and then 'madam' looks fearfully stern and rigid, particularly when addressed te a young unmarried lady; she is certainly not 'madam' yet, surely. I can't begin 'miss.' What a language is ours! How cruelly fatal to all the tenderer emotions is a dialect so matter-of-fact and formal! If I could only start with 'Gentilissima Signora,' how I could get on! What an impulse would the words lend me! What 'way on me' would they impart for what was to follow! In your cast-metal tongue there is nothing for it but the third person: 'The undersigned has the honor,' etc., etc. This is chilling—it is positively repulsive. Let me see, will this do?——

"'The gentleman who was fortunate enough to render you some trivial service at the Milford station two days ago, having accidentally learned that you are here and unprovided with a protector, in all humility offers himself to afford you every aid and counsel in his power. No stranger to the touching interest of your life, deeply sensible of the delicacy that should surround your steps, if you deign to accept his devoted services, he will endeavor to prove himself, by every sentiment of respect, your most faithful, most humble, and most grateful servant.

"'P.S.—His name is Potts.'"

"Yes, all will do but the confounded postscript. What a terrible bathos—'His name is Potts!' What if I say: 'One word of reply is requested, addressed to Algernon Sydney Pottinger, at this hotel?'"

I made a great many copies of this document, always changing something as I went. I felt the importance of every word, and fastidiously pondered over each expression I employed. The bright sun of morning broke in at last upon my labors and found me still at my desk, still composing. All done, I lay down and slept soundly.

"Is she gone, waiter?" said I, as he entered my room with hot water. "Is she gone?"

"Who, sir?" asked he, in some astonishment.

"The lady in black, who came over in the last mail packet from Dover; the young lady in deep mourning, who arrived all alone."

"No, sir. She has sent all round the hotels this morning to inquire after some one who was to have met her here, but apparently without success."

"Give her this; place it in her own hand, and, as you are leaving the room, say, in a gentle voice: 'Is there an answer, mademoiselle?' You understand?"

"Well, I believe I do," said he, significantly, as he slyly pocketed the half-napoleon fee I had tendered for his acceptance.

Now the fellow had thrown into his countenance—a painfully astute and cunning face it was—one of those expressive looks which actually made me shudder. It seemed to say, "This is a conspiracy, and we are both in it."

"You are not for a moment to suppose," said I, hurriedly, "that there is one syllable in that letter which could compromise *me*, or wound the delicacy of the most susceptible."

"I am convinced that monsieur has written it with most consummate skill," said he, with a supercilious grin, and left the room.

How I detest the familiarity of a foreign waiter! The fellows cannot respond to the most ordinary question without an affectation of showing off their immense acuteness and knowledge of life. It is their eternal boast how they read people, and with what an instinctive subtlety they can decipher all the various characters that pass before them. Now this impertinent lackey, who is to say what has he not imputed to me? Utterly incapable as such a creature must necessarily be of the higher and nobler motives that sway men of my order, he will doubtless have ascribed to me the most base and degenerate motives.

I was wrong in speaking one word to the fellow. I might have said, "Take that note to Number Fourteen, and ask if there be an answer;" or, better still, if I had never written at all, but merely sent in my card to ask if the lady would vouchsafe to accord me an audience of a few minutes. Yes, such would have been the discreet course; and then I might have trusted to my manner, my tact, and a certain something in my general bearing, to have brought the matter to a successful issue. While I thus meditated, the waiter re-entered the room, and, cautiously closing the door, approached me with an ostentatious pretense of secrecy and mystery.

"I have given her the letter," said he, in a whisper.

"Speak up!" said I, severely; "what answer has the lady given?"

"I think you'll get the answer presently," said he, with a sort of grin that actually thrilled through me.

"You may leave the room," said I, with dignity, for I saw how the fellow was actually reveling in the enjoyment of my confusion.

"They were reading it over together for the third time when I came away," said he, with a most peculiar look.

"Whom do you mean? who are they that you speak of?"

"The gentleman that she was expecting. He came by the nine-forty train from Brussels. Just in time for your note." As the wretch uttered these words, a violent ringing of bells resounded along the corridor, and he rushed out without waiting for more.

I turned in haste to my note-book; various copies of my letter were there, and I was eager to recall the expressions I had employed in addressing her. Good heavens! what had I really written? Here were scraps of all sorts of absurdity; poetry, too!

verses to the "Fair Victim of a Recent War," with a number of rhymes for the last word, such as "low," "snow," "mow," etc.—all evidences of composition under difficulty.

While I turned over these rough copies, the door opened, and a large, red-faced, stern-looking man, in a suit of red-brown tweed, and with a heavy stick in his hand, entered; he closed the door leisurely after him, and I half thought that I saw him also turn the key in the lock. He advanced towards me with a deliberate step, and, in a voice measured as his gait, said—

"I am Mr. Jopplyn, sir—I am Mr. Christopher Jopplyn."

"I am charmed to hear it, sir," said I, in some confusion, for, without the vaguest conception of wherefore, I suspected lowering weather ahead.

"May I offer you a chair, Mr. Jopplyn? Won't you be seated? We are going to have a lovely day, I fancy—a great change after yesterday."

"Your name, sir," said he, in the same solemnity as before—"your name I apprehend to be Porringer?"

"Pottinger, if you permit me; Pottinger, not Porringer."

"It shall be as you say, sir: I am indifferent what you call yourself." He heaved something that sounded like a hoarse sigh, and proceeded: "I have come to settle a small account that stands between us. Is that document your writing?" As he said this, he drew, rather theatrically, from his breast-pocket the letter I had just written, and extended it towards me. "I ask, sir—and I mean you to understand that I will suffer no prevarication—is that document in your writing?"

I trembled all over as I took it, and for an instant I determined to disavow it; but in the same brief space I bethought me that my denial would be in vain. I then tried to look boldly, and brazen it out; I fancied to laugh it off as a mere pleasantry, and, failing in courage for each of these, I essayed, as a last resource, the argumentative and discussional line, and said—

"If you will favor me with an indulgent hearing for a few minutes, Mr. Jopplyn, I trust to explain to your complete satisfaction the circumstances of that epistle."

"Take five, sir—five," said he, laying a ponderous silver watch on the table as he spoke, and pointing to the minute hand.

"Really, sir," said I, stung by the peremptory and dictatorial tone he assumed, "I have yet to learn that intercourse between gentlemen is to be regulated by clock-work, not to say that I have to inquire by what right you ask me for this explanation."

"One minute gone," said he, solemnly.

"I don't care if there were fifty," said I, passionately. I disclaim all pretension of a perfect stranger to obtrude himself upon me, and by the mere assumption of a pompous manner and an imposing air, to inquire into my private affairs."

"There are two!" said he, with the same solemnity.

"Who is Mr. Jopplyn—what is he to me?" cried I, in increased excitement, "that he presents himself in my apartment like a commissary of police? Do you imagine, sir, because I am a young man, that this—this—impertinence"—Lord, what a gulp it cost me!—"is to pass unpunished? Do you fancy that a red beard and a heavy walking-cane are to strike terror into me? You may think, perhaps, that I am unarmed——"

"Three!" said he, with a bang of his stick on the floor, that made me actually jump with the stick.

"Leave the room, sir," said I; "it is my pleasure to be alone—the apartment is mine—I am the proprietor here. A very little sense of delicacy, a very small amount of good breeding, might show you, that when a gentleman declines to receive company, when he shows himself indisposed to the society of strangers——"

"One minute more, now," said he, in a low growl, while he proceeded to button up his coat to the neck, and make preparations for some coming event.

My heart was in my mouth; I gave a glance at the window; it was the third story, and a leap out would have been fatal. What would I not have given for one of those weapons I had so proudly proclaimed myself possessed of! There was not even a poker in the room. I made a spring at the bell-rope, and before he could interpose, gave one pull that, though it brought down the cord, resounded through the whole house.

"Time is up, Porringer," said he, slowly, as he replaced the watch in his pocket, and grasped his murderous-looking cane.

There was a large table in the room, and I entrenched myself at once behind this, armed with a light cane chair, while I screamed murder in every language I could command. Failing to reach me across the table, my assailant tried to dodge me by false starts, now at this side, now at that. Though a large fleshy man, he was not inactive, and it required all my quickness to escape him. These maneuvers being unsuccessful, he very quickly placed a chair

beside the table and mounted upon it. I now hurled my chair at him ; he warded off the blow and rushed on ; with one spring I bounded under the table, reappearing at the opposite side just as he had reached mine. These tactics we now pursued for several minutes, when my enemy suddenly changed his attack, and descending from the table, he turned it on edge : the effort required strength. I seized the moment and reached the door ; I tore it open in some fashion, gained the stairs—the court—the streets—and ran ever onward with the wildness of one possessed with no time for thought, nor any knowledge to guide ; I turned left and right, choosing only the narrowest lanes that presented themselves, and at last came to a dead halt at an open drawbridge, where a crowd stood waiting to pass.

"How is this ? What's all the hurry for ? Where are you running this fashion?" cried a well-known voice. I turned, and saw the skipper of the packet.

"Are you armed ? Can you defend me ?" cried I, in terror ; "or shall I leap in and swim for it ?"

"I'll stand by you. Don't be afraid, man," said he, drawing my arm within his ; "no one shall harm you. Were they robbers ?"

"No—worse—assassins!" said I, gulping, for I was heartily ashamed of my terror, and determined to show "cause why" in the plural.

"Come in here, and have a glass of something," said he, turning into a little cabaret, with whose penetralia he seemed not unfamiliar. "You're all safe here," said he, as he closed the door of a little room. "Let's hear all about it, though I half guess the story already."

I had no difficulty in perceiving, from my companion's manner, that he believed some sudden shock had shaken my faculties, and that my intellects were for the time deranged ; nor was it very easy for me to assume sufficient calm to disabuse him of his error, and assert my own perfect coherency. "You have been out for a lark," said he, laughingly. "I see it all. You have been at one of those tea-gardens and got into a row with some stout Fleming. All the young English go through that sort of thing. Ain't I right ?"

"Never more mistaken in your life, captain. My conduct since I landed would not discredit a canon of St. Paul's. In fact, all my habits, my tastes, my instincts, are averse to every sort of junketing. I am essentially retiring, sensitive, and, if you will, over-fastidious in my choice of associates. My story is simply this." My reader will readily excuse my repeating what is already known to him. It is enough if I say that the captain, although anything rather than mirthful, held his hand several times over his face, and once laughed out loudly and boisterously.

"You don't say it was Christy Jopplyn, do you ?" said he, at last. "You don't tell me it was Jopplyn ?"

"The fellow called himself Jopplyn, but I know nothing of him beyond that."

"Why, he's mad jealous about that wife of his ; that little woman with the cork-screw curls, and the scorbutic face, that came over with us. Oh ! you did not see her aboard, you went below at once, I remember ; but there was she, in her ugly black, and her old crape shawl——"

"In mourning ?"

"Yes, always in mourning. She never wears anything else, though Christy goes about in colors, and not particular as to the tint, either."

There came a cold perspiration over me as I heard these words, and perceived that my proffer of devotion had been addressed to a married woman, and the wife of the "most jealous man in Europe."

"And who is this Jopplyn ?" asked I, haughtily, and in all the proud confidence of my present security.

"He's a railway contractor—a shrewd sort of fellow, with plenty of money, and a good head on his shoulders ; sensible on every point except his jealousy."

"The man must be an idiot," said I, indignantly, "to rush indiscriminately about the world with accusations of this kind. Who wants to supplant him ? Who seeks to rob him of the affections of his wife ?"

"That's all very well, and very specious," said he, gravely; "but if men will deliberately set themselves down at a writing-table, hammering their brains for fine sentiments, and toiling to find grand expressions for their passion, it does not require that a husband should be as jealous as Christy Jopplyn to take it badly. I don't think I'm a rash or hasty man, but I know what I'd do in such a circumstance."

"And pray, what would *you* do ?" said I, half impertinently.

"I'd just say, 'Look here, young gent, is this balderdash here your hand ? Well, now, eat your words. Yes, eat them. I mean what I say. Eat up that letter, seal and all, or, by my oath, I'll break every bone in your skin !'"

"It is exactly what I intend," cried a voice, hoarse with passion ; and Jopplyn

himself sprang into the room, and dashed at me.

The skipper was a most powerful man, but it required all his strength, and not very gingerly exercised either, to hold off my enraged adversary. "Will you be quiet, Christy?" cried he, holding him by the throat. "Will you just be quiet for one instant, or must I knock you down?"

"Do! do! by all means," muttered I, for I thought if he were once on the ground I could finish him off with a large pewter measure that stood on the table.

With a rough shake the skipper had at last convinced the other that resistance was useless, and induced him to consent to a parley.

"Let him only tell *you*," said he, "what he has told *me*, Christy."

"Don't strike, but hear me," cried I; and safe in my stockade behind the skipper, I recounted my mistake.

"And *you* believe all this?" asked Jopplyn of the skipper, when I had finished.

"Believe it—I should think I do! I have known him since he was a child that high, and I'll answer for his good conduct and behavior."

Heaven bless you for that bail bond, though endorsed in a lie, honest ship-captain! and I only hope I may live to requite you for it.

Jopplyn was appeased; but it was the suppressed wrath of a brown bear rather than the vanquished anger of a man. He had booked himself for something cruel, and he was miserable to be balked. Nor was I myself—I shame to own it—an emblem of perfect forgiveness. I know nothing harder than for a constitutionally timid man of weak proportions to forgive the bullying superiority of brute force. It is about the greatest trial human forgiveness can be subjected to; so that when Jopplyn, in a vulgar spirit of reconciliation, proposed that we should go and dine with him that day, I declined the invitation with a frigid politeness.

"I wish I could persuade you to change your plans," said he, "and let Mrs. J. and myself see you at six."

"I believe I can answer for him that it is impossible," broke in the skipper; while he added in a whisper, "They never *can* afford any delay—they have to put on the steam at high pressure from one end of Europe to t'other."

What could he possibly mean by imputing such haste to my movements, and who were "they" with whom he thus associated me? I would have given worlds to ask, but the presence of Jopplyn prevented me, and so I could simply assent with a sort of foolish laugh, and a muttered "very true—quite correct."

"Indeed, how you manage to be here now, I can scarcely imagine," continued the skipper. "The last of yours that went through this took a roll of bread and a cold chicken with him into the train, rather than halt to eat his supper—but I conclude *you* know best."

What confounded mystification was passing through his marine intellect, I could not fathom. To what guild or brotherhood of impetuous travelers had he ascribed me? Why should I not "take mine ease in mine inn"? All this was very tantalizing and irritating, and pleading a pressing engagement I took leave of them both, and returned to the hotel.

I was in need of rest and a little composure. The incident of the morning had jarred my nerves and disconcerted me much. But a few hours ago and life had seemed to me like a flowery meadow, through which, without path or track, one might ramble at will; now it rather presented the aspect of a vulgar kitchen-garden, fenced in, and divided, and partitioned off, with only a few very stony alleys to walk in. "This boasted civilization of ours," exclaimed I, "what is it but snobbery? Our class distinctions—our artificial intercourses—our hypocritical professions—our deference for externals, are they not the flimsiest pretenses that ever were fashioned? Why has no man the courage to make short work of these, and see the world as it really is? Why has not some one gone forth, the apostle of frankness and plain speaking, the same to prince as to peasant? What I would like, would be a ramble through the less visited parts of Europe—countries in which civilization slants in just as the rays of a setting sun steal into a forest at evening. I would buy me a horse. Oh, Blondel," thought I, suddenly, "am I not in search of you? Is it not in the hope to recover you that I am here, and, with you for my companion, am I not content to roam the world, taking each incident of the way with the calm of one who asks little of his fellow-man save a kind word as he passes, and a God-speed as he goes?" I knew perfectly that, with any other beast for my "mount," I could not view the scene of life with the same bland composure. A horse that started, that tripped, that shied, reared, kicked, cromed his neck, or even shook himself, as certain of these beasts do, would have kept me in a paroxysm of anxiety and uneasiness, the least adapted of all modes for thoughtful-

ness and reflection. Like an ill-assorted union, it would have given no time save for squabble and recrimination. But Blondel almost seemed to understand my mission, and lent himself to its accomplishment. There was none of the obtrusive selfishness of an ordinary horse in his ways. He neither asked you to remark the glossiness of his skin, nor the graceful curve of his neck; he did not passage nor curvet. Superior to the petty arts by which vulgar natures present themselves to notice, he felt that destiny had given him a duty, and he did it.

Thus thinking, I returned once more to the spirit which had first sent me forth to ramble, to wander through the world, spectator, not actor; to be with my fellow-men in sympathy, but not in action; to sorrow and rejoice as they did, but, if possible, to understand life as a drama, in which, so long as I was the mere audience, I could never be painfully afflicted or seriously injured by the catastrophe; a wonderful philosophy, but of which, up to the present, I could not boast any pre-eminent success.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUCHY OF HESSE-KALBBRATONSTADT.

I GREW impatient to leave Ostend: every association connected with the place was unpleasant. I hope I am not unjust in my estimate of it. I sincerely desire to be neither unjust to men nor cities, but I thought it vulgar and commonplace. I know it is hard for a watering-place to be otherwise; there is something essentially low in the green-baize and bathing-house existence—in that semi-nude sociality, begun on the sands and carried out into deep water, which I cannot abide. I abhor, besides, a lounging population in fancy toilets, a procession of donkeys in scarlet trappings, elderly gentlemen with pocket-telescopes, and fierce old ladies with camp-stools. The worn-out debauchees come to recruit for another season of turtle and whitebait; the half-faded victims of twenty polkas per night, the tiresome politician, pale from a long session, all fiercely bent on fresh diet and sea-breezes, are perfect antipathies to me, and I would rather seek companionship in a Tyrol village than amidst these wounded and missing of a London season.

With all this I wanted to get away from the vicinity of the Jopplyns—they were positively odious to me. Is not the man who holds in his keeping one scrap of your handwriting which displays you in a light of absurdity, far more your enemy than the holder of your protested bill? I own I think so. Debt is a very human weakness; like disease, it attacks the best and the noblest amongst us. You may pity the fellow that cannot meet that acceptance, you may be sorry for the anxiety it occasions him, the fruitless running here and there, the protestations, promises, and even lies, he goes through, but no sense of ludicrous scorn mingles with your compassion, none of that contemptuous laughter with which you read a copy of absurd verses or a maudlin love-letter. Imagine the difference of tone in him who says: "That's an old bill of poor Potts's; he'll never pay it now, and I'm sure I'll never ask him." Or, "Just read those lines; would you believe that any creature out of Hanwell could descend to such miserable drivel as that? It was one Potts who wrote it."

I wonder, could I obtain my manuscript from Jopplyn before I started. What pretext could I adduçe for the request? While I thus pondered, I packed up my few wearables in my knapsack and prepared for the road. They were, indeed, a very scanty supply, and painfully suggested to my mind the estimate that waiters and hotel porters must form of their owner. "Cruel world," muttered I, "whose maxim is, 'By their outsides shall ye judge them.' Had I arrived here with a traveling-carriage and a 'fourgon,' what respect and deference had awaited me! how courteous the landlord, how obliging the head-waiter! Twenty attentions which could not be charged for in the bill had been shown me; and even had I, in superb dignity, declined to descend from my carriage while the post-horses were being harnessed, a levee of respectful flunkeys would have awaited my orders. I have no doubt but there must be something very intoxicating in all this homage. The smoke of the hecatombs must have affected Jove as a sort of chloroform, or else he would never have sat there sniffing them for centuries. Are you ever destined to experience these sensations, Potts? Is there a time coming when anxious ears will strain to catch your words, and eyes watch eagerly for your slightest gestures? If such an era should ever come, it will be a great one for the masses of mankind, and an evil one for snobbery. Such a lesson as I will read the world on humility in high places, such an example will I give of one elevated, but uncorrupted by fortune."

"Let the carriage come to the door," said I, closing my eyes, as I sank into my

chair in reverie. "Tell my people to prepare the entire of the 'Hôtel de Belle Vue' for my arrival, and my own cook to preside in the kitchen."

"Is this to go by the omnibus?" said the waiter, suddenly, on entering my room in haste. He pointed to my humble knapsack.

"Yes," said I, in deep confusion—"yes, that's my luggage—at least, all that I have here at this moment. Where is the bill? Very moderate, indeed," muttered I, in a tone of approval. "I will take care to recommend your house; attendance prompt, and the wines excellent."

"Monsieur is complimentary," said the fellow, with a grin; "he only experimented upon a 'small Beaune' at one-twenty the bottle."

I scowled at him, and he shrank again.

"And this *objet* is also monsieur's," said he, taking up a small white canvas bag which was enclosed in my railroad wrapper.

"What is it?" cried I, taking it up. I almost fell back as I saw that it was one of the despatch-bags of the Foreign Office, which in my hasty departure from the Dover train I had accidentally carried off with me. There it was, addressed to "Sir Shalley Doubleton, H. M.'s Envoy and Minister at Hesse-Kalbbratonstadt, by the Hon. Grey Buller, Attaché," etc.

Here was not alone what might be construed into a theft, but what it was well possible might comprise one of the gravest offenses against the law: it might be high-treason itself! Who would ever credit my story, coupled as it was with my secret escape from the carriage—my precipitate entrance into the first place I could find, not to speak of the privacy I observed by not mixing with the passengers in the mail packet, by keeping myself estranged from all observation in the captain's cabin? Here, too, was the secret of the skipper's politeness to me: he saw the bag, and believed me to be a Foreign Office messenger, and this was his meaning, as he said, "I can answer for him, he can't delay much here." Yes; this was the entire mystification by which I obtained his favor, his politeness, and his protection. What was to be done in this exigency? Had the waiter not seen the bag, and with the instincts of his craft calmly perused the address on it, I believe—nay, I am quite convinced—I should have burned it and its contents on the spot. The thought of his evidence against me in the event of a discovery, however, entirely routed this notion, and, after a brief consideration I resolved to convey the bag to its destination, and trump up the most plausible explanation I could of the way it came into my possession. His excellency, I reasoned, will doubtless be too delighted to receive his despatches to inquire very minutely as to the means by which they were recovered, nor is it quite impossible that he may feel bound to mark my zeal for the public service by some token of recognition. This was a pleasant turn to give to my thoughts, and I took it with all the avidity of my peculiar temperament. "Yes," thought I, "it is just out of trivial incidents like this a man's fortune is made in life. For one man who mounts to greatness by the great entrance and the state staircase, ten thousand slip in by *la petite porte*. It is, in fact, only by these chances that obscure genius obtains acknowledgment. How, for example, should this great diplomatist know Potts if some accident should not throw them together? Raleigh flung his laced jacket in a puddle, and for his reward he got a proud queen's favor. A village apothecary had the good fortune to be visiting the state apartments at the Pavilion when George the Fourth was seized with a fit; he bled him, brought him back to consciousness, and made him laugh by his genial and quaint humor. The king took a fancy to him, named him his physician, and made his fortune. I have often heard it remarked by men who have seen much of life, that nobody, not one, goes through the world without two or three such opportunities presenting themselves. The careless, the indolent, the unobservant, and the idle, either fail to remark, or are too slow to profit by them. The sharp fellows, on the contrary, see in such incidents all that they need to lead them to success. Into which of these catagories you are to enter, Potts, let this incident decide."

Having, by a reference to my John Murray, ascertained the whereabouts of the capital of Hesse-Kalbbratonstadt, I took my place at once on the rail for Cologne, reading myself up on its beauty and its belongings as I went. There is, however, such a dreary sameness in these small ducal states, that I am ashamed to say how little I gleaned of anything distinctive in the case before me. The reigning sovereign was of course married to a Grand Duchess of Russia, and he lived at a country seat called Ludwig's Lust, or Carl's Lust, as it might be, "took little interest in politics"—how should he—and "passed much of his time in mechanical pursuits, in which he had attained considerable proficiency;" in other words, he was a middle-aged gentleman, fond of his pipe, and with a taste for carpentry. Some sort of connection

with our own royal family had been the pretext for having a resident minister at his court, though what he was to do when he was there seemed not so easy to say. Even John, glorious John, was puzzled how to make a respectable half-page out of his capital, though there was a dome in the Byzantine style, with an altarpiece by Peter von Grys, the angels in the corner being added afterwards by Hans Lüders; and there was a Hof Theater, and an excellent inn, the "Schwein," by Kramm, where the sausages of home manufacture were highly recommendable, no less than a table wine of the host's vineyard, called "Magenschmerzer," and which, Murray adds, would doubtless, if known, find many admirers in England; and lastly, but far from leastly, there was a Music Garten, where popular pieces were performed very finely by an excellent German band, and to which promenade all the fashion of the capital nightly resorted.

I give you all these details, respected reader, just as I got them in my "Northern Germany," and not intending to obtrude any further description of my own upon you; for who, I would ask, could amplify upon his Handbook? What remains to be noted after John has taken the inventory? has he forgotten a nail or a saint's shinbone? With him for a guide, a man may feel that he has done his Europe conscientiously; and, though it be hard to treasure up all the hard names of poets, painters, priests, and warriors, it is not worse than botany, and about as profitable.

For the same reason that I have given above, I spare my reader all the circumstances of my journey, my difficulties about carriage, my embarrassments about steamboats and cab fares, which were all of the order that Brown and Jones have experienced, are experiencing, and will continue to experience till the arrival of that millenniary period when we shall all converse in any tongue we please.

It was at nightfall that I drove into Kalbbratonstadt, my postilion announcing my advent at the gates and all the way to the Platz where the inn stood, by a volley of whip-crackings which might have announced a grand-duke or a prima donna. Some casements were hastily opened, as we rumbled along, and the guests of a *café* issued hurriedly into the street to watch us, but these demonstrations over, I gained the "Schwein" without further notice, and descended.

Herr Kramm looked suspiciously at the small amount of luggage of the traveler who arrived by "extra post," but, like an honest German, he was not one to form rash judgments, and so he showed me to a comfortable apartment, and took my orders for supper in all respectfulness. He waited upon me also at my meal, and gave me opportunity for conversation. While I ate my carbonade mit Kartoffel-salad, therefore, I learned that, being already nine o'clock, it was too late an hour to present myself at the English embassy—for so he designated our minister's residence; that, at this advanced period of the night, there were but few citizens out of their beds; the ducal candle was always extinguished at half-past eight, and only roisterers and revelers kept it up much later. My first surprise over, I owned I liked all this. It smacked of that simple patriarchal existence I had so long yearned after. Let the learned explain it, but there is, I assert, something in the early hours of a people that guarantees habits of simplicity, thrift, and order. It is all very well to say that the people can be as wicked at eight in the evening as at two or three in the morning; that crime cares little for the clock, nor does vice respect the chronometer; but does experience confirm this, and are not the small hours notorious for the smallest moralities? The grand-duke, who is fast asleep at nine, is scarcely disturbed by dreams of cruelties to his people. The police minister, who takes his bedroom candle at the same hour, is seldom harassed by devising new schemes of torture for his victims. I suffered my host to talk largely of his town and its people, and probably such a listener rarely presented himself, for he certainly improved the occasion. He assured me, with a gravity that vouched for the conviction, that the capital, though by no means so dear as London or Paris, contained much, if not all, these more pretentious cities could boast. There was a court, a theater, a promenade, a public fountain, and a new gaol, one of the largest in all Germany. Jenny Lind had once sung at the opera on her way to Vienna; and to prove how they sympathized in every respect with greater centers of population, when the cholera raged at Berlin, they, too, lost about four hundred of their townsfolk. Lastly, he mentioned, and this boastfully, that though neither wanting organs of public opinion, nor men of adequate ability to guide them, the Kalbbratoners had never mixed themselves up in politics, but proudly maintained that calm and dignified attitude which Europe would one day appreciate; that is, if she ever arrived at the crowning knowledge of the benefit of letting her differences be decided by some impartial umpire.

More than once, as I heard him, I muttered to myself—"Potts, this is the very spot you have sought for; here is all the tranquil simplicity of the village, with the elevated culture of a great city. Here are sages and philosophers clad in homespun, beauty herself in linsey-woolsey. Here there are no vulgar rivalries of riches, no contests in fine clothes, no opposing armies of yellow plush. Men are great by their faculties, not in their flunkeys. How elevated must be the tone of their thoughts, the style of their conversation, and what a lucky accident it was that led you to that goal to which all your wishes and hopes have been converging!—For how much can a man live—a single gentleman like myself—here in your city?" asked I of my host.

He sat down at this, and filling himself a large goblet of my wine—the last in the bottle—he prepared for a lengthy *séance*.

"First of all," said he, "how would he wish to live? Would he desire to mingle in our best circles, equal to any in Europe, to know Herr von Krugwitz, and the Gnädige Frau von Steinhaltz?"

"Well," thought I, "these be fair ambitions." And I said, "Yes, both of them."

"And to be on the list of the court dinners? There are two yearly, one at Easter, the other on his highness's birthday, whom may Providence long protect!"

To this also might he aspire.

"And to have a stall at the Grand Opera and a carriage to return visits—twice in carnival time—and to live in a handsome quarter, and dine every day at our *table d'hôte* here with General von Beulwitz and the Hofrath von Schlaffrichter? A life like this is costly, and would scarcely be comprised under two thousand florins a year."

How my heart bounded at the notion of refinement, culture, elevated minds, and polished habits. "Science," indeed, and the "musical glasses," all for one hundred and sixty pounds per annum.

"It is not improbable that you will see me your guest for many a day to come," said I, as I ordered another bottle, and of a more generous vintage, to honor the occasion.

My host offered no opposition to my convivial projects—nay, he aided them, by saying—

"If you have really an appreciation for something super-excellent in wine, and wish to taste what Freiligrath calls 'der Deutschen nectar,' I'll go and fetch you a bottle."

"Bring it by all means," said I. And away he went on his mission.

"Providence blessed me with two hands," said he, as he re-entered the room, "and I have brought two flasks of Lieb Herzenthaler."

There is something very artistic in the way your picture-dealer, having brushed away the dust from a Mieris or a Gerard Dow, places the work in a favorite light before you, and then stands to watch the effect on your countenance. So, too, will your man of rare manuscripts and illuminated missals offer to your notice some illegible treasure of the fourth century; but these are nothing to the mysterious solemnity of him who, uncorking a bottle of rare wine, waits to note the varying sensations of your first enjoyment down to your perfect ecstasy.

I tried to perform my part of the piece with credit. I looked long at the amber-colored liquor in the glass; I sniffed it and smiled approvingly; the host smiled, too, and said, "Ja!" Not another syllable did he utter; but how expressive was that "Ja!" "Ja!" meant, "You are right, Potts; it is the veritable wine of 1764, bottled for the Herzog Ludwig's marriage. Every drop of it is priceless. Mark the odor, how it perfumes the air around us; regard the color—the golden hair of Venus can alone rival it; see how the oily globules cling to the glass!" "Ja!" meant all this, and more.

As I drank off my glass, I was sorely puzzled by the precise expression in which to couch my approval; but he supplied it, and said, "Is it not Göttlich?" and I said it *was* Göttlich; and while we finished the two bottles, this solitary phrase sufficed for converse between us, "Göttlich!" being uttered by each as he drained his glass, and "Göttlich!" being re-echoed by his companion.

There is great wisdom in reducing our admiration to a word—giving, as it were, a cognate number to our estimate of anything. Whenever we amplify we usually blunder; we employ epithets that disagree, or, in even less questionable taste, soar into extravagances that are absurd; besides, our moods of highest enjoyment are not such as dispose to talkativeness—the ecstasy that is most enthralling is self-contained. Who, on looking at a glorious landscape, does not feel the insufferable bathos of the descriptive enthusiast beside him? How grateful would he own himself if he would be satisfied with one word for his admiration. And if one needs this calm repose, this unbroken peace, for the enjoyment of scenery, equally is it applicable to our appreciation of a curious wine. I have no

recollection that any further conversation passed between us; but I have never ceased, and most probably never shall cease, to have a perfect memory of the pleasant ramble of my thoughts as I sat there sipping, sipping. I pondered long over a plan of settling down in this place for life, by what means I could realize sufficient to live in that elevated sphere the host spoke of. If Potts *père*—I mean my father—were to learn that I were received in the highest circles, admitted to all that was most socially exclusive, would he be induced to make an adequate provision for me? He was an ambitious and a worldly man. Would he see in these beginnings of mine the seeds of future greatness? Fathers, I well knew, are splendidly generous to their successful children, and "the poor they send empty away." It is so pleasant to aid him who does not need assistance, and such a hopeless task to be always saving him who *will* be drowned.

My first care, therefore, should be to impress upon my parent the appropriateness of his contributing his share to what already was an accomplished success. "Wishing, as the French say, to make you a part in my triumph, dear father, I write these lines." How I picture him to my mind's eye as he reads this, running frantically about to his neighbors, and saying, "I have got a letter from Algy—strange boy—but, as I always foresaw, with great stuff in him, very remarkable abilities. See what he has done; struck out a perfect line of his own in life; just the sort of a thing genius alone can do. He went off from this one morning by way of a day's excursion, never returned—never wrote. All my efforts to trace him were in vain. I advertised, and offered rewards, did everything, without success; and now, after all this long interval, comes a letter by this morning's post to tell me that he is well, happy, and prosperous. He is settled, it appears, in a German capital with a hard name—a charming spot, with every accessory of enjoyment in it: men of the highest culture, and women of most graceful and attractive manner; as he himself writes, 'the elegance of a Parisian *salon* added to the wisdom of the professor's cabinet.' Here is Algy, living with all that is highest in rank and most distinguished in station; the favored guest of the prince, the bosom friend of the English minister; his advice sought for, his counsel asked in every difficulty; trusted in the most important state offices, and taken into the most secret councils of the duchy! Though the requirements of his station make heavy demands upon his means, very little help from me will enable him to maintain a position which a few years more will have consolidated into a rank recognized throughout Europe." Would the flintiest of fathers, would the most primitive rockhearted of parents, resist an appeal like this? It is no hand to rescue from the waves is sought, but a little finger to help to affluence. "Of course you'll do it, Potts, and do it liberally; the boy is a credit to you. He will place your name where you never dreamed to see it. What do you mean to settle on him? Above all things, no stinginess; don't disgust him."

I hear these and such like on every hand; even the most closefisted and miserly of our acquaintances will be generous of their friend's money; and I think I hear the sage remarks with which they season advice with touching allusions to that well-known ship that was lost for want of a small outlay in tar. "Come down handsomely, Potts," says a resolute man, who has sworn never to pay a sixpence of his son's debts. "What better use can we make of our hoardings than to render our young people happy?" I don't like the man who says this, but I like his sentiments; and I am much pleased when he goes on to remark that "there is no such good investment as what establishes a successful son. Be proud of the boy, Potts, and thank your stars that he had a soul above senna, and a spirit above sal volatile!"

As I invent all this play of dialogue for myself, and picture the speakers before me, I come at last to a small peevish little fellow named Lynch, a merchant tailor, who lived next door to us, and enjoyed much of my father's confidence. "So they tell me you have heard from that runaway of yours, Potts. Is it true? What face does he put upon his disgraceful conduct? What became of the livery-stable-keeper's horse? Did he sell him, or ride him to death? A bad business if he should ever come back again, which, of course, he's too wise for. And where is he now, and what is he at?"

"You may read this letter, Mr. Lynch," replies my father; "he is one who can speak for himself." And Lynch reads and sniggers, and reads again. I see him as plainly as if he were but a yard from me. "I never heard of this ducal capital before," he begins, "but I suppose it's like the rest of them—little obscure dens of pretentious poverty, plenty of ceremony, and very little to eat. How did he find it out? What brought him there?"

"You have this letter before you, sir," says my parent, proudly. "Algernon

Sydney is, I imagine, quite competent to explain what relates to his own affairs."

"Oh, perfectly, perfectly; only that I can't really make out how he first came to this place, nor what it is that he does there now that he's in it."

My father hastily snatches the letter from his hands, and runs his eye rapidly along to catch the passage which shall confute the objector and cover him with shame and confusion. He cannot find it at once. "It is this. No, it is on this side. Very strange, very singular indeed; but as Algernon must have told me——" Alas! no, father, he has not told you, and for the simple reason that he does not know it himself. For, though I mentioned with becoming pride the prominent stations Irishmen now hold in most of the great states of Europe, and pointed to O'Donnel in Spain, MacMahon in France, and the Field-Marshal Nugent in Austria, I utterly forgot to designate the high post occupied by Potts in the Duchy of Hesse Kalbbratonstadt. To determine what this should be was now of imminent importance, and I gave myself up to the solution with a degree of intentness and an amount of concentration that set me off sound asleep.

Yes, benevolent reader, I will confess it, questions of a complicated character have always affected me, as the inside of a letter seems to have struck Tony Lumpkin—"all buzz." I start with the most loyal desire to be acute and penetrating; I set myself to my task with as honest a disposition to do my best as ever man did; I say, "Now, Potts, no self-indulgence, no skulking; here is a knotty problem, here is a case for your best faculties in their sharpest exercise;" and if any one come in upon me about ten minutes after this resolve, he will see a man who could beat Sancho Panza in sleeping!

Of course this tendency has often cost me dearly; I have missed appointments, forgotten assignations, lost friends through it. My character, too, has suffered, many deeming me insupportably indolent, a sluggard quite unfit for any active employment. Others, more mercifully hinting at some "cerebral cause," have done me equal damage; but there happily is an obverse on the medal, and to this somnolency do I ascribe much of the gentleness and all the romance of my nature. It is your sleepy man is ever benevolent, he loves ease and quiet for others as for himself. What he cultivates is the tranquil mood that leads to slumber, and the calm that sustains it. The very operations of the mind in sleep are broken, incoherent, undelineated—just like the waking occupations of an idle man; they are thoughts that cost so little to manufacture, that he can afford to be lavish of them. And now—good-night!

CHAPTER XIII.

I CALL AT THE BRITISH LEGATION.

Breakfast over, I took a walk through the town. Though in a measure prepared for a scene of unbustling quietude and tranquillity, I must own that the air of repose around far surpassed all I had imagined. The streets through which I sauntered were grass-grown and untrodden; the shops were but half open; not an equipage, nor even a horseman, was to be seen. In the Platz, where a sort of fruit-market was held, a few venders of grapes, peaches, and melons, sat under large crimson umbrellas, but there seemed few purchasers, except a passing schoolboy, carefully scanning the temptations in which he was about to invest his kreutzer.

The most remarkable feature of the place, however—and it is one which, through a certain significance, has always held its place in my memory—was that, go where one would, the palace of the grand-duke was sure to finish the view at one extremity of the street. In fact, every alley converged at this one center, and the royal residence stood like the governor's chamber in a panopticon gaol. There did my mind for many a day picture him sitting like a huge spider watching the incautious insects that permeated his web. I imagined him fat, indolent, and apathetic, but yet, with a gaoler's instincts, ever mindful of every stir and movement of the prisoners below. With a very ordinary telescope he must be master of everything that went on, and the humblest incident could not escape his notice. Was it the consciousness of this surveillance that made every one keep the house? Was it the feeling that the "Gross Herzogliche" eye never left them, that prevented men being abroad in the streets and about their affairs as in other places? I half suspected this, and set to work imagining a state of society thus scanned and scrutinized. But that the general aspect of the town so palpably proclaimed the absence of all trade and industry, I might have compared the whole to a glass hive; but they were all drones that dwelt there; there was not one "busy bee" in the whole of them.

When I rambled thus carelessly along, I came in front of a sort of garden fenced

from the street by an iron railing. The laurel, and arbutus, and even the oleander, were there, gracefully blending a varied foliage, and contrasting in their luxuriant liberty so pleasantly with the dull uniformity outside. Finding a gate wide open, I strolled in, and gave myself up to the delicious enjoyment of the spot. As I was deliberating whether this was a public garden or not, I found myself before a long, low, villa-like building, with a colonnade in front. Over the entrance was a large shield, which on nearer approach I recognized to contain the arms of England. This, therefore, was the legation, the residence of our minister, Sir Shalley Doubleton. I felt a very British pride and satisfaction to see our representative lodged so splendidly. With all the taxpayer's sentiment in my heart, I rejoiced to think that he who personated the nation should, in all his belongings, typify the wealth, the style, and the grandeur of England, and in the ardor of this enthusiasm, I hastened back to the inn for the despatch-bag.

Armed with this and a card, I soon presented myself at the door. On the card I had written, "Mr. Pottinger presents his respectful compliments, and requests his excellency will favor him with an audience for a few minutes for an explanation."

I had made up my mind to state that my servant, in removing my smaller luggage from the train, had accidentally carried off this Foreign Office bag, which, though at considerable inconvenience, I had traveled much out of my way to restore in person. I had practiced this explanation as I dressed in the morning, I had twice rehearsed it to an orange-tree in the garden, before which I had bowed till my back ached, and I fancied myself perfect in my part. It would, I confess, have been a great relief to me to have had only the slightest knowledge of the great personage before whom I was about to present myself: to have known was he short or tall, young or old, solemn or easy-mannered, had he a loud voice and an imperious tone, or was he of the soft and silky order of his craft. I'd have willingly entertained his "gentleman" at a moderate repast for some information on these points, but there was no time for the inquiry, and so I rang boldly at the bell. The door opened of itself at the summons, and I found myself in a large hall with a plaster cast of the Laocoön, and nothing else. I tried several of the doors on either side, but they were all locked. A very handsome and spacious stair of white marble led up from the middle of the hall, but I hesitated about venturing to ascend this, and once more repaired to the bell outside, and repeated my summons. The loud clang re-echoed through the arched hall, the open door gave a responsive shake, and that was all. No one came; everything was still as before. I was rather chagrined at this. The personal inconvenience was less offensive than the feeling how foreigners would comment on such want of propriety, what censures they would pass on such an ill-arranged household. I rang again, this time with an energy that made the door strike some of the plaster from the wall, and, with a noise like cannon. "What the hangman"—I am translating—"is all this?" cried a voice thick with passion; and, on looking up, I saw a rather elderly man, with a quantity of curly yellow hair, frowning savagely on me from the balcony over the stair. He made no sign of coming down, but gazed sternly at me from his eminence.

"Can I see his excellency the minister?" said I, with dignity.

"Not if you stop down there, not if you continue to ring the bell like an alarm for fire, not if you won't take the trouble to come upstairs."

I slowly began the ascent at these words, pondering what sort of a master such a man must needs have. As I gained the top, I found myself in front of a very short, very fat man, dressed in a suit of striped gingham, like an over-plethoric zebra, and wheezing painfully, in part from asthma, in part from agitation. He began again:

"What the hangman do you mean by such a row? Have you no manners, no education? Where were you brought up that you enter a dwelling-house like a city in storm?"

"Who is this insolent creature that dares to address me in this wise? What ignorant menial can have so far forgotten my rank and his insignificance?"

"I'll tell you all that presently," said he; "there's his excellency's bell." And he bustled away, as fast as his unwieldy size would permit, to his master's room.

I was outraged and indignant. There was I, Potts—no, Pottinger—Algernon Sydney Pottinger—on my way to Italy and Greece, turning from my direct road to consign with safety a despatch-bag which many a less conscientious man would have chucked out of his carriage window and forgotten—there I stood to be insulted by a miserable stone-polishing, floor-scrubbing, carpet-twigging hausknecht? Was this to be borne? was it to be endured? Was a man of station, family, and attainments, to be the object of such indignity?

Just as I uttered this speech aloud, a very gentle voice addressed me, saying:

"Perhaps I can assist you? Will you be good enough to say what you want?"

I started suddenly, looked up, and whom should I see before me but that Miss Herbert, the beautiful girl in deep mourning, that I had met at Milford, and who now, in the same pale loveliness, turned on me a look of kind and gentle meaning.

"Do you remember me?" said I eagerly. "Do you remember the traveler—a pale young man, with a Glengarry cap and a plaid overcoat—who met you at Milford?"

"Perfectly," said she, with a slight twitch about the mouth like a struggle against a smile. "Will you allow me to repay you now for your politeness then? Do you wish to see his excellency?"

I'm not very sure what it was I replied, but I know well what was passing through my head. If my thoughts could have spoken, it would have been in this wise:

"Angel of loveliness, I don't care a brass farthing for his excellency. It is not a matter of the slightest moment to me if I never set eyes on him. Let me but speak to you, tell you the deep impression you have made upon my heart; how in my ardor to serve you, I have already been involved in an altercation that might have cost me my life; how I still treasure up the few minutes I passed beside you as the Elysian dream of all my life——"

"I am certain, sir," broke she in while I spoke—I repeat, I know not what—"I am certain, sir, that you never came here to mention all this to his excellency."

There was a severe gravity in the way that she said these words that recalled me to myself, but not to any consciousness of what I had been saying; and so, in my utter discomfiture, I blundered out something about the lost despatches and the cause of my coming.

"If you'll wait a moment here," said she, opening a door into a neatly-furnished room, "his excellency shall hear of your wish to see him." And before I could answer, she was gone.

I was now alone, but in what wild perplexity and anxiety! How came she here? What could be the meaning of her presence in this place? The minister was an unmarried man, so much my host had told me. How, then, reconcile this fact with the presence of one who had left England but a few days ago, as some said, to be a governess or a companion? Oh, the agony of my doubts, the terrible agony of my dire misgivings! What a world of iniquity do we live in, what vice and corruption are ever around us! It was but a year or two ago, I remember, that the *Times* newspaper had exposed the nefarious schemes of a wretch who had deliberately invented a plan to entrap those most unprotected of all females. The adventures of this villain had become part of the police literature of Europe. Young and attractive creatures, induced to come abroad by promises of the most seductive kind, had been robbed by this man of all they possessed, and deserted here and there throughout the continent. I was so horror-stricken by the terrors my mind had so suddenly conjured up, that I could not acquire the calm and coolness requisite for a process of reasoning. My over-active imagination, as usual, went off with me, clearing obstacles with a sweeping stride, and steeple-chasing through fact as though it were only a gallop over grass land.

"Poor girl, well might you look confused and overwhelmed at meeting me! well might the flush of shame have spread over your neck and shoulders, and well might you have hurried away from the presence of one who had known you in the days of your happy innocence!" I am not sure that I didn't imagine I had been her playfellow in childhood, and that we had been brought up from infancy together. My mind then addressed itself to the practical question, What was to be done? Was I to turn my head away while this iniquity was being enacted? was I to go on my way, forgetting the seeds of that misery whose terrible fruits must one day be shame and an open ignominy? or was I to arraign this man, great and exalted as he was, and say to him: "Is it thus you represent before the eyes of the foreigner the virtues of that England we boast to be the model of all morality? Is it thus you illustrate the habits of your order? Do you dare to profane what, by the fiction of diplomacy, is called the soil of your country, by a life that you dare not pursue at home? The Parliament shall hear of it; the *Times* shall ring with it; that magnificent institution, the common-sense of England, long sick of what is called secret diplomacy, shall learn at last to what uses are applied the wiles and snares of this deceitful craft, its extraordinary and its private missions, its hurried messengers with their bags of corruption——"

I was well "into my work," and was going along slappingly, when a very trim footman, in a nankeen jacket, sad:

"If you will come this way, sir, his excellency will see you."

He led me through three or four *salons* handsomely furnished and ornamented with

pictures, the most conspicuous of which, in each room, was a life-sized portrait of the same gentleman, though in a different costume—now in the Windsor uniform, now as a Guardsman, and lastly, in the full dress of the diplomatic order. I had but time to guess that this must be his excellency, when the servant announced me and retired.

It is in deep shame that I own that the aspect of the princely apartments, the silence, the implied awe of the footman's subdued words as he spoke, had so routed all my intentions about calling his excellency to account, that I stood in his presence timid and abashed. It is an ignoble confession wrung out of the very heart of my snobbery, that no sooner did I find myself before that thin, pale, grey-headed man, who, in a light silk dressing-gown and slippers, sat writing away, than I gave up my brief, and inwardly resigned my place as a counsel for injured innocence.

He never raised his head as I entered, but continued his occupation without noticing me, muttering below his breath the words as they fell from his pen. "Take a seat," said he, curtly, at last. Perceiving, now, that he was fully aware of my presence, I sat down without reply. "This bag is late, Mr. Paynter," said he, blandly, as he laid down his pen and looked me in the face.

"Your excellency will permit me, *in limine*, to observe that my name is not Paynter."

"Possibly, sir," said he, haughtily; "but you are evidently before me for the first time, or you would know that, like my great colleague and friend, Prince Metternich, I have made it a rule through life never to burden my memory with what ever can be spared it, and of these are the patronymics of all subordinate people; for this reason, sir, and to this end, every cook in my establishment answers to the name of Honoré, my valet is always Pierre, my coachman Jacob, my groom is Charles, and all foreign messengers I call Paynter. The original of that appellation is, I fancy, superannuated or dead, but he lives in some twenty successors who carry canvas reticules as well as he."

"The method may be convenient, sir, but it is scarcely complimentary," said I, stiffly.

"Very convenient," said he, complacently. "All consuls I address as Mr. Sloper. You can't fail to perceive how it saves time, and I rather think that in the end they like it themselves. When did you leave town?"

"I left on Saturday last. I arrived at Dover by the express train, and it was there that the incident befell me by which I have now the honor to stand before your excellency."

Instead of bestowing the slightest attention on this exordium of mine, he had resumed his pen and was writing away glibly as before. "Nothing new stirring, when you left?" said he, carelessly.

"Nothing, sir. But to resume my narrative of explanation——"

"Come to dinner, Paynter; we dine at six," said he, rising hastily; and, opening a glass door into a conservatory, walked away, leaving me in a mingled state of shame, anger, humiliation, and I will state, of ludicrous embarrassment, which I have no words to express.

"Dinner! No," exclaimed I, "if the alternative were a hard crust and a glass of spring water! not if I were to fast till this time to-morrow! Dine with a man who will not condescend to acknowledge even my identity, who will not deign to call me by my name, but only consents to regard me as a pebble on the seashore, a blade of grass in a wide meadow! Dine with him, to be addressed as Mr. Paynter, and to see Pierre, and Jacob, and the rest of them looking on me as one of themselves! By what prescriptive right does this man dare to insult those who, for aught he can tell, are more than his equals in ability? Does the accident—and what other can it be than accident—of his station confer this privilege? How would he look if one were to retort with his own impertinence? What, for instance, if I were to say, 'I always call small diplomatists Bluebottles! you'll not be offended if, just for memory' sake, I address you as Bluebottle—Mr. Bluebottle, of course?'"

I was in ecstasies at this thought. It seemed to vindicate all my insulted personality, all my outraged and injured identity. "Yes," said I, "I will dine with him; six o'clock shall see me punctual to the minute, and determined to avenge the whole insulted family of the Paynters. I defy him to assert that the provocation came not from *his* side. I dare him to show cause why I should be the butt of *his* humor, any more than he of *mine*. I will be prepared to make use of his own exact words in repelling my impertinence, and say, 'Sir, you have exactly embodied *my* meaning; you have to the letter expressed what this morning I felt on being called Mr. Paynter; you have, besides this, had the opportunity of experiencing the sort of pain such an impertinence inflicts, and you

are now in a position to guide you as to how far you will persist in it for the future.'"

I actually reveled in the thought of this reprisal, and longed for the moment to come in which, indolently thrown back in my chair, I should say, "Bluebottle, pass the Madeira," with some comment on the advantage all the Bluebottles have in getting their wine duty free. Then, with what sarcastic irony I should condole with him over his wearisome, dull career, eternally writing some platitudes for blue-books, making Grotius into bad grammar, and vamping up old Puffendorf for popular reading. "Ain't you sick of it all, B.-B.?" I should say, familiarly; "is not the unreality of the whole thing offensive? Don't you feel that a despatch is a sort of formula in which Madrid might be inserted for Moscow, and what was said of Naples might be predicated for Norway?" I disputed a long time with myself at what precise period of the entertainment I should unmask my battery and open fire. Should it be in the drawing-room, before dinner? Should it be immediately after the soup, with the first glass of sherry? Ought I to wait till the dessert, and that time when a sort of easy intimacy had been established which might be supposed to prompt candor and frankness? Would it not be in better taste to defer it till the servants had left the room? To expose him to his household seemed scarcely fair.

These were all knotty points, and I revolved them long and carefully, as I came back to my hotel, through the same silent street.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHAMEFUL NEGLECT OF A PUBLIC SERVANT.

"DON'T keep a place for me at the *table d'hôte* to-day, Kramm," said I, in an easy carelessness; "I dine with his excellency. I couldn't well get off the first day, but to-morrow I promise you to pronounce upon your good cheer."

I suppose I am not the first man who has derived consequence from the invitation it had cost him misery to accept. How many in this world of snobbery have felt that the one sole recompense for long nights of *ennui* was the fact that their names figured amongst the distinguished guests in the next day's *Post!*

"It is not a grand dinner to-day, is it?" asked Kramm.

"No, no, merely a family party; we are very old chums, and have much to talk over."

"You will then go in plain black, and with nothing but your 'decorations'?"

"I will wear none," said I, "none; not even a ribbon." And I turned away to hide the shame and mortification his suggestion had provoked.

Punctually at six o'clock I arrived at the legation; four powdered footmen were in the hall, and a decent-looking personage preceded me up the stairs, and opened the double doors into the drawing-room, without, however, announcing me, or paying the slightest attention to my mention of "Mr. Pottinger."

Laying down his newspaper as I entered, his excellency came forward with his hand out, and though it was the least imaginable touch, and his bow was grandly ceremonious, his smile was courteous and his manner bland.

"Charmed to find you know the merit of punctuality," said he. "To the untraveled English, six means seven, or even later. You may serve dinner, Robins. Strange weather we are having," continued he, turning to me; "cold, raw and uncongenial."

We talked "barometer" till, the door opening, the *maître d'hôtel* announced, "His excellency is served;" a rather unpolite mode, I thought, of ignoring his company, and which was even more strongly impressed by the fact that he walked in first, leaving me to follow.

At the table a third "cover" was just being speedily removed as we entered, a fact that smote at my heart like a blow. The dinner began, and went on with little said; a faint question from the minister as to what the dish contained and a whispered reply constituted most of the talk, and an occasional cold recommendation to me to try this or that *entrée*. It was admirable in all its details, the cookery exquisite, the wines delicious, but there was an oppression in the solemnity of it all that made me sigh repeatedly. Had the butler been serving a high mass, his motions at the sideboard could scarcely have been more reverential.

"If you don't object to the open air, we'll take our coffee on the terrace," said his excellency; and we soon found ourselves on a most charming elevation, surrounded on three sides with orange-trees, the fourth opening a magnificent view over a fine landscape with the Taunus mountains in the distance.

"I can offer you at least a good cigar," said the minister as he selected with great care two from a number on a silver plateau

before him. "These, I think, you will find recommendable; they are grown for myself at Cuba, and prepared after a receipt only known to one family."

In all this there was a dignified civility, not at all like the impertinent freedom of his manner in the morning. He never, besides, addressed me as Mr. Paynter; in fact, he did not advert to a name at all, not giving me the slightest pretext for that reprisal I had come so charged with; and as to opening the campaign myself, I'd as soon have commenced acquaintance with a tiger by a pull at his tail. We were now alone; the servants had retired, and there we sat, silently smoking our cigars in apparent ease, but one of us at least in a frame of mind the very opposite to tranquillity. What a rush and conflict of thought was in my head! Why had not *she* dined with us? Was her position such as that the presence of a stranger became an embarrassment? Good heaven! was I to suppose this, that, and the other? What was there in this man that so imposed on me, that when I wanted to speak I only could sigh, and that I felt his presence like some overpowering spell? It was that calm, self-contained, quiet manner—cold rather than austere, courteous without cordiality—that chilled me to the very marrow of my bones. Lecture *him* on the private moralities of his life! ask *him* to render me an account of his actions! address *him* as Bluebottle!——

"With such tobacco as that, one can drink Bordeaux," said he. "Help yourself."

And I did help myself—freely, repeatedly. I drank for courage, as a man might drink from thirst or fever, or for strength in a moment of fainting debility. The wine was exquisite, and my heart beat more forcibly, and I felt it.

I cannot follow very connectedly the course of events; I neither know how the conversation glided into politics, nor what I said on that subject. As to the steps by which I succeeded in obtaining his excellency's confidence, I know as little as a man does of the precise moment in which he is wet through in a Scotch mist. I have a dim memory of talking in a very dictatorial voice, and continually referring to my "entrance into public life," with reference to what Peel "said," and what the Duke "told me."

"What's the use of writing home?" said his excellency, in a desponding voice. "For the last five years I have called attention to what is going on here: nobody minds, nobody heeds it. Open any blue-book you like, and will you find one solitary despatch from Hesse-Kalbbratonstadt?"

"I cannot call one to mind."

"Of course you can't. Would you believe it, when the Zeringer party went out, and the Schlaffdorfers came in, I was rebuked—actually rebuked—for sending off a special messenger with the news? And then came out a dispatch in cipher, which, being interpreted, contained this stupid doggrel:—

'Strange that such difference should be
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.'

"I ask, sir, is it thus the affairs of a great country can be carried on? The efforts of Russia here are incessant: a certain personage—I will mention no names—loves caviare, he likes it fresh, there is a special *estaffette* established to bring it! I learned, by the most insidious researches, his fondness for English cheese; I lost no time in putting the fact before the cabinet I represented, that while timid men looked tremblingly towards France, the thoughtful politician saw the peril of Hesse-Kalbbratonstadt. I urged them to lose no time; 'The grand-duchess has immense influence—countermine her,' said I, 'countermine her with a Stilton;' and, would you believe it, sir, they have not so much as sent out a Cheddar! What will the people of England say one of these days when they learn, as learn they shall, that at this mission here I am alone—that I have neither secretary nor *attaché*, paid or unpaid—that since the Crimean war the whole weight of the legation has been thrown upon me—nor is this all, but that a systematic course of treachery—I can't call it lies—has been adopted to entrap me, if such were possible? My despatches are unreplied to, my questions all unanswered. I stand here with the peace of Europe in my hands, and none to counsel nor advise me. What will you say, sir, to the very last despatch I have received from Downing Street? It runs thus:—

"'I am instructed by his lordship to inform you that he views with indifference your statement of the internal condition of the grand-duchy, but is much struck by your charge for sealing-wax.

"'I have, sir, etc.'

"This is no longer to be endured. A public servant who has filled some of the most responsible of official stations—I was eleven years at Tragotà, in the Argentine Republic; I was a *chargé* at Oohululoo for eight months, the only European who ever

survived an autumn there; they then sent me special to Cabanhos to negotiate the Salt-Sprat treaty; after that——"

Here my senses grew muddy: the grey dim light, the soft influences of a good dinner and a sufficiency of wine, the drowsy tenor of the minister's voice, all conspired, and I slept as soundly as if in my bed. My next conscious moment was as his excellency moved his chair back, and said—

"I think a cup of tea would be pleasant; let us come into the drawing-room."

CHAPTER XV.

I LECTURE THE AMBASSADOR'S SISTER.

On entering the drawing-room, his excellency presented me to an elderly lady, very thin, and very wrinkled, who received me with a cold dignity, and then went on with her crochet-work. I could not catch her name, nor, indeed, was I thinking of it; my whole mind was bent upon the question —Who could she be? For what object was she there? All my terrible doubts of the morning now rushed forcibly back to my memory, and I felt that never had I detested a human being with the hate I experienced for her. The pretentious stiffness of her manner, the haughty self-possession she wore, were positive outrages; and, as I looked at her, I felt myself muttering, "Don't imagine that your heavy black moiré, or your rich falls of lace, impose upon *me*. Never fancy that this mock austerity deceives one who reads human nature as he reads large print. I know, and I abhor you, old woman! That a man should be to the other sex as a wolf to the fold, the sad experience of daily life too often teaches; but that a woman should be false to woman, that all the gentle instincts we love to think feminine, should be debased to treachery and degraded into snares for betrayal—this is an offense that cries aloud to heaven!

"No more tea—none!" cried I, with an energy, that nearly made the footman let the tray fall, and so far startled the old lady, that she dropped her knitting, with a faint cry. As for his excellency, he had covered his face with the *Globe*, and, I believe, was fast asleep.

I looked about for my hat to take my leave, when a sudden thought struck me. "I will stay. I will sit down beside this old creature, and, for once, at least, in her miserable life, she shall hear from the lips of a man a language that is not that of the debauchee. Who knows what effect one honest word of a true-hearted man may not work? I will try, at all events," said I, and approached her. She did not, as I expected, make room for me on the sofa beside her, and I was, therefore, obliged to take a chair in front. This was so far awkward that it looked formal; it gave somewhat the character of accusation to my position, and I decided to obviate the difficulty by assuming a light, easy, cheerful manner at first, as though I suspected nothing.

"It's a pleasant little capital, this Kalbbratonstadt," said I, as I lay back in my chair.

"Is it?" said she, dryly, without looking up from her work.

"Well, I mean," said I, "it seems to have its reasonable share of resources. They have their theater, and their music garden, and their promenades, and their drives to—to——"

"You'll find all the names set down there," said she, handing me a copy of Murray's "Handbook" that lay beside her.

"I care less for names than facts, madam," said I, angrily, for her retort had stung me, and routed all my previous intention of a smooth approach to the fortress. "I am one of those unfashionable people who never think the better of vice because it wears French gloves, and goes perfumed with Ess bouquet."

She took off her spectacles, wiped them, looked at me, and went on with her work without speaking.

"If I appear abrupt, madam," said I, "in this opening, it is because the opportunity I now enjoy may never occur again, and may be of the briefest even now. We meet by what many would call an accident —one of those incidents which the thoughtless call chance directed my steps to this place; let me hope that that which seemed a hazard may bear all the fruits of maturest combination, and that the weak words of one frail, even as yourself, may not be heard by you in vain. Let me, therefore, ask you one question—only one —and give me an honest answer to it."

"You are a very singular person," said she, "and seem to have strangely forgotten the very simple circumstance that we meet for the first time now."

"I know it, I feel it; and that it may also be for the last and only time is my reason for this appeal to you. There are persons who, seeing you here, would treat you with a mock deference, address you with a counterfeit respect, and go their ways; who would say to their selfish

hearts, 'It is no concern of mine, why should it trouble me?' But I am not one of these. I carry a conscience in my breast; a conscience that holds its daily court, and will even to-morrow ask me, 'Have you been truthful, have you been faithful? When the occasion served to warn a fellow-creature of the shoal before him, did you cry out, "Take soundings! you are in shallow water"? or, "Did you with slippery phrases gloss over the peril, because it involved no danger to yourself?"' "

"Would that same conscience be kind enough to suggest that your present conduct is an impertinence, sir?"

"So it might, madam; just as the pilot is impertinent when he cries out, 'Hard, port! breakers ahead!'"

"I am therefore to infer, sir," said she, with a calm dignity, "that my approach to a secret danger—of which I can have no knowledge—is a sufficient excuse for the employment of language on your part, that, under a less urgent plea, had been offensive?"

"You are," said I, boldly.

"Speak out, then, sir, and declare what it is."

"Nay, madam, if the warning find no echo within, my words are useless. I have said I would ask you a question."

"Well, sir, do so."

"Will you answer it frankly? Will you give it all the weight and influence it should bear, and reply to it with that truthful spirit that conceals nothing?"

"What is your question, sir? You had better be speedy with it, for I don't much trust to my continued patience."

I arose at this, and, passing behind the back of my chair, leaned my arms on the upper rail, so as to confront her directly; and then, in the voice of an accusing angel, I said: "Old woman, do you know where you are going?"

"I protest, sir," said she, rising, with an indignation I shall not forget—"I protest, sir, you make me actually doubt if I know where I am!"

"Then let me tell you, madam," said I, with the voice of one determined to strike terror into her heart—"let me tell you; and may my words have the power to awaken you, even now, to the dreadful consequences of what you are about!"

"Shalley, Shalley!" cried she, in amazement, "is this gentleman deranged, or is it but the passing effect of your conviviality?" And with this she swept out of the room, leaving me there alone, for I now perceived—what seemed to have also escaped her—that the minister had slipped quietly away some time before, and was doubtless at that same moment in the profoundest of slumbers.

I took my departure at once. There were no leave-takings to delay me, and I left the house in a mood little according with the spirit of one who had partaken of its hospitalities; I am constrained to admit I was the very reverse of satisfied with myself. It was cowardly and mean of me to wreak my anger on that old woman, and not upon him who was the really great offender. He it was I should have arraigned; and with the employment of a little artifice and some tact, how terrible I might have made even my jesting levity! how sarcastic my sneers at fashionable vice! Affecting utter ignorance about his life and habits, I could have incidentally thrown out little episodes of all the men who have wrecked their fortunes by abandoned habits. I would have pointed to this man who made a brilliant opening in the House, and that who had acquired such celebrity at the bar; I would have shown the rising statesman tarnished, the future chief justice disqualified; I would have said: "Let no man, however modest his character or unfrequented his locality, imagine that the world takes no note of his conduct; in every class he is judged by his peers, and you and I, Doubleton, will as assuredly be arraigned before the bar of society as the pickpocket will be charged before the beak!"

I continued to revolve these and such like thoughts throughout the entire night. The wine I had drunk fevered and excited me, and added to that disturbed state which my own self-accusings provoked. Doubts, too, flitted across my mind whether I ought not to have maintained a perfect silence towards the others, and reserved all my eloquence for the poor girl herself. I imagined myself taking her hand between both mine, while, with averted head, she sobbed as if her heart would break, and, saying: "Be comforted, poor stricken deer! be comforted; I know all. One who is far from perfect himself, sorrows with and compassionates you; he will be your friend, your adviser, your protector. I will restore you to that home you quitted in innocence. I will bring you back to that honeysuckled porch where your pure heart expanded in home affections." Nothing shall equal the refined delicacy of my manner; that mingled reserve and kindness—a sort of cross between a half-brother and a canon of St. Paul's—shall win her over to repentance, and then to peace. How I fancied myself at intervals of time visiting that cottage, going, as the gar-

dener watches some cherished plant, to gaze on the growing strength I had nurtured, and enjoy the luxury of seeing the once drooping flower expanding into fresh loveliness and perfume. "Yes, Potts, this would form one of those episodes you have so often longed to realize." And then I went on to fancy a long heroic struggle between my love and that sentiment of respect for worldly opinion which is dear to every man, the years of conflict wearing me down in health, but exalting me immensely in every moral consideration. Let the hour of crowning victory at last come, I should take her to my bosom and say, "There is rest for thee here!"

"His excellency begs that you will call at the legation, as early as you can this morning," said a waiter, entering with the breakfast tray; and I now perceived that I had never gone to bed, or closed my eyes during the night.

"How did this message come?" I asked.

"By the chasseur of his excellency."

"And how addressed?"

"'To the gentleman who dined yesterday at the legation.'"

I asked these questions to ascertain how far he persisted in the impertinence of giving me a name that was not mine, and I was glad to find that on this occasion no transgression had occurred.

I hesitated considerably about going to him. Was I to accept that slippery morality that says, "I see no more than I please in the man I dine with," or was I to go boldly on and denounce this offender to himself? What if he were to say, "Potts, let us play fair; put your own cards on the table, and let us see are you always on the square? Who is your father? how does he live? Why have you left home, and how? What of that horse you have——"

"No, no, not stolen—on my honor, not stolen!"

"Well, ain't it ugly? Isn't the story one that any relating might, without even a spice of malevolence, make marvelously disagreeable? Is the tale such as you'd wish to herald you into any society you desire to mix with?" It was in this high, easy, and truly companionable style that conscience kept me company, while I ate two eggs and a plate of buttered toast. "After all," thought I, "might it not prove a great mistake not to wait on him? How if, in our talk over politics last night, I may have dropped some remarkable expression, a keen appreciation of some statesman, an extraordinary prediction of some coming crisis? Maybe it is to question me more fully about my 'views' of the state of Europe." Now I am rather given to "views of the state of Europe." I like that game of patience, formed by shuffling up all the governments of the continent, and then seeing who is to have the most "tricks," who's to win all the kings, and who the knaves. "Yes," thought I, "this is what he is at. These diplomatic people are consummately clever at pumping; their great skill consists in extracting information from others and adapting it to their own uses. Their social condition confers the great advantage of intercourse with whatever is remarkable for station, influence, and ability; and I think I hear his excellency muttering to himself, 'Remarkable man that—large views—great reach of thought—wish I could see more of him; must try what polite attentions may accomplish.' Well," said I, with a half sigh, "it is the old story, *Sic vos non vobis;* and I suppose it is one of the curses on Irishmen that, from Edmund Burke to Potts, they should be doomed to cram others. I will go. What signifies it to *me?* I am none the poorer in dispensing my knowledge than is the nightingale in discoursing her sweet music to the night air, and flooding the groves with waves of melody: like *her*, I give of an affluence that never fails me." And so I set out for the legation.

As I walked along through the garden, a trimly-dressed French maid passed me, turned, and repassed, with a look that had a certain significance. "It was monsieur dined here yesterday?" said she, interrogatively; and as I smiled assent, she handed me a very small sealed note, and disappeared.

It bore no address but the word "Mr.——;" a strange, not very ceremonious direction. "But, poor girl!" thought I, "she knows me not as Potts, but as protector. I am not the individual, but the representative of that widespread benevolence that succors the weak and consoles the afflicted. I wonder has she been touched by my devotion? has she imagined—oh, that she would!—that I have followed her hither, that I have sworn a vow to rescue and to save her? Or is this note the cry of a sorrow-struck spirit, saying, 'Come to my aid ere I perish'?"

My fingers trembled as I broke the seal; I had to wipe a tear from my eye ere I could begin to read. My agitation was great; it was soon to be greater. The note contained very few words; they were these:—

"SIR—I have not communicated to my brother, Sir Shalley Doubleton, any circumstance of your unaccountable conduct yesterday evening. I hope that my reserve will be appreciated by you, and

"I am, your faithful servant,

"MARTHA KEATS."

I did not faint, but I sat down on the grass, sick and faint, and I felt the great drops of cold perspiration burst out over my forehead and temples. "So," muttered I, "the venerable person I have been lecturing is his excellency's own sister! My exhortations to a changed life have been addressed to a lady doubtless as rigid in morals as austere in manners." Though I could recall none of the words I employed, I remembered but too well the lesson I intended to convey, and I shuddered with disgust at my own conduct. Many a time have I heard severest censure on the preacher who has from the pulpit scattered words of doubtful application to the sinners beneath; but here was I making a direct and most odious attack upon the life and habits of a lady of immaculate behavior! Oh, it was too—too bad! A whole year of sackcloth and ashes would not be penance for such iniquity. How could she have forgiven it? What consummate charity enabled her to pardon an offense so gross and so gratuitous? Or is it that she foresaw consequences so grave, in the event of disclosure, that she dreaded to provoke them? What might not an angry brother, in such a case, be warranted in doing? Would the world call any vengeance exorbitant? I studied her last phrase over and over, "I hope my reserve will be appreciated by you." This may mean, "I reserve the charge—I hold it over you as a bail bond for the future; diverge ever so little from the straight road, and I will say: Potts, stand forward and listen to your indictment." She may have some terrible task in view for me, some perilous achievement which I cannot now refuse. This old woman may be to me as was the Old Man of the Sea to Sinbad. I may be fated to carry her forever on my back, and the dread of her be a living nightmare to me. "At such a price existence has no value," said I, in despair. "Worse even than the bondage is the feeling that I am no longer, to my own heart, the great creature I love to think myself. Instead of Potts the generous, the high-spirited, the confiding, the self-denying, I am Potts the timorous, the terror-stricken, and the slave."

Out of my long and painful musings on the subject, I bethought me of a course to take. I would go to her and say:—

"Listen to this parable. I remember once, when a member of the phrenological club, a stupid jest was played off upon the society by some one presenting us with the cast of a well-known murderer's skull, and asking for our interpretations of its development. We gave them with every care and deliberation: we pointed out the fatal protuberances of crime, and indicated the depressions, which showed the absence of all prudential restraints; we demonstrated all the evidences of badness that were there, and proved that, with such a head, a man must have thought killing no murder. The rejoinder to our politeness was a small box that arrived by the mail, labeled, 'The original of the cast forwarded on the 14th.' We opened it, and found a pumpkin! The foolish jester fancied that he had cast an indelible stain upon phrenology, quite forgetting the fact that his pumpkin had personated a skull which, had it ever existed, would have presented the characteristics we gave it." I would say, "Now, madam, make the application, and say, do you not rather commend than condemn? are you not more ready to applaud than upbraid me?"

Second thoughts rather deterred me from this plan; the figurative line is often dangerous with elderly people. It was just as likely she would mistake the whole force of my illustration, and bluntly say, "I'd beg to remark, sir, I am not a pumpkin!"

"No; I will not adventure on this path. There is no need that I should ever meet her again, or, if I should, we may meet as utter strangers." This resolve made, I arose boldly, and walked on towards the house.

His excellency, I learned, was at home, and had been for some time expecting me. I found him in his morning room in the same costume and same occupation as on the day before.

"There's the *Times*," said he, as I entered; "I shall be ready for you presently;" and worked away without lifting his head.

Affecting to read, I set myself to regard him with attention. Vast piles of papers lay around him on every side; the whole table, and even the floor at his feet, was littered with them. "Would," thought I—"would that these writers for the Radical press, these scurrilous penny-a-liners who inveigh against a bloated and pampered aristocracy, could just witness the daily life of labor of one of these spoiled children of fortune. Here is this man, doubtless

reared in ease and affluence, and see him, how he toils away, from sundown to dawn, unraveling the schemes, tracing the wiles, and exposing the snares of these crafty foreigners. Hark! he is muttering over the subtle sentence he has just written: 'I am much grieved about Maria's little girl, but I hope she will escape being marked by the malady.'" A groan that broke from me here startled him, and he looked up.

"Ah! yes, by the way, I want you, Paynter."

"I am not Paynter, your excellency, my name is——"

"Of course you have your own name for your own peculiar set; but don't interrupt. I have a special service for you, and will put it in the 'extraordinaries.' I have taken a little villa on the Lake of Como for my sister, but, from the pressure of political events, I am not able to accompany her there. She is a very timid traveler, and cannot possibly go alone. You'll take charge of her, therefore, Paynter—there, don't be fussy—you'll take charge of her and a young lady who is with her, and you'll see them housed and established there. I suppose she will prefer to travel slowly, some thirty miles or so a day, post horses always, and strictly avoiding railroads; but you can talk it over together yourselves. There was a Bobus to have come out——"

"A Bobus!"

"I mean a doctor—I call every doctor, Bobus—but something has detained him, or, indeed, I believe he was drowned; at all events he has not come, and you'll have to learn how to measure out ether and drop morphine; the 'companion' will help you. And keep an account of your expenses, Paynter—your own expenses for F.O.—and don't let her fall sick at any out-of-the-way place, which she has rather a knack of doing; and, above all, don't telegraph on any account. Come and dine—six."

"If you will excuse me at dinner, I shall be obliged. I have a sort of half engagement."

"Come in about nine, then," said he, "for she'd like to talk over some matters. Look out for a carriage, too; I don't fancy giving mine up if you can get another. One of those great roomy German things with a cabriolet front, for Miss—I forget her name—would prefer a place outside. Kramm, the landlord, can help you to search for one; and let it be dusted, and aired, and fumigated, and the drag examined, and the axles greased—in a word, have your brains about you, Paynter. Good-bye." Exit as before.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNPLEASANT TURN TO AN AGREEABLE CONVERSE.

THERE is no denying it, I have led a life of far more than ordinary happiness. The white squares in the chequer of my existence have certainly equaled the black ones; and it is not every man can say as much. I suspect I owe a great share of this enjoyment to temperament, to a disposition not so much remarkable for opposing difficulties, as for deriving all the possible pleasure from any fortunate conjuncture. This gift I know I possess. I am not one of those strong natures which, by their intrinsic force, are ever impressing their own image on the society they live in. I am a weak, frail, yielding creature, but my very pliancy has given me many a partnership in emotions which, with a more rugged temperament, I had not partaken of. When one has wept over a friend's misfortunes and awakes to the consciousness that no ill has befallen himself, he feels as some great millionaire might feel who has bestowed a thousand pounds in charity and yet knows he's never the poorer. With the proud consciousness of this fresh title to man's admiration, he has the secret satisfaction of knowing that he will go clothed in purple as before, and fare to-day as sumptuously as yesterday. Do you, most generous of readers, call this selfishness? It is the very reverse. It is the grand culminating point of human sympathy.

I have a great deal more to say about myself. It is a theme I am really fond of, but I am not exactly sure that you are like-minded, or that this is the fittest place for it. I return to events.

It was on a bright, breezy morning of the early autumn that a heavy old German traveling-carriage—a wagon!—rattled over the uneven pavement of Kalbbratonstadt, and soon gaining one of the long forest alleys, rolled noiselessly over the smooth sward. Within, sat an elderly lady, with a due allowance of air-cushions, toy-terriers, and guide-books; in the rumble were a man and a maid; and in the cabriolet in front were a pale but placid girl, with large grey eyes and long lashes, and he who now writes these lines beside her. They who had only known me a few months back as a freshman of Trinity would not have recognized me now, as I sat with a long-peaked traveling-cap, a courier's belt and bag at my side, and the opening promise of a small furry mustache on my upper lip; not to say that I had got up a sort of supercilious air of contemptuous pity for the for-

eigner, which I had observed to be much in favor with the English abroad. It cost me dear to do this, and nothing but the consciousness that it was one of the requirements of my station could have made me assume it, for, in my heart of hearts, I reveled in enjoyment of all around me. I liked the soft breezy, balmy air, the mellow beech-wood, the grassy turf overgrown with violets, the wild notes of the frightened wood-pigeon, the very tramp-tramp of the massive horses, with their scarlet tassels and their jingling bells—all pleased and interested me. Not to speak of her who, at my side, felt a very child's delight at every novelty of the way.

"What would I have said to any one who, only a fortnight ago, had promised me such happiness as this?" said I to my companion, as we drove along, while the light branches rustled pleasantly over the roof of the carriage, darkening the shade around us, or occasionally deluging us with the leaves as we passed.

"Are you, then, so very happy?" asked she, with a pleasant smile.

"Can you doubt it? or, rather, is it that, as the emotion does not extend to yourself, you *do* doubt it?"

"Oh, as for me," cried she, joyfully, "it, it is very different. I have never traveled till now—seen nothing, actually nothing. The veriest commonplaces of the road, the peasants' costumes, their wayside cottages, the little shrines they kneel at, are all objects of picturesque interest to me, and I am ready to exclaim at each moment, 'Oh! why cannot we stop here? shall we ever see anything so beautiful again as this?'"

"And hearing you talk thus, you can ask me am I so very happy!" said I, reproachfully.

"What I meant was, is it not stupid to have no companion of your own turn of mind, none with whom you could talk, without condescending to a tone beneath you, just as certain stories are reduced to words of one syllable for little children?"

"Mademoiselle is given to sarcasm, I see," said I, half peevishly.

"Nothing of the kind," said she, blushing slightly. "It was in perfect good faith I wished you a more suitable companion. Indeed, after what I had heard from his excellency about you, I was terrified at the thought of my own insufficiency."

"And pray what *did* he say of me?" asked I, in a flutter of delight.

"Are you very fond of flattery?"

"Immensely!"

"Is it not possible that praise of you could be so exaggerated as to make you feel ashamed?"

"I should say, perfectly impossible; that is, to a mind regulated as mine, over-elation could never happen. Tell me, therefore, what he said."

"I can't remember one-half of it; he remarked how few men in the career—I conclude he meant diplomacy—could compare with you; that you had such just views about the state of Europe, such an accurate appreciation of public men. I can't say how many opportunities you musn't have had, and what valuable uses you have not put them to. In a word, I felt that I was about to travel with a great statesman and a consummate man of the world, and was terrified accordingly."

"And, now that the delusion is dispelled, how do you feel?"

"But is it dispelled? Am I not shocked with my own temerity in daring to talk thus lightly with one so learned?"

"If so," said I, "you conceal your embarrassment wonderfully."

And then we both laughed, but I am not quite sure it was at the same joke.

"Do you know where you are going?" said I, taking out a traveling map as a means of diverting our conversation into some higher channel.

"Not in the least."

"Nor care?"

"Nor care."

"Well, I must say, it is a most independent frame of mind. Perhaps you could extend this fine philosophy, and add, 'Nor with whom'?"

I was not at all conscious of what an impertinence I had uttered till it was out; nor, indeed, even then, till I remarked that her cheek had become scarlet, and her eyes double as dark as their wont.

"Yes," said she, "there is one condition for which I should certainly stipulate—not to travel with any one who could needlessly offend me."

I could have cried with shame; I could have held my hand in the flame of a fire to expiate my rude speech. And so I told her; while I assured her at the same time, with marvelous consistency, that it was not rude at all; that it was entirely misconception on her part; that *nous autres diplomates*—heaven forgive me the lying assumption!—had a way of saying little smartnesses that don't mean much; that we often made our coin ring on the table, though it turned out bad money when it came to be looked at; that Talleyrand did it, and Walewsky did it, and I did it—we all did it!

Now, there was one more unlucky feature in all this. It was only a few minutes before this passage occurred that I said to myself, "Potts, here is one whose frank, fresh, generous nature claims all your respect and devotion. No nonsense of your being this, that, and t'other here. Be truthful and be honest; neither pretend to be a man of fortune, nor a man of fashion; own fairly to her by what chance you adventured upon this strange life; tell her, in a word, you are the son of Potts—Potts the 'pothecary, and neither a hero nor a plenipotentiary!"

I have no doubt, most amiable of readers, that nothing can seem possibly more easy than to have done all this. You deem it the natural and ordinary course; just as, for instance, a merchant in good credit and repute would feel no repugnance to calling all his creditors together to inspect his books, and see that, though apparently solvent, he was, in truth, utterly bankrupt. And yet there is some difficulty in doing this. Does not the law of England expressly declare that no man need criminate himself? Who accuses you, then, Potts? And then I bethought me of the worthy old alderman, who, on learning that "Robinson Crusoe" was a fiction, exclaimed, "It may be so; but I have lost the greatest pleasure of my life in hearing it." What a profound philosophy was there in that simple avowal! With what illusions are we not cheered on through life! how unreal the joys that delight and the triumphs that elate us; for we are all hypochondriacs, and are as often cured with bread pills as with bold remedies. "Yes," thought I, "this young girl is happy in the thought that her companion is a person of rank, station, and influence; she feels a sort of self-elation in being associated with one endowed with all worldly advantages. Shall I rob her of this illusion? Shall I rudely deprive her of what imparts a charm to her existence, and gives a sort of romantic interest to her daily life? Harsh and needless would be the cruelty!"

While I thus argued with myself, she had opened her guide-book, and was eagerly reading away about the road we were traveling. "We are to halt at Bömerstein, are we not?" asked she.

"Yes," said I, "we rest here for the night. It is one of those little villages of which a German writer has given us a striking picture."

"Auerstadt," broke she in.

"So you have read him? You read German?"

"Yes, tolerably; that is, well enough for Schiller and Uhland, but not well enough for Jean Paul and Goethe."

"Never mind; trust me for a guide. You shall now venture upon both."

"But how will you be able to give up time valuable as yours to such teachings? Would it be fair of me, besides, to steal hours that ought to be devoted to your country?"

Though I had not the slightest imaginable ground to suspect any secret sarcasm in this speech, my guilty conscience made me feel it as a perfect torture. "She knows me," thought I, "and this sneer at my pretended importance is intended to overwhelm me."

"As to my country's claims," said I, haughtily, "I make light of them. All that I have seen of life only shows the shallowness of what is called the public service. I am resolved to leave it, and forever."

"And for what?"

"A life of retirement—obscurity, if you will."

"It is what I should do if I were a man."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I have often reflected over the delight I have felt in walking through some man's demesne, reveling in the enjoyment of its leafy solitude, its dreary shade, its sunlit vistas; and I have thought, 'If all these things, not one of which is mine, can bring such pleasure to my heart, why should I not adopt the same philosophy in life, and be satisfied with enjoying without possessing? A very humble lot would suffice for one; nothing but great success could achieve the other."

"What becomes, then, of that great stimulus to good they call labor?"

"Oh, I should labor, too. I'd work at whatever I was equal to. I'd sew, and knit, and till my garden, and be as useful as possible."

"And I would write," said I, enthusiastically, as though I were plotting out my share in this garden of Eden. "I would write all sorts of things: reviews, and histories, and stories, and short poems, and, last of all, the 'Confessions of Algernon Sydney Potts.'"

"Oh, what a shocking title! How could such names have met together? That shocking epithet Potts would vulgarize it all!"

"I really cannot agree with you," said I, angrily.

"Without," said she, "you meant it for a sort of quiz; and that Potts was to be a creature of absurdity and folly, a pretender and a snob."

I felt as if I was choking with passion; but I tried to laugh, and say, "Yes, of course."

"That would be good fun enough," went she on. "I'd like, if I could, to contribute to that. You should invent the situations, and leave me occasionally to supply the reflective part."

"It would be charming, quite delightful."

"Shall we do it, then? Let us try it, by all means. We might begin by imagining Potts in search of this, that, or t'other—love, happiness, solitude, climate, scenery—anything, in short. Let us fancy him on a journey, try and personate him—that would be the real way. Do you, for instance, be Potts, and I'll be his sister Susan. It will be the best fun in the world, as we go along, to see everything, note everything, and discuss everything Pottswise."

"It would be too ridiculous, too absurd," said I, sick with anger.

"Not a bit; we are traveling with our old grandmother, we are making the tour of Europe, and keeping our journal. Every evening we compare notes of what we have seen. Pray do so; I'm quite wild to try it."

"Really," said I, gravely, "it is a sort of trifling I should find it very difficult to descend to. I see no reason, besides, to associate the name of Potts with what you are pleased to call snobbery!"

"Could you help it? Could you, with all the best will in the world, make Potts a man of distinction? Wouldn't he, in spite of you, be low, vulgar, inquisitive, and obtrusive? Wouldn't you find him thrusting himself forward, twenty times a day, into positions he had no right to? Wouldn't the creature be a butt and a dupe——"

"Shall I own," burst I in, "that it gives me no exalted idea of your taste, if I find that you select for ridicule a person on the mere showing that his name is a monosyllable? And, once for all, I repudiate all share in the scheme, and beg that I may not hear more of it."

I turned away as I said this. She resumed her book, and we spoke no more to each other till we reached our halting-place for the night.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. KEATS MOVES MY INDIGNATION.

I AM forced to the confession, Mrs. Keats was not what is popularly called an agreeable old lady. She spoke seldom, she smiled never, and she had a way of looking at you, a sort of cold astonishment, seeming to say, "How is this? explain yourself," that kept me in a perpetual terror.

My morning's tiff with Miss Herbert had neither been condoned nor expiated when we sat down to dinner, as stiff a party of three as can well be imagined: scarcely a word was interchanged as we ate.

"If you drink wine, sir, pray order it," said Mrs. Keats to me, in a voice that might have suited an invitation to prussic acid.

"This little wine of the country is very pleasant, madam," said I, courteously, "and I can even venture to commend it."

"Not to me, sir. I drink water."

"Perhaps Miss Herbert will allow me?"

"Excuse me, I also drink water."

After a very dreary and painful pause, I dared to express a faint hope that Mrs. Keats had not been fatigued by the day's journey.

She looked at me for a second or two before replying, and then said:

"I am really not aware, sir, that I have manifested any such signs of weariness as would warrant your inquiry. If I should have, however——"

"Oh, I beg you will pardon me, madam," broke I in, apologetically; "my question was not meant for more than a mere ordinary politeness, a matter-of-course expression of my solicitude."

"It will save us both some trouble in future, sir, if I remark that I am no friend to matter-of-course civilities, and never reply to them."

I felt as though my head and face had been passed across the open door of a blast furnace. I was in a perfect flame, and dared not raise my eyes from my plate.

"The waiter is asking if you will take coffee, sir," said the inexorable old lady to me, as I sat almost stunned and stupid.

"Yes—with brandy—a full glass of brandy in it," cried I, in the half-despair of one who knew not how to rally himself.

"I think we may retire, Miss H.," said Mrs. Keats, rising with a severe dignity that seemed to say: "We are not bound to assist at an orgie." And with a stern stare and a defiant little bow she moved towards the door. I was so awestruck that I never moved from my place, but stood resting my hand on my chair, till she said: "Do you mean to open the door, sir, or am I to do it for myself?"

I sprang forward at once and flung it wide, my face all scarlet with shame.

She passed out, and Miss Herbert

followed her. Her dress, however, catching in the doorway, she turned back to extricate it; I seized the moment to stoop down and say: "Do let me see you for one moment this evening—only one moment."

She shook her head in silent negative and went away.

I sat down at the table and filled myself a large goblet of wine; I drank it off and replenished it. It was only this morning, a few brief hours ago, and I would not have changed fortunes with the Emperor of France. Life seemed to open before me like some beautiful alley in a garden, with a glorious vista in the distance. I would not have bartered the place in that cabriolet for the proudest throne in Europe. *She* was there beside me, listening in rapt attention as I discoursed voyages, travels, memoirs, poetry and personal adventures. With every changeful expression of lovely sympathy did she follow me through all. I was a hero to us both, myself as much captivated as she was; and now the brief drama was over, the lights were put out, and the theater closed! How had I destroyed this golden delusion—why had I quarreled with her, and for what? For a certain Potts, a creature who, in reality, had no existence. "For who is Potts?" said I. "Potts is no more a substance than Caleb Williams or Peregrine Pickle; Potts is the lay figure that the artist dresses in any costume he requires—a ranchero to-day, a railway director to-morrow. What an absurdity in the importance we lend to mere names! Here, for instance, I take the label off the port, and I hang it round the neck of the claret decanter: have I changed the quality of the vintage? have I brought Bordeaux to the meridian of Oporto? Not a bit of it. And yet a man is to be more the victim of an accident than a bottle of wine, and his intrinsic qualities—strength, flavor, and richness—are not to be tested, but simply implied from the label round his neck! How narrow-minded, after all, of her who ought to have known better! It is thus, however, we educate our women; this is part and parcel of the false system by which we fancy we make them companionable. The North American Indians are far in advance of us in all this; they assign them their proper places and fitting duties; they feel that, in this life of ours, order and happiness depend on the due distribution of burdens, and the Snapping Alligator never feels his squaw more truly his helpmate than when she is skinning eels for his dinner."

"How I hated that old woman; I don't think I ever detested a human creature so much as that. I have often speculated as to whether venomous reptiles have any gratification imparted to them when they inflict a poisonous wound. Is the mosquito the happier of having stung one's nose? And in the same spirit, I should like to know, do the disagreeable people of this world sleep the better from the consciousness of having offended us? Is there that great ennobling sense of a mission fulfilled for every cheek they set on fire and every heart they depress?" and do they quench hope and extinguish ambition with the same zeal that the Sun or the Phœnix puts out a fire?

"'If you drink wine, sir, pray order it,'" said I, mimicking her imperious tone. "Yes, madam, I do drink wine, and I mean to order it, and liberally. I travel at the expense of that noble old paymaster who only wags his tail the more the more he has to pay—the British Lion. I go down in the extraordinaries. I'm on what is called a special service. 'Keep an account of your expenses, Paynter!' Confound his insolence, he would say, 'Paynter.' By the way, I have never looked how he calls me in my passport. I'm curious to see if I be Paynter there." I had left the bag containing this and my money in my room, and I rang the bell, and told the waiter to fetch it.

The passport set forth in due terms all the dignities, honors, and decorations of the great man who granted it, and who bespoke for the little man who traveled by it all aid and assistance possible, and to let him pass freely, etc. "Mr. Ponto—British subject." "'Ponto!'" What an outrage! This comes of a man making his *maître d'hôtel* his secretary. That stupid French flunkey has converted me into a water-dog. This may explain a good deal of the old lady's rudeness; how could she be expected to be even ordinarily civil to a man called Ponto? She'd say at once, "His father was an Italian, and of course a courier, or a valet; or he was a foundling, and called after a favorite spaniel!" I'll rectify this without loss of time. If she has not the tact to discover the man of education and breeding by the qualities he displays in intercourse, she shall be brought to admit them by the demands of his self-respect.

I opened my writing-desk and wrote just two lines—a polite request for a few moments of interview, signed "A. S. Pottinger." I wrote the name in a fine text hand as though to say, "No more blunders, madam, this is large as print."

"Take this to your mistress, François," said I to the courier.

"Gone to bed, sir."

"Gone to bed! why, it's only eight o'clock."

A shrug and a smile were all he replied.

"And Miss Herbert—can I speak to *her?*"

"I fear not, sir; she went to her room, and told Clementina not to disturb her."

"It is of consequence, however, that I should see her. I want to make arrangements for to-morrow—the hour we are to start——"

"Oh! but we are to stop here over to-morrow—I thought monsieur knew that," said the fellow, with the insolent grin of a menial at knowing more than his betters.

"Oh, to be sure we are," said I, laughingly, and affecting to have suddenly remembered it. "I forgot all about it, François; you are quite right. Take a glass of wine, François—or take the bottle with you, that's better." And I handed him a flask of Hochheimer of eight florins, right glad to get rid of his presence and escape further scrutiny from his prying glances.

How relieved I felt when the fellow closed the door after him and left me to "blow off the steam" of my indignation all alone! And was I not indignant? Only to fancy this insolent old woman giving her orders without so much as condescending to communicate with me! I am left to learn her whim by a mere accident, or not learn it at all, and exhibit myself ready to depart at the inn door, and then hear, for the first time, that I may unpack again.

This was unquestionably a studied rudeness, and demanded an equally studied reprisal. She means to discredit my station, and disparage my influence: how shall I reply to her? A vast variety of expedients offered themselves to my mind: I could go off, leaving a fearful letter behind me—a document that would cut her to the very soul with the sarcastic bitterness of its tone; but could I leave without a reconciliation with Miss Herbert—without the fond hope of our meeting as friends? I meant a great deal more, though I wouldn't trust myself to say so. Besides, were I to go away, there were financial considerations to be entertained. I could not, of course, carry off that crimson bag with its gold and silver contents, and yet it was very hard to tear myself from such a treasure.

I say it under correction, for I have never been rich, and, consequently, never in the position to assert it positively, but I delare my firm conviction to be, that no man has ever tasted the unbounded pleasures of a careless liberality on a journey who has not traveled at some other person's expense. Be as wealthy as you like, let your portmanteau be stuffed full of circular notes, and there will be present at moments of payment the thought, "If I do not allow myself to be cheated here, I shall have all the more to squander, there." But, drawing from the bag of another, no such mean reflection obtrudes. You might as well defraud your lungs of a long inspiration out of the fear of taking more than your share of the atmosphere. There is enough, and will be enough there, when you are dust and ashes.

In fact, if I had on one side the "three courses" of the great statesman, I had on the other full thirty reasons against each, and therefore, I resolved to suspend action and do nothing. And let me here passingly remark that much as we hear every day about the merits of promptitude and quick-wittedness, in nine cases out of ten in life, I'd rather "give the move than take it." The waiting policy is a rare one; it is the secret of success in love, and of victory in an equity court. And so I determined I'd wait and see what should come of it. I appealed to myself thus: "Potts, you are eminently a man of the world, one who accepts life as it is, with all its crosses and untoward incidents; who knows well that he must play bad cards even oftener than good ones. No impatience, therefore, no rashness; give at least twenty-four hours' thought to any important decision, and let a night's sleep intervene between your first conception of a plan and its adoption." Oh, if the people who are fretting themselves about what is to happen this day ten years, would only remember what a long time it is—that is, counting by the number of events that will occur between this and to-morrow—not to say what incidents are happening at the antipodes that will yet bring joy or sorrow to their hearts—they would keep more of their sympathies for present use, and perhaps be the happier for doing so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN IMPATIENT SUMMONS.

I AM about to make a very original observation. I hope its truth may equal its originality. It is, that the man who has never had a sister is, at his first entrance into life, far more the slave of feminine captivations, than he who has been brought up in a "house full of girls." "Oh, for shame, Mr. Potts! Is this the gallantry we have heard so much of? Is this the spirit of that chivalrous devotion you have been

incessantly impressing upon us?" Wait a moment, fair creature; give me one half-minute for an explanation. He who has not had sisters has had no experiences of the behind-scene life of the female world; he has never heard one syllable about the plans, and schemes, and devices, by which hearts are ensnared. He fancies Mary stuck that moss-rose in her hair in a moment of childish caprice; that Kate ran after her little sister and showed the prettiest of ankles in doing it, out of the irrepressible gaiety of her buoyant spirits. In a word, he is one who only sees the play when the house is fully lighted, and all the actors in their grand costume; he has never witnessed a rehearsal, and has not the very vaguest suspicion of a prompter.

To him, therefore, who has only experienced the rough companionship of brothers—or worse still, has lived entirely alone—the first acquaintanceship with the young-lady world is such a fascination as no words can describe. The gentle look, the graceful gestures, the silvery voices, all the play and action of natures so infinitely more refined than any he has ever witnessed, are inexpressibly captivating. It is not alone the occupations of their hours, light, graceful, and picturesque as they are; but all their topics, their thoughts, seem to soar out of the commonplace world he has lived in, and rise to ideal realms of poetry and beauty. I say it advisedly: I do not know of anything so truly Elysian in life as our first—our very first—experiences of this kind.

Werther's passion for Charlotte received a powerful impulse from watching her as she cut bread-and-butter for the children. There are vulgar natures who will smile at this; who cannot enter into the intense far-sightedness of that poetic conception, that could in one trait of simplicity embody a whole lifetime with its ennobling duties, its cheerful sacrifices, its gracefully borne cares. Let him, therefore, who could sneer at Werther, scoff at Potts, as he owns that he never felt his heart so powerfully drawn to Kate Herbert as when he watched her making tea for breakfast. Dressed in a muslin that represented mourning, her rich hair plainly enclosed in a net, with a noiseless motion, she glided about, an ideal of gentle sadness, more fascinating than I can tell. If she bore any unpleasant memory of our little difference, she did not show it; her manner was calm, and even kind. She felt perhaps, that some compensation was due to me for the rudeness of that old woman, and was not unwilling to make it.

"You know we are to rest here to-day?" said she, as she busied herself at the table.

"I heard it by a mere chance and from the courier," said I, peevishly. "I am not quite certain in what capacity Mrs. Keats condescends to regard me, that I am treated with such scant courtesy. Probably you would be kind enough to ascertain this point for me?"

"I shall assuredly not ask," said she, with a smile.

"I certainly promised her brother—I could not do less for a colleague, not to say something more—that I'd see this old lady safe over the Alps. They are looking out for me anxiously enough at Constantinople all this while; in fact, I suspect there will be a nice confusion there through my delay, and I'd not be a bit surprised if they begin to believe that stupid story in the *Nord*. I suppose you saw it?"

"No. What is it about?"

"It is about your humble servant, Miss Herbert, and hints that he has received one hundred purses from the sheiks of the Lebanon not to reach the Golden Horn before they have made their peace with the Grand Vizier."

"And is of course untrue?"

"Of course; every word of it is a falsehood; but there are *gobemouches* will believe anything. Mark my words, and see if this allegation be not heard in the House of Commons, and some Tower Hamlets member start up to ask if the Foreign Secretary will lay on the table copies of the instructions given to a certain person, and supposed to be credentials of a nature to supersede the functions of our ambassador at the Porte. In confidence between ourselves, Miss Herbert, so they are! I am intrusted with full powers about the Hatti Homayoun, as the world shall see in good time."

"Do you take your tea strong?" asked she. And there was something so odd and so inopportune in the question, that I felt it as a sort of covert sneer; but when I looked up, and beheld that pale and gentle face turned towards me, I banished the base suspicion, and, forgetting all my enthusiasm, said—

"Yes, dearest; strong as brandy!"

She tried to look grave, perhaps angry; but, in spite of herself, she burst out a laughing.

"I perceive, sir," said she, "that Mrs. Keats was quite correct when she said that you appeared to have moments in which you are unaware of what you say."

Before I could rally to reply, she had

poured out a cup of tea for Mrs. Keats, and left the room to carry it to her.

"'Moments in which I am unaware of what I say'—'incoherent intervals,' Forbes Winslow would call them: in plain English, I am mad. Old woman, have you dared to cast such an aspersion on me, and to disparage me, too, in the quarter where I am striving to achieve success? For her opinion of me I am less than indifferent; for her judgment of my capacity, my morals, my manners, I am as careless as I well can be of anything; but these become serious disparagements when they reach the ears of one whose heart I would make my own. I will insist on an explanation —no, but an apology—for this. She shall declare that she used these words in some non-natural sense—that I am the sanest of mortals; she shall give it under her hand and seal: 'I, the undersigned, having in a moment of rash and impatient judgment imputed to the bearer of this document, Algernon Sydney Potts'—no, Pottinger—ha, there is a difficulty! If I be Pottinger, I can never re-become Potts; if Potts, I am lost—or rather, Miss Herbert is lost to me forever. What a dire embarrassment! Not to mention that in the passport I was Ponto!"

"Mrs. Keats desired me to beg you will step up to her room after breakfast, and bring your account-books with you." This was said by Miss Herbert, as she entered and took her place at the table.

"What has the old woman got in her head?" said I, angrily. "I have no account-books; I never had such in my life. When I travel alone, I say to my courier, 'Diomede'—he is a Greek—'Diomede, pay'; and he pays. When Diomede is not with me, I ask, 'How much?' and I give it."

"It certainly simplifies travel," said she, gravely.

"It does more, Miss Herbert. It accomplishes the end of travel. Your doctor says, 'Go abroad—take a holiday—turn your back on Downing Street, and bid farewell to cabinet councils.' Where is the benefit of such a course, I ask, if you are to pass the vacation cursing custom-house officers, bullying landlords, and browbeating waiters? I say always, 'Give me a bad dinner if you must, but do not derange my digestion; rather a damp bed than thorns in the pillow.'"

"I am to say that you will see her, however?" said she, with that matter-of-fact adhesiveness to the question that never would permit her to join in my digressions.

"Then I go under protest, Miss Herbert—under protest, and, as the lawyers say, without prejudice—that is, I go as a private gentleman, irresponsible and independent. Tell her this, and say I know nothing of figures. Arithmetic may suit the Board of Trade; in the Foreign Department we ignore it. You may add, too, if you like, that from what you have seen of me I am of a haughty disposition, easily offended, and very vindictive—very!"

"But I really don't think this," said she, with a bewitching smile.

"Not to *you*, de——" I was nearly in it again: "not to *you*," said I, stammering and blushing till I felt on fire. I suspect that she saw all the peril of the moment, for she left the room hurriedly, on the pretext of asking Mrs. Keats to take more tea.

"She is sensible of your devotion, Potts; but is she touched by it? Has she said to herself, 'That man is my fate, my destiny—it is no use resisting him; dark and mysterious as he is, I am drawn towards him by an inscrutable sympathy'—or is she still struggling in the toils, muttering to her heart to be still, and to wait? Flutter away, gentle creature," said I, compassionately, "but ruffle not your lovely plumage too roughly; the bars of your cage are not the less impassable that they are invisible. You *shall* love me, and you *shall* be mine!"

To these rapturous fancies there now succeeded the far less captivating thought of Mrs. Keats, and an approaching interview. Can any reader explain why it is that one sits in quiet admiration of some old woman by Teniers or Holbein, and never experiences any chagrin or impatience at trials which, if only represented in life, would be positively odious? Why is it that art transcends nature, and that ugliness in canvas is more endurable than ugliness in the flesh? Now, for my own part, I'd rather have faced a whole gallery of the Dutch school, from Van Eyck to Verhagen, than have confronted that one old lady who sat awaiting me in No. 12.

Twice as I sat at my breakfast did François put in his head, look at me, and retire without a word. "What is the matter? What do you mean?" cried I, impatiently, at the third intrusion.

"It is madam that wishes to know when monsieur will be at leisure to go upstairs to her."

I almost bounded on my chair with passion. How was I, I would ask, to maintain any portion of that dignity with which I ought to surround myself if exposed to such demands as this? This absurd old woman would tear off every illusion in

which I draped myself. What availed all the romance a rich fancy could conjure up, when that wicked old enchantress called me to her presence, and in a voice of thunder said, "Strip off these masqueradings, Potts, I know the whole story." "Ay, but," thought I, "she cannot do so; of me and my antecedents she knows positively nothing." "Halt there!" interposes Conscience; "it is quite enough to pronounce the coin base, without being able to say at what mint it was fabricated. She knows you, Potts, she knows you."

There is one great evil in castle-building, and I have thought very long and anxiously, and I must own fruitlessly, over how to meet it: it is that one never can get a lease of the ground to build on. One is always like an Irish cottier, a tenant at will, likely to be turned out at a moment's notice, and dispossessed without pity or compassion. The same language applies to each: "You know well, my good fellow, you had no right to be there; pack up and be off!" It's no use saying it was a bit of waste land unfenced and untilled; that, until you took it in hand, it was overgrown with nettles and duckweed; that you dispossessed no one, and such like. The answer is still the same, "Where's your title? Where's your lease?"

Now, I am curious to hear what injury I was inflicting on that old woman at No. 12 by any self-deceptions of mine? Could the most exaggerated estimate I might form of myself, my present, or my future, in any degree affect *her?* Who constituted her a sort of ambulatory conscience, to call people's hearts to account at a moment's notice? It may be seen, by the tone of these reflections, that I was fully impressed with the belief through some channel, or by some clue, Mrs. Keats knew all my history, and intended to use her knowledge tyrannically over me.

Oh, that I could only retaliate! Oh, that I had only the veriest fragments of her past life, out of which to construct her whole story! Just as out of a mastodon's molar, Cuvier used to build up the whole monster, never omitting a rib, nor forgetting a vertebra! How I should like to say to her, and with a most significant sigh, "I knew poor Keats well!" Could I not make even these simple words convey a world of accusation, blended with sorrow and regret?

François again, and on the same errand. "Say I am coming; that I have only finished a hasty breakfast, and that I am coming this instant," cried I. Nor was it very easy for me to repress the more impatient expressions which struggled for utterance, particularly as I saw, or fancied that I saw, the fellow pass his hand over his mouth to hide a grin at my expression.

"Is Miss Herbert upstairs?"

"No, sir, she is in the garden."

This was, so far, pleasant. I dreaded the thought of her presence at this interview, and I felt that punishment within the precincts of the gaol was less terrible than on the drop before the populace; and, with this consoling reflection, I mounted the stairs.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. KEATS'S MYSTERIOUS COMMUNICATION.

I KNOCKED twice before I heard the permission to enter; but, scarcely had I closed the door behind me, than the old lady advanced, and curtseying to me with a manner of most reverential politeness, said, "When you learn, sir, that my conduct has been dictated in the interest of your safety, you will, I am sure, graciously pardon many apparent rudenesses in my manner towards you, and only see in them my zeal to serve you."

I could only bow to a speech, not one syllable of which was in the least intelligible to me. She conducted me courteously to a seat, and only took her own after I was seated.

"I feel, sir," said she, "that there will be no end to our embarrassments if I do not go straight to my object and say at once that I know you. I tell you frankly, sir, that my brother did not betray your secret. The instincts of his calling—to *him* a second nature—were stronger than fraternal love, and all he said to me was, 'Martha, I have found a gentleman who is going south, and who, without inconvenience, can see you safely as far as Como.' I implicitly accepted his words, and agreed to set out immediately. I suspected nothing—I knew nothing. It was only before going down to dinner that the paragraph in the *Courrier du Dimanche* met my eye, and, as I read it, I thought I should have fainted. My first determination was not to appear at dinner. I felt that something or other in my manner would betray my knowledge of your secret. My next was to go down and behave with more than usual sharpness. You may have remarked that I was very abrupt, almost, shall I say, rude?"

I tried to enter a dissent at this, but did not succeed so happily as I meant; but she resumed:

"At any cost, however, sir, I determined that I alone should be the depositary of your confidence. Miss Herbert is to me a comparative stranger; she is, besides, very young; she would be in no wise a suitable person to intrust with such a secret, and so I said, I will pretend illness, and remain here for a day; I will make some pretext of dissatisfaction about the expense of the journey; I will affect to have had some passing difference, and he can thus leave us ere he be discovered. Not that I desire this, sir; far from it. This is the brightest episode in a long life. I never imagined that I should have enjoyed such an honor; but I have only to think of your safety; and if an old woman, unobservant and unremarking as myself, could penetrate your disguise, why not others more keen-sighted and inquisitive? Don't you agree with me?"

"There is much force in what you say, madam," said I, with dignity, "and your words touch me profoundly." I thought this a happy expression, for it conveyed a sort of grand condescension that seemed to hit off the occasion.

"You would never guess how I recognized you, sir?" said she.

"Never, madam." I could give my oath to this, if required.

"Well," said she, with a bland smile, "it was from the resemblance to your mother!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes; you are far more like *her*, than your father, and you are scarcely so tall as he was."

"Perhaps not, madam."

"But you have his manner, sir—the graceful and captivating dignity that distinguished all your house; this would betray you to the eyes of all who have enjoyed the high privilege of knowing your family."

The allusion to our house showed that we were royalties, and I laid my hand on my heart, and bowed as a prince ought, blandly but haughtily.

"Ah, sir," said she, with a deep sigh, "your present enterprise fills me with apprehension. Are you not afraid, yourself, of the consequences?"

I sighed, too, and, if the truth were to be told, I was very much afraid.

"But, of course, you are acting under advice, and with the counsel of those well able to guide you?"

"I cannot say I am, madam; I am free to tell you that every step I am now taking is self-suggested."

"Oh, then, let me implore you to pause, sir," said she, falling on her knees before me; "let me thus entreat of you not to go further in a path so full of danger!"

"Shall I confess, madam," said I, proudly, "that I do not see these dangers you speak of?"

I thought that on this hint she would talk out, and I might be able to pierce the veil of the mystery, and discover who I was; for, though very like my mother, and shorter than my father, I was sorely puzzled about my parentage; but she only went off into generalities about the state of the continent and the condition of Europe generally. I saw now that my best chance of ascertaining something about myself was to obtain from her the newspaper that first suggested her discovery of me, and I said, half carelessly, "Let me see the paragraph which struck you in the *Courrier.*"

"Ah, sir, you must excuse me; these ignoble writers have little delicacy in alluding to the misfortunes of the great; they seem to revenge the littleness of their own station on every such occasion."

"You can well imagine, madam, how time has accustomed me to such petty insults: show me the paper."

"Pray let me refuse you, sir; I would not, however blamelessly, be associated in your mind with what might offend you."

Again I protested that I was used to such attacks, that I knew all about the wretched hireling creatures who wrote them, and that, instead of offending, they positively amused me—actually made me laugh.

Thus urged, she proceeded to search for the newspaper, and only after some minutes was it that she remembered Miss Herbert had taken it away to read in the garden. She proposed to send the servant to fetch it, but this I would not permit, pretending at last to concur in her own previously expressed contempt for the paragraph—but secretly promising myself to go in search of it the moment I should be at liberty—and once more she resumed the theme of my rashness, and my dangers, and all the troubles I might possibly bring upon my family, and the grief I might occasion my grandmother.

Now as there are few men upon whom the ties of family and kindred imposed less rigid bonds, I was rather provoked at being reminded of obligations to my grandmother, and was almost driven to declare that she weighed for very little in the balance of my plans and motives. The old lady, however, rescued me from the indiscretion by a fervent entreaty that I would at least ask a certain person what he thought of my present step.

"Will you do this?" said she, with tears in her eyes. "Will you do it, now?"

I promised her faithfully.

"Will you do it here, sir, at this table, and let me have the proudest memory in my life to recall the incident?"

"I should like an hour or two for reflection," said I, pushed very hard by this insistence of hers, for I was sorely puzzled whom I was to write to.

"Oh," said she, still tearfully, "is it not the habit of hesitating, sir, has cost your house so dearly?"

"No," said I, "we have been always accounted prompt in action and true to our engagements."

Heaven forgive me! but in this vainglorious speech I was alluding to the motto of the Potts crest, "*Vigilantibus omnia fausta;*" or, as some one rendered it, "Potts answers to the night-bell."

She smiled faintly at my remark. I wonder how she would have looked had she read the thought that suggested it.

"But you *will* write to him, sir?" said she, once more.

I laid my hand over what anatomists call the region of the heart, and tried to look like Charles Edward in the prints. Meanwhile, my patience was beginning to fail me, and I felt that, if the mystification were to last much longer, I should infallibly lose my presence of mind. Fortunately, the old lady was so full of her theme that she only asked to be let talk away without interruption, with many an allusion to the dear count and the adored duchess, and a fervent hope that I might be ultimately reconciled to them both—a wish which I had tact enough to perceive required the most guarded reserve on my part.

"I know I am indiscreet, sir," said she, at least; "but you must pardon one whose zeal outruns her reason."

And I bowed grandly, as I might have done in extending mercy to some captive taken in battle.

"There is but one favor more, sir, I have to beg."

"Speak it, madam. As the courtier remarked, if it be possible, it *is* done; if impossible, it *shall* be done."

"Well, sir, it is that you will not leave us till you hear from——" She hesitated as if afraid to say the name, and then added, "the Rue St. Georges. Will you give me this pledge?"

Now, though this would have been, all things considered, an arrangement very like to have lasted my life, I could not help hesitating ere I assented, not to say that our dear friend of the Rue St. Georges, whoever he was, might possibly not concur in all the delusions indispensable to my happiness. I therefore demurred—that is, in legal acceptance, I deferred assent—as though to say, "We'll see."

"At all events, sir, you'll accompany us to Como?"

"You have my pledge to that, madam."

"And meanwhile, sir, you agree with me that it is better I should continue to behave towards you with a cold and distant reserve."

"Unquestionably."

"Rarely meeting, seldom or never conversing."

"I should say never, madam; making, in fact, any communication you may desire to reach me through the intervention of that young person—I forget her name."

"Miss Herbert, sir."

"Exactly; and who appears gentle and unobtrusive."

"She is a gentlewoman by birth, sir," said the old lady, techily.

"I have no doubt of it, madam, or she would not be found in association with *you*."

She curtseyed deeply at the compliment, and I bowed as low, and backing and bowing I gained the door, dying with eagerness to make my escape.

"Will you pardon me, sir, if, after all the agitation of this meeting, I may not feel equal to appear at dinner to-day?"

"You will charge that young person to give news of your health, however," said I, insinuating that I expected to see Miss Herbert.

"Certainly, sir; and if it should be your pleasure that she should dine with you, to preserve appearances——"

"You are right, madam; your remark is full of wisdom. I shall expect to meet her." And again I bowed low, and ere she recovered from another reverential curtsey, I had closed the door behind me, and was half-way downstairs.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

As between the man who achieves greatness and him who has greatness thrust upon him there lies a whole world of space, so is there an immense interval between one who is the object of his own delusions and him who forms the subject of delusion to others.

My reader may have already noticed that nothing was easier for me than to lend

myself to the idle current of my fancy. Most men who build "castles in Spain," as the old adage calls them, do so purely to astonish their friends. *I* indulged in these architectural extravagances in a very different spirit. I built my castle to live in it; from foundation to roof-tree, I planned every detail of it to suit my own taste, and all my study was to make it as habitable and comfortable as I could. Ay, and what's more, live in it I did, though very often the tenure was a brief one; sometimes while breaking my egg at breakfast, sometimes as I drew on my gloves to walk out, and yet no terror of a short lease ever deterred me from finishing the edifice in the most expensive manner. I gilded my architraves and frescoed my ceilings as though all were to endure for centuries; and laid out the gardens and disposed the parterres as though I were to walk in them in my extreme old age. This faculty of lending myself to an illusion by no means adhered to me where the deception was supplied by another; from the moment I entered one of *their* castles, I felt myself in a strange house. I continually forgot where the stairs were, what this gallery opened on, where that corridor led to. No use was it to say, "You are at home here. You are at your own fireside." I knew and felt that I was not.

By this declaration, I mean my reader to understand that, while ready for any exigency of a story devised by myself, I was perfectly miserable at playing a part written for me by a friend; nor was this feeling diminished by the thought that I really did not know the person I was believed to represent; nor had I the very vaguest clue to his antecedents or belongings.

As I set out in search of Miss Herbert, these were the reflections I revolved, occasionally asking myself: "Is the old lady at all touched in the upper story? Is there not something private-asylumish in these wanderings?" But still, apart from this special instance, she was a marvel of acuteness and good sense. I found Miss Herbert in a little arbor at her work; the newspaper on the bench beside her.

"So," said she, without looking up, "you have been making a long visit upstairs. You found Mrs. Keats very agreeable, or you were so yourself."

"Is there anything wrong hereabouts?" said I, touching my forehead with my finger.

"Nothing whatever."

"No fancies, no delusions about certain people?"

"None whatever."

"None of the family suspected of anything odd or eccentric?"

"Not that I have ever heard of. Why do you ask?"

"Well, it was a mere fancy, perhaps on my part; but her manner to-day struck me as occasionally strange—almost flighty."

"And on what subject?"

"I am scarcely at liberty to say that; in fact, I am not at all free to divulge it," said I, mysteriously, and somewhat gratified to remark that I had excited a most intense curiosity on her part to learn the subject of our interview.

"Oh, pray do not make any imprudent revelations to me," said she, pettishly; "which, apart from the indiscretion, would have the singular demerit of affording me not the slightest pleasure. I am not afflicted with the malady of curiosity."

"What a blessing to you! Now, I am the most inquisitive of mankind. I feel that if I were a clerk in a bank I'd spend the day prying into every one's account, and learning the exact state of his balance-sheet. If I were employed in the post-office no terror of the law could restrain me from reading the letters. Tell me that any one has a secret in his heart, and I feel I could cut him open to get at it!"

"I don't think you are giving a flattering picture of yourself in all this," said she, peevishly.

"I am aware of that, Miss Herbert, but I am also one of those who do not trade upon qualities they have no pretensions to."

She flushed a deep crimson at this, and after a moment said:

"Has it not occurred to you, sir, that people who seldom meet except to exchange ungracious remarks, would show more judgment by avoiding each other's society?"

Oh, how my heart thrilled at this pettish speech! In Hans Grüter's "Courtship," he says: "I knew she loved me, for we never met without a quarrel."

"I have thought of that, too, Miss Herbert," said I, "but there are outward observances to be kept up, conventionalities to be respected."

"None of which, however, require that you should come out and sit here while I am at my work," said she, with suppressed passion.

"I came out here to search for the newspaper," said I, taking it up, and stretching myself on the grassy sward to read at leisure.

She arose at once, and, gathering all the articles of her work into a basket, walked away.

"Don't let me hunt you away, Miss Herbert," said I, indolently; "anywhere else will suit me just as well. Pray don't go." But without vouchsafing to utter a word or even turn her head, she continued her way towards the house.

"The morning she slapped my face," says Hans, "filled the measure of my bliss, for I then saw she could not control her feelings for me." This passage recurred to me as I lay there, and I hugged myself in the thought that such a moment of delight might yet be mine. The profound German explains this sentiment well. "With women," says he, "love is like the idol-worship of an Indian tribe; at the moment their hearts are bursting with devotion, they like to cut and wound and maltreat their god. With *them*, this is the ecstasy of their passion."

I now saw that the girl was in love with me, and that she did not know it herself. I take it that the sensations of a man who suddenly discovers that the pretty girl he has been admiring is captivated by his attentions, are very like what a head clerk may feel at being sent for by the house and being informed that he is now one of the firm! This may seem a commercial formula to employ, but it will serve to show my meaning, and as I lay there on that velvet turf, what a delicious vision spread itself around me! At one moment we were rich, traveling in splendor through Europe, amassing art-treasures wherever we went, and despoiling all the great galleries of their richest gems. I was the associate of all that was distinguished in literature and science, and my wife the chosen friend of queens and princesses. How unaffected we were, how unspoiled by fortune! Approachable by all, our graceful benevolence seemed to elevate its object and make of the recipient the benefactor. What a world of bliss this vile dross men call gold can scatter! "There — there, good people," said I, blandly, waving my hand, "no illuminations, no bonfires—your happy faces are the brightest of all welcomes." Then we were suddenly poor—out of caprice just to see how we should like it—and living in a little cottage under Snowden, and I was writing, heaven knows what, for the periodicals, and my wife rocking a little urchin in a cradle, whom we constantly awoke by kissing, each pretending that it was all the other's fault, till we ratified a peace in the same fashion. Then I remembered the night, never to be forgotten, when I received my appointment as something in the antipodes, and we went up to town to thank the great man who bestowed it, and he asked us to dinner, and he was, I fancied, more than polite to my wife, and I sulked about it when we got home, and she petted and caressed me, and we were better friends than ever, and I swore I would not accept the minister's bounty, and we set off back again to our cottage in Wales, and there we were when I came to myself once more.

It is always pleasant—at least I have ever felt it so, on awaking from a dream or a reverie—to know that one has borne himself well in some imaginary crisis of difficulty and peril. I like to think that I was in no hurry to get into the longboat. I am glad I gave poor Dick that last fifty-pound note—my last in the world—and I rejoice to remember that I did not run away from that grizzly bear, but sent the four-pound ball right into the middle of his forehead. You feel in all these that the metal of your nature has been tested, and come out pure gold; at all events *I* did, and was very happy thereat. It was not till after some little time that I could get myself clear out of dreamland, and back to the actual world of small debts and difficulties, and then I bethought me of the newspaper which lay unread beside me.

I began it now, resolved to examine it from end to end, till I discovered the passage that alluded to me. It was so far pleasant reading, that it was novel and original. A very able leader set forth that nothing could equal the blessings of the Pope's rule at Rome—no people were so happy—so prosperous—or so contented—that all the granaries were full, and all the gaols empty, and the only persons of small incomes in the state were the cardinals, and that they were too heavenly-minded to care for it. After this, there came some touching anecdotes of that good man, the late King of Naples. And then there was a letter from Frohsdorf, with fifteen francs enclosed to the inhabitants of a village submerged by an inundation. There were pleasant little paragraphs, too, about England, and all the money she was spending to propagate infidelity and spread the slave-trade—the two great and especial objects of her policy—after which came insults to France and injustice to Ireland. The general tone of the print was war with every one but some twenty or thirty old ladies and gentlemen living in exile somewhere in Bohemia. Now none of these things touched *me*, and I was growing very weary of my search when I lighted upon the following:

"We are informed, on authority that we cannot question, that the young C. de P. is now making the tour of Germany alone and in disguise, his object being to ascertain

for himself how the various relatives of his house, on the maternal side, would feel affected by any movement in France to renew his pretensions. Strange, undignified, and ill-advised as such a step must seem, there is nothing in it at all repulsive to the well-known traditions of the younger branch. Our informant himself met the P. at Mayence, and speedily recognized him, from the marked resemblance he bears to the late duchess, his mother; he addressed him at once by his title, but was met by the cold assurance that he was mistaken, and that a casual similarity in features had already led others into the same error. The general—for our informant is an old and honored soldier of France—confessed he was astounded at the *aplomb* and self-possession displayed by so young a man; and although their conversation lasted for nearly an hour, and ranged over a wide field, the C. never for an instant exposed himself to a detection, nor offered the slightest clue to his real rank and station. Indeed, he affected to be English by birth, which his great facility in the language enabled him to do. When he quitted Mayence it was for Central Germany.

Here was the whole mystery revealed, and I was no less a person than a royal prince—very like my mother, but neither so tall nor robust as my distinguished father! "Oh, Potts! in all the wildest ravings of your most florid moments you never arrived at this!"

A very strange thrill went through me as I finished this paragraph. It came this wise. There is, in one of Hoffman's tales, the story of a man who, in a compact with the fiend, acquired the power of personating whomsoever he pleased, but who, sated at last with the enjoyment of this privilege, and eager for a new sensation, determined he would try whether the part of the devil himself might not be amusing, Apparently Mephistopheles won't stand joking, for he resented the liberty by depriving the transgressor of his identity forever, and made him become each instant whatever character occurred to the mind of him he talked to.

Though the parallel scarcely applied, the very thought of it sent an aguish thrill through me—a terror so great and acute that it was very long before I could turn the medal round and read on the reverse. There, indeed, was matter for vainglory! "It was but t'other day," thought I, "and Lord Keldrum and his friends fancied I was their intimate acquaintance, Jack Burgoyne; and though they soon found out the mistake, the error led to an invitation to dinner, a delightful evening, and, alas! that I should own, a variety of consequences, some of which proved less delightful. Now, however, fortune is in a more amiable mood; she will have it that I resemble a prince. It is a project which I neither aid nor abet; but I am not childish enough to refuse the *rôle* any more than I should spoil the Christmas revelries of a country-house by declining a part in a tableau, or in private theatricals. I say, in the one case as in the other, 'Here is Potts! make of him what you will. Never is he happier than by affording pleasure to his friends.' To what end, I would ask, should I rob that old lady upstairs at No. 12, evidently a widow, and with not too many enjoyments to solace her old age—why should I rob her of what she herself calls the proudest episode in her life? Are not, as the moralists tell us, all our joys fleeting? Why, then, object to this one that it may only last for a few days? Let us suppose it only to endure throughout our journey, and the poor old soul will be so happy, never caring for the fatigues of the road, never fretting about the inn-keepers' charges, but delighted to know that his royal highness enjoys himself, and sits over his bottle of Chambertin every evening in the garden, apparently as devoid of care as though he were a bagman."

I cannot say how it may be with others, but, for myself, I have always experienced an immense sense of relief, actual repose, whenever I personated somebody else; I felt as though I had left the man Potts at home to rest and refresh himself, and took an airing as another gentleman; just as I might have spared my own paletot by putting on a friend's coat in a thunderstorm. Now I *did* wish for a little repose, I felt it would be good for me. As to the special part allotted me, I took it just as an obliging actor plays Hamlet or the Cock to convenience the manager. Mrs. Keats likes it, and, I repeat, I do not object to it.

It was evident that the old lady was not going to communicate her secret to her companion, and this was a great source of satisfaction to me. Whatever delusions I threw around Miss Herbert I intended should be lasting. The traits in which I would invest myself to *her* eyes, my personal prowess, coolness in danger, skill in all manly exercises, together with a large range of general gifts and acquirements, I meant to accompany me through all time, and I am a sufficient believer in magnetism to feel assured that by imposing upon *her* I should go no small part of the road to deceiving myself; and that the first step in any gift is to suppose you are eminently suited to it, is a well-known and readily ac-

knowledged maxim. Women grow pretty from looking in the glass; why should not men grow brave from constantly contemplating their own courage?

"Yes, Potts, be a prince, and see how it will agree with you!"

CHAPTER XXI

HOW I PLAY THE PRINCE.

Mrs. Keats came down, and our dinner that day was somewhat formal. I don't think any of us felt quite at ease, and, for my own part, it was a relief to me when the old lady asked my leave to retire after her coffee. "If you should feel lonely, sir, and if Miss Herbert's company would prove agreeable——"

"Yes," I said, languidly, "that young person will find me in the garden." And therewith I gave my orders for a small table under a great weeping-ash, and the usual accompaniment of my after-dinner hours, a cool flask of Chambertin. I had time to drink more than two-thirds of my Burgundy before Miss Herbert appeared. It was not that the hour hung heavily on me, or that I was not in a mood of considerable enjoyment, but, somehow, I was beginning to feel chafed and impatient at her long delay. Could she possibly have remonstrated against the impropriety of being alone with a young man? Had she heard, by any mischance, that impertinent phrase by which I designated her? Had Mrs. Keats herself resented the cool style of my permission by a counter-order? "I wish I knew what detains her!" cried I to myself, just as I heard her step on the gravel, and then saw her coming, in very leisurely fashion, up the walk.

Determined to display an indifference the equal of her own, I waited till she was almost close; and then, rising languidly, I offered her a chair with a superb air of Brummelism, while I listlessly said, "Won't you take a seat?"

It was growing duskish, but I fancied I saw a smile on her lip as she sat down.

"May I offer you a glass of wine or a cigar?" said I, carelessly.

"Neither, thank you," said she, with gravity.

"Almost all women of fashion smoke, nowadays," I resumed. "The Empress of the French smokes this sort of thing here; and the Queen of Bavaria smokes and chews."

She seemed rebuked at this, and said nothing.

"As for myself," said I, "I am nothing without tobacco—positively nothing. I remember one night—it was the fourth sitting of the Congress at Paris, that Sardinian fellow, you know his name, came to me and said—

"'There's that confounded question of the Danubian Provinces coming on to-morrow, and Gortschakoff is the only one who knows anything about it. Where are we to get at anything like information?'

"'When do you want it, count?' said I.

"'To-morrow, by eleven at latest. There must be at least a couple of hours to study it before the Congress meets.'

"'Tell them to bring in ten candles, fifty cigars, and two quires of foolscap,' said I, 'and let no one pass this door till I ring.' At ten minutes to eleven next morning he had in his hands that memoir which Lord C. said embodied the prophetic wisdom of Edmund Burke with the practical statesmanship of the great Commoner. Perhaps you have read it?"

"No, sir."

"Your tastes do not probably incline to affairs of state. If so, only suggest what you'd like to talk on. I am indifferently skilled in most subjects. Are you for the poets? I am ready, from Dante to the Bigelow Papers. Shall it be arts? I know the whole thing from Memmling and his long-nosed saints, to Leech and the Punchists. Make it antiquities, agriculture, trade, dress, the drama, conchology, or cock-fighting—I'm your man; so go in; and don't be afraid that you'll disconcert me."

"I assure you, sir, that my fears would attach far more naturally to my own insufficiency."

"Well," said I, after a pause, "there's something in that. Macaulay used to be afraid of me. Whenever Mrs. Montagu Stanhope asked him to one of her Wednesday dinners, he always declined if I was to be there. You don't seem surprised at that?"

"No, sir," said she, in the same quiet, grave fashion.

"What's the reason, young lady," said I, somewhat sternly, "that you persist in saying 'sir' on every occasion that you address me? The ease of that intercourse that should subsist between us is marred by this Americanism. The pleasant interchange of thought loses the charming feature of equality. How is this?"

"I am not at liberty to say, sir."

"You are not at liberty to say, young

lady?" said I, severely. "You tell me distinctly that your manner towards me is based upon a something which you must not reveal?"

"I am sure, sir, you have too much generosity to press me on a subject of which I cannot, or ought not, to speak."

That fatal Burgundy had got into my brains, while the princely delusion was uppermost; and if I had been submitted to the thumbscrew now, I would have died one of the Orleans family.

"Mademoiselle," said I, grandly, "I have been fortunately, or unfortunately, brought up in a class that never tolerates contradiction. When we ask, we feel that we order."

"Oh, sir, if you but knew the difficulty I am in——"

"Take courage, my dear creature," said I, blending condescension with something warmer. "You will at least be reposing your confidence where it will be worthily bestowed."

"But I have promised—not exactly promised—but Mrs. Keats enjoined me imperatively not to betray what she revealed to me."

"Gracious powers!" cried I, "she has not surely communicated my secret—she has not told you who I am?"

"No, sir, I assure you most solemnly that she has not; but being annoyed by what she remarked as the freedom of my manner towards you at dinner, the readiness with which I replied to your remarks, and what she deemed the want of deference I displayed for them, she took me to task this evening, and, without intending it, even before she knew, dropped certain expressions which showed me that you were one of the highest in rank, though it was your pleasure to travel for the moment in this obscurity and disguise. She quickly perceived the indiscretion she had committed, and said, 'Now, Miss Herbert, that an accident has put you in possession of certain circumstances, which I had neither the will nor the right to reveal, will you do me the inestimable favor to employ this knowledge in such a way as may not compromise me?' I told her, of course, that I would; and having remarked how she occasionally—inadvertently, perhaps,—used 'sir,' in addressing you, I deemed the imitation a safe one, while it as constantly acted as a sort of monitor over myself to repress any relapse into familiarity."

"I am very sorry for all this," said I, taking her hand in mine, and employing my most insinuating of manners towards her. "As it is more than doubtful that I shall ever resume the station that once pertained to me; as, in fact, it may be my fortune to occupy for the rest of life an humble and lowly condition, my ambition would have been to draw towards me in that modest station such sympathies and affections as might attach to one so circumstanced. My plan was to assume an obscure name, seek out some unfrequented spot, and there, with the love of one—one only—solve the great problem, whether happiness is not as much the denizen of the thatched cottage as of the gilded palace. The first requirement of my scheme was that my secret should be in my own keeping. One can steel his own heart against vain regrets and longings; but one cannot secure himself against the influence of those sympathies which come from without, the unwise promptings of zealous followers, the hopes and wishes of those who read your submission as mere apathy."

I paused and sighed; she sighed too, and there was a silence between us.

"Must she not feel very happy and very proud," thought I, "to be sitting there on the same bench with a prince, her hand in his, and he pouring out all his confidence in her ear? I cannot fancy a situation more full of interest."

"After all, sir," said she, calmly, "remember that Mrs. Keats alone knows your secret. *I* have not the vaguest suspicion of it."

"And yet," said I tenderly, "it is to *you* I would confide it; it is in *your* keeping I would wish to leave it; it is from *you* I would ask counsel as to my future.

"Surely, sir, it is not to such inexperience as mine you would address yourself in a difficulty?"

"The plan I would carry out demands none of that crafty argument called 'knowing the world.' All that acquaintance with the by-play of life, its conventionalities and exactions, would be sadly out of place in an Alpine village, or a Tyrolese dorf, where I mean to pitch my tent. Do you not think that your interest might be persuaded to track me so far?"

"Oh, sir, I shall never cease to follow your steps with the deepest anxiety."

"Would it not be possible for me to secure a lease of that sympathy?"

"Can you tell me what o'clock it is, sir?" said she, very gravely.

"Yes," said I, rather put out by so sudden a diversion; "it is a few minutes after nine."

"Pray excuse my leaving you, sir, but Mrs. Keats takes her tea at nine, and will expect me." And, with a very respectful

curtsey, she withdrew, before I could recover my astonishment at this abrupt departure.

"I trust that my royal highness said nothing indiscreet," muttered I to myself; "though, upon my life, this hasty exit would seem to imply it."

CHAPTER XXII.

INCIDENTS OF THE SECOND DAY'S JOURNEY.

We continued our journey the next morning, but it was not without considerable difficulty that I succeeded in maintaining my former place in the cabriolet. That stupid old woman fancied that princes were born to be bored, and suggested accordingly that I should travel inside with her, leaving the macaw and the toy terriers to keep company with Miss Herbert. It was only by insisting on an outside place as a measure of health that I at last prevailed, telling her that Dr. Corvisart was peremptory on two points regarding me. "Let him," said he, "have abundance of fresh air, and never be without some young companion."

And so we were again in our little leathern tent, high up in the fresh breezy atmosphere, above dusty roads, and with a glorious view over that lovely country that forms the approach to the Black Forest. The road was hilly, and the carriage-way a heavy one, but we had six horses who trotted along briskly, shaking their merry bells, and flourishing their scarlet tassels, while the postilions cracked their whips or broke out into occasional bugle performances, principally intended to announce to the passing peasants that we were very great folk, and well able to pay for all the noise we required.

I was not ashamed to confess my enjoyment in thus whirling along at some ten miles the hour, remembering how that great sage, Dr. Johnson, had confessed to a like pleasure, and, animated by the inspiriting air and the lovely landscape, could not help asking Miss Herbert if she did not feel it "very jolly."

She assented with a sort of constrained courtesy that by no means responded to the warmth of my own sensations, and I felt vexed and chafed accordingly.

"Perhaps you prefer traveling inside?" said I, with some pique.

"No, sir."

"Perhaps you dislike traveling altogether?"

"No, sir."

"Perhaps——" But I checked myself—and with a somewhat stiff air, I said, "Would you like a book?"

"If it would not be rude to read, sir, while you——"

"Oh, not at all. Never mind me, I have more than enough to think of. Here are some things by Dumas and Paul Féval, and some guide-book trash." And with that I handed her several volumes, and sank back into my corner in sulky isolation.

Here was a change! Ten minutes ago all nature smiled on me: from the lark in the high heavens to the chirping grasshopper in the tall maize-field, it was one song of joy and gladness. The very clouds as they swept past threw new and varied light over the scene, as though to show fresh effects of beauty on the landscape—the streams went by in circling eddies, like smiles upon a lovely face—and now all was sad and crape-covered! "What has wrought this dreary change?" thought I. "Is it possible that the cold looks of a young woman—good-looking, I grant, but no regular downright beauty after all—can have altered the aspect of the whole world to you? Are you so poor a creature in yourself, Potts, so beggared in your own resources, so barren in all the appliances of thought and reflection, that if your companion, whoever she or he may be, sulk, you must needs reflect the humor? Are you nothing but the mirror that displays what is placed before it?"

I set myself deliberately to scan the profile beside me; her black veil, drawn down on the side farthest from me, formed a sort of back-ground, which displayed her pale features more distinctly. All about the brow and orbit was beautifully regular, but the mouth was, I fancied, severe. There was a slight retraction of the upper lip that seemed to imply over-firmness, and then the chin was deeply indented—"a sign," Lavater says, "of those who have a will of their own." "Potts," thought I, "she'd rule you—that's a nature would speedily master yours. I don't think there's any softness either, any of that yielding gentleness there, that makes the poetry of womanhood; besides, I suspect she's worldly—those sharply-cut nostrils are very worldly! She is, in fact"—and here I unconsciously uttered my thoughts aloud—"she is, in fact, one to say, 'Potts, how much have you got a-year? Let us have it in figures.'"

"So you are still ruminating over the life of that interesting creature," said she,

laying down her book to laugh; "and shall I confess, I lay awake half the night inventing incidents and imagining situations for him."

"For whom?" said I, innocently.

"For Potts, of course. I cannot get him out of my head such as I first fancied he might be, and I see now, by your unconscious allusion to him, that he has his place in your imagination also."

"You mistake, Miss Herbert—at least you very much misapprehend my conception of that character. The Potts family has a high historic tradition. Sir Constantine Potts was cup-bearer to Henry II., and I really see no reason why ridicule should attach to one who may be, most probably, his descendant."

"I'm very sorry, sir, if I should have dared to differ with you; but when I heard the name first, and in connection with two such names as Algernon Sydney, and when I thought by what strange accident did they ever meet in the one person——"

"You are very young, Miss Herbert, and therefore not removed from the category of the teachable," said I, with a grand didactic look. "Let me guard you, therefore, against the levity of chance inferences. What would you say if a person named Potts were to make the offer of his hand? I mean, if he were a man in all respects acceptable, a gentleman captivating in manner and address, agreeable in person, graceful and accomplished—what would you reply to his advances?"

"Really, sir, I am shocked to think of the humble opinion I may be conveying of my sense and judgment, but I'm afraid I should tell him it is impossible I could ever permit myself to be called Mrs. Potts."

"But, in heaven's name, why?—I ask you why?"

"Oh, sir! don't be angry with me; it surely does not deserve such a penalty; at the worst, it is a mere caprice on my part."

"I am not angry, young lady, I am simply provoked; I am annoyed to think that a prejudice so unworthy of you should exercise such a control over your judgment."

"I am quite ashamed, sir, to have been the occasion of so much displeasure to you. I hope and trust you will ascribe it to my ignorance of life in the world."

"If you are dissatisfied with yourself, Miss Herbert, I have no more to say," said I, taking up a book, and pretending to read, while I felt such a disgust with myself, that if I hadn't been strapped up with a leather apron up to my chin, I think I should have thrown myself headlong down and let the wheel pass over me. "What is it, Potts, that is corrupting and destroying the naturally fine and noble nature you are certainly endowed with? Is it this confounded elevation to princely rank? If you were not a royal highness, would you have dared to utter such cruelties as these? Would you, in your most most savage of moods, have presumed to make that pale cheek paler, and forced a tear-drop into that liquid eye? I always used to think that the greatest effort of a man was to keep him on a level with those born above him. I now find it is far harder to stoop than to stand on tip-toe. Such a pain in the back comes of always bending, and it is so difficult to do it gracefully!"

I was positively dying to be what the French call *bon prince*, and yet I didn't know how to set about it. I could not take off one of my decorations—a cross, or a ribbon—for I had none; nor give it, because she, being a woman, couldn't wear it. I couldn't make her one of the court ladies, for there was no court; and yet it was clear something should be done, if one only knew what it was. "I suppose now," said I to myself, "a real R.H. would see his way here at once; the right thing to do, the exact expression to use would occur as naturally to his mind as all this embarrassment presents itself to mine. 'Whenever your head cannot guide you,' says a Spanish proverb, 'ask your heart;' and so I did, and my heart spoke thus: 'Tell her, Potts, who you are, and what; say to her, "Listen, young lady, to the words of truth from one who could tell you far more glibly, far more freely, and far more willingly, a whole bushel of lies. It will sit light on his heart that he deceives the old lady inside, but *you* he cannot, will not deceive. Do not deem the sacrifice a light one; it cost St. George far less to go out dragon-hunting than it costs me to slay this small monster who ever prompts me to feats of fancy."'"

"I am very sorry to be troublesome, sir, but as we change horses here, I will ask you to assist me to alight; the weather looks very threatening, and some drops of rain have already fallen."

These words roused me from my reverie to action, and I got down, not very dexterously either, for I slipped, and made the postilion laugh, and then I helped her, who accomplished the descent so neatly, so gracefully, showing the least portion of such an ankle, and accidentally giving me

such a squeeze of the hand! The next moment she was lost to me, the clanking steps were drawn up, the harsh door banged to, and I was alone—all alone in the world.

Like a sulky eagle, sick of the world, I climbed up to my eyrie. I no longer wished for sunshine or scenery, nay, I was glad to see the postboys put on their overcoats and prepare for a regular down-pour. I liked to think there are some worse off than even Potts. In half an hour *they* will be drenched to the skin, and I'll not feel a drop of it!

The little glass slide at my back was now withdrawn, and Miss Herbert's pale, sweet face appeared at it. She was saying that Mrs. Keats urgently entreated I would come inside, that she was so uneasy at my being exposed to such a storm.

I refused, and was about to enter into an account of my ascent of Mont Blanc, when the slide was closed and my listener lost to me.

"Is it possible, Potts," said I, "that she has detected this turn of yours for the imaginative line, and that she will not encourage it, even tacitly? Has she said, 'There is a young man of genius, gifted marvelously with the richest qualities, and yet such is the exuberance of his fancy that he is positively its slave. Not content to let him walk the earth like other men, she attaches wings to him, and carries him off into the upper air. I will endeavor, however hard the task, to clip his feathers and bring him back to the common haunts of men.' Try it, fair enchantress—try it!"

The rain was now coming down in torrents, and with such swooping gusts of wind, that I was forced to fasten the leather curtain in front of me, and sit in utter darkness, denied even the passing pleasure of seeing the drenched postboys bobbing up and down on the wet saddles. I grew moody and sad. Every blue devil of my acquaintance came to pay his visit to me, and brought a few more of his private friends. I bethought me that I was hourly traveling away further and further from my home; that all this long road must surely be retraced one day or other, though not in a carriage and post, but probably in a one-horse cart, with a mounted gendarme on either side of it, and a string to my two wrists in their bridle hands. I thought of that vulgar herd of mankind so ready to weep over a romance, and yet send the man who acts one to a penal settlement. I thought how I should be described as the artful knave, the accomplished swindler. As if I was the first man who ever took an exaggerated estimate of his own merits! Go into the House of Commons, visit the National Gallery, dine at the bar or a military mess, frequent, in one word, any of the haunts of men, and with what *pièces pour servir à l'histoire* of self-deception will you come back loaded!

The sliding window at my back was again drawn aside, and I heard Miss Herbert's voice:

"If I am not giving you too much trouble, sir, would you kindly see if I have not dropped a bracelet—a small jet bracelet—in the *coupé?*"

"I'm in the dark here, but I'll do my best to find it."

"We are very nearly so too," said she; "and Mrs. Keats is fast asleep, quite unmindful of the thunder."

With some struggling I managed to get down on my knees, and was soon engaged in a very vigorous search. To aid me, I lighted a lucifer match, and by its flickering glare I saw right in front of me that beautiful pale face, enclosed as it were in a frame by the little window. She blushed at the fixedness of my gaze, for I utterly forgot myself in my admiration, and stared as though at a picture. My match went out, and I lit another. Alas! there she was still, and I could not force myself to turn away, but gazed on in rapture.

"I'm sorry to give you this trouble, sir," said she, in some confusion. "Pray never mind it. It will doubtless be found this evening when we arrive."

Another lucifer, and now I pretended to be in most eager pursuit; but somehow my eyes would look up and rest upon her sweet countenance."

"A diamond bracelet, you said?" muttered I, not knowing what I was saying.

"No, sir, mere jet, and of no value whatever, save to myself. I am really distressed at all the inconvenience I have occasioned you. I entreat you to think no more of it."

My match was out and I had not another. "Was ever a man robbed of such ecstasy for a mere pennyworth of stick and a little sulphur? O fortune! is not this downright cruelty?"

As I mumbled my complaints, I searched away with an honest zeal, patting the cushions all over, and poking away into most inscrutable pockets and recesses, while she, in a most beseeching tone, apologized for her request and besought me to forget it.

"Found! found!" cried I, in true delight, as I chanced upon the treasure at my feet.

"Oh, sir, you have made me *so* happy,

and I am so much obliged, and so grateful to you!"

"Not another word, I beseech you," whispered I; "you are actually turning my head with ecstasy. Give me your hand, let me clasp it on your arm, and I am repaid."

"Will you kindly pass it to me, sir, through the window?" said she, timidly.

"Ah!" cried I, in anguish, "your gratitude has been very fleeting."

She muttered something I could not catch, but I heard the rustle of her sleeve against the window-frame, and dark as it was, pitch-dark, I knew her hand was close to me. Opening the bracelet, I passed it round her wrist as reverently as though it were the arm of a queen of Spain, one touch of whom is high-treason. I trembled so, that it was some seconds before I could make the clasp meet. This done, I felt she was withdrawing her hand, when, with something like that headlong impulse by which men set their lives on one chance, I seized the fingers in my grasp, and implanted two rapturous kisses on them. She snatched her hand hastily away, closed the window with a sharp bang, and I was alone once more in my darkness, but in such a flutter of blissful delight that even the last reproving gesture could scarcely pain me. It mattered little to me that day that the lightning felled a great pine and threw it across the road, that the torrents were so swollen that we only could pass them with crowds of peasants around the carriage with ropes and poles to secure it, that four oxen were harnessed in front of our leaders to enable us to meet the hurricane, or that the postboys were paid treble their usual fare for all their perils to life and limb. I cared for none of these. Enough for me that, on this day, I can say with Schiller,

> "Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück,
> Ich habe gelebt und geliebt!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

JEALOUSY UNSUPPORTED BY COURAGE.

We arrived at a small inn on the borders of the Titi-see at nightfall; and though the rain continued to come down unceasingly, and huge masses of cloud hung half way down the mountain, I could see that the spot was highly picturesque and romantic. Before I could descend from my lofty eminence, so strapped and buttoned and buckled up was I, the ladies had time to get out and reach their rooms. When I asked to be shown mine, the landlord, in a very free-and-easy tone, told me that there was nothing for me but a double-bedded room, which I must share with another traveler. I scouted this proposition at once with a degree of force and, indeed, of violence, that I fancied must prove irresistible; but the stupid German, armed with native impassiveness, simply said, "Take it or leave it, it's nothing to me," and left me to look after his business. I stormed and fumed. I asked the chambermaid if she knew who I was, and sent for the hausknecht to tell him that all Europe should ring with this indignity. I more than hinted that the landlord had sealed his own doom, and that his miserable cabaret had seen its last days of prosperity.

I asked next, where was the Jew pedlar? I felt certain he was a fellow with pencil-cases and pipe-heads, who owned the other half of the territory. Could he not be bought up? He would surely sleep in the cow-house, if it were too wet to go up a tree!

François came to inform me that he was out fishing; that he fished all day, and only came home after dark; his man had told him so much.

"His man? Why, has he a servant?" asked I.

"He's not exactly like a servant, sir; but a sort of peasant with a green jacket and a tall hat and leather gaiters, like a Tyrolese."

"Strolling actors, I'll be sworn," muttered I; "fellows taking a week's holiday on their way to a new engagement. How long have they been here?"

"Came on Monday last in the diligence, and are to remain till the twentieth; two florins a-day they give for everything."

"What nation are they?"

"Germans, sir, regular Germans; never a pipe out of their mouths, master and man. I learned all this from his servant, for they have put up a bed for me in his room."

A sudden thought now struck me: "Why should not François give up his bed to this stranger, and occupy the one in my room?" This arrangement would suit *me* better, and it ought to be all the same to Hamlet or Goetz, or whatever he was. "Just lounge about the door, François," said I, "till he comes back; and when you see him, open the thing to him, civilly, of course; and if a crown piece, or even two, will help the negotiation, slip it slyly into his hand. You understand?"

François winked like a man who had corrupted custom-house officers in his time,

and even bribed bigger functionaries at a pinch.

"If he's in trade, you know, François, just hint that if he sends in his pack in the course of the evening, the ladies might possibly take a fancy to something."

Another wink.

"And throw out—vaguely, of course, very vaguely—that we are swells, but in strict *incog.*"

A great scoundrel was François; he was a Swiss, and could cheat any one, and, like a regular rogue, never happier than when you gave him a mission of deceit or duplicity. In a word, when I gave him his instructions, I regarded the negotiation as though it were completed, and now addressed myself to the task of looking after our supper, which, with national obstinacy, the landlord declared could not be ready before nine o'clock. As usual, Mrs. Keats had gone to bed immediately on arriving; but when sending me a "good night" by her maid, she added, "that whenever supper was served, Miss Herbert would come down."

We had no sitting-room save the common room of the inn, a long, low-ceilinged, dreary chamber, with a huge green-tile stove in one corner, and down the center a great oak table, which might have served about forty guests. At one end of this three covers were laid for us, the napkins enclosed in bone circlets, and the salt in great leaden receptacles—like big ink bottles—a very ancient brass lamp giving its dim radiance over all. It was wearisome to sit down on the straight-backed wooden chairs, and not less irksome to walk on the gritty, sanded floor, and so I lounged in one of the windows and watched the rain. As I looked I saw the figure of a man with a fishing-basket and rod on his shoulder approaching the house. I guessed at once it was our stranger, and, opening the window a few inches, I listened to hear the dialogue between him and François. The window was enclosed in the same porch as the door, so that I could hear a good deal of what passed. François accosted him familiarly, questioned him as to his sport, and the size of the fish he had taken. I could not hear the reply, but I remarked that the stranger emptied his basket, and was dispatching the contents in different directions; some were for the curé, and some for the postmaster, some for the brigadier of the gendarmerie, and one large trout for the miller's daughter.

"A good-looking wench, I'll be sworn," said François, as he heard the message delivered.

Again the stranger said something, and I thought, from the tone, angrily, and François responded; and then I saw them walk apart for a few seconds, during which François seemed to have all the talk to himself—a good omen, as it appeared to me, of success, and a sure warranty that the treaty was signed. François, however, did not come to report progress, and so I closed the window and sat down.

"So you have got company to-night, Master Ludwig?" said the stranger, as he entered, followed by the host, who speedily seemed to whisper that one of the arrivals was then before him. The stranger bowed stiffly, but courteously to me, which I returned not less haughtily; and I now saw that he was a man about thirty-five, but much freckled, with a light-brown beard and mustache. On the whole, a good-looking fellow, with a very upright carriage, and something of a cavalry soldier in the swing of his gait.

"Would you like it at once, Herr Graf?" said the host, obsequiously.

"Oh, he's a count, is he?" said I, with a sneer to myself. "These countships go a short way with *me*."

"You had better consult your other guests; *I* am ready when *they* are," said the stranger.

Now, though the speech was polite, and even considerate, I lost sight of the courtesy in thinking that it implied we were about to sup in common, and that the third cover was meant for him.

"I say, landlord," said I, "you don't intend to tell me that you have no private sitting-room, but that ladies of condition must needs come down and sup here with"—I was going to say, "heaven knows who;" but I halted and said—"with the general company?"

"That, or nothing!" was the sturdy response. "The guests in this house eat here, or don't eat at all; eh, Herr Graf?"

"Well, so far as my experience goes, I can corroborate you," said the stranger, laughing. "Though, you may remember, I have often counseled you to make some change."

"That you have; but I don't want to be better than my father and my grandfather; and the Archduke Charles stopped here in *their* time, and never quarreled with his treatment."

I told the landlord to apprise the young lady whenever supper was ready, and I walked to a distant part of the room and sat down.

In about two minutes after Miss Herbert appeared, and the supper was served at

once. I had not met her since the incident of the bracelet, and I was shocked to see how cold she was in her manner, and how resolute in repelling the most harmless familiarity towards her.

I wanted to explain to her that it was through no fault of mine we were to have the company of that odious stranger, that it was one of the disagreeables of these wayside hostels, and to be borne with patience, and that though he was a stage-player, or a sergeant of dragoons, he was reasonably well-bred and quiet. I did contrive to mumble out some of this explanation, but, instead of attending to it, I saw her eyes following the stranger, who had just draped a large riding-cloak over a clothes-horse behind her chair, to serve as a screen. Thanks are all very well, but I'm by no means certain that gratitude requires such a sweet glance as that, not to mention that I saw the expression in her eyes for the first time.

I thought the soup would choke me. I almost hoped it might. Othello was a mild case of jealousy compared to me, and I felt that strangling would not half glut my vengeance. And how they talked!—he complimenting her on her accent, and she telling him how her first governess was a Hanoverian from Celle, where they are all such purists. There was nothing they did not discuss in those detestable gutturals, and as glibly as if it had been a language meet for human lips. I could not eat a mouthful, but I drank and watched them. The fellow was not long in betraying himself: he was soon deep in the drama. He knew every play of Schiller by heart, and quoted the Wallenstein, the Robbers, Don Carlos, and Maria Stuart at will; so, too, was he familiar with Goethe and Lessing. He had all the swinging intonation of the boards, and declaimed so very professionally that, as he concluded a passage, I cried out, without knowing it—

"Take that for your benefit—it's the best you have given yet."

Oh, Lord, how they laughed! She covered up her face and smothered it; but he lay back, and holding the table with both hands, he positively shouted and screamed aloud. I would have given ten years of life for the courage to have thrown my glass of wine in his face; but it was no use, nature had been a niggard to me in that quarter, and I had to sit and hear it—exactly so, sit and hear it—while they made twenty attempts to recover their gravity and behave like ladies and gentlemen, and when, no sooner would they look towards me, than off they were again as bad as before.

I revolved a dozen cutting sarcasms, all beginning with, "Whenever I feel assured that you have sufficiently regained the customary calm of good society," but the dessert was served ere I could complete the sentence; and now they were deep in the lyric poets, Uhland, and Körner, and Freiligrath, and the rest of them. As I listened to their enthusiasm, I wondered why people never went into raptures over a cold in the head. But it was not to end here: there was an old harpsichord in the room, and this he opened and set to work on in that fearful two-handed fashion your German alone understands. The poor old crippled instrument shook on its three legs, while the fourth fell clean off, and the loose wires jangled and jarred like knives in a tray; but he only sang the louder, and her ecstasies grew all the greater too.

Heaven reward you, dear old Mrs. Keats, when you sent word down that you couldn't sleep a wink, and begging them to "send that noisy band something and let them go away;" and then Miss Herbert wished him a sweet good-night, and he accompanied her to the door, and then there was more good-night, and I believe I had a short fit, but when I came to myself he was sitting smoking his cigar opposite me.

"You are no relative, no connection of the young lady who has just left the room?" said he to me with a grave manner, so significant of something under it, that I replied hastily, "None—none whatever."

"Was that servant who spoke to me in the porch, as I came in this evening, yours?"

"Yes." This I said more boldly, as I suspected he was coming to the question François had opened.

"He mentioned to me," said he, slowly, and puffing his cigar at easy intervals, "that you desire your servant should sleep in the same room with you. I am always happy to meet the wishes of courteous fellow-travelers, and so I have ordered my servant to give you *his* bed; he will sleep upstairs in what was intended for *you*. Good-night." And with an insolent nod he lounged out of the room and left me.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY CANDOR AS AN AUTOBIOGRAPHER.

My reader is sufficiently acquainted with me by this time to know that there is one quality in me on which he can always count with safety—my candor! There may be braver men and more in-

genious men; there may be, I will not dispute it, persons more gifted with oratorical powers, better linguists, better mathematicians, and with higher acquirements in art; but I take my stand upon candor, and say, there never lived the man, ancient or modern, who presented a more open and undisguised section of himself than I have done, am doing, and hope to do to the end. And what, I would ask you, is the reason why we have hitherto made so little progress in that greatest of all sciences—the knowledge of human nature? Is it not because we are always engaged in speculating on what goes on in the hearts of others, guessing, as it were, what people are doing next door, instead of honestly recording what takes place in their own house?

You think this same candor is a small quality. Well, show me one thoroughly honest autobiography. Of all the men who have written their own memoirs, it is fair to presume that some may have lacked personal courage; some been deficient in truthfulness; some forgetful of early friendships, and so on. Yet where will you find me one, I only ask one, who declares, "I was a coward. I never could speak the truth. I was by nature ungrateful?"

Now, it would be exactly through such confessions as these our knowledge of humanity would be advanced. The ship that makes her voyage without the loss of a spar or a rope, teaches little; but there is a whole world of information in the log of the vessel with a great hole in her, all her masts carried away, the captain invariably drunk, and the crew mutinous. Then, we hear of energy and daring and ready-wittedness, marvelous resource, and indomitable perseverance. Then, we come to estimate a variety of qualities that are only evoked by danger. Just as some gallant skipper might say, "I saw that we couldn't weather the point, and so I dropped anchor in thirty fathoms, and determined to trust all to my cables;" or, "I perceived that we were settling down, so I crowded all sail on, resolved to beach her." In the same spirit I would like to read in some personal memoir, "Knowing that I could not rely on my courage; feeling that, if pressed hard, I should certainly have told a lie——" Oh, if we only could get honesty like this! If some great statesman, some grand foreground figure of his age, would sit down to give his trials as they really occurred, we should learn more of life from one such volume than we glean from all the mock memoirs we have been reading for centuries!

It is the special pleading of these records that makes them so valueless; the writer always is bent on making out his case. It is the eternal representation of that spectacle said to be so pleasing to the gods—the good man struggling with adversity. But what we want to see is the weak man, the frail man, the man who has to fight adversity with an old rusty musket and a flint lock, instead of an Enfield rifle, loading at the breech!

I'd not give a rush to see Blondin cross the Falls of Niagara on a tight-rope; but I'd cross the Atlantic to see, say the Lord Mayor, or the Master of the Rolls, try it.

Now, much-respected reader, do not for a moment suppose that I have, even in my most vainglorious raptures, ever imagined that I was here in these records supplying the void I have pointed out. Remember that I have expressly told you, such confessions, to be valuable, ought to come from a great man. Painful as the avowal is, I am not a great man! Elements of greatness I have in me, it is true; but there are wants, deficiencies, small little details, many of them—rivets and bolts, as it were—without which the machinery can't work; and I know this, and I feel it.

This digression has all grown out of my unwillingness to mention—what mention I must—that I passed my night at the little inn on the table where we supped. I had not courage to assert the right to my bed in the count's room, and so I wrapped myself in my cloak, and with my carpet-bag for a pillow, tried to sleep. It was no use—the most elastic spring-mattress and a down cushion would have failed that night to lull me! I was outraged beyond endurance: *she* had slighted, *he* had insulted me! Such a provocation as he gave me could have but one expiation. He could not, by any pretext, refuse me satisfaction. But was I as ready to ask it? Was it so very certain that I would insist upon this reparation? He was certain to wound, he might kill me! I believe I cried over that thought. To be cut off in the bud of one's youth, in the very springtime of one's enjoyment—I could not say of one's utility—to go down unnoticed to the grave, never appreciated, never understood, with vulgar and mistaken judgments upon one's character and motives! I thought my heart would burst with the affliction of such a picture, and I said, "No, Potts, live—and reply to such would-be slanderers

by the exercise of the qualities of your great nature." Numberless beautiful little episodes came thronging to my memory of good men, men whose personal gallantry had won them a world-wide renown, refusing to fight a duel. "We are to storm the citadel to-morrow, colonel," said one; "let us see which of us will be first up the breach." How I loved that fellow for his speech, and I tortured my mind how, as there was no citadel to be carried by assault, I could apply its wisdom to my own case. What if I were to say, "Count, the world is before us—a world full of trials and troubles. With the common fortune of humanity, we are certain each of us to have our share. What if we meet on this spot, say ten years hence, and see who has best acquitted himself in the conflict?" I wonder what he would say. The Germans are a strange, imaginative, dreamy sort of folk. Is it not likely that he would be struck by a notion so undeniably original? Is it not probable that he would seize my hand with rapture, and say, "Ja! I agree"? Still it is possible that he might not; he might be one of those vulgar, matter-of-fact creatures who will regard nothing through the tinted glass of fancy; he might ridicule the project, and tell it at breakfast as a joke. I felt almost smothered as this notion crossed me.

I next bethought me of the privileges of my rank. Could I, as an R. H., accept the vulgar hazards of a personal encounter? Would not such conduct be derogatory in one to whom great destinies might be one day committed? Not that I lent myself, be it remarked, to the delusion of being a prince; but that I felt, if the line of conduct would be objectionable to men in my rank and condition, it inevitably followed that it must be bad. What I could neither do as the descendant of St. Louis, or the son of Peter Potts, must needs be wrong. These were the grievous meditations of that long, long night; and, though I arose from the hard table, weary, and with aching bones, I blessed the pinkish-grey light that ushered in the day. I had scarcely completed a very rapid toilet, when François came with a message from Mrs. Keats, "hoping I had rested well, and begging to know at what hour it was my pleasure to continue the journey." There was an evident astonishment in the fellow's face at the embassy with which he was charged; and though he delivered the message with reasonable propriety, there was a certain something in his look that said, "What delusion is this you have thrown around the old lady?"

"Say that I am ready, François; that I am even impatient to be off, and the sooner we start the better."

This I uttered with all my heart; for I was eager to get away before the odious German should be stirring, and could not subdue my anxiety to avoid meeting him again. There was every reason to expect that we should get off unnoticed, and I hastened out myself to order the horses and stimulate the postilions to greater activity. This was no labor of love, I promise you! The sluggardly inertness of that people passes all belief; entreaties, objurgations, curses, even bribes could not move them. They never admitted such a possibility as haste, and stumped about in their wooden shoes or iron-bound boots, searching for articles of horse-gear under bundles of hay or stacks of firewood, as though it was the very first time in their lives that post-horses had ever been required in that locality. "Make a great people out of such materials as these!" muttered I; "what rubbish to imagine it! How, with such intolerable apathy are they to be moved? Where everything proceeds at the same regulated slowness, how can justice ever overtake crime? When can truth come up with falsehood? Whichever starts first here, must inevitably win. To urge the creatures on by example, I assisted with my own hands to put on the harness; not, I will own, with much advantage to speed, for I put the collar on upside down, and, in revenge for the indignity, the beast planted one of his feet upon me, and almost drove the cock of his shoe through my instep. Almost mad with pain and passion, I limped away into the garden, and sat down in a damp summer-house. A sleepless night, a lazy hostler, and a bruised foot, are, after all, not stunning calamities; but there are moments when our jarred nerves jangle at the slightest touch, and even the most trivial inconveniences grow to the size of afflictions.

"We began to fear you were lost, sir," said François, breaking in upon my gloomy reverie, I cannot say how long after. "The horses have been at the door this half-hour, and all the house searching after you."

I did not deign a reply, but followed him, as he led me by a short path to the house. Mrs. Keats and Miss Herbert had taken their places inside the carriage, and, to my ineffable disgust, there was the German chatting with them at the door, and actually presenting a bouquet the landlord had just culled for her. Unable to confront the fellow with that contemptuous

indifference which I knew with a little time and preparation I could summon to my aid, I scaled up to my leathern attic and let down the blinds.

"Do you mean," said I, through a small slit in my curtain—"do you mean to sit smoking there all day? Will you never drive on?" And now with a crash of bolts and a jarring of cordage, like what announced the launch of a small ship, the heavy conveniency lurched, surged, and, after two or three convulsive bounds, lumbered along, and we started on our day's journey. As we bumped along, I remembered that I had never wished the ladies a "good morning," nor addressed them in any way; so completely had my selfish preoccupation immersed me in my own annoyances, that I actually forgot the commonest attentions of every-day life. I was pained by this rudeness on my part, and waited with impatience for our first change of horses to repair my omission. Before, however, we had gone a couple of miles, the little window at my back was opened, and I heard the old lady's voice, asking if I had ever chanced upon a more comfortable country inn, or with better beds?

"Not bad—not bad," said I, peevishly. "I had such a mass of letters to write that I got little sleep. In fact, I scarcely could say I took any rest."

While the old lady expressed her regretful condolences at this, I saw that Miss Herbert pinched her lips together as if to avoid a laugh, and the bitter thought crossed me, "She knows it all!"

"I am easily put out, besides," said I. "That is, at certain times I am easily irritated, and a vulgar German fellow who supped with us last night so ruffled my temper, that I assure you he continued to go through my head till morning."

"Oh, don't call him vulgar!" broke in Miss Herbert; "surely there could be nothing more quiet or unpretending than his manners."

"If I were to hunt for an epithet for a month," retorted I; "a more suitable one would never occur to me. The fellow was evidently an actor of some kind—perhaps a rope-dancer."

She burst in with an exclamation, but at the same time Mrs. Keats interposed, and though her words were perfectly inaudible to me, I had no difficulty in gathering their import, and saw that "the young person" was undergoing a pretty smart lecture for her presumption in daring to differ in opinion with my royal highness. I suppose it was very ignoble of me, but I was delighted at it. I was right glad that the old woman administered that sharp castigation, and I burned even with impatience to throw in a shell myself and increase the discomfiture. Mrs. Keats finished her gallop at last, and I took up the running.

"You were fortunate, madam," said I, "in the indisposition that confined you to your room, and which rescued you from the underbred presumption of this man's manners. I have traveled much, I have mixed largely, I may say, with every rank and condition, and in every country of Europe, so that I am not pronouncing the opinion of one totally inadequate to form a judgment——"

"Certainly not, sir. Listen to that, young lady," muttered she, in a sort of under-growl.

"In fact," resumed I, "it is one of my especial amusements to observe and note the forms of civilization implied by mere conventional habits. If, from circumstances not necessary to particularize, certain advantages have favored this pursuit——"

When I had reached thus far in my very pompous preface the clatter of a horse coming up at full speed arrested my attention, and at the very moment the German himself, the identical subject of our talk, dashed up to the carriage window, and with a few polite words handed in a small volume to Miss Herbert, which it seems he had promised to give her, but could not accomplish before, in consequence of the abrupt haste of our departure. The explanation did not occupy an entire minute, and he was gone and out of sight at once. And now the little window was closed, and I could distinctly hear that Mrs. Keats was engaged in one of those salutary exercises by which age communicates its experiences to youth. I wished I could have opened a little chink to listen to it, but I could not do so undetected, so I had to console myself by imagining all the shrewd and disagreeable remarks she must have made. Morals has its rhubarb as well as medicine, wholesome, doubtless, when down, but marvelously nauseous and very hard to swallow, and I felt that the young person was getting a full dose; indeed, I could catch two very significant words, which came and came again in the allocution, and the very utterance of which added to their sharpness: "levity," "encouragement." There they were again!

"Lay it on, old lady," muttered I; "your precepts are sound; never was there a case more meet for their application. Never mind a little pain, either—one must touch the quick to make the cautery effec-

tual. She will be all the better for the lesson and she has well earned it!"

Oh, Potts! Potts! was not this very hard-hearted and ungenerous? Why should the sorrow of that young creature have been a pleasure to you? Is it possible that the mean sentiment of revenge has had any share in this? Are you angry with her that she liked that man's conversation and turned to *him* in preference to *you?* You surely cannot be actuated by a motive so base as this? Is it for herself, for her own advantage, her preservation, that you are thinking all this time? Of course it is. And there, now, I think I hear her sob. Yes, she is crying; the old lady has really come to the quick, and I believe is not going to stop there.

"Well," thought I, "old ladies are an excellent invention; none of these cutting severities could be done but for them. And they have a patient persistence in this surgery quite wonderful, for, when they have flayed the patient all over, they sprinkle on salt as carefully as a pastry-cook frosting a plum-cake."

At last, I did begin to wish it was over. She surely must have addressed herself to every phase of the question in an hour and a half, and yet I could hear her still grinding, grinding on, as though the efficacy of her precepts, like a homœopathic medicine, were to be increased by trituration. Fortunately, we had to halt for fresh horses, and so I got down to chat with them at the carriage door, and interrupt the lecture. Little was I prepared for the reddened eyes and quivering lips of that poor girl, as she drank off the glass of water she begged me to fetch her, but still less for the few words she contrived to whisper in my ear as I took the glass from her hands.

"I hope you have made me miserable enough *now.*"

And with this the window was banged to, and away we went.

CHAPTER XXV.

I MAINTAIN A DIGNIFIED RESERVE.

I WAS so hurt by the last words of Miss Herbert to me, that I maintained throughout the entire day what I meant to be a "dignified reserve," but what I half suspect bore stronger resemblance to a deep sulk. My station had its privileges, and I resolved to take the benefit of them. I dined alone. Yes, on that day I did fall back upon the eminence of my condition, and proudly intimated that I desired solitude. I was delighted to see the dismay this declaration caused. Old Mrs. Keats was speechless with terror. I was looking at her through a chink in the door when Miss Herbert gave my message, and I thought she would have fainted.

"What were his precise words? Give them to me exactly as he uttered them," said she, tremulously, "for there are persons whose intimations are half commands."

"I can scarcely repeat them, madam," said the other, "but their purport was, that we were not to expect him at dinner, that he had ordered it to be served in his own room, and at his own hour."

"And this is very probably all your doing," said the old lady with indignation. "Unaccustomed to any levity of behavior, brought up in a rank where familiarities are never practiced, he has been shocked by your conduct with that stranger. Yes, Miss Herbert, I say shocked, because, however harmless in intention, such freedoms are utterly unknown in—in certain circles."

"I am sure, madam," replied she, with a certain amount of spirit, "that you are laboring under a very grave misapprehension. There was no familiarity, no freedom. We talked as I imagine people usually talk when they sit at the same table. Mr. —— I scarcely know his name ——"

"Nor is it necessary," said the old woman, tartly; "though, if you had, probably this unfortunate incident might not have occurred. Sit down there, however, and write a few lines in my name, hoping that his indisposition may be very slight, and begging to know if he desire to remain here to-morrow and take some repose."

I waited till I saw Miss Herbert open her writing-desk, and then I hastened off to my room to reflect over my answer to her note. Now that the suggestion was made to me, I was pleased with the notion of passing an entire day where we were. The place was Schaffhausen—the famous fall of the Rhine—not very much as a cataract, but picturesque withal; pleasant chestnut woods to ramble about, and a nice old inn in a wild old wilderness of a garden that sloped down to the very river.

Strange perversity is it not; but how naturally one likes everything to have some feature or other out of keeping with its intrinsic purport. An inn like an old *château,* a chief-justice that could ride a steeple-chase, a bishop that sings Moore's

Melodies, have an immense attraction for me. They seem all, as it were, to say, "Don't fancy life is a mere four-roomed house with a door in the middle. Don't imagine that all is humdrum, and routine, and regular. Notwithstanding his wig and stern black eyebrows, there is a touch of romance in that old chancellor's heart that you could'nt beat out of it with his great mace; and his grace the primate there has not forgotten what made the poetry of his life in days before he ever dreamed of charges or triennial visitations."

By these reflections I mean to convey that I am very fond of an inn that does not look like an inn, but resembles a faded old country-house, or a deserted convent, or a disabled mill. This Schaffhausen Gasthaus looked like all three. It was the sort of place one might come to in a long vacation, to live simply and to go early to bed, take monotony as a tonic, and fancying unbroken quiet to be better than quinine.

"Ah!" thought I, "if it had not been for that confounded German, what a paradise might not this have been to me! Down there in that garden, with the din of the waterfall around us, walking under the old cherry-trees, brushing our way through tangled sweetbriers, and arbutus, and laburnum, what delicious nonsense might I not have poured into her ear. Ay! and not unwillingly had she heard it. That something within that never deceives, that little crimson heart within the rose of conscience tells me that she liked me, that she was attracted by what, if it were not for shame, I would call the irresistible attractions of my nature; and now this creature of braten and beetroot has spoiled all, jarred the instrument and unstrung the chords that might have yielded me such sweet music."

In thinking over the inadequacy of all human institutions, I have often been struck by the fact that while the law gives the weak man a certain measure of protection against the superior physical strength of the powerful ruffian in the street, it affords none against the assaults of the intellectual bully at a dinner party. *He* may maltreat you at his pleasure, batter you with his arguments, kick you with inferences, and knock you down with conclusions, and no help for it all!

"Ah, here comes François with the note." I wrote one line in pencil for answer: "I am sensibly touched by your consideration, and will pass to-morrow here." I signed this with a P., which might mean Prince, Potts, or Pottinger. My reply despatched, I began to think how I could improve the opportunity. "I will bring her to book," thought I; "I will have an explanation." I always loved that sort of thing—there is an almost certainty of emotion; now emotion begets tears; tears, tenderness; tenderness, consolation; and when you reach consolation, you are, so to say, a tenant in possession; your title may be disputable, your lease invalid, still you are there, on the property, and it will take time at least to turn you out. "After all," thought I, "that rude German has but troubled the water for a moment, the pure well of her affections will by this time have regained its calm still surface, and I shall see my image there as before."

My meditations were interrupted, perhaps not unpleasantly. It was the waiter with my dinner. I am not unsocial—I am eminently the reverse—I may say, like most men who feel themselves conversationally gifted, I like company, I see that my gifts have in such gatherings their natural ascendency—and yet, with all this, I have always felt that to dine splendidly, all alone, was a very grand thing. Mind, I don't say it is pleasant, or jolly, or social; but simply that it is grand to see all that table equipage of crystal and silver spread out for *you* alone: to know that the business of that gorgeous candelabrum is to light *you;* that the two decorous men in black—archdeacons they might be, from the quiet dignity of their manners—are there to wait upon *you;* that the whole sacrifice, from the caviare to the cheese, was a hecatomb to *your* greatness. I repeat, these are all grand and imposing considerations, and there have been times when I have enjoyed these *Lucullus cum Lucullo* festivals more than convivial assemblages. This day was one of these: I lingered over my dinner in delightful dalliance. I partook of nearly every dish, but, with a supreme refinement, ate little of any, as though to imply, "I am accustomed to a very different *cuisine* from this; it is not thus that I fare habitually." And yet I was blandly forgiving, accepting even such humble efforts to please as if they had been successes. The Clicquot was good, and I drank no other wine, though various flasks with tempting titles stood around me.

Dinner over and coffee served. I asked the waiter what resources the place possessed in the way of amusement. He looked blank, and even distressed, at my question: he had all his life imagined that

the Falls sufficed for everything; he had seen the tide of travel halt there to view them for years. Since he was a boy, he had never ceased to witness the yearly recurring round of tourists who came to see, and sketch, and scribble about them, and so he faintly muttered out a remonstrance—

"Monsieur has not yet visited the Falls."

"The Falls! why I see them from this, and if I open the window I am stunned with their uproar."

I was really sorry at the pain my hasty speech gave him, for he looked suddenly faint and ill, and after a moment gasped out—

"But monsieur is surely not going away without a visit to the cataract? the guide-books give two hours as the very shortest time to see it effectually."

"I only gave ten minutes to Niagara, my good friend," said I, "and would not have spared even that, but that I wanted to hold a sprained ankle under the fall."

He staggered, and had to hold a chair to support himself.

"There is, besides, the Laufen Schloss——"

"As to castles," broke I in, "I have no need to leave my own to see all that mediæval architecture can boast. No, no," sighed I out, "if I am to have new sensations, they must come through some other channel than sight. Have you no theater?"

"No, sir. None."

"No concert-rooms, no music garden?"

"None, sir."

"Not even a circus?" said I, peevishly.

"There was, sir, but it was not attended. The strangers all come to see the Falls."

"Confound the Falls! And what became of the circus?"

"Well, they made a bad business of it; got into debt on all sides, for oil, and forage, and printing placards, and so on, and then they beat a sudden retreat one night, and slipped off, all but two, and, indeed, they were about the best of the company; but somehow they lost their way in the forest, and instead of coming up with their companions, found themselves at daybreak at the outside of the town."

"And these two unlucky ones, what were they?"

"One was the chief clown, sir, a German, and the other was a little girl, a Moor they call her; but the cleverest creature to ride or throw somersaults through hoops of the whole of them."

"And how do they live now?"

"Very hardly, I believe, sir; and but for Tintefleck—that's what they call her—they might starve; but she goes about with her guitar through the *cafés* of an evening, and as she has a sweet voice, she picks up a few batzen. But the maire, I hear, won't permit this any longer, and says that, as they have no passport or papers of any kind, they must be sent over the frontier as vagabonds."

"Let that maire be brought before *me*," said I, with a haughty indignation. "Let me tell him in a few brief words what I think of his heartless cruelty——But no, I was forgetting—I am here *incog.* Be careful, my good man, that you do not mention what I have so inadvertently dropped; remember that I am nobody here; I am Number Five and nothing more. Send the unfortunate creatures, however, here, and let me interrogate them. They can be easily found, I suppose?"

"In a moment, sir. They were in the Platz just when I served the pheasant."

"What name does the man bear?"

"I never heard a name for him. Amongst the company he was called Vaterchen, as he was the oldest of them all; and, indeed, they seemed all very fond of him."

"Let Vaterchen and Tintefleck, then, come hither. And bring fresh glasses, waiter."

And I spoke as might an Eastern despot giving his orders for a "nautch;" and, then, waving my hand, motioned the messenger away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

VATERCHEN AND TINTEFLECK.

Had fortune decreed that I should be rich, I believe I would have been the most popular of men. There is such a natural kindness of disposition in me, blended with the most refined sense of discrimination. I love humanity in the aggregate, and, at the same time, with a rare delicacy of sentiment, I can follow through all the tortuous windings of the heart, and actually sympathize in emotions that I never experienced. No rank is too exalted, no lot too humble, for the exercise of my benevolence. I have sat in my arm-chair with a beating, throbbing heart, as I imagined the troubles of a king, and I have drunk my Bordeaux with tears of gratitude as I fancied myself a peasant with only water to slake his thirst.

To a man of highly-organized temperament, the privations themselves are not necessary to eliminate the feeling they would suggest. Coarser natures would require starvation to produce the sense of hunger, nakedness to cause that of cold, and so on; the gifted can be in rags, while enclosed in a wadded dressing-gown; they can go supperless to bed after a meal of oysters and toasted cheese; they can, if they will, be fatally wounded as they sit over their wine, or cast away after shipwreck with their feet on the fender. Great privileges all these; happy is he who has them, happy are they amidst whom he tries to spread the blessings of his inheritance!

Amid the many admirable traits which I recognize in myself—and of which I speak not boastfully, but gratefully, being accidents of my nature as far removed from my own agency as the color of my eyes or the shape of my nose—of these, I say, I know of none more striking than such as fit me to be a patron. I am graceful as a lover, touching as a friend, but I am really great as a protector.

Reveling in such sentiments as these, I stood at my window, looking at the effect of moonlight on the Falls. It seemed to me as though in the grand spectacle before my eyes I beheld a sort of illustration of my own nature, wherein generous emotions could come gushing, foaming, and falling, and yet the source be never exhausted, the flood ever at full. I ought parenthetically to observe that the champagne was excellent, and that I had drunk the third glass of the second bottle to the health of the Widow Clicquot herself. Thus standing and musing, I was startled by a noise behind me, and, turning round, I saw one of the smallest of men in a little red Greek jacket and short yellow breeches, carefully engaged in spreading a small piece of carpet on the floor, a strip like a very diminutive hearth-rug. This done, he gave a little wild exclamation of "Ho!" and cut a somersault in the air, alighting on the flat of his back, which he announced by a like cry of "Ha!" He was up again, however, in an instant, and repeated the performance three times. He was about, as I judged by the arrangement of certain chairs, to proceed to other exercises equally diverting, when I stopped him by asking who he was.

"Your excellency," said he, drawing himself up to his full height of, say four feet, "I am Vaterchen!"

Every one knows what provoking things are certain chance resemblances, how disturbing to the right current of thought, how subverting to the free exercise of reason. Now, this creature before me, in his deeply indented temples, high narrow forehead, aquiline nose, and resolute chin, was marvelously like a certain great field-marshal with whose features, notwithstanding the portraits of him, we are all familiar. It was not of the least use to me that I knew he was not the illustrious general, but simply a mountebank. There were the stern traits, haughty and defiant, and do what I would, the thought of the great man would clash with the capers of the little one. Owing to this impression, it was impossible for me to address him without a certain sense of deference and respect.

"Will you not be seated?" said I, offering him a chair and taking one myself. He accepted with all the quiet ease of good breeding, and smiled courteously as I filled a glass and passed it towards him.

I pressed my hand across my eyes for a few moments while I reflected, and I muttered to myself—

"Oh, Potts, if instead of a tumbler this had already been the hero, what an evening might this be! Lives there that man in Europe so capable of feeling in all its intensity the glorious privilege of such a meeting? Who, like you, would listen to the wisdom distilling from those lips? Who would treasure up every trait of voice, accent, and manner, remembering, not alone every anecdote, but every expression? Who, like you, could have gracefully led the conversation so as to range over the whole wide ocean of that great life, taking in battles, and sieges, and stormings, and congresses, and scenes of all that is most varied and exciting in existence? Would not the record of one such night, drawn by you, have been worth all the cold compilations and bleak biographies that ever were written? You would have presented him as he sat there in front of you." I opened my eyes to paint from the model, and there was the little dog, with his legs straight up on each side of his head and forming a sort of gothic arch over his face.

The wretch had done the feat to amuse me and I almost fainted with horror as I saw it.

"Sit down, sir," said I, in a voice of stern command. "You little know the misery you have caused me."

I refilled his glass, and closed my eyes once more. In my old pharmaceutical experiences I had often made bread pills, and remembered well how, almost invariably, they had been deemed successful. What relief from pain to the agonized sufferer had they not given! What slumber to the sleepless! What appetite, what vigor, what

excitement! Why should not the same treatment apply to morals as to medicine? Why, with faith to aid one, cannot he induce every wished-for mood of mind and thought? The lay figure to support the drapery suffices for the artist, the Venus herself is in his brain. Now, if that little fellow there would neither cut capers nor speak, I ask no more of him. Let him sit firmly as he does now, staring me boldly in the face that way.

"Yes," said I, "lay your hand on the arm of your chair, so, and let the other be clenched thus." And so I placed him. "Never utter a word, but nod to me at rare intervals."

He has since acknowledged that he believed me to be deranged; but as I seemed a harmless case, and he could rely on his activity for escape, he made no objection to my directions—the less, too, that he enjoyed his wine immensely, and was at liberty to drink as he pleased.

"Now," thought I, "one glance, only one, to see that he poses properly."

All right, nothing could be better. His face was turned slightly to one side, giving what the painters call action to the head, and he was perfect. I now resigned myself to the working of the spell, and already I felt its influence over me. Where and with what was I to begin? Numberless questions thronged to my mind. I wanted to know a thousand disputed things, and fully as many that were only disputed by myself. I felt that as such another opportunity would assuredly never present itself twice in my life, the really great use of the occasion would be to make every inquiry subsidiary to my own case—to make all my investigations what the Germans would call "Pottswise." My intensest anxiety was then to ascertain if, like myself, his grace started in life with very grand aspirations.

"Did you feel, for instance, when playing practical jokes on the maids of honor in Dublin, some sixty odd years ago, that you were only, in sportive vein, throwing off so much light ballast to make room for the weightier material that was to steady you in the storm-tossed sea before you? Have you experienced the almost necessity of these little expansions of eccentricity as I have? Was there always in your heart, as a young man, as there is now in mine, a profound contempt for the opinions of your contemporaries? Did you continually find yourself repeating, '*Respice finem!*' Mark where I shall be yet?" There was another investigation which touched me still more closely, but it was long before I could approach it. I saw all the difficulty and delicacy of the inquiry; but, with that same recklessness of consequences which would make me catch at a queen by the back hair if I was drowning, I clutched at this discovery now, and, although trembling at my boldness, asked, "Was your grace ever afraid? I know the impertinence of the question, but if you only guessed how it concerns me, you'd forgive it. Nature has made me many things, but not courageous. Nothing on earth could induce me to risk life; the more I reason about it, the greater grows my repugnance. Now, I would like to hear, is this what anatomists call congenital? Am I likely to grow out of it? Shall I ever be a dare-devil, intrepid, fire-eating sort of creature? How will the change come over me? Shall I feel it coming? Will it come from within, or through external agencies? And when it has arrived, what shall I become? Am I destined to drive the Zouaves into the sea by a bayonet charge of the North Cork Rifles, or shall I only be great in council, and take weekly trips in the *Fairy* to Cowes? I'd like to know this, and begin a course of preparation for my position, as I once knew of a militia captain who hardened himself for a campaign by sleeping every night with his head on the window-stool."

As I opened my eyes I saw the stern features in front of me. I thought the words, "I was never afraid, sir!" rang through my brain till they filled very ventricle with their din.

"Not at Assaye?"

"No, sir."

"Not at the Douro?"

"No, sir."

"Not at Torres Vedras?"

"I tell you again, no, sir!"

Whether I uttered this last with any uncommon degree of vehemence or not, I so frightened Vaterchen that he cut a somersault clean over the chair, and stood grinning at me through the rails at the back of it. I motioned to him to be reseated, while, passing my hand across my brow, I waved away the bright illusions that beset me, and, with a heavy sigh, re-entered the dull world of reality.

"You are a clown," said I, meditatively. "What is a clown?"

He did not answer me in words, but, placing his hands on his knees, stared at me steadfastly, and then, having fixed my attention, his face performed a series of the most fearful contortions I ever beheld. With one horrible spasm he made his mouth appear to stretch from ear to ear; with another, his nose wagged from side to side; with a third, his eyebrows went up and

down alternately, giving the different sides of his face two directly antagonistic expressions. I was shocked and horrified, and called to him to desist.

"And yet," thought I, "there are natures who can delight in these, and see in them matter for mirth and laughter!"

"Old man," said I, gravely, "has it ever occurred to you that in this horrible commixture of expression, wherein grief wars with joy and sadness with levity, you are like one who, with a noble instrument before him, should, instead of sweet sounds of harmony, produce wild, unearthly discords, the jangling bursts of fiend-like voices?"

"The Tintefleck can play indifferently well, your excellency," said he, humbly. "I never had any skill that way myself."

Oh, what a *crassa natura* was here! What a triple wall of dullness surrounds such dark intelligences!

"And where is the Tintefleck? Why is she not here?" asked I, anxious to remove the discussion to a ground of more equality.

"She is without, your excellency. She did not dare to present herself till your excellency had desired, and is waiting in the corridor."

"Let her come in," said I, grandly; and I drew my chair to a distant corner of the room so as to give them a wider area to appear in, while I could, at the same time, assume that attitude of splendid ease and graceful protection I have seen a prince accomplish on the stage at the moment the ballet is about to begin. The door opened, and Vaterchen entered, leading Tintefleck by the hand.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW SOCIAL PREJUDICES.

I WAS quite right, Tintefleck's *entrée* was quite dramatic. She tripped into the room with a short step, nor arrested her run till she came close to me, when, with a deep curtsey, she bent down very low, and then, with a single spring backward, retreated almost to the door again. She was very pretty—dark enough to be a Moor, but with a rich brilliancy of skin never seen amongst that race, for she was a Calabrian; and as she stood there with her arms crossed before her, and one leg firmly advanced, and with the foot—a very pretty foot—well planted, she was like—all the Italian peasants one has seen in the National Gallery for years back. There was the same look, half shy; the same elevation of sentiment in the brow, and the same coarseness of the mouth: plenty of energy, enough and to spare of daring; but no timidity, no gentleness.

"What is she saying?" asked I of the old man, as I overheard a whisper pass between them. "Tell me what she has just said to you."

"It is nothing, your excellency—she is a fool."

"That she may be, but I insist on hearing what it was she said."

He seemed embarrassed and ashamed, and instead of replying to me, turned to address some words of reproach to the girl.

"I am waiting for your answer," said I, peremptorily.

"It is the saucy way she has gotten, your excellency, all from over-flattery; and now that she sees that there is no audience here, none but your excellency, she is impatient to be off again. She'll never do anything for us on the night of a thin house."

"Is this the truth, Tintefleck?" asked I.

With a wild volubility, of which I could not gather a word, but every accent of which indicated passion, if not anger, she poured out something to the other, and then turned as if to leave the room. He interposed quickly, and spoke to her, at first angrily, but at last in a soothing and entreating tone, which seemed gradually to calm her.

"There is more in this than you have told, Vaterchen," said I. "Let me know at once why she is impatient to get away."

"I would leave it to herself to tell your excellency," said he, with much confusion, "but that you could not understand her mountain dialect. The fact is," added he, after a great struggle with himself—"the fact is, she is offended at your calling her 'Tintefleck.' She is satisfied to be so named amongst ourselves, where we all have similar nicknames; but that you, a great personage, high, and rich, and titled, should do so, wounds her deeply. Had you said——"

Here he whispered me in my ear, and, almost inadvertently, I repeated after him, "Catinka."

"*Si, si*, Catinka," said she, while her eyes sparkled with an expression of wildest delight, and at the same instant she bounded forward and kissed my hand twice over.

I was glad to have made my peace, and placing a chair for her at the table, I filled out a glass of wine and presented it. She only shook her head in dissent, and pushed it away.

"She has odd ways in everything," said the old man; "she never eats but bread

and water. It is her notion, that if she were to taste other food, she'd lose her gift of fortune-telling."

"So, then, she reads destiny, too?" said I, in astonishment.

Before I could inquire further, she swept her hands across the strings of her guitar, and broke out into a little peasant song. It was very monotonous, but pleasing. Of course, I knew nothing of the words nor the meaning, but it seemed as though one thought kept ever and anon recurring in the melody, and would continue to rise to the surface, like the air bubbles in a well. Satisfied, apparently, by the evidences of my approval, she had no sooner finished than she began another. This was somewhat more pretentious, and, from what I could gather, represented a parting scene between a lover and his mistress. There was, at least, a certain action in the song which intimated this. The fervent earnestness of the lover, his entreaties, his prayers, and at last his threatenings, were all given with effect, and there was actually good acting in the stolid defiance she opposed to all; she rejected his vows, refused his pledges, scorned his menaces; but when he had gone and left her, when she saw herself alone and desolate, then came out a gush of the most passionate sorrow, all the pent-up misery of a heart that seemed to burst with its weight of agony.

If I was in a measure entranced while she was singing, such was the tension of my nerves as I listened, that I was heartily glad when it was over. As for her, she seemed so overcome by the emotion she had parodied, that she bent her head down, covered her face with her hands, and sobbed twice or thrice convulsively.

I turned towards Vaterchen to ask him some question, I forget what, but the little fellow had made such good use of the decanter beside him, while the music went on, that his cheeks were a bright crimson, and his little round eyes shone like coals of fire.

"This young creature should never have fallen amongst such as you!" said I, indignantly; "she has feeling and tenderness—the powers of expression she wields all evidence a great and gifted nature. She has, so to say, noble qualities."

"Noble, indeed!" croaked out the little wretch, with a voice hoarse from the strong Burgundy.

"She might, with proper culture, adorn a very different sphere," said I, angrily. "Many have climbed the ladder of life with humbler pretensions."

"Ay, and stand on one leg on top of it, playing the tambourine all the time," hiccoughed he in reply.

I did not fancy the way he carried out my figure, but went on with my reflections:

"Some, but they are few, achieve greatness at a bound——"

"That's what she does," broke he in. "Twelve hoops and a drum behind them, at one spring—she comes through like a flying-fish."

I don't know what angry rejoinder was on my lips to this speech, when there came a tap at my door. I arose at once and opened it. It was François, with a polite message from Mrs. Keats, to say how happy it would make her "if I felt well enough to join her and Miss Herbert at tea." For a second or two I knew not what to reply. That I was "well enough," François was sure to report, and in my flushed condition I was, perhaps, the picture of an exaggerated state of convalescence; so, after a moment's hesitation, I muttered out a blundering excuse, on the plea of having a couple of friends with me, "who had chanced to be just passing through the town on their way to Italy."

I did not think François had time to report my answer, when I heard him again at the door. It was, with his mistress's compliments, to say she "would be charmed if I would induce my friends to accompany me."

I had to hold my hand on my side with laughter as I heard this message, so absurd was the proposition, and so ridiculous seemed the notion of it. This, I say, was the first impression made upon my mind; and then, almost as suddenly, there came another and very different one. "What is the mission you have embraced, Potts?" asked I of myself. If it have a butt or an object, is it not to overthrow the mean and unjust prejudices, the miserable class distinctions, that separate the rich from the poor, the great from the humble, the gifted from the ignorant? Have you ever proposed to yourself a nobler conquest than over that vulgar tyranny by which prosperity lords it over humble fortune? Have you imagined a higher triumph than to make the man of purple and fine linen feel happy in the companionship of him in smock-frock and high-lows? Could you ask for a happier occasion to open the campaign than this? Mrs. Keats is an admirable representative of her class; she has all the rigid prejudices of her condition: her sympathies may rise, but they never fall; she can feel for the sorrows of the wellborn, she has no concern for vulgar afflic-

tions. How admirable the opportunity to show her that grace, and genius, and beauty are of all ranks! And Miss Herbert, too, what a test it will be of *her!* If she really have greatness of soul, if there be in her nature a spirit that rises above petty conventionalities and miserable ceremonials, she will take this young creature to her heart like a sister. I think I see them with arms entwined—two lovely flowers on one stalk—the dark crimson rose and the pale hyacinth! Oh, Potts, this would be a nobler victory to achieve than to rend battalions with grape, or ride down squadrons with the crash of cavalry.—"I will come, François," said I. "Tell Mrs. Keats that she may expect us immediately." I took especial care in my dialogue to keep this prying fellow out of the room, and to interpose in every attempt he made to obtain a peep within. In this I perfectly succeeded, and dismissed him, without his being able to report any one circumstance about my two traveling friends.

My next task was to inform them of my intentions on their behalf; nor was this so easy as might be imagined, for Vaterchen had indulged very freely with the wine, and all the mountains of Calabria lay between myself and Tintefleck. With a great exercise of ingenuity, and more of patience, I did at last succeed in making known to the old fellow that a lady of the highest station and her friend were curious to see them. He only caught my meaning after some time, but when he had surmounted the difficulty, as though to show me how thoroughly he understood the request, and how nicely he appreciated its object, he began a series of face contortions of the most dreadful kind, being a sort of programme of what he intended to exhibit to the distinguished company. I repressed this firmly, severely. I explained to him that an artist in all the relations of private life should be ever the gentleman; that the habits of the stage were no more necessary to carry into the world than the costume. I dilated on the fact that John Kemble had been deemed fitting company by the first gentleman of Europe; and that if his manner could have exposed him to a criticism, it was in, perhaps, a slight tendency to an over-reserve, a cold and almost stern dignity. I'm not sure Vaterchen followed me completely, nor understood the anecdotes I introduced about Edmund Kean and Lord Byron, but I now addressed myself pictorially to Tintefleck—pictorially, I say, for words were hopeless. I signified that a *très grande dame* was about to receive her. I arose, with my skirts expanded in both hands, made a reverent curtsey, throwing my head well back, looking every inch a duchess. But, alas for my powers of representation! she burst into a hearty laugh, and had at last to lay her head on Vaterchen's shoulder out of pure exhaustion.

"Explain to her what I have told you, sir, and do not sit grinning at me there, like a baboon," said I, in a severe voice.

I cannot say how he acquitted himself, but I could gather that a very lively altercation ensued, and it seemed to me as though she resolutely refused to subject herself to any further ordeals of what academicians call "a private view." No; she was ready for the ring and the sawdust, and the drolleries of the men with chalk on their faces, but she would not accept high life on any terms. By degrees, and by arguments of his own ingenious devising, however, he did succeed, and at last she arose with a bound, and cried out, "*Eccomi!*"

"Remember," said I to Vaterchen, as we left the room, "I am doing that which few would have the courage to dare. It will depend upon the dignity of your conduct, the grace of your manners, the well-bred ease of your address, to make me feel proud of my intrepidity, or, sad and painful possibility, retire covered with ineffable shame and discomfiture. Do you comprehend me?"

"Perfectly," said he, standing erect, and giving even in his attitude a sort of bail bond for future dignity. "Lead on!"

This was more familiar than he had been yet; but I ascribed it to the tension of nerves strung to a high purpose, and rendering him thus inaccessible to other thoughts than of the enterprise before him.

As I neared the door of Mrs. Keats's apartment, I hesitated as to how I should enter. Ought I to precede my friends, and present them as they followed? Or would it seem more easy and more assured if I were to give my arm to Tintefleck, leaving Vaterchen to bring up the rear? After much deliberation, this appeared to be the better course, seeming to take for granted that, although some peculiarities of costume might ask for explanation later on, I was about to present a very eligible and charming addition to the company.

I am scarcely able to say whether I was or was not reassured by the mode in which she accepted the offer of my arm. At first, the proposition appeared unintelligible, and she looked at me with one of those wide-eyed stares, as though to

say, "What new gymnastic is this? What *tour de force*, of which I never heard before?" and then, with a sort of jerk, she threw my arm up in the air, and made a pirouette under it, of some half-dozen whirls.

Half reprovingly, I shook my head, and offered her my hand. This she understood at once. She recognized such a mode of approach as legitimate and proper, and with an artistic shake of her drapery with the other hand, and a confident smile, she signified she was ready to go "on."

I was once on a time thrown over a horse's head into a slate quarry, a very considerable drop it was, and nearly fatal; on another occasion, I was carried in a small boat over the fall of a salmon weir, and hurried along in the flood for almost three hundred yards: each of these was a situation of excitement and peril, and with considerable confusion as the consequence; and yet I could deliberately recount you every passing phase of my terror, from my first fright down to my complete unconsciousness, with such small traits as would guarantee truthfulness; while, of the scene upon which I now adventured, I preserve nothing beyond the vaguest and most unconnected memory.

I remember my advance into the middle of the room. I have a recollection of a large tea-urn, and beyond it a lady in a turban; another in long ringlets there was. The urn made a noise like a small steamer, and there was a confusion of voices—about what, I cannot tell—that increased the uproar, and we were all standing up and all talking together; and there was what seemed an angry discussion; and then the large turban and the ringlets swept haughtily past me. The turban said, "This is too much, sir!" and ringlets added, "Far too much, sir!" and as they reached the door, there was Vaterchen on his head, with a branch of candles between his feet to light them out, and Tintefleck, screaming with laughter, threw herself into an arm-chair, and clapped a most riotous applause.

I stood a moment almost transfixed, then dashed out of the room, hurried upstairs to my chamber, bolted the door, drew a great clothes-press against it for further security, and then threw myself upon my bed in one of those paroxysms of mad confusion, in which a man cannot say whether he is on the verge of inevitable ruin, or has just been rescued from a dreadful fate. I would not, if even I could, recount all that I suffered that night. There was not a scene of open shame and disgrace that I did not picture to myself as incurring. I was everywhere in the stocks or the pillory. I wore a wooden placard on my breast, inscribed, "Potts, the Impostor." I was running at top speed before hooting and yelling crowds. I was standing with a circle of protecting policemen amidst a mob eager to tear me to pieces. I was sitting on a hard stool while my hair was being cropped *à la* Pentonville, and a grey suit lay ready for me when it was done. But enough of such a dreary record. I believe I cried myself to sleep at last, and so soundly, too, that it was very late in the afternoon ere I awoke. It was the sight of the barricade I had erected at my door gave me a clue to the past, and again I buried my face in my hands and wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENTS.

I could not hear the loud and repeated knockings which were made at my door, as at first waiters, and then the landlord himself, endeavored to gain admittance. At length, a ladder was placed at the window, and a courageous individual, duly armed, appeared at my casement and summoned me to surrender. With what unspeakable relief did I learn that it was not to apprehend or arrest me that all these measures were taken; they were simply the promptings of a graceful benevolence, a sort of rumored intimation having got about that I had taken prussic acid, or was being done to death by charcoal. Imagine a prisoner in a condemned cell suddenly awakened, and hearing that the crowd around him consisted not of the ordinary, the sheriff, Mr. Calcraft and Co., but a deputation of respectable citizens come to offer the representation of their borough or a piece of plate, and then you can have a mild conception of the pleasant revulsion of my feelings. I thanked my public in a short but appropriate address; I assured them, although there was a popular prejudice about doing this sort of thing in November in England, that it was deemed quite unreasonable at other times, and that really, in these days of domestic arsenic and conjugal strychnine, nothing but an unreasonable impatience would make a man self-destructive—suicide arguing that as a man was really so utterly valueless, it was worth nobody's

while to get rid of him. My explanation over, I ordered breakfast.

"Why not dinner?" said the waiter. "It is close on four o'clock."

"No," said I; "the ladies will expect me at dinner."

"The ladies are near Constance by this, or else the roads are worse than we thought them."

"Near Constance! Do you mean to say they have gone?"

"Yes, sir, at daybreak; or, indeed, I might say before daybreak."

"Gone! actually gone!" was all that I could utter.

"They never went to bed last night, sir; the old lady was taken very ill after tea, and all the house running here and there for doctors and remedies, and the young lady, though she bore up so well, they tell me she fainted when she was alone in her own room. In fact, it was a piece of confusion and trouble until they started, and we may say, none of us had a moment's peace till we saw them off."

"And how came it that I was never called?"

"I believe, sir, but I'm not sure, the landlord tried to awake you. At all events, he has a note for you now, for I saw the old lady place it in his hand."

"Fetch it at once," said I; and when he left the room I threw some water over my face, and tried to rally all my faculties to meet the occasion.

When the waiter reappeared with the note, I bade him leave it on the table; I could not venture to read it while he was in the room. At length he went away, and I opened it. These were the contents:

"SIR:—When a person of your rank abuses the privileges of his station, it is supposed that he means to rebuke. Although innocent of any cause for your displeasure, I have preferred to withdraw myself from your notice than incur the chance of so severe a reprimand a second time.

"I am, sir, with unfeigned sorrow and humility, your most devoted follower and servant, MARTHA KEATS.

"To the——de——"

This was the whole of it; not a great deal as correspondence, but matter enough for much thought and much misery. After a long and painful review of my conduct, one startling fact stood prominently forward, which was, that I had done something which, had it been the act of a royal prince, would yet have been unpardonable, but which, if known to emanate from one such as myself, would have been a downright outrage.

I went into the whole case, as a man who detests figures might have gone into a long and complicated account; and just as he would skip small sums, and pay little heed to fractions, I aimed at arriving at some grand solid balance for or against myself.

I felt that, if asked to produce my books, they might run this wise: Potts, on the credit side, a philanthropist, self-denying, generous, and trustful; one eager to do good, thinking no evil of his neighbor, hopeful of everybody, anxious to establish that brotherhood amongst men which, however varied the station, could and ought to subsist, and which needs but the connecting link of one sympathetic existence to establish. On the other side, Potts, I grieve to say, appeared that which Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was said to be.

When I had rallied a bit from the stunning effect of this disagreeable "total," I began to wish that I had somebody to argue the matter out with me. The way I would put my case would be thus: "Has not—from the time of Martius Curtius down to the late Mr. Sadlier, of banking celebrity—the sacrifice of one man for the benefit of his fellows been recognized as the noblest exposition of heroism? Now, although it is much to give up life for the advantage of others, it is far more to surrender one's identity, to abandon that grand capital Ego, which gives a man his self-esteem and suggests his self-preservation. And who, I would ask, does this so thoroughly as the man who everlastingly palms himself upon the world for that which he is not? According to the greatest-happiness principle, this man may be a real boon to humanity. He feeds this one with hope, the other with flattery; he bestows courage on the weak, confidence on the wavering. The rich man can give of his abundance, but it is out of his very poverty this poor fellow has to bestow all. Like the spider, he has to weave his web from his own vitals, and like the same spider he may be swept away by some pretentious affectation of propriety."

While I thus argued, the waiter came in to serve dinner. It looked all appetizing and nice; but I could not touch a morsel. I was sick at heart; Kate Herbert's last look as she quitted the room was ever before me. Those dark grey eyes—which you stupid folk will go on calling blue—have a sort of reproachful power in them

very remarkable. They don't flash out in anger like black eyes, or sparkle in fierceness like hazel; but they emit a sort of steady, fixed, concentrated light, that seems to imply that they have looked thoroughly into you, and come back very sad and very sorry for the inquiry. I thought of the happy days I had passed beside her; I recalled her low and gentle voice, her sweet, half sad smile, and her playful laugh, and I said, "Have I lost all these forever, and how? What stupid folly possessed me last evening? How could I have been so idiotic as not to see that I was committing the rankest of all enormities? How should I, in my insignificance, dare to assail the barriers and defenses which civilization has established, and guards amongst its best prerogatives? Was this old buffoon, was this piece of tawdry fringe and spangles, a fitting company for that fair and gentle girl? How artistically false, too, was the position I had taken. Interweaving into my ideal life these coarse realities, was the same sort of outrage as shocks one in some of the Venetian churches, where a lovely Madonna, the work of a great hand, may be seen bedizened and disfigured with precious stones over her drapery. In this was I violating the whole poetry of my existence. These figures were as much out of keeping as would be a couple of Ostade's Boors in a grand Scripture piece by Domenichino.

"And yet, Potts," thought I, "they were *really* living creatures. They had hearts for joy and sorrow and hope and the rest of it. They were pilgrims traveling the self-same road as you were. They were not illusions, but flesh and blood folk, that would shiver when cold, and die of hunger if starved. Were they not, then, as such, of more account than all your mere imaginings? would not the least of their daily miseries outweigh a whole bushel of fancied sorrow? and is it not a poor selfishness on your part, when you deem some airy conception of your brain of more account than that poor old man and that dark-eyed girl? Last of all, are they not, in all their ragged finery, more 'really true men' than you yourself, Potts, living in a maze of delusions? They only act when the sawdust is raked and the lamps are lighted; but you are *en scène* from dawn to dark, and only lay down one motley to don another. Is not this wretched? Is it not ignoble? In all these changes of character, how much of the real man will be left behind? Will there be one morsel of honest flesh, when all the lacquer of paint is washed off? And was it—oh, was it for this you first adventured out on the wide ocean of life?"

I passed the evening and a great part of the night in such self-accusings, and then I addressed myself to action. I bethought me of my future, and with whom and where and how it might be passed. The bag of money intrusted to me by the minister to pay the charges of the road was hanging where I had placed it—on the curtain holder. I opened it, and found a hundred and forty gold napoleons, and some ten or twelve pounds in silver. I next set to count over my own especial hoard; it was a fraction under a thousand francs. Forty pounds was truly a very small sum wherewith to confront a world to which I brought not any art, or trade, or means of livelihood; I say forty, because I had not the shadow of a pretext for touching the other sum, and I resolved at once to transmit it to the owner. Now, what could be done with so humble a capital? I had heard of a great general who once pawned a valuable sword—a sword of honor it was—wherewith to buy a horse, and so mounted, he went forth over the Alps, and conquered a kingdom. The story had no moral for me, for somehow I did not feel as though I were the stuff that conquers kingdoms, and yet there must surely be a vast number of men in life with about the same sort of faculties, merits, and demerits as I have. There must be a numerous Potts family in every land, well-meaning, right-intentioned, worthless creatures, who, out of a supposed willingness to do anything, always end in doing nothing. Such people, it must be inferred, live upon what are called their wits, or, in other words, trade upon the daily accidents of life, and the use to which they can turn the traits of those they meet with.

I was resolved not to descend to this; no, I had determined to say adieu to all masquerading, and be simply Potts, the druggist's son, one who had once dreamed of great ambitions, but had taken the wrong road to them. I would from this hour be an honest, truth-speaking, simple-hearted creature. What the world might henceforth accord me of its sympathy should be tendered on honest grounds; nay, more, in the spirit of those devotees who inspire themselves with piety by privations, I resolved on a course of self-mortification; I would not rest till I had made my former self expiate all the vainglorious wantonness of the past, and pay in severe penance for every transgression I had committed. I began boldly with my reformation. I sat down and wrote thus:—

"To Mr. Dycer, Stephen's-green, Dublin.

"The gentleman who took away a dun pony from your livery stables in the month of May last, and who, from certain circumstances, has not been able to restore the animal, sends herewith twenty pounds as his probable value. If Mr. D. conscientiously considers the sum insufficient, the sender will, at some future time, he hopes, make good the difference."

Doubtless my esteemed reader will say at this place, "The fellow couldn't do less; he need not vaunt himself on a commonplace act of honesty, which, after all, might have been suggested by certain fears of future consequences. His indiscretion amounted to horse-stealing, and horse-stealing is a felony."

All true, every word of it, most upright of judges: I was simply doing what I ought, or rather what I ought long since to have done. But now, let me ask, is this, after all, the invariable course in life, and is there no merit in doing what one ought when every temptation points to the other direction? and lastly, is it nothing to do what a man ought, when the doing costs exactly the half of all he has in the world?

Now, if I were, instead of being Potts, a certain great writer that we all know and delight in, I would improve the occasion here by asking my reader, does he always himself do the right thing? I would say to him, perhaps with all haste to anticipate his answer, "Of course you do. You never pinch your children, or kick your wife out of bed; you are a model father and a churchwarden; but I am only a poor apothecary's son brought up in precepts of thrift and the Dublin Pharmacopœia; and I own to you, when I placed the half of my twenty-pound crisp clean bank note inside of that letter, I felt I was figuratively cutting myself in two. But I did it "like a man," if that be a proper phrase for an act which I thought godlike. And oh, take my word for it, when a sacrifice hasn't cost you a coach-load of regrets, and a shopful of hesitations about making it, it is of little worth. There's a wide difference between the gift of a sheep from an Australian farmer, or the present of a child's pet lamb, even though the sheep be twice the size of the lamb.

I gave myself no small praise for what I had done, much figurative patting on the back, and a vast deal of that very ambiguous consolation which beggars in Catholic countries bestow in change for alms, by assurance that it will be remembered to you in purgatory.

"Well," thought I, "the occasion isn't very far off, for my purgatory begins to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON FOOT AND IN LOW COMPANY.

I WAS in a tourist locality, and easily provided myself with a light equipment for the road, resolved at once to take the footpath in life and "seek my fortune." I use these words simply as the expression of the utter uncertainty which prevailed as to whither I should go, and what do when I got there.

If there be few more joyous things in life than to start off on foot with three or four choice companions, to ramble through some fine country rich in scenery, varied in character and interesting in story, there are few more lonely sensations than to set out by one's self, not very decided what way to take, and with very little money to take it.

One of the most grievous features of small means is, certainly, the almost exclusive occupation it gives the mind as to every, even the most trivial, incident that involves cost. Instead of dining on fish and fowl and fruit, you feel eating so many groschen and kreutzers. You are *not* drinking wine; your beverage is a solution of copper batzen in vinegar! When you poke the fire, every spark that flies up the chimney is a bajocco! You come at last to suspect that the sun won't warm you for nothing, and that the very breeze that cooled your brow is only waiting round the corner to ask "for something for himself."

When the rich man lives sparingly, the conscious power of the wealth he might employ if he pleased, sustains him. The poor fellow has no such consolation to fall back on; the closer his coat is examined, the more threadbare will it appear. If it were simply that he dressed humbly and fared coarsely, it might be borne well; but it is the hourly depreciation that poverty is exposed to, makes its true grievance. "An ill-looking"—this means, generally, ill-dressed — "an ill-looking fellow had been seen around the premises at nightfall," says the police report. "A very suspicious character had asked for a bed; his wardrobe was in a 'spotted handkerchief.' The waiter remembers that a fellow, much travel-stained and weary, stopped at the door that evening and asked if there was any cheap house of entertainment in the

village." Heaven help the poor wayfarer if any one has been robbed, any house broken into, any rick set fire to, while he passed through that locality. There is no need of a crowd of witnesses to convict him, since every bend in his hat, every tear in his coat, and every rent in his shoes, are evidence against him.

If I thought over these things in sorrow and humiliation, it was in a very proud spirit that I called to mind how, on that same morning, I deposited the bag with all the money in Messrs. Haber's bank, saw the contents duly counted over, replaced and sealed up, and then addressed to Her Majesty's Minister at Kalbbratonstadt, taking a receipt for the same. "This was only just common honesty," says the reader. Oh, if there is an absurd collocation of words, it is that! Common honesty! why, there is nothing in this world so perfectly, so totally, uncommon! Never, I beseech you, undervalue the waiter who restores the ring you dropped in the coffee-room; nor hold him cheaply who gives back the umbrella you left in the cab. These seem such easy things to do, but they are not easy. Men are more or less Cornish wreckers in life, and very apt to regard the lost article as treasure-trove. I have said all this to you, amiable reader, that you may know what it cost me, on that same morning, not to be a rogue, and not to enrich myself with the goods of another.

I underwent a very long and searching self-examination to ascertain why it was I had not appropriated that bag, an offense which, legally speaking, would only amount to a breach of trust. I said, "Is it that you had no need of the money, Potts? Did you feel that your own means were ample enough? Was it that your philosophy had made you regard gold as mere dross, and then think that the load was a burden? Or, taking higher ground, had you recalled the first teachings of your venerable parent, that good man and careful apothecary, who had given you your first perceptions of right and wrong?" I fear that I was obliged to say No, in turn, to each of these queries. I would have been very glad to be right, proud to have been a philosopher, overjoyed to feel myself swayed by moral motives, but I could not palm the imposition on my conscience, and had honestly to own that the real reason of my conduct was—I was in love! There was the whole of it!

There was an old sultan once so impressed with an ill notion of the sex, that, whenever a tale of misfortune or disgrace reached him, his only inquiry as to the source of the evil was, Who was she? Now, my experiences of life have traveled in another direction, and whenever I read of some noble piece of heroism, or some daring act of self-devotion, I don't ask whether he got the Bath or the Victoria Cross, if he were made a governor here, or a vice-governor there, but who was she that prompted this glorious deed? I'd like to know all about *her*: the color of her eyes, her hair; was she slender or plump; was she fiery or gentle; was it an old attachment, or an acute attack coming after a paroxysm at first sight?

If I were the great chief of some great public department, where all my subordinates were obliged to give heavy security for their honesty, I would neither ask for bail bonds or sureties, but I'd say, "Have you got a wife or a sweetheart? either will do. Let me look at her. If she be worthy an honest man's love, I am satisfied; mount your high stool and write away."

Oh, how I longed to stand aright in that dear girl's eyes, that she should see me worthy of her! Had she yielded to all my wayward notions and rambling opinions, giving way either in careless indolence or out of inability to dispute them, she had never made the deep impression on my heart. It was because she had bravely asserted her own independence, never conceding where unconvinced, never yielding where unvanquished, that I loved her. What a stupid reverie was that of mine when I fancied her one of those strong-minded, determined women—a thickly-shod, umbrella-carrying female, who can travel alone and pass her trunk through a custom-house. No; she was delicate, timid, and gentle; there was no over-confidence in her, nor the slightest pretension. Rule me? not a bit of it. Guide, direct, support, confirm, sustain me; elevate my sentiments, cheer me on my road in life, making all evil odious in my eyes, and the good to seem better!

I verily believe, with such a woman, an humble condition in life offers more chances of happiness than a state of wealth and splendor. If the best prizes of life are to be picked up around a man's fireside, moderate means, conducing as they do to a home life, would point more certainly to these than all the splendor of grand receptions. If I were, say, a village doctor, a schoolmaster; if I were able to eke out subsistence in some occupation, whose pursuit might place me sufficiently favorably in her eyes. I don't like grocery, for instance, or even "dry goods," but something

—it's no fault of mine if the English language be cramped and limited, and that I must employ the odious word "genteel," but it conveys, in a fashion, all that I aim at.

I began to think how this was to be done: I might return to my own country, go back to Dublin, and become Potts and Son—at least son! A very horrid thought and very hard to adopt.

I might take a German degree in physic, and become an English doctor, say at Baden, Ems, Geneva, or some other resort of my countrymen on the continent. I might give lectures, I scarcely well know on what, still less to whom; or I could start as Professor Potts, and instruct foreigners in Shakespeare. There were at least "three courses" open to me; and to consider them the better, I filled my pipe, and strolled off the high road into a shady copse of fine beech-trees, at the foot of one of which, and close to a clear rivulet, I threw myself at full length, and thus, like Tityrus, enjoyed the leafy shade, making my meerschaum do duty for the shepherd's reed.

I had not been long thus, when I heard the footsteps of some persons on the road, and shortly after, the sound discontinuing, I judged that they must have crossed into the sward beneath the wood. As I listened I detected voices, and the next moment two figures emerged from the cover and stood before me: they were Vaterchen and Tintefleck.

"Sit down," said I, pointing to each in turn to take a place at either side of me. They had, it is true, been the cause of the great calamity of my life, but in no sense was the fault theirs, and I wished to show that I was generous and open-minded. Vaterchen acceded to my repeated invitation with a courteous humility, and seated himself at a little distance off; but Tintefleck threw herself on the grass, and with such a careless *abandon* that her hair escaped from the net that held it, and fell in great wavy masses across my feet.

"Ay," thought I, as I looked at the graceful outlines of her finely-shaped figure, "here is the Amaryllis come to complete the tableau; only I would wish fewer spangles and a little more simplicity."

I saw that it was necessary to reassure Vaterchen as to my perfect sanity by some explanation as to my strange mode of traveling, and told him briefly, "that it was a caprice common enough with my countrymen to assume the knapsack, and take the road on foot; that we fancied in this wise we obtained a nearer view of life, and at least gained companionship with many from whom the accident of station might exclude us." I said this with an artful delicacy, meant to imply that I was pointing at a very great and valuable privilege of pedestrianism.

He smiled with a sad, a very sad expression on his features: "But in what wise, highly honored sir,"—he addressed me always as Hoch Ge-ehrter Herr—"could you promise to yourself advantage from such associations as these? I cannot believe you would condescend to know us simply to carry away in memory the little traits that must needs distinguish such lives as ours. I would not insult my respect for you by supposing that you come amongst us to note the absurd contrast between our real wretchedness and our mock gayety; and yet what else is there to gain? What can the poor mountebank teach you beyond this?"

"Much," said I, with fervor, as I grasped his hand and shook it heartily; "much, if you only gave me this one lesson that I now listen to, and I learn that a man's heart can beat as truthfully under motley as under the embroidered coat of a minister. The man who speaks as you do, can teach me much."

He gave a short but heavy sigh, and turned away his head. He arose after a few minutes, and going gently across the grass, spread his handkerchief over the head and face of the girl, who had at once fallen into a deep sleep.

"Poor thing," muttered he, "it is well she *can* sleep! she has eaten nothing to-day!"

"But, surely," said I, "there is some village, or some wayside inn near this——"

"Yes, there is the 'Eckstein,' a little public about two miles farther; but we didn't care to reach it before nightfall. It is so painful to pass many hours in a place and never call for anything; one is ill-looked on, and uncomfortable from it; and as we have only what would pay for our supper and lodging, we thought we'd wear away the noon in the forest here, and arrive at the inn by close of day."

"Let me be your traveling companion for to-day," said I, "and let us push forward and have our dinner together. Yes, yes, there is far less of condescension in the offer than you suspect. I am neither great nor milor, I am one of a class like your own, Vaterchen, and what I do for you to-day some one else will as probably do for me to-morrow."

Say what I could, the old man would persist in believing that this was only an-

other of those eccentricities for which Englishmen are famed; and though, with the tact of native good breeding, he showed no persistence in opposition, I saw plainly enough that he was unconvinced by all my arguments.

While the girl slept, I asked him how he chanced upon the choice of his present mode of life, since there were many things in his tone and manner that struck me as strangely unlike what I should have ascribed to his order.

"It is a very short story," said he; "five minutes will tell it, otherwise I might scruple to impose on your patience. It was thus I became what you see me."

Short as the narrative was, I must keep it for another page.

CHAPTER XXX.

VATERCHEN'S NARRATIVE.

I GIVE the old man's story, as nearly as I can, the way he told it.

"There is a little village on the Lago di Garda, called Caprini. My family had lived there for some generations. We had a little wine-shop, and though not a very pretentious one, it was the best in the place, and much frequented by the inhabitants. My father was in considerable repute while he lived; he was twice named Syndic of Caprini, and I myself once held that dignity. You may not know, perhaps, that the office is one filled at the choice of the townsfolk, and not nominated by the government. Still the crown has its influence in the selection, and likes well to see one of its own partisans in power, and, when a popular candidate does succeed against their will, the government officials take good care to make his berth as uncomfortable as they can. These are small questions of politics to ask you to follow, but they were our great ones; and we were as ardent and excited and eager about the choice of our little local governor as though he wielded real power in a great state.

"When I obtained the syndicate, my great ambition was to tread in the footsteps of my father, old Gustave Gamerra, who had left behind him a great name as the assertor of popular rights, and who had never bated the very least privilege that pertained to his native village. I did my best—not very discreetly, perhaps—for my own sake, but I held my head high against all imperial and royal officials, and I taught them to feel that there was at least one popular institution in the land that no exercise of tyranny could assail. I was over-zealous about all our rights. I raked up out of old archives traces of privileges that we once possessed and had never formally surrendered; I discovered concessions that had been made to us of which we had never reaped the profit; and I was, so to say, ever at war with the authorities, who were frank enough to say, that when my two years of office expired, they meant to give me some wholesome lessons about obedience.

"They were as good as their word. I had no sooner descended to a private station than I was made to feel all the severities of their displeasure. They took away my license to sell salt and tobacco, and thereby fully one half of my little income; they tried to withdraw my privilege to sell wine, but this came from the municipality, and they could not touch it. Upon information that they had suborned, they twice visited my house to search for seditious papers, and, finally, they made me such a mark of their enmity that the timid of the townsfolk were afraid to be seen with me, and gradually dropped my acquaintance. This preyed upon me most of all. I was all my life of a social habit; I delighted to gather my friends around me, or to go and visit them; and to find myself, as I was growing old, growing friendless, too, was a great blow.

"I was a widower, and had none but an only daughter."

When he had reached thus far, his voice failed him, and, after an effort or two, he could not continue, and turned away his head and buried it in his hands. Full ten minutes elapsed before he resumed, which he did with a hard, firm tone, as though resolved not to be conquered by his emotion.

"The cholera was dreadfully severe all through the Italian Tyrol; it swept from Venice to Milan, and never missed even the mountain villages, far away up in the Alps. In our little hamlet, we lost one hundred and eighteen souls, and my Gretchen was one of them.

"We had all grown to be very hard-hearted to each other; misfortune was at each man's door, and he had no heart to spare for a neighbor's grief; and yet such was the sorrow for her, that they came, in all this suffering and desolation, to try and comfort and keep me up, and though it was a time when all such cares were forgotten, the young people went and laid fresh flowers over her grave every morning. Well, that was very kind of them, and made me weep heartily, and, in weeping,

my heart softened, and I got to feel that God knew what was best for all of us, and that mayhap he had taken her away to spare her greater sorrow hereafter, and left me to learn that I should pray to go to her. She had only been in the earth eight days, and I was sitting alone in my solitary house, for I could not bear to open the shop, and began to think that I'd never have the courage to do so again, but would go away and try some other place and some other means of livelihood—it was while thinking thus, a sharp, loud knock came to the door, and I arose rather angrily, to answer it.

"It was a sergeant of an infantry regiment, whose detachment was on march for Peschiera; there were troubles down there, and the government had to send off three regiments in all haste from Vienna to suppress them. The sergeant was a Bohemian, and his regiment the Kinsky. He was a rough, coarse fellow, very full of his authority, despising all villagers, and holding Italians in especial contempt. He came to order me to prepare rations and rooms for six soldiers, who were to arrive that evening. I answered, boldly, that I would not. I had served the office of syndic in the town, and was thus forever exempt from the 'billet,' and I led him into my little sitting-room, and showed him my 'brevet,' framed and glazed, over the chimney. He laughed heartily at my little remonstrance, coolly turned the 'brevet' with its face to the wall, and said:

"'If you don't want twelve of us, instead of six, you'll keep your tongue quiet, and give us a stoup of your best wine.'

"I did not wait to answer him, but seized my hat and hurried away to the Platz Commandant. He was an old enemy of mine, but I could not help it; his was the only authority that I could appeal to, and he was bound to do me justice. When I reached the bureau, it was so crowded with soldiers and townsfolk, some seeking for billets, some insisting on their claim to be free, that I could not get past the door, and, after an hour's waiting, I was fain to give up the attempt, and turned back home again, determined to make my statement in writing, which, after all, might have been the most fitting.

"I found my doors wide open when I got there, and my shop crowded with soldiers, who, either sitting on the counter or squatting on their knapsacks, had helped themselves freely to my wine, even to raising the top of an old cask, and drinking it in large cups from the barrel, which they handed liberally to their comrades as they passed.

"My heart was too full to care much for the loss, though the insult pressed me sorely, and, pushing my way through, I gained the inner room to find it crowded like the shop. All was in disorder and confusion. The old musket my father had carried for many a year, and which had hung over the chimney as an heirloom, lay smashed in fragments on the floor; some wanton fellow had run his bayonet through my 'brevet' as syndic, and hung it up in derision as a banner; and one, he was a corporal, had taken down the wreath of white roses that lay on Gretchen's coffin till it was laid in the earth, and placed it on his head. When I saw this, my senses left me; I gave a wild shriek, and dashed both my hands in his face. I tried to strangle him; I would have torn him with my teeth had they not dragged me off and dashed me on the ground, where they trampled on me, and beat me, and then carried me away to prison.

"I was four days in prison before I was brought up to be examined. I did not know whether it had been four or forty, for my senses had left me and I was mad; perhaps it was the cold, dark cell and the silence restored me, but I came out calm and collected. I remembered everything to the smallest incident.

"The soldiers were heard first; they agreed in everything, and their story had all the air of truth about it. They owned they had taken my wine, but said that the regiment was ready and willing to pay for it so soon as I came back, and that all the rest they had done were only the usual follies of troops on a march. I began by claiming my exemption as a syndic, but was stopped at once by being told that my claim had never been submitted to the authorities, and that in my outrage on the imperial force I had forfeited all consideration on that score. My offense was easily proven. I did not deny it, and I was lectured for nigh an hour on the enormity of my crime, and then sentenced to pay a fine of a thousand zwanzigers to the emperor, and to receive four-and-twenty blows with the stick. 'It should have been eight-and-forty but for my age,' he said.

"On the same stool where I sat to hear my sentence was a circus man, waiting the Platz Commandant's leave to give some representation in the village. I knew him from his dress, but had never spoken to him nor he to me; just, however, as the commandant had delivered the words of my condemnation he turned to look at me;

mayhap to see how I bore up under my misfortune. I saw his glance, and I did my best to sustain it. I wanted to bear myself manfully throughout, and not let any one know my heart was broken, which I felt it was. The struggle was, perhaps, more than I was able for, and, while the tears gushed out and ran down my cheeks, I burst out laughing, and laughed away fit after fit, making the most terrible faces all the while; so outrageously droll were my convulsions, that every one around laugh d too, and there was the whole court screaming madly with the same impulse, and unable to control it.

"'Take the fool away!' cried the commandant, at last, 'and bring him to his senses with a hazel rod.' And they carried me off, and I was flogged.

"It was about a week after I was down near Commachio. I don't know how I got there, but I was in rags, and had no money, and the circus people came past and saw me. 'There's the old fellow that nearly killed us with his droll face,' said the chief. 'I'll give you two zwanzigers a day, my man, if you'll only give us a few grins like that every evening. Is it a bargain?'

"I laughed. I could not keep now from laughing at everything, and the bargain was made, and I was a clown from that hour. They taught me a few easy tricks to help me in my trade, but it is my face they care for—none can see it unmoved."

He turned on me as he spoke with a fearful contortion of countenance, but, moved by his story, and full only of what I had been listening to, I turned away and shed tears.

"Yes," said he, meditatively, "many a happy heart is kindled at the fire that is consuming another. As for myself, both joy and sorrow are dead within me. I am without hope, and, stranger still, without fear."

"But you are not without benevolence," said I, as I looked towards the sleeping girl.

"She was so like Gretchen," said he; and he bent down his head and sobbed bitterly.

I would have asked him some questions about her if I dared, but I felt so rebuked by the sorrow of the old man, that my curiosity seemed almost unfeeling.

"She came amongst us a mere child," said he, "and speedily attached herself to me. I contrived to learn enough of her dialect to understand and talk to her, and at last she began to regard me as a father, and even called me such. It was a long time before I could bear this. Every time I heard the word my grief would burst out afresh; but what won't time do? I have come to like it now."

"And is she good, and gentle, and affectionate?" asked I.

"She is far too good and true-hearted to be in such company as ours. Would that some rich person—it should be a lady—kind, and gentle, and compassionate, could see her and take her away from such associates, and this life of shame, ere it be too late. If I have a sorrow left me now, it is for her."

I was silent; for, though the wish only seemed fair and natural enough on his part, I could not help thinking how improbable such an incident would prove.

"She would repay it all," said he. "If ever there was a nature rich in great gifts, it is hers. She can learn whatever she will, and for a word of kindness she would hold her hand in the fire for you. Hush!" whispered he, "she is stirring. What is it, darling?" said he, creeping close to her, as she lay, throwing her arms wildly open, but not removing the handkerchief from her face.

She muttered something hurriedly, and then burst into a laugh, so joyous and so catching, it was impossible to refrain from joining in it.

She threw back her kerchief at once and started to her knees, gazing steadfastly, almost sternly, at me. I saw that the old man comprehended the inquiry of her glance, and as quickly whispered a few words in her ear. She listened till he had done, and then springing towards me, she caught my hand and kissed it.

I suspect he must have rebuked the ardor of her movement, for she hung her head despondingly, and turned away from us both.

"Now for the road once more," said Vaterchen, "for, if we stay much longer here, we shall have the forest flies, which are always worse towards evening."

It was not without great difficulty I could prevent his carrying my knapsack for me, and even the girl herself would gladly have borne some of my load. At last, however, we set forth, Tintefleck lightening the way with a merry canzonette, that had the time of a quickstep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A GENIUS FOR CARICATURE.

WHAT a pleasant little dinner we had that day. It was laid out in a little sum-

mer-house of the inn-garden. All overgrown with a fine old fig-tree, through whose leaves the summer wind played deliciously, while a tiny rivulet rippled close by, and served to cool our "Achten-thaler"—an amount of luxury that made Tintefleck quite wild with laughter.

"Is it cold enough?" she asked, archly, in her peasant dialect, each time the old man laid down his glass.

As I came gradually to pick up the occasional meaning of her words—a process which her expressive pantomime greatly aided—I was struck by the marvelous acuteness of a mind so totally without culture, and I could not help asking Vaterchen why he never attempted to instruct her.

"What can I do?" said he, despondently; "there are no books in the only language she knows, and the only language she will condescend to speak. She can understand Italian, and I have read stories for her, and sonnets, too, out of Leopardi, but though she will listen in all eagerness till they are finished, no sooner over than she breaks out into some wild Calabrian song, and ask me is it not worth all the fine things I have been giving her, thrice told."

"Could you not teach her to write?"

"I tried that. I bought a slate, and I made a bargain with her that she should have a scarlet knot for her hair when she could ask me for it in written words. Well, all seemed to go on prosperously for a time; we had got through half the alphabet very successfully, till we came to the letter H. This made her laugh immediately, it was so like a scaffold we had in the circus for certain exercises; and no sooner had I marked down the letter, than she snatched the pencil from me, and drew the figure of a man on each bar of the letter. From that hour forth, as though her wayward humor had been only imprisoned, she burst forth into every imaginable absurdity at our lessons. Every ridiculous event of our daily life she drew, and with a rapidity almost incredible. I was not very apt, as you may imagine, in acquiring the few accomplishments they thought to give me, and she caricatured me under all my difficulties."

"*Si, si*," broke she in at this; for, with a wonderful acuteness, she could trace something of a speaker's meaning where every word was unknown to her. As she spoke she arose, and fled down the garden at top speed.

"Why has she gone? Is she displeased at your telling me all these things about her?" asked I.

"Scarcely that; she loves to be noticed. Nothing really seems to pain her so much as when she is passed over unremarked. When such an event would occur in the circus, I have seen her sob through her sleep all the night after. I half suspect now she is piqued at the little notice you have bestowed upon her. All the better if it be so."

"But here she comes again."

With the same speed she now came back to us, holding her slate over her head and showing that she rightly interpreted what the old man had said of her.

"Now for my turn!" said Vaterchen, with a smile. "She is never weary of drawing me in every absurd and impossible posture."

"What is it to be, Tintefleck?" asked he. "How am I to figure this time?"

She shook her head without replying, and, making a sign that she was not to be questioned or interrupted, she nestled down at the foot of the fig-tree, and began to draw.

The old man now drew near me, and proceeded to give me further details of her strange temper and ways. I could mark that, throughout all he said, a tone of intense anxiety and care prevailed, and that he felt her disposition was exactly that which exposed her to the greatest perils for her future. There was a young artist who used to follow her through all the South Tyrol, affecting to be madly in love with her, but of whose sincerity and honor Vaterchen professed to have great misgivings. He gave her lessons in drawing, and, what was less to be liked, he made several studies of herself. "The artless way," said the old man, "she would come and repeat to me all his raptures about her, was at first a sort of comfort to me. I felt reassured by her confidence, and also by the little impression his praises seemed to make, but I saw later on that I was mistaken. She grew each day more covetous of these flatteries, and it was no longer laughingly, but in earnest seriousness she would tell me that the 'Fornarina' in some gallery had not such eyes as hers, and that some great statue that all the world admired was far inferior to her in shape. If I had dared to rebuke her vanity, or ridicule her pretensions, all my influence would have been gone forever. She would have left us, gone who knows whither, and been lost, so that I had nothing for it but to seem to credit all she said and yet hold the matter lightly, and I said beauty had no value except when associated with rank and station. If queens and princesses be handsome, they are more fitted to adorn this high estate,

but for humble folk it was as great a mockery as these tinsel gems we wear in the circus.

"'Max says not,' said she to me one evening, after one of my usual lectures. 'Max says, there are queens would give their coronets to have my hair, ay, or even one of the dimples in my cheek.'

"'Max is a villain,' said I, before I could control my words.

"'Max is a *vero signor!*' said she, haughtily, and 'not like one of us; and more, too, I'll go and tell him what you have called him.' She bounded away from me at this, and I saw her no more till nightfall.

"'What has happened to you, poor child?' said I, as I saw her lying on the floor of her room, her forehead bleeding, and her dress all draggled and torn. She would not speak to me for a long while, but by much entreating and caressing I won upon her to tell me what had befallen her. She had gone to the top of the 'Glucksburg' and thrown herself down. It was a fearful height, and she was only saved by being caught by the brambles and tangled foliage of the cliff; and all this for 'one harsh word of mine,' she said. But I knew better; the struggle was deeper in her heart than she was aware of, and Max had gone suddenly away, and we saw no more of him."

"Did she grieve after him?"

"I scarcely can say she did. She fretted, but I think it was for her own loneliness and the want of that daily flattery she had grown so fond of. She became overbearing, and even insolent, too, with all her equals, and though for many a day she had been the spoiled child of the troop, many began to weary of her waywardness. I don't know how all this might have turned out, when, just as suddenly, she changed, and became everything that she used to be."

When the old man had got thus far, the girl arose, and, without saying a word, laid the slate before us. Vaterchen, not very quick-sighted, could not at once understand the picture, but I caught it at once, and laughed immoderately. She had taken the scene where I had presented Vaterchen and herself to the ladies at the tea-table, and, with an intense humor, sketched all the varying emotions of the incident. The offended dignity of the old lady, the surprise and mortification of Miss Herbert, and my own unconscious pretension as I pointed to the "friends" who accompanied me, were drawn with the spirit of high caricature. Nor did she spare Vaterchen or herself. They were drawn, perhaps, with a more exaggerated satire than all the rest.

The old man no sooner comprehended the subject, than he drew his hand across it, and turned to her with words of anger and reproach. I meant, of course, to interfere in her behalf, but it was needless. She fled, laughing, into the garden; and before many minutes were over we heard her merry voice, with the tinkle of a guitar to assist it.

"There it is," said Vaterchen, moodily. "What are you to do with a temperament like that?"

That was a question I was in no wise prepared to answer. Tintefleck's temperament seemed to be the very converse of my own. I was over-eager to plan out everything in life. *She* appeared to be just as impulsively bent on risking all. *My* head was always calculating eventualities; *hers*, it struck me, never worried itself about difficulties till in the midst of them. Now, Jean Paul tells us that when a man detects any exaggerated bias in his character, instead of endeavoring, by daily watching, to correct it, he will be far more successful if he ally himself with some one of a diametrically opposite humor. If he be rash, for instance, let him seek companionship with the sluggish. If his tendency bear to over-imagination, let him frequent the society of realists. Why, therefore, should not I and Tintefleck be mutually beneficial? Take the two different kinds of wood in a bow: one will supply resistance, the other flexibility. It was a pleasant notion, and I resolved to test it.

"Vaterchen," said I, "call me to-morrow, when you get ready for the road. I will keep you company as far as Constance."

"Ah, sir," said he, with a sigh, "you will be well weary of us before half the journey is over; but you shall be obeyed."

CHAPTER XXXII.

I RELIEVE MYSELF OF MY PURSE.

NEXT morning, just as day was breaking, we set out on foot on our road to Constance. There was a pinkish-grey streak of light on the horizon, sure sign of a fine day; and the bright stars twinkled still in the clear, half-somber sky, and all was calm and noiseless—nothing to be heard but the tramp of our feet on the hard causeway.

With the cowardly caution of one who feels the water with his foot before he springs in to swim, I was glad that I made my first experiences of companionship with

these humble friends while it was yet dark and none could see us. The old leaven of snobbery was unsubdued in my heart, and, as I turned to look at poor Vaterchen and then at the tinsel finery of Catinka, I bethought me of the little consideration the world extends to such as these and their belongings. "Vagabonds, all!" would say some rich banker, as he rolled by in his massive traveling-carriage, creaking with imperials and jingling with bells. "Vagabonds, all!" would mutter the Jew pedlar, as he looked down from the *banquette* of the diligence. How slight is the sympathy of the realist for the poor creature whose life's labor is to please. How prone to regard him as useless, or, even worse, forgetting the while, how a wiser than he has made many things in this beautiful world of ours that they should merely minister to enjoyment, gladden the eye and ear, and make our pilgrimage less weary. Where would be the crimson jay? where the scarlet bustard? where the gorgeous peacock, with the nosegay on his tail? where the rose, and the honeysuckle, and the purple foxglove, mingled with the wild thorn in our hedgerows, if the universe were of *their* creation, and this great globe but one big workshop? You never insist that the daisy and the daffodil should be pot-herbs; and why are there not to be wild-flowers in humanity as well as in fields? Is it not a great pride to you who live under a bell-glass, nurtured and cared for, and with your name attached to a cleft-stick at your side—is it not a great pride to know that you are not like one of us poor dog-roses? Be satisfied, then, with that glory; we only ask to live! Shame on me for that "only!" As if there could be anything more delightful than life. Life, with all its capacities for love, and friendship, and heroism, and self-devotion, for generous actions and noble aspirations! Life to feel life, to know that we are in a sphere specially constructed for the exercise of our senses and the play of our faculties, free to choose the road we would take, and with a glorious reward if our choice be the right one!

"'Vagabonds!' Yes," thought I, "there was once on a time such a vagabond, and he strolled along from village to village, making of his flute a livelihood; a poor performer, too, he tells us he was, but he could touch the hearts of these simple villagers with his tones as he could move the hearts of thousands more learned than they with his marvelous pathos, and this vagabond was called Oliver Goldsmith." I have no words to say the ecstasy this thought gave me. Many a proud traveler, doubtless, swept past the poor wayfarer as he went, dusty and footsore, and who was, nevertheless, journeying onward to a great immortality; to be a name remembered with blessings by generations when the haughty man that scorned him was forgotten forever. "And so now," thought I, "some splendid Russian or some Saxon Crœsus will crash by and not be conscious that the thin and weary-looking youth, with the girl's bundle on his stick and the red umbrella under his arm, that this is Potts! Ay, sir, you fancy that to be threadbare and footsore is to be vulgar-minded and ignoble, and you never so much as suspect that the heart inside the poor plaid waistcoat is throbbing with ambitions high as a kaiser's, and that the brain within that battered Jim Crow is the realm of thoughts profound as Bacon's, and high-soaring as Milton's."

If I make my reader a sharer in these musings of mine, it is because they occupied me for some miles of the way. Vaterchen was not talkative, and loved to smoke on uninterruptedly. I fancy that, in his way, he was as great a dreamer as myself. Catinka would have talked incessantly if any one had listened, or could understand her. As it was, she recited legends and sang songs for herself, as happy as ever a blackbird was to listen to his own melody; and though I paid no especial attention to her music, still the sounds floated through all my thoughts, bathing them with a soothing flood; just as the air we breathe is often loaded with a sweet and perfumed breath ere we know it. On the whole, we journeyed along very pleasantly, and what between the fresh morning air, the brisk exercise and the novelty of the situation, I felt in a train of spirits that made me delighted with everything. "This, after all," thought I, "is more like the original plan I sketched out for myself. This is the true mode to see life and the world. The student of nature never begins his studies with the more complicated organizations; he sets out with what is simplest in structure, and least intricate in function; he begins with the extreme link of the chain; so, too, I start with the investigation of those whose lives of petty cares and small ambitions must render them easy of appreciation. This poor Mollusca Vaterchen, for instance—to see is to know him; and the girl, how absurd to connect such a guileless child of nature as that, with those stereotyped notions of feminine craft and subtlety!" I then went on to imagine some future biographer of mine engaged on this portion of my life, puzzled for materials, puzzled still more to catch the clue to my meaning

in it. "At this time," will he say, "Potts, by one of those strange caprices which often were the mainspring of his actions, resolved to lead a gypsy life. His ardent love of nature, his heartfelt enjoyment of scenery, and, more than even these, a certain breadth and generosity of character, disposed him to sympathize with those who have few to pity and fewer to succor them. With these wild children of the roadside he lived for months, joyfully sharing the burdens they carried, and taking his part in their privations. It was here he first met Catinka." I stopped at this sentence, and I slowly repeated to myself, "It was here he first met Catinka!" "What will he have next to record?" thought I. "Is Potts now to claim sympathy as the victim of a passion that regarded not station, nor class, nor fortune; that despised the cold conventionalities of a selfish world, and asked only a heart for a heart? Is he to be remembered as the faithful believer in his own theory—Love, above all? Are we to hear of him clasping rapturously to his bosom the poor forlorn girl?" So intensely were my feelings engaged in my speculations, that, at this critical pass, I threw my arms around Catinka's neck, and kissed her. A rebuke, not very cruel, not in the least angry or peevish, brought me quickly to myself, and as Vaterchen was fortunately in front and saw nothing of what passed, I speedily made my peace. I do not know how it happened, but in that same peace-making I had passed my arm round her waist and there it remained—an army of occupation after the treaty was signed—and we went along, side by side, very amicably—very happily.

We are often told that a small competence—the just enough to live on—is the bane of all enterprise; that men thus placed are removed from the stimulus of necessity, and yet not lifted into the higher atmosphere of ambitions. Exactly in the same way do I believe that equality is the grave of love. The passion thrives on difficulty, and requires sacrifice. You must bid defiance to mankind in your choice, or you are a mere fortune-hunter. Show the world the blushing peasant-girl you have made your wife, and say, "Yes, I have had courage to do this." Or else strive for a princess—a Russian princess. Better, far better, however, the humble-hearted child of nature and the fields, the simple, trusting, confiding girl, who, regarding her lover as a sort of demigod, would, while she clung to him——

"You press me so hard!" murmured Catinka, half rebukingly, but with a sort of pouting expression that became her marvelously.

"I was thinking of something that interested me, dearest," said I; but I'm not sure that I made my meaning very clear to her, and yet there was a roguish look in her black eye that puzzled me greatly. I began to like her, or, if you prefer the phrase, to fall in love with her. I knew it—I felt it just the way that a man who has once had the ague never mistakes when he is going to have a return of the fever. In the same way exactly, did I recognize all the premonitory symptoms: the giddiness, the shivering, increased action of the heart ——. Halt, Potts, and reflect a bit! are you describing love, or a tertian?

How will the biographer conduct himself here? Whether he will have to say, "Potts resisted manfully this fatal attachment: had he yielded to the seductions of this early passion, it is more than probable we would never have seen him this, that, and t'other, nor would the world have been enriched with—heaven knows what?" Or shall he record, "Potts loved her, loved her as only such a nature as his ever loves! He felt keenly that, in a mere worldly point of view, he must sacrifice; but it was exactly in that love and that sacrifice was born the poet, the wondrous child of song, who has given us the most glorious lyrics of our language. He had the manliness to share his fortune with this poor girl. 'It was,' he tells us of himself, in one of those little touching passages in his diary, which place him immeasurably above the mock sentimentality of Jean Jacques—'it was on the road to Constance, of a bright and breezy summer morning, that I told her of my love. We were walking along, our arms around each other, as might two happy, guileless children. I was very young in what is called the world, but I had a boundless confidence in myself; my theory was, "If I be strengthened by the deep devotion of one loving heart, I have no fears of failure."' Beautiful words, and worthy of all memory! And then he goes on: 'I drew her gently over to a grassy bench on the roadside, and, taking my purse from my pocket, poured out before her its humble contents, in all something less than twenty sovereigns, but to her eyes a very Pactolus of wealth.'"

"What if I were to try this experiment?" thought I—"what if I were, so to say, to anticipate my own biography?" The notion pleased me much. There was something novel in it, too. It was making the experiment in the *corpore vili* of accident, to see what might come of it.

"Come here, Catinka," said I, pointing to a moss-covered rock at the roadside, with a little well at its base—"come here, and let me have a drink of this nice clear water."

She assented with a smile and a nod, detaching at the same time a little cup from the flask she wore at her side, in *vivandière* fashion. "And we'll fill my flask, too," said she, showing that it was empty. With a sort of childish glee she now knelt beside the stream, and washed the cup. What is it, I wonder, that gives the charm to running water, and imparts a sort of glad feeling to its contemplation? Is it that its ceaseless flow suggests that "forever" which contrasts so powerfully with all short-lived pleasures? I cannot tell, but I was still musing over the difficulty, when, having twice offered me the cup without my noticing it, she at last raised it to my lips. And I drank—oh, what a draught it was! so clear, so cold, so pure; and all the time my eyes were resting on hers, looking, as it were, into another well, the deepest and most unfathomable of all.

"Sit down here beside me on this stone, Catinka, and help me to count these pieces of money; they have got so mingled together that I scarcely know what is left me." She seemed delighted with the project, and sat down at once, and I, throwing myself at her feet, poured the contents of my purse in her lap.

"*Madonna mia!*" was all she could utter as she beheld the gold. Aladdin in the cave never felt a more overwhelming rapture than did she at the sight of these immense riches. "But where did it come from?" cried she, wildly. "Have you got mines of gold and silver—have you got gems, too—rubies and pearls? Oh, say if there be pearls; I love them so! And are you really a great prince, the son of a king; and are you wandering the world this way to seek adventures, or in search, mayhap, of that lovely princess you are in love with?" With wildest impetuosity she asked these and a hundred other questions, for it was only now and then that I could trace her meaning, which expressive pantomime did much to explain.

I tried to convince her that what she deemed a treasure was a mere pittance, which a week or two would exhaust; that I was no prince, nor had I a kingly father; "and last of all," said I, "I am not in pursuit of a princess. But I'll tell you what I am in search of, Catinka: one trusting, faithful, loving heart; one that will so unite itself to mine, as to have no joys, or sorrows, or cares, but mine; one content to go wherever I go, live however I live, and no matter what my faults may be, or how meanly others think of me, will ever regard me with eyes of love and devotion."

I had held her hand while I uttered this, gazing up into her eyes with ecstasy, for I saw how their liquid depth appeared to move as though about to overflow, when at last she spoke, and said—

"And there are no pearls!"

"Poor child!" thought I, "she cannot understand one word I have been saying. Listen to me, Catinka," said I, with a slow utterance. "Would you give me your heart for all this treasure?"

"*Si, si!*" cried she, eagerly.

"And love me always—forever?"

"*Si,*" said she, again; but I fancied with less of energy than before.

"And when it was spent and gone, and nothing remaining of it, what would you do?"

"Send you to gather more, *mio caro,*" said she, pressing my hand to her lips, as though in earnest of the blandishments she would bestow upon me.

Now, I cannot affect to say that all this was very reassuring. This poor simple child of the mountains showed a spirit as sordid and as calculating as though she were baptized in May Fair. It was a terrible shock to me to see this; a dire overthow to a very fine edifice that I was just putting the roof on! "Would Kate Herbert have made me such a speech?" thought I. "Would she have declared herself so venal and so worldly?—and why not? May it not be, perhaps, simply that a mere question of good breeding, the usages of a polite world, might have made all the difference, and that she would have felt what poor Catinka felt and owned to? If this were true, the advantages were all on the side of sincerity. With honesty as the basis, what may not one build up of character? Where there is candor, there are at least no disappointments. This poor simple child, untutored in the wiles of a scheming world, where all is false, unreal, and deceptive, has the courage to say that her heart can be bought. She is ready in her innocence, too, to sell it, just as the Indians sell a great territory for a few glass beads or bright buttons. And why should not I make the acquisition in the very spirit of a new settler? It was I discovered this lone island of the sea; it was I first landed on this unknown shore; why not claim a sovereignty so cheaply established?" I put the question arithmetically before me: Given, a young girl, totally new to life and its seductions, deeply impressed with the value of wealth, to find the measure of venality in a well

brought up young lady, educated at Clapham and finished at Boulogne-sur-Mer. I expressed it thus : $D - y = T + x$, or an unknown quantity.

"What strange marks are you drawing there?" cried she, as I made these figures on the slate.

"A caprice," said I, in some confusion.

"No," said she; "I know better. It was a charm. Tell truth—it was a charm."

"A charm, dearest! but for what?"

"*I* know," said she, shaking her head and laughing, with a sort of wicked drollery.

"*You* know! Impossible, child."

"Yes," she said, with great gravity, while she swept her hand across the slate and erased all the figures. "Yes, *I* know, and I'll not permit it."

"But what, in heaven's name, is trotting through your head, Catinka? You have not the vaguest idea of what those signs meant."

"Yes," she said, even more solemnly than before. "I know it all. You mean to steal away my heart in spite of me, and you are going to do it with a charm."

"And what success shall I have, Catinka."

"Oh, do not ask me," said she, in a tone of touching misery. "I feel it very sore here." And she pressed her hand to her side. "Ah me," sighed she, "if there were only pearls!"

The ecstasy her first few words gave me was terribly routed by this vile conclusion, and I started abruptly, and in an angry voice, said, "Let us go on; Vaterchen will fear we are lost."

"And all this gold; what shall I do with it?" cried she.

"What you will. Throw it into the well if you like," said I, angrily; for in good sooth I was out of temper with her, and myself, and all mankind.

"Nay," said she mildly, "it is yours; but I will carry it for you if it weary you."

I might have felt rebuked by the submissive gentleness of her words; indeed, I know not how it was that they did not so move me, and I walked on in front of her, heedless of her entreaties that I should wait till she came up beside me.

When she did join me, she wanted to talk immensely. She had all manner of questions to ask about where my treasure came from; how often I went back there to replenish it; was I quite sure that it could never, never be exhausted, and such like. But I was in no gracious mood for such inquiries, and telling her that I wished to follow my own thoughts without interruption, I walked along in silence.

I cannot tell the weight I felt at my heart. I am not speaking figuratively. No; it was exactly as though a great mass of heavy metal filled my chest, forced out my ribs, and pressed down my diaphragm; and though I held my hands to my sides with all my force, the pressure still remained.

"What a bitter mockery it is," thought I, "if the only false thing in all the world should be the human heart! There are diamonds that will resist fire, gold that will stand the crucible; but the moment you come to man and his affections, all is hollow and illusory!"

Why do we give the name worldliness to traits of selfish advancement and sordid gain, when a young creature like this, estranged from all the commerce of mankind, who knows nothing of that bargain-and-barter system, which we call civilization, reared and nurtured like a young fawn in her native woods, should, as though by a very instinct of corruption, have a heart as venal as any hackneyed beauty of three London seasons?

Let no man tell me now, that it is our vicious system of female training, our false social organization, our spurious morality, laxity of family ties, and the rest of it. I am firmly persuaded that a young squaw of the Choctaws has as many anxieties about her *parti* as any belle of Belgravia, even though the settlements be only paid in sharks' teeth and human toupees.

And what an absurdity is our whole code on this subject! A man is actually expected to court, solicit, and even worship the object that he is after all called upon to pay for. You do not smirk at the salmon in your fishmonger's window, or ogle the lamb at your butcher's; you go in boldly and say, "How much the pound?" If you sighed outside for a week, you'd get it never the cheaper. Why not then make an honest market of what is so salable? What a saving of time to know that the splendid creature yonder, with the queenly air, can only be had at ten thousand a-year, but that the spicy article with the black ringlets, will go for two! Instead of all the heart-burnings and blank disappointments we see now, we should have a practical, contented generation; and in the same spirit that a man of moderate fortune turns away from the seductions of turtle and whitebait, while he orders home his mutton chop, he would avert his gaze from beauty, and fix his affections on the dumpy woman that can be "got a bargain."

Why did not the poet say, Venality, thy name is Woman? It would suit the pros-

ody about as well, and the purpose better. The Turks are our masters in all this: they are centuries—whole centuries, in advance of us. How I wish some Babbage would make a calculation of the hours, weeks, years, centuries of time, that are lost in what is called love-making. Time, we are told, is money, and here, at once, is the fund to pay off our national debt. Take the "time that's lost in wooing" by a nation, say of twenty-eight or thirty millions, and at the cheapest rate of labor—take the prison rate if you like—and see if I be not right. Let the population who now heave sighs, pound oyster-shells; let those who pick quarrels, pick oakum, and we need no income-tax!

"I'll not sing any more," broke in Catinka. "I don't think you have been listening to me."

"Listening to you!" said I, contemptuously, "certainly not. When I want a siren, I take a pit ticket and go to the opera; seven-and-sixpence is the price of Circe, and dear at the money." With this rude rebuff I waved her off, and walked along once more alone.

At a sudden bend in the road we found Vaterchen seated under a tree waiting for us, and evidently not a little uneasy at our long absence.

"What is this?" said he, angrily to Catinka. "Why have you remained so long behind?"

"We sat down to rest at a well," said she, "and then he took out a great bag of money to count, and there was so much in it, so many pieces of bright gold, that one could not help turning them over and over, and gazing at them."

"And worshiping them too, girl!" cried he, indignantly, while he turned on me a look of sorrow and reproach. I returned his stare haughtily, and he arose and drew me to one side.

"Am I, then, once more mistaken in my judgment of men? Have *you*, too, duped me?" said he, in a voice that shook with agitation. "Was it for this you offered us the solace of your companionship? Was it for this you condescended to journey with us, and deigned to be our host and entertainer?"

The appeal came at an evil moment; a vile, contemptible skepticism was at work within me. The rasp and file of doubt were eating away my heart, and I deemed "all men liars."

"And is it to me—Potts—you address such words as these, you consummate old humbug? What is there about me that denotes dupe or fool?"

The old man shook his head, and made a gesture to imply he had *not* understood me; and now I remembered that I had uttered this rude speech in English and not in German. With the memory of this fact came also the consciousness of its cruel meaning. What if I should have wronged him? What if the poor old fellow be honest and upright? What if he be really striving to keep this girl in the path of virtue? I came close to him, and fixed my eyes steadfastly on his face. He looked at me fearlessly, as an honest man might look. He never tried to turn away, nor did he make the slightest effort to evade me. He seemed to understand all the import of my scrutiny, for he said at last:

"Well, are you satisfied?"

"I am, Vaterchen," said I, "fully satisfied. Let us be friends." And I took his hand and shook it heartily.

"You think me honest?" asked he.

"I do think so."

"And I am not more honest than she is. No," said he, resolutely, "Tintefleck is true-hearted."

"What of *me?*" cried she, coming up and leaning her arm on the old man's shoulder, "what of *me?*"

"I have said that you are honest, and would not deceive!"

"Not *you*, Vaterchen—not *you*," said she, kissing him. And then, as she turned away, she gave me a look so full of meaning, and so strange withal, that if I were to speak for an hour I could not explain it. It seemed to mean sorrow and reproach and wounded pride, with a dash of pity, and, above all and everything, defiance; ay, that was its chief character, and I believe I winced under it.

"Let us step out briskly," said Vaterchen. "Constance is a good eleven miles off yet."

"He looks tired already," said she, with a glance at me.

"I? I'm as fresh as when I started," said I. And I made an effort to appear brisk and lively, which only ended in making them laugh heartily.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

MY ELOQUENCE BEFORE THE CONSTANCE MAGISTRATES.

Respectable reader, there is no use in asking you if you have ever been in the hotel of the "Balance," at Constance. Of course you have not. It is neither recorded in the book of John, nor otherwise known to fame. It is an obscure hostel, only visited

by the very humblest wayfarers, and such poor offshoots of wretchedness as are fain to sleep on a truckle-bed and sup meanly. Vaterchen, however, spoke of it in generous terms. There was a certain oniony soup he had tasted there years ago whose flavor had not yet left his memory. He had seen, besides, the most delicious *schweine fleisch* hanging down from the kitchen rafters, and it had been revealed to him in a dream that a solvent traveler might have rashers on demand.

Poor fellow! I had not the vaguest idea of the eloquence he possessed till he came to talk on these matters. From modest and distrustful, he grew assured and confident; his hesitation of speech was replaced by a fluent utterance and a rich vocabulary; and he repeatedly declared that though the exterior was unprepossessing, and the surface generally homely, there were substantial comforts obtainable which far surpassed the resources of more pretentious houses. "You are served on pewter, it is true," said he; "but pewter is a rare material to impart relish to a savory mess." Though we should dine in the kitchen, he gave me to understand that even in this there were advantages, and that the polite guests of the *salon* never knew what it was to taste that rich odor of the "roast," or that fragrant incense that steamed up from the luscious stew, and which were to cookery what bouquet was to wine.

"I will not say that, honored sir," continued he, "to you, in the mixed company which frequent such humble hearths there would be matter of interest and amusement; but, to a man like myself, these chance companionships are delightful. Here all are stragglers, all adventurers. Not a man that deposits his pack in the corner, and draws in his chair to the circle, but is a wanderer and a pilgrim of one sort or other." He drew me an amusing picture of one of these groups, wherein, even without telling his story, each gave such insight into his life and travels as to present a sort of drama.

Whether it was that my companion had drawn too freely on his imagination, or that we had fallen on an unfortunate moment, I cannot say, but though we found the company at the "Balance" numerous and varied, there was none of the sociality I looked for, still less of that generous warmth and good greeting which he assured me was the courtesy of such places. The men were chiefly carriers, with their mule teams and heavy wagons, bound for the Bavarian Tyrol. There was a sprinkling of Jew pedlars, on their way to the Vorarlberg; a deserter from the Austrian army, trying to get back to Hesse Cassel; and an Italian image-carrier, with a green parrot and a well-filled purse, going back to finish his days at Lucca.

Now none of these were elements of a very exalted or exclusive rank; they were each and all of them taken from the very base of the social pyramid; and yet would it be believed that they regarded our entrance amongst them as an act of rare impudence!

A more polished company might have been satisfied with averted heads or cold looks; these were less equivocal. One called out to the landlord to know if he expected any gypsies; another, affecting to treat us as solicitors for their patronage, said he had no "batzen" to bestow on buffoonery; a third suggested we should get up our theatricals under the cart-shed outside, and beat the drum when we were ready; and the deserter, a poor weak-looking, mangy wretch, with a ragged fatigue-jacket and broken boots, put his arm round Catinka's waist, to draw her on his knee, for the which she dealt him such a slap on the face as fairly sent him on the floor, in which ignoble position Vaterchen kicked him again and again. In an instant all were upon us. Carters, pedlars, and image man assailed us furiously. I suppose I beat somebody; I know that several beat *me*. The impression left upon me when all was over was of a sort of human kaleidoscope, where the people turned every way without ceasing. Now we seemed all on our feet, now on our heads, now on the floor, now in the air, Vaterchen flying about like a demon, while Tintefleck stood in a corner, with a gleaming stiletto in hand, saying something in Calabrian, which sounded like an invitation to come and be killed.

The police came at last; and, after a noisy scene of accusation and denial, the weight of evidence went against us, and we were marched off to prison, poor old Vaterchen crying like a child for all the disgrace and misery he had brought on his benefactor; and while he kissed my hand, swearing that a whole life's devotion would not be enough to recompense me for what he had been the means of inflicting on me, Catinka took it more easily, her chief regret apparently being that nobody came near enough to give her a chance with her knife, which she assured us she wielded with a notable skill, and could, with a jerk, send flying through a door, like a javelin, at full six paces' distance; nor, indeed, was it without considerable persuasion she could be induced to restore it to its sheath, which

truth obliges me to own was inside her garter. Our prison, an old tower adjoining the lake, had been once the dungeon of John Huss, and the torture chamber, as it was still called, continued to be used for mild transgressors, such as we were. A small bribe induced the gaoler's wife to take poor Tintefleck for the night into her own quarters, and Vaterchen and I were sole possessors of the gloomy old hall, which opened by a balcony, railed like a sort of cage, over the lake.

If the torture chamber had been denuded of its flesh pincers and thumb-screws, and the other ingenious devices of human cruelty, I am bound to own that its traditions as a place of suffering had not died out, as the fleas left nothing to be desired on the score of misery. Whether it was that they had been pinched by a long fast, or that we were more tender, cutaneously, than the aborigines, I know not, but I can safely aver that I never passed such a night, and sincerely trust that I may never pass such another. Though the air from the lake was cold and chilly, we preferred to crouch on the balcony to remaining within the walls; but even here our persecutors followed us.

Vaterchen slept through it all; an occasional convulsive jerk would show, at times, when one of the enemy had chanced upon some nervous fiber; but, on the whole, he bore up like one used to such martyrdom, and able to brave it. As for me, when morning broke, I looked like a strong case of confluent small-pox, with the addition that my heavy eyelids nearly closed over my eyes, and my lips swelled out like a Kaffir's. How that young minx, Catinka, laughed at me. All the old man's signs, warnings, menaces, were in vain; she screamed aloud with laughter, and never ceased, even as we were led into the tribunal and before the dread presence of the judge.

The judgment-seat was not imposing. It was a long, low, ill-lighted chamber, with a sort of raised counter at one end, behind which sat three elderly men, dressed like master sweeps—that is, of the old days of climbing-boys. The prisoners were confined in a thing like a fold, and there leaned against one end of the same pen as ourselves a square-built, thick-set man of about eight-and-forty, or fifty, dressed in a suit of coarse drab, and whom, notwithstanding an immense red beard and mustache, a clear blue eye and broad brow proclaimed to be English. He was being interrogated as we entered, but from his total ignorance of German the examination was not proceeding very glibly.

"You're an Englishman, ain't you?" cried he, as I came in. "You can speak High Dutch, perhaps?"

"I can speak German well enough to be intelligible, sir."

"All right," said he, in the same free-and-easy tone. "Will you explain to those old beggars there that they're making fools of themselves! Here's how it is. My passport was made out for two: for Thomas Harpar, that's me, and Sam Rigges. Now, because Sam Rigges ain't here, they tell me I can't be suffered to proceed. Ain't that stupid? Did you ever hear the like of that for downright absurdity before?"

"But where is he?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you, because you're a countryman; but I don't like blackening an Englishman to one of those confounded foreigners. Rigges has run."

"What do you mean by 'run'?"

"I mean, cut his stick; gone clean away; and, what's worse, too, carried off a stout bag of dollars with him that we had for our journey!"

"Whither were you going?"

"That's neither here nor there, and don't concern you in any respect. What you've to do is, explain to the old cove yonder—the fellow in the middle is the worst of them—tell him it's all right, that I'm Harpar, and that the other ain't here; or, look here, I'll tell you what's better: do you be Rigges, and it's all right."

I demurred flatly to this suggestion, but undertook to plead his cause on its true merits.

"And who are you, sir, that presume to play the advocate here?" said the judge, haughtily. "I fancied that you stood there to answer a charge against yourself."

"That matter may be very easily disposed of sir," said I, as proudly; "and you will be very fortunate if you succeed as readily in explaining your own illegal arrest of me to the higher court of your country."

With the eloquence which we are told essentially belongs to truth, I narrated how I had witnessed, as a mere passing traveler, the outrageous insult offered to these poor wanderers as they entered the inn. With the warm enthusiasm of one inspired by a good cause, I painted the whole incident with really scarcely a touch of embellishment, reserving the only decorative portion to a description of myself, whom I mentioned as an agent of the British government, especially employed on a peculiar service, the confirmation of which I proudly established by my passport setting forth

that I was a certain "Ponto, Chargé des Dépêches."

Now, if there be one feature of continental life fixed and immutable, it is this, that, wherever the German language be spoken, the reverence for a government functionary is supreme. If you can only show on documentary evidence that you are grandson of the man who made the broom that swept out a government office, it is enough. You are from that hour regarded as one of the younger children of Bureaucracy. You are under the protection of the state; and, though you be but the smallest rivet in the machinery, there is no saying what mischief might not ensue if you were either lost or mislaid.

I saw in an instant the dread impression I had created, and I said, in a voice of careless insolence, "Go on, I beg of you; send me back to prison; chain me; perhaps you would like to torture me? The government I represent is especially slow in vindicating the rights of its injured officials. It has a European reputation for long-suffering, patience, and forbearance. Yes, Englishmen can be impaled, burned, flayed alive, disemboweled. By all means, avail yourselves of your bland privileges; have me led out instantly to the scaffold, unless you prefer to have me broken on the wheel!"

"Will nobody stop him!" cried the president, almost choking with wrath.

"Stop me; I suspect not, sir. It is upon these declarations of mine, made thus openly, that my country will found that demand for reparation which will one day cost you so dearly. Lead on, I am ready for the block." And, as I said this, I untied my cravat, and appeared to prepare for the headsman.

"If he will not cease, the court shall be dissolved," called out the judge.

"Never, sir! Never, so long as I live, shall I surrender the glorious privileges of that freedom by which I assert my birthright as a Briton!"

"Well, you are as impudent a chap as ever I listened to," muttered my countryman at my side.

"The prisoners are dismissed, the court is adjourned," said the president, rising; and, amidst a very disorderly crowd, not certainly enthusiastic in our favor, we were all hurried into the street.

"Come along down here," said Mr. Harpar. "I'm in a very tidy sort of place they call the 'Golden Pig.' Come along, and bring the vagabonds, and let's have breakfast together."

I was hurt at the speech, but, as my companions could not understand its coarseness, I accepted the invitation, and we followed him.

"Well, I ain't seen *your* like for many a day," said Harpar, as we went along. "If you'd have said the half of that to one of our 'beaks,' I think I know where you'd be. But you seem to understand the fellows well. Mayhap you have lived much abroad?"

"A great deal. I am a sort of citizen of the world," said I, with a jaunty easiness.

"For a citizen of the world you appear to have strange tastes in your companionship. How did you come to foregather with these creatures?"

I tried the timeworn cant about seeing life in all its gradations—exploring the cabin as well as visiting the palace, and so on; but there was a rugged sort of incredulity in his manner that checked me, and I could not muster the glib rudeness which usually stood by me on such occasions.

"You're not a man of fortune," said he, dryly, as I finished; "one sees that plainly enough. You're a fellow that should be earning his bread somehow; and the question is: Is this the kind of life that you ought to be leading? What humbug it is to talk about knowing the world and such like. The thing is, to know a trade, to understand some art, to be able to produce something, to manufacture something, to convert something to a useful purpose. When you've done that, the knowledge of men will come later on, never be afraid of that. It's a school that we never miss one single day of our lives. But here we are; this is the 'Pig.' Now, what will you have for breakfast? Ask the vagabonds, too, and tell them there's a wide choice here. They have everything you can mention in this little inn."

An excellent breakfast was soon spread out before us, and though my humble companions did it the most ample justice, I sat there, thoughtful and almost sad. The words of that stranger rang in my ears like a reproach and a warning. I knew how truly he had said that I was not a man of fortune, and it grieved me sorely to think how easily he saw it. In my heart of hearts, I knew it was the delusion I loved best. To appear to the world at large an eccentric man of good means, free to do what he liked and go where he would, was the highest enjoyment I had ever prepared for myself; and yet here was a coarse, commonplace sort of man—at least, his manners were unpolished and his tone underbred—and he saw through it all at once.

I took the first opportunity to slip away unobserved from the company, and retired to the little garden of the inn, to commune with myself and be alone. But ere I had been many minutes there, Harpar joined me. He came up smoking his cigar, with the lounging, lazy air of a man at perfect leisure, and, consequently, quite free to be as disagreeable as he pleased.

"You went off without eating your breakfast," said he, bluntly. "I saw how it was. You didn't like *my* freedom with you. You fancied that I ought to have taken all that nonsense of yours about your rank and your way of life for gospel; or, at least, that I ought to have pretended to do so. That ain't my way. I hate humbug."

It was not very easy to reply good humoredly to such a speech as this. Indeed, I saw no particular reason to treat this man's freedom with any indulgence, and, drawing myself haughtily up, I prepared a very dry but caustic rejoinder.

"When I have learned two points," said I, "on which you can inform me, I may be better able to answer what you have said. The first is: By what possible right do you take to task a person that you never met in your life till now? and, secondly, What benefit on earth could it be to me to impose upon a man from whom I neither want nor expect anything?"

"Easily met, both," said he, quickly. "I'm a practical sort of fellow, who never wastes time on useless materials—that's for your first proposition. Number two: You're a dreamer, and you hate being awakened."

"Well, sir," said I, stiffly, "to a gentleman so remarkable for perspicuity, and who reads character at sight, ordinary intercourse must be wearisome. Will you excuse me if I take my leave of you here?"

"Of course, make no ceremony about it; go or stay, just as you like. I never cross any man's humor."

I muttered something that sounded like a dissent to that doctrine, and he quickly added, "I mean, further than speaking my mind, that's all; nothing more. If you had been a man of fair means, and for a frolic thought it might be good fun to consort for a few days with rapscallions of a traveling circus, all one could say was, it wasn't very good taste; but being evidently a fellow of another stamp, a young man who ought to be in his father's shop or his uncle's counting-house, following some honest craft or calling—for *you*, I say, it was downright ruin."

"Indeed!" said I, with an accent of intense scorn.

"Yes," continued he, seriously, "downright ruin. There's a poison in the lazy, good-for-nothing life of these devils, that never leaves a man's blood. I've a notion that it wouldn't hurt a man's nature so much were he to consort with housebreakers; there's at least something real about these fellows."

"You talk, doubtless, with knowledge, sir," said I, glad to say something that might offend him.

"I do," said he, seriously, and not taking the smallest account of the impertinent allusion. "I know that if a man hasn't a fixed calling, but is always turning his hand to this, that, and t'other, he will very soon cease to have any character whatsoever; he'll just become as shifty in his nature as in his business. I've seen scores of fellows wrecked on that rock, and I hadn't looked at you twice till I saw you were one of them."

"I must say, sir," said I, summoning to my aid what I felt to be a most cutting sarcasm of manner—"I must say, sir, that, considering how short has been the acquaintance which has subsisted between us, it would be extremely difficult for me to show how gratefully I feel the interest you have taken in me."

"Well, I am not so sure of that," said he, thoughtfully.

"May I ask, then, how?"

"Are you sure, first of all, that you wish to show this gratitude you speak of?"

"Oh, sir, can you possibly doubt it?"

"I don't want to doubt it, I want to profit by it."

I made a bland bow that might mean anything, but did not speak.

"Here's the way of it," said he, boldly. "Rigges has run off with all my loose cash, and though there's money waiting for me at certain places, I shall find it very difficult to reach them. I have come down here on foot from Wildbad, and I can make my way, in the same fashion, to Marseilles or Genoa; but then comes the difficulty, and I shall need about ten pounds to get to Malta. Could you lend me ten pounds?"

"Really, sir," said I, coolly, "I am amazed at the innocence with which you can make such a demand on the man whom you have, only a few minutes back, so acutely depicted as an adventurer."

"It was for that very reason I thought of applying to you. Had you been a young fellow of a certain fortune, you'd naturally have been a stranger to the accidents which now and then leave men penniless in out-of-the-way places, and it is just as likely

that the first thought in your head would be, 'Oh, he's a swindler. Why hasn't he his letters of credit or his circular notes?' But, being exactly what I take you for, the chances are you'll say: 'What has befallen *him* to-day may chance to *me* to-morrow. Who can tell the day and the hour some mishap may not overtake him? and so I'll just help him through it."

"And that was your calculation?"

"That was my calculation."

"How sorry I feel to wound the marvelous gift you seem to possess of interpreting character. I am really shocked to think that for this time, at least, your acuteness is at fault."

"Which means that you'll not do it?"

I smiled a benign assent.

He looked at me for a minute or more with a sort of blank incredulity, and then, crossing his arms on his breast, moved slowly down the walk without speaking.

I cannot say how I detested this man; he had offended me in the very sorest part of all my nature; he had wounded the nicest susceptibility I possessed; of the pleasant fancies wherewith I loved to clothe myself he would not leave me enough to cover my nakedness; and yet, now that I had resented his cool impertinence, I hated myself far more than I hated him. Dignity and sarcasm, forsooth! What a fine opportunity to display them, truly! The man might be rude and underbred; he *was* rude and underbred! and was that any justification for *my* conduct towards him? Why had I not had the candor to say, "Here's all I possess in the world; you see yourself that I cannot lend you ten pounds?" How I wished I had said that, and how I wished, even more ardently still, that I had never met him, never interchanged speech with him!

"And why is it that I am offended with him—simply because he has discovered that I am Potts?" Now, these reflections were all the more bitter, since it was only twenty-four hours before that I had resolved to throw off delusion either of myself or others; that I would take my place in the ranks and fight out my battle of life a mere soldier. For this it was that I made companionship with Vaterchen, walking the high road with that poor old man of motley, and actually speculating — in a sort of artistic way—whether I should not make love to Tintefleck! And if I were sincere in all this, how should I feel wounded by the honest candor of that plain-spoken fellow? He wanted a favor at my hands, he owned this; and yet, instead of approaching me with flattery, he at once assails the very stronghold of my self-esteem and says: "No humbug, Potts; at least none with *me!*" He opens acquaintance with me on that masonic principle by which the brotherhood of Poverty is maintained throughout all lands and all peoples, and whose great maxim is: "He who lends to the poor man borrows from the ragged man."

"I'll go over at once," said I, aloud. "I'll have more talk with him. I'm much mistaken if there's not good stuff in that rugged nature."

When I entered the little inn, I found Vaterchen fast asleep; he had finished off every flask on the table, and lay breathing stertorously, and giving a long-drawn whistle in his snore, that smacked almost of apoplexy. Tintefleck was singing to her guitar before a select audience of the inn servants, and Harpar was gone!

I gave the girl a glance of rebuke and displeasure. I aroused the old man with a kick, and imperiously demanded my bill.

"The bill has been paid by the other stranger," said the landlord; "he has settled everything, and left a *trenkgeld* for the servants, so that you have nothing to say."

I could have almost cried with spite as I heard these words. It would have been a rare solace to my feelings if I could have put that man down for a rogue, and then been able to say to myself, how cleverly I had escaped the snares of a swindler. But to know now that he was not only honest but liberal, and to think, besides, that I had been his guest—eaten of his salt—it was more than I well could endure.

"Which way did he take?" asked I.

"Round the head of the lake for Lindau. I told him that the steamer would take him there to-morrow for a trifle, but he would not wait."

"Ah me!" sighed Vaterchen, but half awake, and with one eye still closed, "and we are going to St. Gallen."

"Who said so?" cried I, imperiously. "We are going to Lindau; at least if I be the person who gives orders here. Follow!" And as I spoke I marched proudly on, while a slip-shod, shuffling noise of feet and a low, half-smothered sob told me that they were coming after me.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A SUMPTUOUS DINNER AND AN EMPTY POCKET.

My poor companions had but a sorry time of it on that morning. I was in a

fearful temper, and made no effort to control it. The little romance of my meeting with these creatures was beginning to scale off, and, there beneath, lay the vulgar metal of their natures exposed to view. As for old Vaterchen, shuffling along in his tattered shoes, half-stupid with wine and shame together, I couldn't bear to look at him; while Tintefleck, although at the outset abashed by my rebukeful tone and cold manner, had now rallied, and seemed well disposed to assert her own against all comers. Yes, there was a palpable air of defiance about her, even to the way that she sang as she went along; every thrill and cadence seemed to say, "I'm doing this to amuse myself; never imagine that I care whether you are pleased or not." Indeed, she left me no means of avoiding this conclusion, since at every time that I turned on her a look of anger or displeasure, her reply was to sing the louder.

"And it was only yesterday," thought I, "and I dreamed that I could be in love with this creature—dreamed that I could replace Kate Herbert's image in my heart with that coarse travestie of woman's gentleness. Why, I might as well hope to make a gentleman of old Vaterchen, and present him to the world as a man of station and eminence."

What an insane hope was this! As well might I shiver a fragment from a stone on the roadside, and think to give it value by having it set as a ring. The caprice of keeping them company for a day might be pardonable. It was the whim of one who is, above all, a student of mankind. But why continue the companionship? A little more of such intimacy, and who is to say what I may not imbibe of their habits and their natures; and Potts, the man of sentiment, the child of impulse, romance, and poetry, become a slave of the "Ring," a saltimbanque! Now, though I could implicitly rely upon the rigidity of my joints to prevent the possibility of my ever displaying any feats of agility, I could yet picture myself in a long-tailed blue coat and jack-boots walking round and round in the sawdust circle, with four or five other creatures of the same sort, and who have no consciousness of any function till they are made the butt of some extempore drollery by the clown.

The creative temperament has this great disadvantage, that one cannot always build castles, but must occasionally construct hovels, and sometimes even dungeons and gaols; and here was I now, with a large contract order for this species of edifice, and certainly I set to work with a will. The impatience of my mind communicated itself to my gait, and I walked along at a tremendous rate.

"I can scarcely keep up with you at this pace," said Tintefleck; "and see, we have left poor Vaterchen a long way behind."

I made some rude answer—I know not what—and told her to come on.

"I will not leave him," said she, coming to a halt, and standing in a composed and firm attitude before me.

"Then I will," said I, angrily. "Farewell!" And waving my hand in a careless adieu, I walked briskly onward, not even turning a look on her as I went. I think I'm almost certain I heard a heavy sob close behind me, but I would not look round for worlds. I was in one of those moods—all weak men know them well—when a harsh or ungracious act appears something very daring and courageous. The very pain my conduct gave myself persuaded me that it must be heroic, just as a devotee is satisfied after a severe self-castigation.

"Yes, Potts," said I, "you are doing the right thing here. A little more of such association as this, and you would be little better than themselves. Besides, and above all, you ought to be 'real.' Now, these are not real any more than the tinsel gems and tinfoil splendors they wear on their tunics." It broke on me, too, like a sudden light, that to be the fictitious Potts, the many-sided, many-tinted—what a German would call "der mitviele-farben bedeckte Potts"—I ought to be immensely rich, all my changes of character requiring great resources and unlimited "properties" as stage folk call them; whereas, "der echte wahrhaftige mann Potts" might be as poor as Lazarus. Indeed, the poorer the more real, since more natural.

While I thus speculated, I caught sight of a man scaling one of the precipitous paths by which the winding road was shortened for foot-travelers; a second glance showed me that this was Harpar, who, with a heavy knapsack, was toiling along. I made a great effort to come up with him, but when I reached the high road, he was still a long distance in front of me. I could not, if there had been any one to question me, say why I wished to overtake him. It was a sort of chase suggested simply by the object in front: a rare type, if we but knew it, of one-half the pursuits we follow throughout life.

As I mounted the last of these bypaths which led to the crest of the mountain, I felt certain that, with a lighter equipment, I should come up with him; but scarcely had I gained the top, than I saw him strid-

ing away vigorously on the road fully a mile away beneath me. "He shall not beat me," said I; and I increased my speed. It was all in vain. I could not do it; and when I drew nigh Lindau at last, very weary and footsore, the sun was just sinking on the western shore of the lake.

"Which is the best inn here?" asked I of a shopkeeper who was lounging carelessly at his door.

"Yonder," said he, "where you see that post-carriage turning into."

"To-night," said I, "I will be guilty of an extravagance. I will treat myself to a good supper, and an honest glass of wine." And on these hospitable thoughts intent I unslung my knapsack, and, throwing as much of distinction as I could into my manner, strolled into the public room.

So busied was the household in attending to the travelers who arrived "extra post," that none condescended to notice me, till at last, as the tumult subsided, a venerable old waiter approached me, and said, in a half friendly, half rebukeful tone: "It is at the 'Swan' you ought to be, my friend; the next turning but two to the left hand, and you'll see the blue lantern over the gateway."

"I mean to remain where I am," said I, imperiously, "and to remember your impertinence when I am about to pay my bill. Bring me the *carte*."

I was overjoyed to see the confusion and shame of the old fellow. He saw at once the grievous error he had committed, and was so overwhelmed that he could not reply. Meanwhile, with all the painstaking accuracy of a practiced *gourmand*, I was making a careful note of what I wished for supper.

"Are you not ashamed," said I, rebukefully, "to have *ortolans* here, when you know in your heart they are swallows?"

He was so abject that he could only give a melancholy smile, as though to say, "Be merciful, and spare us!"

"Bohemian pheasant, too—come, come, this is too bad! Be frank and confess; how often has that one speckled tail done duty on a capon of your own raising?"

"Gracious Herr!" muttered he, "do not crush us altogether."

I don't think that he said this in actual words, but his terrified eyes and his shaking cheeks declared it.

"Never mind," said I, encouragingly, "it will not hurt us to make a sparing meal occasionally; with the venison and steak, the fried salmon, the duck with olives, and the apricot tart, we will satisfy appetite, and persuade ourselves, if we can, that we have fared luxuriously."

"And the wine, sir?" asked he.

"Ah, there we *are* difficult. No little Baden vintage, no small wine of the Bergstrasse, can impose upon us! Liebfrauenmilch, or, if you can guarantee it, Marcobrunner will do; but, mind, no substitutes!"

He laid his hand over his heart and bowed low; and, as he moved away, I said to myself, "What a mesmerism there must be in real money, since, even with the mockery of it, I have made that creature a bondslave." Brief as was the interval in preparing my meal, it was enough to allow me a very considerable share of reflection, and I found that, do what I would, a certain voice within would whisper, "Where are your fine resolutions now, Potts? Is this the life of reality that you had promised yourself? Are you not at the old work again? Are you not masquerading it once more? Don't you know well enough that all this pretension of yours is bad money, and that at the first ring of it on the counter you will be found out?"

"This you may rely on, gracious sir," said the waiter, as he laid a bottle on the table beside me with a careful hand. "It is the orange seal;" and he then added, in a whisper, "taken from the Margrave's cellar in the revolution of '93, and every flask of it worth a province."

"We shall see—we shall see," said I, haughtily; "serve the soup!"

If I had been Belshazzar, I believe I should have eaten very heartily, and drunk my wine with a great relish, notwithstanding that drawn sword. I don't know how it is, but if I can only see the smallest bit of *terra firma* between myself and the edge of a precipice, I feel as though I had a whole vast prairie to range over. For the life of me I cannot realize anything that may, or may not, befall me remotely. "Blue are the hills far off," says the adage; and on the converse of the maxim do I aver that faint are all dangers that are distant. An immediate peril overwhelms me; but I could look forward to a shipwreck this day fortnight with a fortitude truly heroic.

"This is a nice, old, half-forgotten sort of place," thought I, "a kind of vulgar Venice, water-washed, and muddy, and dreary, and do-nothing. I'll stay here for a week or so; I'll give myself up to the drowsy *genius loci*; I'll Germanize to the top of my bent; who is to say what metaphysical melancholy, dashed with a strange diabolic humor, may not come of constantly feeding on this heavy cookery, and eternally listening to their gurgling gutturals? I may come out a Wieland or a Herder, with

a sprinkling of Henri Heine! Yes," said I, "this is the true way to approach life: first of all develop your own faculties, and then mark how in their exercise you influence your fellow-men. Above all, however, cultivate your individuality; respect this, the greatest of all the unities."

"*Ja, gnädiger Herr*," said the old waiter, as he tried to step away from my grasp, for, without knowing it, I had laid hold of him by the wrist while I addressed to him this speech. Desirous to re-establish my character for sanity, somewhat compromised by this incident, I said:

"Have you a money-changer in these parts? If so, let me have some silver for this English gold." I put my hand in my pocket for my purse; not finding it, I tried another and another. I ransacked them all over again, patted myself, shook my coat, looked into my hat, and then, with a sudden flash of memory, I bethought me that I had left it with Catinka, and was actually without one sou in the world! I sat down, pale and almost fainting, and my arms fell powerless at my sides.

"I have lost my purse!" gasped I out, at length.

"Indeed!" said the old man, but with a tone of such palpable scorn that it actually sickened me.

"Yes," said I, with all that force which is the peculiar prerogative of truth; "and in it all the money I possessed."

"I have no doubt of it," rejoined he, in the same dry tone as before.

"You have no doubt of what, old man? Or what do you mean by the supercilious quietness with which you assent to my misfortune? Send the landlord to me."

"I will do more, I will send the police!" said he, as he shuffled out of the room.

I have met scores of men on my way through life who would not have felt the slightest embarrassment in such a situation as mine—fellows so accustomed to shipwreck, that the cry of "Breakers ahead!" or "Man the boats!" would have occasioned neither excitement nor trepidation. What stuff they are made of instead of nerves, muscles, and arteries, I cannot imagine, since, when the question is self-preservation, how can it possibly be more imminent than when not alone your animal existence is jeopardized, but the dearer and more precious life of fame and character is in peril?

For a moment I thought that though this besotted old fool of a waiter might suspect my probity the more clear-sighted intelligence of the landlord would at once recognize my honest nature, and with the confidence of a noble conviction say, "Don't tell me that the man yonder is a knave. I read him very differently. Tell me your story, sir." And then I would tell it. It is not improbable that my speculation might have been verified had it not been that it was a landlady and not a landlord who swayed the destinies of the inn. Oh, what a wise invention of our ancestors was the Salique law! How justly they appreciated the unbridled rashness of the female nature in command! How well they understood the one-ideaed impetuosity with which they rush to wrong conclusions!

Until I listened to the Frau von Wintner, I imagined the German language somewhat weak in the matter of epithets. She undeceived me on this head, showing resources of abusive import that would have done credit to a Homeric hero. Having given me full ten minutes of a strong vocabulary, she then turned on the waiter, scornfully asking him if, at his time of life, he ought to have let himself be imposed upon by so palpable and undeniable a swindler as myself? She clearly showed that there was no extenuation of his fault, that rogue and vagabond had been written on my face, and inscribed in my manner; not to mention that I had followed the well-beaten track of all my fraternity in fraud, and ordered everything the most costly the house could command. In fact, so strenuously did she urge this point, and so eager did she seem about enforcing a belief in her statement, that I almost began to suspect she might suggest an anatomical examination of me to sustain her case. Had she been even less eloquent, the audience would still have been with her, for it is a curious but unquestionable fact that in all little visited localities the stranger is ungraciously regarded and ill-looked on.

Whenever I attempted to interpose a word in my defense, I was overborne at once. Indeed, public opinion was so decidedly against me, that I felt very happy in thinking Lynch law was not a Teutonic institution. The room was now filled with retainers of the inn, strangers, townsfolk, and police, and, to judge by the violence of their gestures and the loud tones of their voices, one would have pronounced me a criminal of the worst sort.

"But what is it that he has done? What's his offense?" I heard a voice say from the crowd, and I fancied his accent was that of a foreigner. A perfect inundation of vituperative accusation, however, now poured in, and I could gather no more. The turmoil and uproar rose and fell, and fell and rose again, till at last, my

patience utterly exhausted, I burst out into a very violent attack on the uncivilized habits of a people who could thus conduct themselves to a man totally unconvicted of any offense.

"Well, well, don't give way to passion; don't let temper get the better of you," said a fat, citizen-like man beside me. "The stranger there has just paid for what you have had, and all is settled."

I thought I should have fainted as I heard these words. Indeed, until that instant, I had never brought home to my own mind the utter destitution of my state; but now, there I stood, realizing to myself the condition of one of those we read of in our newspapers as having received five shillings from the poor-box, while D 490 is deputed to "make inquiries after him at his lodgings," and learn particulars of his life and habits. I could have borne being sent to prison. I could have endured any amount of severity, so long as I revolted against its injustice; but the sense of being an object of actual charity crushed me utterly, and I could nearly have cried with vexation.

By degrees the crowd thinned off, and I found myself sitting alone beside the table where I had dined, with the hateful old waiter, as though standing sentinel over me.

"Who is this person," asked I, haughtily, "who, with an indelicate generosity, has presumed to interfere with the concerns of a stranger?"

"The gracious nobleman who paid for your dinner is now eating his own at No. 5," said the old monster with a grin.

"I will call upon him when he has dined," said I, transfixing the wretch with a look so stern, as to make rejoinder impossible; and then, throwing my plaid wrapper and my knapsack on a table near, I strolled out into the street.

Lindau is a picturesque old place, as it stands rising, as it were, out of the very waters of the Lake of Constance, and the great mountain of the Sentis, with its peak of six thousand feet high, is a fine object in the distance; while the gorge of the Upper Rhine offers many a grand effect of Alpine scenery, not the less striking when looked at with a setting sun, which made the foreground more massive and the hill-tops golden; and yet I carried that in my heart which made the whole picture as dark and dreary as Poussin's Deluge. It was all very beautiful. There, was the snow-white summit, reflected in the still water of the lake; there, the rich wood, browned with autumn, and now tinted with a golden glory, richer again; there were the white-sailed boats, asleep on the calm surface, streaked with the variegated light of the clouds above, and it was peaceful as it was picturesque. But do what I could, I could not enjoy it, and all because I had lost my purse, just as if certain fragments of a yellow metal the more or the less ought to obscure eyesight, lull the sense of hearing, and make a man's whole existence miserable. "And after all," thought I, "Catinka will be here this evening, or to-morrow, at furthest. Vaterchen was tired, and could not come on. It was *I* who left *them*—I, in my impatience and ill-humor. The old man doubtless knew nothing of the purse confided to the girl, nor is it at all needful that he should. They will certainly follow me, and why, for the mere inconvenience of an hour or two, should I persist in seeing the world so crape-covered and sad-looking? Surely this is not the philosophy my knowledge of life has taught me. I ought to know and feel that these daily accidents are but stones on the road one travels. They may, perchance, wound the foot or damage the shoe, but they rarely delay the journey if the traveler be not faint-hearted and craven. I will treat the whole incident in a higher spirit. I will wait for their coming in that tranquil and assured condition of mind which is the ripe fruit of a real insight into mankind. Pitt said, after long years of experience, that there was more of good than of bad in human nature. Let it be the remark of some future biographer that Potts agreed with him."

When I got back to the inn, I was somewhat puzzled what to do. It would have been impossible with any success to have resumed my former tone of command, and for the life of me I could not bring myself down to anything like entreaty. While I thus stood, uncertain how to act, the old waiter approached me, almost courteously, and said my room was ready for me when I wished it.

"I will first of all wait upon the traveler in No. 8," said I.

"He has retired for the night," was the answer. "He seems in very delicate health, and the fatigue of the journey has overcome him."

"To-morrow will do, then," said I, easily; and not venturing upon an inquiry as to the means by which my room was at my disposal, I took my candle and mounted the stairs.

As I lay down in my bed, I resolved I would take a calm survey of my past life: what I had done, what I had failed to do,

what were the guiding principles which directed me, and whither they were likely to bear me. But scarcely had I administered to myself the preliminary oath to tell nothing but the truth, than I fell off sound asleep.

My first waking thought the next morning was to inquire if two persons had arrived in search of me—an elderly man and a young woman. I described them. None such had been seen. "They will have sought shelter in some of the humbler inns," thought I; "I'll up and look after them." I searched the town from end to end; I visited the meanest halting-places of the wayfarer; I inquired at the police bureaus—at the gate—but none had arrived who bore any resemblance to those I asked after. I was vexed—only vexed at first—but gradually I found myself growing distrustful. The suspicion that the ice is not strong enough for your weight, and then, close upon that, the shock of fear that strikes you when the loud crash of a fracture breaks on the ear, are mere symbols of what one suffers at the first glimmering of a betrayal. I repelled the thought with indignation; but certain thoughts there are which, when turned out, stand like sturdy duns at the gate, and will not be sent away. This was one of them. It followed me wherever I went, importunately begging for a hearing, and menacing me with sad consequences if I were obdurate enough to listen. "You are a simpleton, Potts, a weak, foolish, erring creature! and you select as the objects of your confidence those whose lives of accident present exactly as the most irresistible of all temptations to them—the Dupe! How they must have laughed—how they must yet be laughing at you! How that old drunken fox will chuckle over your simplicity, and the minx Tintefleck indulge herself in caricatures of your figure and face? I wonder how much of truth there was in that old fellow's story? Was he ever the syndic of his village, or was the whole narrative a mere fiction like—like——" I covered my face with my hands in shame as I muttered out, "like one of your own, Potts?"

I was very miserable, for I could no longer stand proudly forward as the prosecutor, but was obliged to steal ignominiously into the dock and take my place beside the other prisoners. What became of all my honest indignation as I bethought me, that I, of all men, could never arraign the counterfeit and the sham?

"Let them go, then," cried I, "and prosper if they can; I will never pursue them. I will even try and remember what pleased and interested me in their fortunes, and, if it may be, forget that they have carried away my little all of wealth."

A loud tramping of post-horses, and the cracking of whips, drew me to the window, and I saw beneath, in the court-yard, a handsome traveling britzska getting ready for the road. Oh, how suggestive is a well-cushioned calèche, with its many appliances of ease and luxury, its trim imperials, its scattered litter of wrappers and guide-books—all little episodes of those who are to journey in it!

"Who are the happy souls about to travel thus enjoyably?" thought I, as I saw the waiter and the courier discussing the most convenient spot to deposit a small hamper with eatables for the road; and then I heard the landlady's voice call out:

"Take up the bill to No. 8."

So, then, this was No. 8 who was fast getting ready to depart—No. 8 who had interposed in my favor the evening before, and towards whom a night's rest and some reflection had modified my feelings and changed my sentiments very remarkably.

"Will you ask the gentleman at No. 8 if I may be permitted to speak with him?" said I to the man who took in the bill.

"He'll scarcely see you now—he's just going off."

"Give the message as I speak it," said I; and he disappeared.

There was a long interval before he issued forth again, and when he did so he was flurried and excited. Some overcharges had been taken off and some bad money in change to be replaced by honest coin, and it was evident that various little well-intended rogueries had not achieved their usual success.

"Go in, you'll find him there," said the waiter, insolently, as he went down to have the bill rectified.

I knocked, a full round voice cried, "Come in!" and I entered.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MARY CROFTON'S COMMISSION.

"Well, what next? Have you bethought you of anything more to charge me with?" cried a large full man, whose angry look and manner showed how he resented these cheatings.

I staggered back sick and faint, for the individual before me was Crofton, my kind host of long ago in Ireland, and from whose

hospitable roof I had taken such an unceremonious departure.

"Who are you?" cried he, again. "I had hoped to have paid everything and everybody. Who are you?"

Wishing to retire unrecognized, I stammered out something very unintelligibly indeed about my gratitude, and my hope for a pleasant journey to him, retreating all the while towards the door.

"It's all very well to wish the traveler a pleasant journey," said he, "but you innkeepers ought to bear in mind that no man's journey is rendered more agreeable by roguery. This house is somewhat dearer than the 'Clarendon' in London, or the 'Hôtel du Rhin' at Paris. Now, there might be perhaps some pretext to make a man pay smartly who travels post, and has two or three servants with him, but what excuse can you make for charging some poor devil of a foot traveler, taking his humble meal in the common room, and, naturally enough, of the commonest fare, for making him pay eight florins—eight florins and some kreutzers—for his dinner? Why, our dinner here for two people was handsomely paid at six florins a head, and yet you bring in a bill of eight florins against that poor wretch."

I saw now that, what between the blinding effects of his indignation and certain changes which time and the road had worked in my appearance, it was more than probable I should escape undetected, and so I affected to busy myself with some articles of his luggage that lay scattered about the room until I could manage to slip away.

"Touch nothing, my good fellow!" cried he, angrily; "send my own people here for these things. Let my courier come here—or my valet!"

This was too good an opportunity to be thrown away, and I made at once for the door, but at the same instant it was opened, and Mary Crofton stood before me. One glance showed me that I was discovered, and there I stood speechless with shame and confusion. Rallying, however, after a moment, I whispered, "Don't betray me," and tried to pass out. Instead of minding my entreaty, she set her back to the door, and laughingly cried out to her brother:

"Don't you know whom we have got here?"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed he.

"Cannot you recognize an old friend, notwithstanding all his efforts to cut us?"

"Why — what — surely it can't be—it's not possible—eh?" And by this time he had wheeled me round to the strong light of the window, and then, with a loud burst, he cried out, "Potts by all that's ragged! Potts himself! Why, old fellow, what could you mean by wanting to escape us?" and he wrung my hand with a cordial shake that at once brought the blood back to my heart, while his sister completed my happiness by saying:

"If you only knew all the schemes we have planned to catch you, you would certainly not have tried to avoid us."

I made an effort to say something—anything, in short—but not a word would come. If I was overjoyed at the warmth of their greeting, I was no less overwhelmed with shame; and there I stood, looking very pitiably from one to the other, and almost wishing that I might faint outright and so finish my misery.

With a woman's fine tact, Mary Crofton seemed to read the meaning of my suffering, and, whispering one word in her brother's ear, she slipped away and left us alone together.

"Come," said he, good-naturedly, as he drew his arm inside of mine, and led me up and down the room, "tell me all about it. How have you come here? What are you doing?"

I have not the faintest recollection of what I said. I know that I endeavored to take up my story from the day I had last seen him, but it must have proved a very strange and bungling narrative, from the questions which he was forced occasionally to put, in order to follow me out.

"Well," said he, at last, "I will own to you that, after your abrupt departure, I was sorely puzzled what to make of you, and I might have remained longer in the same state of doubt, when a chance visit that I made to Dublin led me to Dycer's, and there, by a mere accident, I heard of you—heard who you were, and where your father lived. I went at once and called upon him, my object being to learn if he had any tidings of you, and where you then were. I found him no better informed than myself. He showed me a few lines you had written on the morning you had left home, stating that you would probably be absent some days, and might be even weeks, but that since that date nothing had been heard of you. He seemed vexed and displeased, but not uneasy or apprehensive about your absence, and the same tone I observed in your college tutor, Doctor Tobin. He said: 'Potts will come back, sir, one of these days, and not a whit wiser than he went. His self-esteem is to his capacity in the duplicate ratio of the inverse proportion of his ability, and he will be always a fool.' I wrote to various friends of ours,

traveling about the world, but none had met with you; and at last, when about to come abroad myself, I called again on your father, and found him just re-married."

"Re-married!"

"Yes! he was lonely, he said, and wanted companionship, and so on; and all I could obtain from him was a note for a hundred pounds, and a promise that, if you came back within the year, you should share the business of his shop with him."

"Never! never!" said I. "Potts may be the fool they deem him, but there are instincts and promptings in his secret heart that they know nothing of. I will never go back. Go on."

"I now come to my own story. I left Ireland a day or two after and came to England, where business detained me some weeks. My uncle had died and left me his heir—not, indeed, so rich as I had expected, but very well off for a man who had passed his life on very moderate means. There were a few legacies to be paid, and one which he especially intrusted to me by a secret paper, in the hope that, by delicate and judicious management, I might be able to persuade the person in whose interest it was bequeathed to accept it. It was, indeed, a task of no common difficulty, the legatee being the widow of a man who had, by my uncle's cruelty, been driven to destroy himself. It is a long story, which I cannot now enter upon; enough that I say it had been a trial of strength between two very vindictive, unyielding men which should crush the other, and my uncle being the richer—and not from any other reason—conquered.

"The victory was a barren one. It imbittered every hour of his life after, and the only reparation in his power he attempted on his death-bed, which was to settle an annuity on the family of the man he had ruined. I found out at once where they lived, and set about effecting this delicate charge. I will not linger over my failure—but it was complete. The family was in actual distress, but nothing would induce them to listen to the project of assistance; and, in fact, their indignation compelled me to retire from the attempt in despair. My sister did her utmost in the cause, but equally in vain, and we prepared to leave the place, much depressed and cast down by our failure. It was on the last evening of our stay at the inn of the little village, a townsman of the place, whom I had employed to aid my attempt by his personal influence with the family, asked to see me and speak with me in private.

"He appeared to labor under considerable agitation, and opened our interview by bespeaking my secrecy as to what he was about to communicate. It was to this purport: A friend of his own, engaged in the Baltic trade, had just declared to him that he had seen W., the person I allude to, alive and well, walking on the quay at Riga, that he traced him to his lodging, but, on inquiring for him the next day, he was not to be found, and it was then ascertained that he had left the city. W. was, it would seem, a man easily recognized, and the other declared that there could not be the slightest doubt of his identity. The question was a grave one how to act, since the assurance company with which his life was insured were actually engaged in discussing the propriety of some compromise by paying to the family a moiety of the policy, and a variety of points arose out of this contingency; for, while it would have been a great cruelty to have conveyed hopes to the family that might, by possibility, not be realized, yet, on the other hand, to have induced them to adopt a course on the hypothesis of his death when they believed him still living, was almost as bad.

"I thought for a long while over the matter, and with my sister's counsel to aid me, I determined that we should come abroad and seek out this man, trusting that, if we found him, we could induce him to accept of the legacy which his family rejected. We obtained every clue we could think of to his detection. A perfect description of him, in voice, look, and manner; a copy of his portrait, and a specimen of his handwriting; and then we bethought ourselves of interesting you in the search. You were rambling about the world in that idle and desultory way in which any sort of a pursuit might be a boon—as often in the by-paths as on the high-roads—you might chance to hit off this discovery in some remote spot, or, at all events, find some clue to it. In a word, we grew to believe that, with you to aid us, we should get to the bottom of this mystery; and now, that by a lucky chance we have met you, our hopes are all the stronger."

"You'll think it strange," said I, "but I already know something of this story: the man you allude to was Sir Samuel Whalley."

"How on earth have you guessed that?"

"I came by the knowledge on a railroad journey, where my fellow-passengers talked over the event, and I subsequently traveled with Sir Samuel's daughter, who came abroad to fill the station of a companion to an elderly lady. She called herself Miss Herbert."

"Exactly! The widow resumed her family name after W.'s suicide—if it were a suicide."

"How singular to think that you should have chanced upon this link of the chain! And do you know her?"

"Intimately; we were fellow-travelers for some days."

"And where is she now?"

"She is, at this moment, at a villa on the Lake of Como, living with a Mrs. Keats, the sister of her majesty's envoy at Kalbbratonstadt."

"You are marvelously accurate in this narrative, Potts," said he, laughing; "the impression made on you by this young lady can scarcely have been a transient one."

I suppose I grew very red—I felt that I was much confused by this remark—and I turned away to conceal my emotion. Crofton was too delicate to take any advantage of my distress, and merely added:

"From having known her, you will naturally devote yourself with more ardor to serve her. May we then count upon your assistance in our project?"

"That you may," said I. "From this hour I devote myself to it."

Crofton at once proposed that I should order my luggage to be placed on his carriage, and start off with them; but I firmly opposed this plan. First of all, I had no luggage, and had no fancy to confess as much; secondly, I resolved to give at least one day for Vaterchen's arrival—I'd have given a month rather than come down to the dreary thought of his being a knave, and Tintefleck a cheat! In fact, I felt that if I were to begin any new project in life with so slack an experience, every step I took would be marked with distrust, and tarnished with suspicion. I therefore pretended to Crofton that I had given rendezvous to a friend at Lindau, and could not leave without waiting for him. I am not very sure that he believed me, but he was most careful in not dropping a word that might show incredulity; and once more we addressed ourselves to the grand project before us.

"Come in, Mary!" cried he, suddenly rising from his chair, and going to meet her. "Come in, and help us by your good counsel."

It was not possible to receive me with more kindness than she showed. Had I been some old friend who came to meet them there by appointment, her manner could not have been more courteous nor more easy; and when she learned from her brother how warmly I had associated myself in this plan, she gave me one of her pleasantest smiles, and said:

"I was not mistaken in you."

With a great map of Europe before us on the table, we proceeded to plan a future line of operations. We agreed to take certain places, each of us, and to meet at certain others, to compare notes and report progress. We scarcely permitted ourselves to feel any great confidence of success, but we all concurred in the notion that some lucky hazard might do for us more than all our best-devised schemes could accomplish; and, at last, it was settled that, while *they* took Southern Germany and the Tyrol, *I* should ramble about through Savoy and Upper Italy, and our meeting-place be in Italy. The great railway centers, where Englishmen of every class and gradation were much employed, offered the best prospect of meeting with the object of our search, and these were precisely the sort of places such a man would be certain to resort to.

Our discussion lasted so long, that the Croftons put off their journey till the following day, and we dined all together very happily, never wearied of talking over the plan before us, and each speculating as to what share of acuteness he could contribute to the common stock of investigation. It was when Crofton left the room to search for the portrait of Whalley, that Mary sat down at my side, and said:

"I have been thinking for some time over a project in which you can aid me greatly. My brother tells me that you are known to Miss Herbert. Now, I want to write to her; I want to tell her that there is one who, belonging to a family from which hers has suffered heavily, desires to expiate, so far as may be, the great wrong, and, if she will permit it, to be her friend. While I can in a letter explain what I feel on this score, I am well aware how much aid it would afford me to have the personal corroboration of one who could say, 'She who writes this is not altogether unworthy of your affection; do not reject the offer she makes you, or, at least, reflect and think over it before you refuse it.' Will you help me so far?"

My heart bounded with delight as I first listened to her plan; it was only a moment before, that I remembered how difficult, if not impossible, it would be for me to approach Miss Herbert once more. How or in what character could I seek her? To appear before her in any feigned part would be, under the circumstances, ignoble and unworthy, and yet was I, out of any merely personal consideration, any regard for the poor creature Potts, to forego the interests, mayhap the whole happiness, of one so immeasurably better and worthier? Would

not any amount of shame and exposure to myself be a cheap price for even a small quantity of benefit bestowed on *her!* What signified it that I was poor and ragged—unknown, unrecognized—if *she* were to be the gainer? Would not, in fact, the very sacrifice of self in the affair be ennobling and elevating to me, and would I not stand better in my own esteem for this one honest act, than I had ever done after any mock success or imaginary victory?

"I think I can guess why you hesitate," cried she; "you fear that I will say something indiscreet—something that would compromise you with Miss Herbert—but you need not dread that; and, at all events, you shall read my letter."

"Far from it," said I; "my hesitation had a very different source. I was solely thinking whether, if you were aware of how I stood in my relations to Miss Herbert, you would have selected me as your advocate; and though it may pain me to make a full confession, you shall hear everything."

With this I told her all—all, from my first hour of meeting her at the railway station, to my last parting with her at Schaffhausen. I tried to make my narrative as grave and commonplace as might be, but, do what I would, the figure in which I was forced to present myself overcame all her attempts at seriousness, and she laughed immoderately. If it had not been for this burst of merriment on her part, it is more than probable I might have brought down my history to the very moment of telling, and narrated every detail of my journey with Vaterchen and Tintefleck. I was, however, warned by these circumstances, and concluded in time to save myself from this new ridicule.

"From all that you have told me here," said she, "I only see one thing—which is, that you are deeply in love with this young lady."

"No," said I; "I was so once—I am not so any longer. My passion has fallen into the chronic stage, and I feel myself her friend—only her friend."

"Well, for the purpose I have in mind, this is all the better. I want you, as I said, to place my letter in her hands, and, so far as possible, enforce its arguments—that is, try and persuade her that to reject our offers on her behalf is to throw upon us a share of the great wrong our uncle worked, and make us, as it were, participators in the evil he did them. As for myself," said she, boldly, "all the happiness that I might have derived from ample means is dashed with remembering what misery it has been attended with to that poor family. If you urge that one then forcibly, you can scarcely fail with her."

"And what are your intentions with regard to her?" asked I.

"They will take any shape she pleases. My brother would either enable her to return home, and, by persuading her mother to accept an annuity, live happily under her own roof; or she might—if the spirit of independence fires her—she might yet use her influence over her mother and sister to regard our proposals more favorably; or she might come and live with us, and this I would prefer to all; but you must read my letter, and more than once, too. You must possess yourself of all its details, and, if there be anything to which you object, there will be time enough still to change it."

"Here he is—here is the portrait of our lost sheep," said Crofton, now entering with a miniature in his hand. It represented a bluff, bold, almost insolently bold, man in full civic robes, the face not improbably catching an additional expression of vulgar pride from the fact that the likeness was taken in that culminating hour of greatness when he first took the chair as chief magistrate of his town.

"Not an over-pleasant sort of fellow to deal with, I should say," remarked Crofton. "There are some stern lines here about the corners of the eyes, and certain very suspicious-looking indentations next the mouth."

"His eye has no forgiveness in it," said his sister.

"Well, one thing is clear enough, he ought to be easily recognized; that broad forehead, and those wide-spread nostrils and deeply divided chin, are very striking marks to guide one. I cannot give you this," said Crofton to me, "but I'll take care to send you an accurate copy of it at the first favorable moment; meanwhile, make yourself master of its details, and try if you cannot carry the resemblance in your memory."

"Disabuse yourself, too," said she, laughing, "of all this accessorial grandeur, and bear in mind that you'll not find him dressed in ermine, or surrounded with a collar and badge. Not very like his daughter, I'm sure," whispered she in my ear, as I continued to gaze steadfastly at the portrait. "Can you trace any likeness?"

"Not the very faintest; she is beautiful," said I, "and her whole expression is gentleness and delicacy."

"Well, certainly," said Crofton, shutting up the miniature, "these are not the dis-

tinguishing traits of our friend here, whom I should call a hard-natured, stern, obstinate fellow, with great self-reliance, and no great trust of others."

"I was just thinking," said I, "that, were I to come up with such a man as this, what chance would my poor, frail, yielding temperament have, in influencing the rugged granite of his nature? He'd terrify me at once."

"Not when your object was a good and generous one," said Miss Crofton. "You might well enough be afraid to confront such a man as this if your aim was to overreach and deceive him; but bear in mind the fable of the man who had the courage to take the thorn out of the lion's paw. The operation, we are told, was a painful one, and there might have been an instant in which the patient felt disposed to eat his doctor; but, with all these perils, strong in a good purpose, the surgeon persevered, and, by his skill and his courage, made the king of the beasts his fast friend for life. The lesson is worth remembering."

I was still pondering over this apothegm, when Crofton aroused me by pushing across the table a great heap of gold. "This is all yours, Potts," said he; "and remember, that as you are now my agent, traveling for the house of Crofton and Co., you journey at my cost."

Of course I would not listen to this proposal, and, although urged by Miss Crofton with all a woman's tact and delicacy, I persisted so firmly in my refusal, that they were obliged to yield. I now had a hundred pounds all my own, and though the sum be not a very splendid one, I remember some French writer—I'm not sure it is not Jules Janin—saying, "Any man who can put his hand into his pocket and find five napoleons there, is rich;" and he certainly supports his theory with considerable sophistry and cleverness, mainly depending on the assumption, that any of the reasonable daily necessities of life, even in a luxurious point of view, are attainable with such means. Now, although a hundred pounds would not very long supply resources for such a life, yet, as I am not a Frenchman, nor living in Paris, still less had I habits or tastes of a costly kind, I might very well eke out three months pleasantly on this sum, and in these three months what might not happen? In a "hundred days" the great Napoleon crushed the whole might of the Austrian empire, and secured an emperor's daughter for his bride; and in another "hundred days" he made the tour of France, from Cannes to Rochefort, and lost an empire by the way! Wonderful things might, then, be compassed within three months!

"What are you saying about three months, Potts?" asked Crofton, for unwittingly I had uttered these words aloud.

"I was observing," said I, "that, in three months from this day, we should arrange to meet somewhere. Where shall we say?"

"Geneva is very central; shall we name Geneva?"

"Oh, on no account. Let our rendezvous be in Italy. Let us say Rome."

"Rome be it then," cried Crofton. "Now for another point: let us have a wager as to who first discovers the object of our search. I'll bet you twenty napoleons, Potts, to ten—for, as we are two to one, so should the wager be."

"I take you," cried I, entering into his humor, "and I feel as certain of success as if I had your money in my hands."

"Will you have another wager with *me?*" whispered Mary Crofton, as she came behind my chair. "It is, that you'll not persuade Miss Herbert to wear this ring for *my* sake."

"I'll bet my life on it," said I, taking the opal ring she drew from her finger, as she spoke; "I'm in that mood of confidence now, I feel there is nothing I could not promise."

"If so then, Potts, let me have the benefit of this fortunate interval, and ask you to promise me one thing, which is, not to change your mind more than twice a day: don't be angry with me, but hear me out. You are a good-hearted fellow, and have excellent intentions; I don't think I know one less really selfish, but at the same time you are so fickle of purpose, so undecided in action, that I'd not be the least astonished to hear, when we asked for you tomorrow at breakfast time, that you had started for a tour in Norway, or on a voyage to the Southern Pacific."

"And is this your judgment of me also, Miss Crofton?" said I, rising from my seat.

"Oh, no, Mr. Potts. I would only suspect you of going off into the Tyrol, or the Styrian Alps, and forgetting all about us, amidst the glaciers and the cataracts."

"I wish you a good night, and a better opinion of your humble servant," said I, bowing.

"Don't go, Potts—wait a minute—come back. I have something to tell you."

I closed the door behind me, and hastened off, not, however, perfectly clear whether I was the injured man, or one who had just achieved a great outrage.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FURTHER INTERCOURSE WITH HARPAR.

I AM obliged to acknowledge that I was vainglorious enough to accept a seat in the Crofton carriage on the morning of their departure, and accompany them for a mile or so of the way—even at the price of returning on foot—just that I might show myself to the landlady and that odious old waiter in a position of eminence, and make them do a bitter penance for the insults they had heaped on an illustrious stranger. It was a poor and paltry triumph, and over very contemptible adversaries, but I could not refuse it to myself. Crofton, too, contributed largely to the success of my little scheme, by insisting that I should take the place beside his sister, while he sat with his back to the horses; and though I refused at first, I acceded at last, with the bland compliance of a man who feels himself once more in his accustomed station.

As throughout this true history I have candidly revealed the inmosts traits of my nature—well knowing the while how deteriorating such innate anatomy must prove—I have ever felt that he who has small claims to interest by the events of his life can make some compensation to the world by an honest exposure of his motives, his weaknesses, and his struggles. Now, my present confession is made in this spirit, and is not absolutely without its moral, for, as the adage tells us, "Look after the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves;" so would I say, Guard yourself carefully against petty vices. You and I, most esteemed reader, are—I trust fervently—little likely to be arraigned on a capital charge. I hope sincerely that transportable felonies, and even misdemeanors, may not picture among the accidents of our life; such like are the pounds that take care of themselves, but the "small pence," which require looking after, are little envies, and jealousies, and rancors, petty snobberies of display, small exhibitions of our being better than this man or greater than that: these, I repeat to you, accumulate on a man's nature just the way barnacles fasten on a ship's bottom—from mere time, and it is wonderful what damage can come of such paltry obstacles.

I very much doubt if a Roman conqueror regarded the chained captive who followed his chariot with a more supreme pride than I bestowed upon that miserable old waiter who now bowed himself to the ground before me, and when I ordered my dinner for four o'clock, and said that probably I might have a friend to dine with me, his humiliation was complete.

"I wish I knew the secret of your staying here," said Mary Crofton, as we drove along; "why will you not tell it?"

"Perhaps it might prove indiscreet, Mary; our friend Potts may have become a *mauvais sujet* since we have seen him last?"

I wrapped myself in a mysterious silence, and only smiled.

"Lindau, of all places, to stop at!" resumed she, pettishly. "There is nothing remarkable in the scenery, no art treasures, nothing socially agreeable; what can it possibly be that detains you in such a place?"

"My dear Mary," said Crofton, "you are, without knowing it, violating a hallowed principle; you are no less than leading into temptation. Look at poor Potts there, and you will see that, while he knows in his inmost heart the secret which detains him here is some passing and insignificant circumstance unworthy of mention, you have, by imparting to it a certain importance, suggested to his mind the necessity of a story; give him now but five minutes to collect himself, and I'll engage that he will 'come out' with a romantic incident that would never have seen the light but for a woman's curiosity."

"Goods heavens!" thought I, "can this be a true interpretation of my character? Am I the weak and impressionable creature this would bespeak me?" I must have blushed deeply at my own reflection, for Crofton quickly added—

"Don't get angry with me, Potts, any more than you would with a friend who'd say, 'Take care how you pass over that bridge, I know it is rotten and must give way.'"

"Let me answer you," said I, courageously, for I was acutely hurt to be thus arraigned before another. "It is more than likely that you, with your active habits and stirring notions of life, would lean very heavily on him who, neither wanting riches nor honors, would adopt some simple sort of dreamy existence, and think that the green alleys of the beech-wood, or the little path beside the river, pleasanter sauntering than the gilded ante-chamber of a palace; and just as likely is it that you would take him roundly to task about wasted opportunities, misapplied talents, and stigmatize as inglorious indolence what might as possibly be called a contented humility. Now, I would ask you, why should one man be the measure of another? The load you could carry with ease might serve to crush me, and yet there may be

some light burdens that would suit *my* strength, and in bearing which I might taste a sense of duty grateful as your own."

"I have no patience with you," began Crofton, warmly; but his sister stopped him with an imploring look, and then, turning to me, said :

"Edward fancies that every one can be as energetic and active as himself, and occasionally forgets what you have just so well remarked as to the relative capacities of different people."

"I want him to do something, to be something besides a dreamer!" burst he in, almost angrily.

"Well, then," said I, "you shall see me begin this moment, for I will get down here and walk briskly back to the town." I called to the postilions to pull up at the same time, and in spite of remonstrances, entreaties—almost beseeching from Mary Crofton—I persisted in my resolve, and bade them farewell.

Crofton was so much hurt that he could scarcely speak, and when he gave me his hand it was in the coldest of manners.

"But you'll keep our rendezvous, won't you?" said Mary; "we shall meet at Rome."

"I really wonder, Mary, how you can force our acquaintanceship where it is so palpably declined. Good-bye—farewell," said he to me.

"Good-bye," said I, with a gulp that almost choked me; and away drove the carriage, leaving me standing in the train of dust it had raised. Every crack of the post-boys' whips gave me a shock as though I had felt the thong on my own shoulders; and, at last, as sweeping round a turn of the road the carriage disappeared from view, such was the sense of utter desolation that came over me, that I sat down on a stone by the wayside, overwhelmed. I do not know if I ever felt such an utter sense of destitution as at that moment. "What a wealth of friends must a man possess," thought I, "who can afford to squander them in this fashion! How could I have repelled the counsels that kindness alone could have prompted? Surely Crofton must know far more of life than I did!" From this I went on to inquire why it was that the world showed itself so unforgiving to idleness in men of small fortune, since, if no burden to the community, they ought to be as free as their richer brethren. It was a puzzling theme, and though I revolved it long, I made but little of it: the only solution that occurred to me was, that the idleness of the humble man is not relieved by the splendors and luxuries which surround a rich man's leisure, and that the world resents the pretensions of ease unassociated with riches. In what a profound philosophy was it, then, that Diogenes rolled his tub about the streets! there was a mock purpose about it, that must have flattered his fellow-citizens. I feel assured that a great deal of the butterfly-hunting and beetle-gathering that we see around us is done in this spirit. They are a set of idle folk anxious to indulge their indolence without reproach.

Thus pondering and musing, I strolled back to the town. So still and silent was it, so free from all movement of traffic or business, that I was actually in the very center of it without knowing it. There were streets without passengers, and shops without customers, and even *cafés* without guests, and I wondered within myself why people should thus congregate to do nothing, and I rambled on from street to alley, and from alley to lane, never chancing upon one who had anything in hand. At last I gained the side of the lake, along which a little quay ran for some distance, ending in a sort of terraced walk, now grass-grown and neglected. There were, at least, the charms of fresh air and scenery here, though the worthy citizen seemed to hold them cheaply, and I rambled along to the end, where, by a broad flight of steps, the terrace communicated with the lake—a spot, doubtless, where, once on a time, the burghers took the water and went out a-pleasuring with fat fraus and fräuleins. I had reached the end, and was about to turn back again, when I caught sight of a man seated on one of the lower steps employed in watching two little toy ships which he had just launched. Now this seemed to me the very climax of indolence, and I sat myself down on the parapet to observe him. His proceedings were indeed of the strangest, for, as there was no wind to fill the sails, and his vessels lay still and becalmed, he appeared to have bethought him of another mode to impart interest to him. He weighted one of them with little stones till he brought her gunwale level with the water, and then pressing her gently with his hand he made her sink slowly down to the bottom. I'm not quite certain whether I laughed outright, or that some exclamation escaped me as I looked, but some noise I must unquestionably have made, for he started and turned up his head, and I saw Harpar, the Englishman, whom I had met the day before at Constance.

"Well, you're not much the wiser after

all," said he, gruffly, and without even saluting me.

There was in the words and fierce expression of his face something that made me suspect him of insanity, and I would willingly have retired without reply had he not risen and approached me.

"Eh," repeated he with a sneer, "ain't I right? You can make nothing of it?"

"I really don't understand you!" said I. "I came down here by the merest accident, and never was more astonished than to see you."

"Oh, of course; I am well used to that sort of thing," went he on in the same tone of scoff. "I've had some experience of these kind of accidents before; but, as I said, it's no use, you're not within one thousand miles of it, no, nor any man in Europe."

It was quite clear to me now that he *was* mad, and my only care was to get speedily rid of him.

"I'm not surprised," said I, with an assumed ease—"I'm not surprised at your having taken to so simple an amusement, for, really, in a place so dull as this any mode of passing the time would be welcome."

"Simple enough when you know it," said he, with a peculiar look.

"You arrived last night, I suppose?" said I, eager to get conversation into some pleasanter channel.

"Yes, I got here very late. I had the misfortune to sprain my ankle, and this detained me a long time on the way, and may keep me for a couple of days more."

I learned where he was stopping in the town, and seeing with what pain and difficulty he moved, I offered him my aid to assist him on his way.

"Well, I'll not refuse your help," said he, dryly; "but just go along yonder, about five-and-twenty or thirty yards, and I'll join you. You understand me, I suppose?"

Now I really did not understand him, except to believe him perfectly insane, and suggest to me the notion of profiting by his lameness to make my escape with all speed. I conclude some generous promptings opposed this course, for I obeyed his injunctions to the very letter, and waited till he came up to me. He did so very slowly, and evidently in much suffering, assisted by a stick in one hand, while he carried his two little boats in the other.

"Shall I take charge of these for you?" said I, offering to carry them.

"No, don't trouble yourself," said he, in the same rude tone. "Nobody touches these but myself."

I now gave him my arm, and we moved slowly along.

"What has become of the vagabonds? Are they here with you?" asked he abruptly.

"I parted with them yesterday," said I shortly, and not wishing to enter into further explanations.

"And you did wisely," rejoined he, with a serious air. "Even when these sort of creatures have nothing very bad about them, they are bad company, out of the haphazard chance way they gain a livelihood. If you reduce life to a game, you must yourself become a gambler. Now, there's one feature of that sort of existence intolerable to an honest man: it is, that, to win himself, some one else must lose. Do you understand me?"

"I do, and am much struck by what you say."

"In that case," said he, with a nudge of his elbow against my side—"in that case, you might as well have not come down to watch *me?*—eh?"

I protested stoutly against this mistake, but I could plainly perceive with very little success.

"Let it be, let it be," said he, with a shake of the head. "As I said before, if you saw the thing done before your eyes you'd make nothing of it. I'm not afraid of you, or all the men in Europe! There now, there's a challenge to the whole of ye! Sit down every man of ye, with the problem before ye, and see what you'll make of it."

"Ah," thought I, "this is madness. Here is a poor monomaniac led away into the land of wild thoughts and fancies by one dominating caprice: who knows whether out of the realm of this delusion he may not be a man acute and sensible!"

"No, no," muttered he, half-aloud; "there are, maybe, half a million of men this moment manufacturing steam-engines; but it took one head, just one head, to set them all working, and if it wasn't for old Watt, the world at this day wouldn't be five miles in advance of what it was a century back. I see," added he, after a moment, "you don't take much interest in these sort of things. *Your* line of parts is the walking gentleman, eh? Well, bear in mind it don't pay; no, sir, it don't pay! Here, this is my way; my lodging is down this lane. I'll not ask you to come farther; thank you for your help, and good-bye."

"Let us not part here; come up to the inn and dine with me," said I, affecting his own blunt and abrupt manner.

"Why should *I* dine with *you?*" asked he, roughly.

"I can't exactly say," stammered I, "except out of good-fellowship, just as, for instance, I accepted your invitation t'other morning to breakfast."

"Ah, yes, to be sure, so you did. Well, I'll come. We shall be all alone, I suppose?"

"Quite alone."

"All right, for I have no coat but this one," and he looked down at the coarse sleeve as he spoke, with a strange and sad smile, and then waving his hand in token of farewell, he said, "I'll join you in half an hour," and disappeared up the lane.

I have already owned that I did not like this man; he had a certain short, abrupt way that repelled me at every moment. When he differed in opinion with me, he was not satisfied to record his dissent, but he must set about demolishing my conviction, and this sort of intolerance pervaded all he said. There was, too, that business-like, practical tone about him that jars fearfully on the sensitive fiber of the idler's nature.

It was exactly in proportion as his society was distasteful to me, that I felt a species of pride in associating with him, as though to say, "I am not one of those who must be fawned on and flattered. I am of a healthier and manlier stamp; I can afford to hear my judgments arraigned, and my opinions opposed." And in this humor I ascended the stairs of the hotel, and entered the room where our table was already laid out.

To compensate, as far as they could, for the rude reception of the day before, they had given me now the "grand apartment" of the inn, which, by a long balcony, looked over the lake, and that fine mountain range that leads to the Splugen pass. A beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers ornamented the center of the small dinner-table, tastely decked with Bohemian glass, and napkins with lace borders. I rather liked this little display of elegance. It was a sort of ally on my side against the utilitarian plainness of my guest.

As I walked up and down the room, awaiting his arrival, I could not help a sigh, and a very deep one, too, over the thought of what had been my enjoyment that moment if my guest had been one of a different temperament—a man willing to take me on my own showing, and ready to accept any version I should like to give of myself. How gracefully, how charmingly, I could have played the host to such a man! What vigor would it have imparted to my imagination—what brilliancy to my fancy! With what a princely grace might I have dispensed my hospitalities, as though such occasions were the daily habit of my life: whereas a dinner with Harpar would be nothing more or less than an airing with a "slave in the chariot"—a perpetual reminder, like the face of a poor relation, that my lot was cast in an humble sphere, and it was no use trying to disguise it.

"What's all this for?" said Harpar's harsh voice, as he entered the room. "Why didn't you order our mutton-chop below-stairs in the common roon, and not a banquet of this fashion? You must be well aware I couldn't do this sort of thing by *you*. Why, then, have you attempted it with *me?*"

"I have always thought it was a host's prerogative," said I, meekly, "to be the arbiter of his own entertainment."

"So it might where he is the arbiter of his purse; but you know well enough neither you nor I have any pretension to these costly ways; and they have this disadvantage, that they make all intercourse stilted and unnatural. If you and I had to sit down to table, dressed in court suits, with wigs and bags, ain't it likely we'd be easy and cordial together? Well, this is precisely the same."

"I am really sorry," said I, with a forced appearance of courtesy, "to have incurred so severe a lesson, but you must allow me this one transgression before I begin to profit by it." And so saying, I rang the bell and ordered dinner.

Harpar made no reply, but walked the room, with his hands deep in his pockets, humming a tune to himself as he went.

At last we sat down to table. Everything was excellent and admirably served; but we ate on in silence, not a syllable exchanged between us. As the dessert appeared, I tried to open conversation. I affected to seem uneasy and unconcerned, but the cold, half-stern look of my companion repelled all attempts, and I sat very sad, and much discouraged, sipping my wine.

"May I order some brandy-and-water? I like it better than these French wines," asked he, abruptly; and, as I arose to ring for it, he added, "and you'll not object to me having a pipe of strong cavendish?" And therewith he produced a leather bag and a very much smoked meerschaum, short and ungainly as his own figure. As he thrust his hand into the pouch, a small boat, about the size of a lady's thimble, rolled out from amidst the tobacco. He quickly took it and placed it in his waistcoat pocket, the act being done with a sort of hurry, that with a man of less self-possession might have, perhaps, evinced confusion.

"You fancy you've seen something, don't you?" said he, with a defiant laugh. "I'd wager a five-pound note, if I had one, that you think at this moment you have made a great discovery. Well, there it is; make much of it!"

As he spoke, he produced the little boat, and laid it down before me. I own that this speech and the act convinced me that he was insane. I was aware that intense suspectfulness is the great characteristic of madness, and everything tended to show that he was deranged.

Rather to conceal what was passing in my own mind than out of curiosity, I took up the little toy to examine it. It was beautifully made, and finished with a most perfect neatness; the only thing I could not understand being four small holes on each side of the keel, fastened by four little plugs.

"What are these for?" asked I.

"Can't you guess?" said he, laughingly.

"No; I have never seen such before."

"Well," said he, musingly, "perhaps they *are* puzzling—I suppose they are. But mayhap, too, if I thought you'd guess the meaning I'd not have been so ready to show it to you." And with this he replaced the boat in his pocket, and smoked away. "You ain't a genius, my worthy friend, that's a fact," said he, sententiously.

"I opine that the same judgment might be passed upon a great many," said I, testily.

"No," continued he, following on his own thoughts without heeding my remark, "*you'll* not set the Thames a-fire."

"Is that the best test of a man's ability?" asked I, sneeringly.

"You're the sort of fellow that ought to be—let us see now what you ought to be—yes, you're just the stamp of man for an apothecary."

"You are so charming in your frankness," said I, "that you almost tempt me to imitate you."

"And why not? sure we oughtn't to talk to each other like two devils in waiting. Out with what you have to say."

"I was just thinking," said I—"led to it by that speculative turn of yours—I was just thinking in what station *your* abilities would have pre-eminently distinguished you."

"Well, have you hit it?"

"I'm not quite certain," said I, trying to screw up my courage for an impertinence, "but I half suspect that in our great national works—our lines of railroad, for instance—there must be a strong infusion of men with tastes and habits resembling yours."

"You mean the navvies?" broke he in. "You're right, I was a navvy once; I turned the first spadeful of earth on the Coppleston Junction, and seeing what a good thing might be made of it, I suggested task-work to my comrades, and we netted from four-and-six to five shillings a day each. In eight months after, I was made an inspector: so that you see strong sinews can be good allies to a strong head and a stout will."

I do not believe that the most angry rebuke, the most sarcastic rejoinder, could have covered me with a tenth part of the shame and confusion that did these few words. I'd have given worlds, if I had them, to make a due reparation for my rudeness, but I knew not how to accomplish it. I looked into his face to read if I might hit upon some trait by which his nature could be approached; but I might as well have gazed at a line of railroad to guess the sort of town that it led to. The stern, rugged, bold countenance seemed to imply little else than daring and determination, and I could not but wonder how I had ever dared to take a liberty with one of his stamp.

"Well," said I, at last, and wishing to lead him back to his story, "and after being made inspector——"

"You can speak German well," said he, totally inattentive to my question; "just ask one of these people when there will be any conveyance from this to Ragatz."

"Ragatz of all places!" exclaimed I.

"Yes; they tell me it's good for the rheumatics, and I have got some old shoulder pains I'd like to shake off before winter. And then this sprain, too: I foresee I shall not be able to walk much for some days to come."

"Ragatz is on my road; I am about to cross the Splugen into Italy; I'll bear you company so far, if you have no objection."

"Well, it may not seem civil to say it, but I have an objection," said he, rising from the table. "When I've got weighty things on my mind I've a bad habit of talking of them to myself aloud. I can't help it, and so I keep strictly alone till my plans are all fixed and settled; after that there's no danger of my revealing them to any one. There now, you have my reason, and you'll not dispute that it's a good one."

"You may not be too distrustful of yourself," said I, laughing, "but assuredly you are far too flattering in your estimate of *my* acuteness."

"I'll not risk it," said he, bluntly, as he sought for his hat.

"Wait a moment," said I. "You told me at Constance that you were in want of money: at the time I was not exactly in funds myself. Yesterday, however, I received a remittance, and if ten or twenty pounds be of any service, they are heartily at your disposal."

He looked at me fixedly, almost sternly, for a minute or two, and then said—

"Is this true, or is it that you have changed your mind about me?"

"True," said I—"strictly true."

"Will this loan—I mean it to be a loan—inconvenience you much?"

"No, no; I make you the offer freely."

"I take it, then. Let me have ten pounds; and write down there an address where I am to remit it some day or other, though I can't say when."

"There may be some difficulty about that," said I. "Stay. I mean to be at Rome some time in the winter; send it to me there."

"To what banker?"

"I have no banker, I never had a banker. There's my name, and let the post-office be the address."

"Whichever way you're bent on going, you're not on the road to be a rich man," said Harpar, as he deposited my gold in his leather purse; "but I hope you'll not lose by me. Good-bye." He gave me his hand, not very warmly or cordially either, and was gone ere I well knew it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MY EXPLOSION AT THE TABLE D'HOTE.

I WENT the next morning to take leave of Harpar before starting, but found to my astonishment that he was already off! He had, I learned, hired a small carriage to convey him to Bregenz, and had set out before daybreak. I do not know why this should have annoyed me, but it did so, and set me a-thinking over the people who, Echstien, in his "Erfährungen," says, are born to be dupes. "There is," says he, "a race of men who are 'eingeborne Narren'—'native numskulls,' one might say—who muddy the streams of true benevolence by indiscriminating acts of kindness, and who, by always aiding the wrong-doer, make themselves accomplices of vice." Could it be that I was in this barren category? Harpar had told me the evening before, that he would not leave Lindau till his sprain was better, and now he was off, just as if, having no further occasion for me, he was glad to be rid of my companionship—just as if—I was beginning again to start another conjecture, when I bethought me that there is not a more deceptive formula in the whole cyclopædia of delusion than that which opens with these same words, "just as if." Rely upon it, amiable reader, that whenever you find yourself driven to explain a motive, trace a cause, or reconcile a discrepancy, by "just as if," the chances are about seven to three you are wrong. If I was not in the bustle of paying my bill and strapping on my knapsack, I'd convince you on this head, but, as the morning is a bright but mellow one of early autumn, and my path lies along the placid lake, waveless and still, with many a tinted tree reflected in its fair mirror, let us not think of knaves and rogues, but rather dwell on the pleasanter thought of all the good and grateful things which daily befall us in this same life of ours. I am full certain that almost all of us enter upon what is called the world in too combative a spirit. We are too fond of dragon-slaying, and rather than be disappointed of our sport, we'd fall foul of a pet lamb, for want of a tiger. Call it self-delusion, credulity, what you will, it is a faith that makes life very livable, and, without it—

> "We feel a light has left the world,
> A nameless sort of treasure,
> As though one pluck'd the crimson heart
> From out the rose of pleasure.
> I could forgive the fate that made
> Me poor and young to-morrow,
> To have again the soul that played
> So tenderly in sorrow,
> So buoyantly in happiness.
> Ay, I would brook deceiving,
> And even the deceiver bless,
> Just to go on believing!"

"Still," thought I, "one ought to maintain self-respect, one should not willingly make himself a dupe. And then I began to wish that Vaterchen had come up, and that Tintefleck was rushing towards me with tears in her eyes, and my money-bag in her hands. I wanted to forget them. I tried in a hundred ways to prevent them crossing my memory; but though there is a most artful system of artificial "mnemonics" invented by some one, the Lethal art has met no explorer, and no man has ever yet found out the way to shut the door against bygones. I believe it is scarcely more than five miles to Bregenz from Lindau, and yet I was almost as many hours on the road. I sat down, perhaps twenty times, lost in reverie; indeed, I'm not very sure that I didn't take a sound sleep under a spreading willow, so that, when I reached

the inn, the company was just going in to dinner at the *table d'hôte.* Simple and unpretentious as that board was, the company that graced it was certainly distinguished, being no less than the Austrian field-marshal in command of the district, and the officers of his staff. To English notions, it seemed very strange to see a nobleman of the highest rank, in the proudest state of Europe, seated at a dinner-table open to all comers, at a fraction less than one shilling a head, and where some of the government officials of the place daily came.

It was not without a certain sense of shame that I found myself in the long low chamber, in which about twenty officers were assembled, whose uniforms were all glittering with stars, medals, and crosses; in fact, to a weak-minded civilian like myself, they gave the impression of a group of heroes fresh come from all the triumphant glories of a campaign. Between the staff, which occupied one end of the long table, and the few townsfolk who sat at the other, there intervened a sort of frontier territory uninhabited, and it was here that the waiter located me—an object of observation and remark to each. Resolving to learn how I was treated by my critics, I addressed the waiter in the very worst French, and protested my utter ignorance of German. I had promised myself much amusement from this expedient, but was doomed to a severe disappointment—the officers coolly setting me down for a servant, while the townspeople pronounced me a pedlar; and when these judgments had been recorded, instead of entering upon a psychological examination of my nature, temperament, and individuality, they never noticed me any more. I felt hurt at this, more indeed for their sakes than my own, since I bethought me of the false impression that is current of this people throughout Europe, where they have the reputation of philosophers deeply engaged in researches into character, minute anatomists of human thought and man's affections; "and yet," muttered I, "they can sit at table with one of the most remarkable of men, and be as ignorant of all about him, as the husbandman who toils at his daily labor is of the mineral treasures that lie buried down beneath him."

"I will read them a lesson," thought I. "They shall see that in the humble guise of foot-traveler it may be the pleasure of men of rank and station to journey." The townsfolk when the dessert made its appearance, rose to take their departure, each, before he left the room, making a profound obeisance to the general, and then another but less lowly act of homage to the staff, showing by this that strangers were expected to withdraw, while the military guests sat over their wine. Indeed, a very significant look from the last person who left the room conveyed to me the etiquette of the place. I was delighted at this—it was the very opportunity I longed for—and so, with a clink of my knife against my wine-glass, the substitute for a bell in use amongst humble hostels, I summoned the waiter, and asked for his list of wines. I saw that my act had created some astonishment amongst the others, but it excited nothing more, and now they had all lighted their pipes, and sat smoking away quite regardless of my presence. I had ordered a flask of Steinberger at four florins, and given most special directions that my glass should have a "roped rim," and be of a tender green tint, but not too deep to spoil the color of the wine.

My admonitions were given aloud and in a tone of command, but I perceived that they failed to create any impression upon my mustached neighbors. I might have ordered nectar or hippocras for all that they seemed to care about me. I raked up in memory all the impertinent and insolent things Henri Heine had ever said of Austria; I bethought me how they tyrannized in the various provinces of their scattered empire, and how they were hated by Hun, Slavac, and Italian; I reveled in those slashing leading articles that used to show up the great but bankrupt bully, and I only wished I was "own correspondent" to something at home to give my impressions of "Austria and her military system."

Little as you think of that pále, sad-looking stranger, who sits sipping his wine in solitude at the foot of the table, he is about to transmit yourself and your country to a remote posterity. "Ay," muttered I, "to be remembered when the Danube will be a choked-up rivulet, and the park of Schönbrunn a prairie for the buffalo." I am not exactly aware how or why these changes were to have occurred, but Lord Macaulay's New Zealander might have originated them.

While I thus mused and brooded, the tramp of four horses came clattering down the street, and soon after swept into the arched doorway of the inn with a rolling and thunderous sound.

"Here he comes—here he is at last!" said a young officer, who had rushed in haste to the window, and at the announcement a very palpable sentiment of satisfaction seemed to spread itself through the company, even to the grim old field-marshal, who took his pipe from his mouth to say: "He is in time—he saves 'arrest!'"

As he spoke, a tall man in uniform entered the room, and walking with military step till he came in front of the general, said, in a loud but respectful voice :

"I have the honor to report myself as returned to duty."

The general replied something I could not catch, and then shook him warmly by the hand, making room for him to sit down next him.

"How far did your royal highness go ? Not to Coire ?" said the general.

"Far beyond it, sir," said the other. "I went the whole way to the Splugen, and if it were not for the terror of your displeasure, I'd have crossed the mountain and gone on to Chiavenna."

The fact that I was listening to the narrative of a royal personage was not the only bond of fascination to me, for somehow the tone of the speaker's voice sounded familiarly to my ears, and I could have sworn I had heard it before. As he was at the same side of the table with myself, I could not see him, but, while he continued to talk, the impression grew each moment more strong that I must have met him previously.

I could gather—it was easy enough to do so—from the animated looks of the party, and the repeated bursts of laughter that followed his sallies, that the newly-arrived officer was a wit and authority amongst his comrades. His elevated rank, too, may have contributed to this popularity. Must I own that he appeared in the character that to me is particularly offensive ? He was a "narrator." That vulgar adage of "two of a trade" has a far wider acceptance when applied to the operations of intellect than when addressed to the work of men's hands. To see this jealousy at its height, you must look for it amongst men of letters, artists, actors, or, better still, those social performers who are the bright spirits of dinner-parties—the charming men of society. All the animosities of political or religious hate are mild compared to the detestation this rivalry engenders ; and now, though the audience was a foreign one, which I could have no pretension to amuse, I conceived the most bitter dislike for the man who had engaged their attention.

I do not know how it may be with others, but to myself there has always been this difficulty in a foreign language, that until I have accustomed myself to the tone of voice and the manner of a speaker, I can rarely follow him without occasional lapses. Now, on the present occasion, the narrator, though speaking distinctly and with a good accent, had a very rapid utterance, and it was not till I had familiarized my ear with his manner that I could gather his words correctly. Nor was my difficulty lessened by the fact that, as he pretended to be witty and epigrammatic, frequent bursts of laughter broke from his audience and obscured his speech. He was, as it appeared, giving an account of a fishing excursion he had just taken to one of the small mountain lakes near Poppenheim, and it was clear enough he was one who always could eke an adventure out of even the most ordinary incident of daily life.

This fishing story had really nothing in it, though he strove to make out fifty points of interest or striking situations out of the veriest commonplace. At last, however, I saw that, like a practiced story-teller, he was hoarding up his great incident for the finish.

"As I have told you," said he, "I engaged the entire of the little inn for myself; there were but five rooms in it altogether, and, though I did not need more than two, I took the rest, that I might be alone and unmolested. Well, it was on my second evening there, as I sat smoking my pipe at the door, and looking over my tackle for the morrow, there came up the glen the strange sound of wheels, and, to my astonishment, a traveling-carriage soon appeared, with four horses driven in hand, and, as I saw in a moment, it was a *lohnkutscher*, who had taken the wrong turning after leaving Ragatz, and mistaken the road, for the highway ceases about two miles above Poppenheim, and dwindles down to a mere mule-path. Leaving my host to explain the mistake to the travelers, I hastily re-entered the house, just as the carriage drove up. The explanation seemed a very prolix one, for, when I looked out of the window, half an hour afterwards, there were the horses still standing at the door, and the driver, with a large branch of alder, whipping away the flies from them, while the host continued to hold his place at the carriage door. At last he entered my room, and said that the travelers, two foreign ladies—he thought them Russians—had taken the wrong road, but that the elder, what between fatigue and fear, was so overcome that she could not proceed farther, and entreated that they might be afforded any accommodation—mere shelter for the night—rather than retrace their road to Ragatz.

"'Well,' said I, carelessly, 'let them have the rooms on the other side of the hall; so that they only stop for one night, the intrusion will not signify.' Not a very gracious reply, perhaps; but I did not want

to be gracious. The fact was, as the old lady got out, I saw something like an elephant's leg, in a fur boot, that quite decided me on not making acquaintance with the travelers, and I was rash enough to imagine they must be both alike. Indeed, I was so resolute in maintaining my solitude undisturbed, that I told my host on no account whatever to make me any communication from the strangers, nor, on any pretext, to let me feel that they were lodged under the same roof with myself. Perhaps, if the next day had been one to follow my usual sport, I should have forgotten all about them, but it was one of such rain as made it perfectly impossible to leave the house. I doubt if I ever saw rain like it. It came down in sheets, like water splashed out of buckets, flattening the small trees to the earth, and beating down all the light foliage into the muddy soil beneath; meanwhile the air shook with the noise of the swollen torrents, and all the mountain-streams crashed and thundered away, like great cataracts. Rain can really become grand at such moments, and no more resembling a mere shower than the cry of a single brawler in the streets is like the roar of a mighty multitude. It was so fine that I determined I would go down to a little wooden bridge over the river, whence I could see the stream as it came down, tumbling and splashing, from a cleft in the mountain. I soon dressed myself in all my best waterproofs—hat, cape, boots, and all—and set out. Until I was fully embarked on my expedition, I had no notion of the severity of the storm, and it was with considerable difficulty I could make head against the wind and rain together, while the slippery ground made walking an actual labor.

"At last I reached the river, but of the bridge, the only trace was a single beam, which, deeply buried in the bank at one extremity, rose and fell in the surging flood, like the arm of a drowning swimmer. The stream had completely filled the channel, and swept along, with fragments of timber, and even furniture, in its muddy tide; farm produce, and implements too, came floating by, showing what destruction had been effected higher up the river. As I stood gazing on the current, I saw, at a little distance from me, a man, standing motionless beside the river, and apparently lost in thought—so at least he seemed—for, though not at all clad in a way to resist the storm, he remained there, wet and soaked through, totally regardless of the weather. On inquiring at the inn, I learned that this was the *lohnkutscher*—the *vetturino*—of the travelers, and who, in attempting to ascertain if the stream were fordable, had lost one of his best horses, and barely escaped being carried away himself. Until that, I had forgotten all about the strangers, who, it now appeared, were close prisoners like myself. While the host was yet speaking, the *lohnkutscher* came up, and in a tone of equality, that showed me he thought I was in his own line of business, asked if I would sell him one of my nags then in the stable.

"Not caring to disabuse him of his error regarding my rank, I did not refuse him so flatly as I might, and he pressed the negotiation very warmly in consequence. At last, to get rid of him, I declared that I would not break up my team, and retired into the house. I was not many minutes in my room, when a courier came, with a polite message from his mistress, to beg I would speak with her. I went at once, and found an old lady—she was English, as her French bespoke—very well mannered and well bred, who apologized for troubling me, but having heard from her *vetturino* that my horses were disengaged, and that I might, if not disposed to sell one of them, hire out the entire team, to take their carriage as far as Andeer——By the time she got thus far, I perceived that she, too, mistook me for a *lohnkutscher*. It just struck me what good fun it would be to carry on the joke. To be sure, the lady herself presented no inducement to the enterprise, and as I thus balanced the case, there came into the room one of the prettiest girls I ever saw. She never turned a look towards where I was standing, nor deigned to notice me at all, but passed out of the room as rapidly as she entered; still, I remembered that I had already seen her before, and passed a delightful evening in her company at a little inn in the Black Forest."

When the narrator had got thus far in his story, I leaned forward to catch a full view of him, and saw to my surprise, and I own to my misery, that he was the German count we had met at the Titi-See. So overwhelming was this discovery to me, that I heard nothing for many minutes after. All of that wretched scene between us on the last evening at the inn came full to my memory, and I bethought me of lying the whole night on the hard table, fevered with rage and terror alternately. If it were not that his narrative regarded Miss Herbert now, I would have skulked out of the room, and out of the inn, and out of the town itself, never again to come under the insolent stare of those wicked

grey eyes, but in that name there was a fascination—not to say that a sense of jealousy burned at my heart like a furnace.

The turmoil of my thoughts lost me a great deal of his story, and might have lost me more, had not the hearty laughter of his comrades recalled me once again to attention.

He was describing how, as a *vetturino*, he drove their carriage with his own spanking grey horses to Coire, and thence to Andeer. He had bargained, it seemed, that Miss Herbert should travel outside in the cabriolet, but she failed to keep her pledge, so that they only met at stray moments during the journey. It was in one of these she said, laughingly, to him:

"'Nothing would surprise me less than to learn, some fine morning, that you were a prince in disguise, or a great count of the empire, at least. It was only the other day that we were honored with the incognito presence of a royal personage; I do not exactly know who, but Mrs. Keats could tell you. He left us abruptly at Schaffhausen.'

"'You can't mean the creature,' said I, 'that I saw in your company at the 'Titi-See?'

"'The same,' said she, rather angrily.

"'Why, he is a saltimbanque; I saw him the morning I came through Constance, with some others of his troop dragged before the maire for causing a disturbance in a cabaret; one of the most consummate impostors, they told me, in Europe.'"

"An infamous falsehood, and a base liar the man who says it!" cried I, springing to my legs, and standing revealed before the company in an attitude of haughty defiance. "I am the person you have dared to defame. I have never assumed to be a prince, and as little am I a rope-dancer. I am an English gentleman, traveling for his pleasure, and I hurl back every word you have said of me with contempt and defiance."

Before I had finished this insolent speech, some half-dozen swords were drawn and brandished in the air, very eager, as it seemed, to cut me to pieces, and the count himself required all the united strength of the party to save me from his hands. At last I was pushed, hustled and dragged out of the room to another smaller one on the same floor, and, the key being turned on me, left to my very happy reflections.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE DUEL WITH PRINCE MAX.

I HAD no writing materials, but I had just composed a long letter to the *Times* on "the outrageous treatment and false imprisonment of a British subject in Austria," when my door was opened by a thin, lank-jawed, fierce-eyed man in uniform, who announced himself as the Rittmeister von Mahony, of the Keyser Hussars.

"A countryman—an Irishman," said I, eagerly, clasping his hand with warmth.

"That is to say, two generations back," replied he; "my grandfather Terence was a lieutenant in Trenck's Horse, but since then none of us have ever been out of Austria."

If these tidings fell coldly on my heart, just beginning to glow with the ardor of home and country, I soon saw that it takes more than two generations to wash out the Irishman from a man's nature. The honest Rittmeister, with scarcely a word of English in his vocabulary, was as hearty a countryman as if he had never journeyed out of the land of the bog.

"He had heard all about it," he said, by way of arresting the eloquent indignation that filled me; and he added: "And the more fool myself to notice the matter;" asking me, quaintly, if I had never heard of our native maxim that says, "One man ought never to fall upon forty"? "Well," said he, with a sigh, "what's done can't be undone; and let us see what's to come next? I see you are a gentleman, and the worse luck yours."

"What do you mean by that?" asked I.

"Just this: you'll have to fight; and if you were a 'Gemeiner'—a plebeian—you'd get off."

I turned away to the window to wipe a tear out of my eye; it had come there without my knowing it, and, as I did so, I devoted myself to the death of a hero.

"Yes," said I, "*she* is in this incident—she has her part in this scene of my life's drama, and I will not disgrace her presence. I will die like a man of honor rather than that her name shall be disparaged."

He went on to tell me of my opponent, who was brother to a reigning sovereign, and himself a royal highness—Prince Max of Swabia. "He was not," he added, "by any means a bad fellow, though not reputed to be perfectly sane on certain topics. However, as his eccentricities were very harmless ones, merely offshoots of an exaggerated personal vanity, it was supposed that some active service, and a little more intercourse with the world, would cure him. "Not," added he, "that one can say he has shown many signs of amendment up to this, for he never makes an excursion of half-a-dozen days from home, without coming back filled with the resistless passion of some young

queen or archduchess for him. As he forgets these as fast as he imagines them, there is usually nothing to lament on the subject. Now you are in possession of all that you need to know about *him*. Tell me something of yourself; and first, have you served?"

"Never."

"Was your father a soldier or your grandfather?"

"Neither."

"Have you any connections on the mother's side in the army?"

"I am not aware of one."

He gave a short, hasty cough, and walked the room twice with his hands clasped at his back, and then, coming straight in front of me, said, "And your name? What's your name?"

"Potts! Potts!" said I, with a firm energy.

"Potztausend!" cried he, with a grim laugh; "what a strange name!"

"I said Potts, Herr Rittmeister, and not Potztausend," rejoined I, haughtily.

"And I heard you," said he; "it was involuntary on my part to add the termination. And who are the Pottses? Are they noble?"

"Nothing of the kind—respectable middle-class folk; some in trade, some clerks in mercantile houses, some holding small government employments; one, perhaps the chief of the family, an eminent apothecary!"

As if I had uttered the most irresistible joke, at this word, he held his hands over his face and shook with laughter.

"Heilge Joseph!" cried he, at last, "this is too good! The Prince Max is going out with an apothecary's nephew, or, maybe, his son!"

"His son, upon this occasion," said I, gravely.

He did not reply for some minutes, and then, leaning over the back of a chair, and regarding me very fixedly, he said:

"You have only to say who you are, and what your belongings, and nothing will come of this affair. In fact, what with your little knowledge of German, your imperfect comprehension of what the prince said, and your own station in life, I'll engage to arrange everything and get you off clear."

"In a word," said I, "I am to plead in *formâ inferioris*—isn't that it?"

"Just so," said he, puffing out a long cloud from his pipe.

"I'd rather die first!" cried I, with an energy that actually startled him.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "I think it is very probable that will come of it; but, if it be your choice, I have nothing to say."

"Go back, Herr Rittmeister," cried I, "and arrange the meeting for the very earliest moment."

I said this with a strong purpose, for I felt if the event were to come off at once I could behave well.

"As you are resolved on this course," said he, "do not make any confidences to others as you have made to me; nothing about those Pottses in haberdashery and drygoods, but just simply you are the high and well-born Potts of Pottsheim. Not a word more."

I bowed an assent, but so anxious was he to impress this upon me that he went over it all once more.

"As it will be for me to receive the prince's message, the choice of the weapons will be yours. What are you most expert with? I mean, after the pistol?" said he, grinning.

"I am about equally skilled in all. Rapier, pistol or saber are all alike to me."

"*Der Teufel!*" cried he: "I was not counting upon this; and as the saber is the prince's weakest arm, we'll select it."

I bowed again, and more blandly.

"There is but one thing more," said he, turning about just as he was leaving the room. "Don't forget that in this case the gross provocation came from *you*, and, therefore, be satisfied with self-defense, or at most a mere flesh wound. Remember that the prince is a near connection of the royal family of England, and it would be irreparable ruin to you were he to fall by your hand." And with this he went out.

Now, had he gravely bound me over not to strangle the lions in the tower it could not have appeared more ridiculous to me than this injunction, and if there had been in my heart the smallest fund of humor, I could have laughed at it; but, heaven knows, none of my impulses took a mirthful turn at that moment, and there never was invented the drollery that could wring a smile from me.

I was sitting in a sort of stupor—I know not how long—when the door opened, and the Rittmeister's head peered in.

"To-morrow morning at five!" cried he. "I will fetch you half an hour before." The door closed, and he was off.

It was now a few minutes past eight o'clock, and there was, therefore, something short of nine hours of life left to me. I have heard that Victor Hugo is an amiable and kindly disposed man, and I feel assured, if he ever could have known the tortures he would have inflicted, he would

never have designed the terrible record entitled *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*. I conclude it was designed as a sort of appeal against death punishments. I doubt much of its efficacy in altering legislation, while I feel assured that, if ever it fall in the way of one whose hours are numbered, it must add indescribably to his misery.

When, how, or by whom my supper was served, I never knew. I can only remember that a very sleepy waiter roused me out of a half drowsy reverie about midnight, by asking if he were to remove the dishes, or let them remain till morning. I bade him leave them, and me also, and when the door was closed I sat down to my meal. It was cold and unappetizing. I would have deemed it unwholesome, too, but I remembered that the poor stomach it was destined for would never be called on to digest it, and that for once I might transgress without the fear of dyspepsia. My case was precisely that of the purseless traveler, who, we are told, can sing before the robber, just as if want ever suggested melody, or that being poor was a reason for song. So with me any excess was open to me just because it was impossible!

"Still," thought I, "great criminals—and surely I am not as bad as they—eat very heartily." And so I cut the tough fowl vigorously in two, and placed half of it on my plate. I filled myself out a whole goblet of wine, and drank it off. I repeated this, and felt better. I fell to now with a will, and really made an excellent supper. There were some potted sardines that I secretly resolved to have for my breakfast, when the sudden thought flashed across me that I was never to breakfast any more. I verily believe that I tasted in that one instant a whole life-long of agony and bitterness.

There was in my friendless, lone condition, my youth, the mild and gentle traits of my nature and my guileless simplicity, just that combination of circumstances which would make my fate peculiarly pathetic, and I imagined my countrymen standing beside the gravestone and muttering "Poor Potts!" till I felt my heart almost bursting with sorrow over myself.

"Cut off at three-and-twenty!" sobbed I; "in the very opening bud of his promise!"

"Misfortune is a pebble with many facets," says the Chinese adage, "and wise is he who turns it around till he find the smooth one."

"Is there such here?" thought I. "And where can it be?" With all my ingenuity I could not discover it, when at last there crossed my mind how the event would figure in the daily papers, and be handed down to remote posterity. I imagined the combat itself described in the language almost of a lion-hunt. "Potts, who had never till that moment had a sword in his hand—Potts, though at this time severely wounded, and bleeding profusely, nothing dismayed by the ferocious attack of his opponent—Potts maintained his guard with all the coolness of a consummate swordsman." How I wished my life might be spared just to let me write the narrative of the combat. I would like, besides, to show the world how generously I could treat an adversary, with what delicacy I could respect his motives, and how nobly deal even with his injustice.

"Was that two o'clock?" said I, starting up, while the humming sound of the gone bell filled the room. "Is it possible that but three hours now stand between me and ——?" I gave a shudder that made me feel as if I was standing in a fearful thorough draught, and actually looked up to see if the window were not open; but no, it was closed, the night calm, and the sky full of stars. "Oh!" exclaimed I, "if there are Pottses up amongst you yonder, I hope destiny may deal more kindly by them than down here. I trust that in those glorious regions a higher and purer intelligence prevails, and, above all things, that dueling is proclaimed the greatest of crimes." Remnant of barbarism! it is worse ten thousand times; it is the whole suit, costume, and investure of an uncivilized age. "Poor Potts!" said I; "you went out upon your life-voyage with very generous intentions towards posterity. I wonder how it will treat *you?* Will it vindicate your memory, uphold your fame, and dignify your motives? Will it be said in history, 'Amongst the memorable events of the period was the duel between the Prince Max of Swabia and an Irish gentleman named Potts? To understand fully the circumstance of this remarkable conflict, it is necessary to premise that Potts was not what is vulgarly called constitutionally brave; but he was more. He was ——' Ah! there was the puzzle. How was that miserable biographer ever to arrive at the secret of an organization fine and subtle as mine? If I could but leave it on record—if I could but transmit to the ages that will come after me the invaluable key to the mystery of my being—a few days would suffice—a week certainly would do it—and why should I not have time given me for this? I will certainly propose this to the Rittmeister when he comes. There

can be little doubt but he will see the matter with my own eyes."

As if I had summoned him by enchantment, there he stood at the door, wrapped in his great white cavalry cloak, and looking gigantic and ominous together.

"There is no carriage-road," said he, "to the place we are going, and I have come thus early that we may stroll along leisurely, and enjoy the fresh air of the morning."

Until that moment I had never believed how heartless human nature could be! To talk of enjoyment, to recall the world and its pleasures, in any way, to one situated as I, was a bold and scarcely credible cruelty; but the words did me good service—they armed me with a sardonic contempt for life and mankind—and so I protested that I was charmed with the project, and out we set.

My companion was not talkative; he was a quiet, almost depressed man, who had led a very monotonous existence, with little society among his comrades; so that he did not offer me the occasion I sought for, of saying saucy and sneering things of the world at large. Indeed, the first observation he made was, that we were in a locality that ought to be interesting to Irishmen, since an ancient shrine of St. Patrick marked the spot of the convent to which we were approaching. No remark could have been more ill-timed! to look back into the past, one ought to have some vista of the future. Who can sympathize with bygones when he is counting the minutes that are to make him one of them?

What a bore that old Rittmeister was with his antiquities, and how I hated him as he said, "If your time was not so limited, I'd have taken you over to St. Gallen to inspect the manuscripts." I felt choking as he uttered these words. How was my time so limited? I did not dare to ask. Was he barbarous enough to mean that if I had another day to live, I might have passed it pleasantly in turning over musty missals in a monastery?

At last we came to a halt in a little grove of pines, and he said, "Have you any address to give me of friends or relatives, or have you any peculiar directions on any subject?"

"You made a remark last night, Herr Rittmeister," said I, "which did not at the moment produce the profound impression upon me that subsequent reflection has enforced. You said that if his royal highness were fully aware that his antagonist was the son of a practicing chemist and apothecary——"

"That I could have put off this event? True enough, but when you refused that alternative, and insisted on satisfaction, I myself, as your countryman, gave the guarantee for your rank, which nothing now will make me retract. Understand me well—nothing will make me retract."

"You are pleased to be precipitate," said I, with an attempt to sneer: "my remark had but one object, and that was my personal disinclination to obtain a meeting under a false pretext."

"Make your mind easy on that score. It will be all precisely the same in about an hour hence."

I nearly fainted as I heard this; it seemed as though a cold stream of water ran through my spine and paralyzed the very marrow inside.

You have your choice of weapons," said he, curtly; "which are you best at?"

I was going to say the "javelin," but I was ashamed; and yet should a man sacrifice life for a false modesty? While I reasoned thus, he pointed to a group of officers close to the garden wall of the convent, and said—

"They are all waiting yonder, let us hasten on."

If I had been mortally wounded, and was dragging my feeble limbs along to rest them forever on some particular spot, I might have, probably, effected my progress as easily as I now did. The slightest inequality of ground tripped me, and I stumbled at every step.

"You are cold," said my companion, "and probably unused to early rising: taste this."

He gave me his brandy-flask, and I finished it off at a draught. Blessings be on the man who invented alcohol! All the ethics that ever were written cannot work the same miracle in a man's nature as a glass of whisky. Talk of all the wonders of chemistry, and what are they to the simple fact that two-pennyworth of cognac can convert a coward into a hero?

I was not quite sure that my antagonist had not resorted to a similar sort of aid, for he seemed as light-hearted and as jolly as though he was out for a picnic. There was a jauntiness, too, in the way he took out his cigar, and scraped his lucifer-match on a beech-tree, that quite struck me, and I should like to have imitated it if I could.

"If it's the same to you, take the saber, it's his weakest weapon," whispered the Rittmeister in my ear; and I agreed. And now there was a sort of commotion about the choice of the ground and the places, in which my friend seemed to stand by me

most manfully. Then there followed a general measurement of swords, and a fierce comparison of weapons. I don't know how many were not thrust into my hand, one saying, "Take this, it is well balanced in the wrist, or, if you like a heavy guard, here's your arm!"

"To *me*, it is a matter of perfect indifference," said I, jauntily. "All weapons are alike."

"He will attack fiercely, and the moment the word is given," whispered the Rittmeister, "so be on your guard; keep your hilt full before you, or he'll slice off your nose before you are aware of it."

"Be not so sure of that till you have seen my sword-play," said I, fiercely; and my heart swelled with a fierce sentiment that must have been courage, for I never remember to have felt the like before. I know I was brave at that moment, for if, by one word, I could have averted the combat, I would not have uttered it.

"To your places," cried the umpire, "and on your guard! Are you ready?"

"Ready!" re-echoed I, wildly, while I gave a mad flourish of my weapon round my head that threw the whole company into a roar of laughter; and, at the same instant, two figures, screaming fearfully, rushed from the beech copse, and, bursting their way through the crowd, fell upon me with the most frantic embraces, amidst the louder laughter of the others. O shame and ineffable disgrace! O misery never to be forgotten! It was Vaterchen who now grasped my knees, and Tintefleck who clung round my neck and kissed me repeatedly. From the time of the Laocoön, no one ever struggled to free himself as I did, but all in vain—my efforts, impeded by the sword, lest I might unwillingly wound them, were all fruitless, and we rolled upon the ground inextricably commingled and struggling.

"Was I right?" cried the prince. "Was I right in calling this fellow a saltimbanque? See him now with his comrades around him, and say if I was mistaken."

"How is this?" whispered the Rittmeister. "Have you dared to deceive *me?*"

"I have deceived no one," said I, trying to rise; and I poured forth a torrent of not very coherent eloquence, as the mirth of my audience seemed to imply; but, fortunately, Vaterchen had now obtained a hearing, and was detailing in very fluent language the nature of the relations between us. Poor old fellow, in his boundless gratitude I seemed more than human; and his praises actually shamed me to hear them. How I had first met them, he recounted in the strain of one assisted by the gods in classic times; his description made me a sort of Jove, coming down on a rosy cloud to succor suffering humanity; and then came in Tintefleck with her broken words, marvelously aided by "action," as she poured forth the heap of gold upon the grass, and said it was all mine!

Wonderful metal, to be sure, for enforcing conviction on the mind of man: there is a sincerity about it far more impressive than any vocal persuasion. The very clink of it implies that the real and the positive are in question, not the imaginary and the delusive. "This is all his!" cried she, pointing to the treasure with the air of one showing Aladdin's cave; and though her speech was not very intelligible, Vaterchen's "vulgate" ran underneath and explained the text.

"I hope you will forgive me. I trust you will be satisfied with my apologies, made thus openly," said the prince, in the most courteous of manners. "One who can behave with such magnanimity can scarcely be wanting in another species of generosity." And ere I could well reply, I found myself shaking hands with every one, and every one with me; nor was the least pleasurable part of this recognition the satisfaction displayed by the Rittmeister at the good issue of this event. I had great difficulty in resisting their resolution to carry me back with them to Bregenz. Innumerable were the plans and projects devised for my entertainment. Field sports, sham fights, rifle-shooting, all were displayed attractively before me; and it was clear that, if I accepted their invitations, I should be treated like the most favored guest. But I was firm in my refusal; and, pleading a pretended necessity to be at a particular place by a particular day, I started once more, taking the road with the "vagabonds," who now seemed bound to me by an indissoluble bond; at least, so Vaterchen assured me by the most emphatic of declarations, and that, do with him what I might, he was my slave till death.

"Who is ever completely happy?" says the sage; and with too good reason is the doubt expressed. Here, one might suppose, was a situation abounding with the most pleasurable incidents. To have escaped a duel, and come out with honor and credit from the issue; to have refound not only my missing money, but to have my suspicions relieved as to those whose honest name was dear to me, and whose dis-

credit would have darkened many a bright hope of life—these were no small successes; and yet—I shame to own it—my delight in them was dashed by an incident so small and insignificant, that I have scarce courage to recall it. Here it is, however: While I was taking a kindly farewell of my military friends, hand-shaking and protesting interminable friendships, I saw, or thought I saw, the prince, with even a more affectionate warmth, making his adieus to Tintefleck! If he had not his arm actually round her waist, there was certainly a white leather cavalry glove curiously attached to her side, and one of her cheeks was deeper colored than the other, and her bearing and manner seemed confused so that she answered, when spoken to, at cross purposes.

"How did you come by this brooch, Tintefleck? I never saw it before."

"Oh, is it not pretty? It is a violet; and these leaves, though green, are all gold."

"Answer me, girl! who gave it thee?" said I, in the voice of Othello.

"Must I tell?" murmured she, sorrowfully.

"On the spot—confess it!"

"It was one who bade me keep it till he should bring me a prettier one."

"I do not care for what he said, or what you promised. I want his name."

"And that I was never to forget him till then—never."

"Do you say this to irritate and offend me, or do you prevaricate out of shame?" said I, angrily.

"Shame!" repeated she, haughtily.

"Ay, shame or fear."

"Or fear! Fear of what, or of whom?"

"You are very daring to ask me. And now, for the last time, Tintefleck—for the last time, I say, who gave you this?"

As I said these words, we had just reached the borders of a little rivulet, over which we were to cross by stepping-stones. Vaterchen was, as usual, some distance behind, and now calling to us to wait for him. She turned at his cry, and answered him, but made no reply to me.

This continued defiance of me overcame my temper altogether, sorely pushed as it was by a stupid jealousy, and seizing her wrist with a strong grasp, I said, in a slow, measured tone, "I insist upon your answer to my question, or——"

"Or what?"

"That we part here, and forever."

"With all my heart. Only remember one thing," said she, in a low, whispering voice, "you left me once before—you quitted me in a moment of temper, just as you threaten it now. Go, if you will, or if you must; but let this be our last meeting and last parting."

"It is as such I mean it—good-bye!" I sprang on the stepping-stone as I spoke, and at the same instant a glittering object splashed into the stream close to me. I saw it, just as one might see the luster of a trout's back as it rose to a fly. I don't know what demon sat where my heart ought to have been, but I pressed my hat over my eyes, and went on without turning my head.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ON THE EDGE OF A TORRENT.

Very conflicting and very mixed were my feelings, as I set forth alone. I had come well, very well, out of a trying emergency. I was neither driven to pretend I was something other than myself, with grand surroundings, and illustrious belongings, nor had I masqueraded under a feigned name and a false history; but as Potts, son of Potts the apothecary, I had carried my head high and borne myself creditably.

"*Magna est veritas*," indeed! I am not so sure of the "*prævalebit semper*," but assuredly, where it does succeed, the success is wonderful.

Heaven knows into what tortuous entanglements might my passion for the "imaginative"—I liked this name for it—have led me, had I given way to one of my usual temptations. In more than one of my flights have I found myself carried up into a region, and have had to sustain an atmosphere very unsuited to my respiration, and now, with the mere prudence of walking on the *terra firma*, and treading the common highway of life, I found I had reached my goal safely and speedily. Flowers do not assume to be shrubs, nor shrubs affect to be forest trees; the limestone and granite never pretend that they are porphyry and onyx. Nature is real, and why should man alone be untruthful and unreal? If I liked these reflections, and tried to lose myself in them, it was in the hope of shutting out others less gratifying; but, do what I would, there before me arose the image of Catinka, as she stood at the edge of the rivulet, that stream which seemed to cut me off from one portion of my life, and make the past irrevocably gone forever.

I am certain I was quite right in parting

with that girl. Any respectable man, a father of a family, would have applauded me for severing this dangerous connection. What could come of such association except unhappiness? "Potts," would the biographer say—"Potts saw, with the unerring instinct of his quick perception, that this young creature would one day or other have laid at his feet the burnt-offering of her heart, and then, what could he have done? If Potts had been less endowed with genius, or less armed in honesty, he had not anticipated this peril, or, foreseeing, had undervalued it. But he both saw and feared it. How very differently had a libertine reasoned out this situation!" And then I thought how wicked I might have been—a monster of crime and atrocity. Every one knows the sensation of lying snugly a-bed on a stormy night, and, as the rain plashes and the wind howls, drawing more closely around him the coverlet, and the sel..sh satisfaction of his own comfort, heightened by all the possible hardships of others outside. In the same benevolent spirit, but not by any means so reprehensible, is it pleasant to imagine one's self a great criminal, standing in the dock, to be stared at by a horror-struck public, photographed, shaved, prison-costumed, exhorted, sentenced, and then, just as the last hammer has driven the last nail into the scaffold, and the great bell has tolled out, to find that you are sitting by your wood fire, with your curtain drawn, your uncut volume beside you, and your peculiar weakness, be it tea or sherry-cobbler, at your elbow. I constantly take a "rise" out of myself in this fashion, and rarely a week goes over that I have not either poisoned a sister or had a shot at the queen. It is a sort of intellectual Russian bath, in which the luxury consists in the exaggerated alternative between being scalded first and rolled in the snow afterwards. It was in this figurative snow I was now disporting myself, pleasantly and refreshingly, and yet remorse, like a sturdy dun, stood at my gate, and refused to go away.

Had I, indeed, treated her harshly? had I rejected the offer of her young and innocent heart? Very puzzling and embarrassing question this, and especially to a man who had nothing of the coxcomb in his nature, none of that prompting of self-love that would suggest a vain reply. I felt that it was very natural *she* should have been struck by the attractive features of my character, but I felt this without a particle of conceit. I even experienced a sense of sorrow as I thought over it, just as a conscientious siren might have regretted that nature had endowed her with such a charming voice; and this duty—for it was a duty—discharged, I bethought me of my own future. I had a mission, which was to see Kate Herbert and give her Miss Crofton's letter. In doing so, I must needs throw off all disguises and mockeries, and be Potts, the very creature she sneered at, the man whose mere name was enough to suggest a vulgar life and a snob's nature! No matter what misery it may give, I will do it manfully. *She* may never appreciate—the world at large may never appreciate—what noble motives were hidden beneath these assumed natures, mere costumes as they were, to impart more vigor and persuasiveness to sentiments which, uttered in the undress of Potts, would have carried no convictions with them. Play Macbeth in a paletot, perform Othello in "pegtops," and see what effect you will produce! Well, my pretended station and rank were the mere grades and properties that gave force to my opinions. And now to relinquish these, and be the actor, in the garish light of the noonday, and a shabby-genteel coat and hat! "I will do it," muttered I, "I will do it, but the suffering will be intense!" When the prisoner sentenced to a long captivity is no more addressed by his name, but simply called No. 18 or 43, it is said that the shock seems to kill the sense of identity with him, and that nothing more tends to that stolid air of indifference, that hopeless inactivity of feature, so characteristic of a prison life; in the very same way am I affected when limited to my Potts nature, and condemned to confine myself within the narrow bounds of that one small identity. From what Prince Max had said at the *table d'hôte* at Bregenz, it was clear that Mrs. Keats had already learned I was not the young prince of the House of Orleans; but, in being disabused of one error, she seemed to have fallen into another, and it behoved me to explain that I was not a rope-dancer or a mountebank. "She, too, shall know me in my Potts nature," said I; "she also shall recognize me in the 'majesty of myself.'" I was not very sure of what that was, but found it in Hegel.

And when I have completed this task, I will throw myself like a waif upon the waters of life. I will be that which the moment or the event shall make me—neither trammeled by the past nor awed by the future. I will take the world as the drama of a day. Were men to do this, what breadth and generosity would it impart to them! It is in self-seeking and advancement that we narrow our faculties and imprison our natures. A man fancies

he owns a palace and a demesne, but it is the palace that owns *him*, obliges him to maintain a certain state, live in a certain style, surrounded with certain observances, not one of which may be perhaps native to him. It is the poor man, who comes to visit and gaze on his splendors, who really enjoys them; *he* sees them without one detracting influence—not to say that in *his* heart are no corroding jealousies of some other rich man, who has a finer Claude, or a grander Rubens. Instead, besides, of owning one palace and one garden, it is the universe he owns: the vast savanna is his race-ground; the Niagara his private cascade.

My heart bounded with these buoyant fancies, and I stepped out briskly on my road. Now that I had made this vow of poverty to myself, I felt very light-hearted and gay. So long as a man is struggling for place and pre-eminence in life, how can he be generous, how even gracious? "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's ox," says the commandment, but surely it must have been your neighbor's before it was yours, and, if you have striven for it, it is likely that you have coveted it. Now, I will covet nothing—positively nothing—and I will see if in this noble spirit there will not be a reward proportionately ample and splendid.

My road led through that wild and somewhat dreary valley by which the Upper Rhine descends, fed by many an Alpine stream and torrent, to reach the fertile plains of Germany. It was a desolate expanse of shingle, with here and there little patches of oak scrub, or, at rare intervals, small enclosures of tillage; though how tilled, or for whom, it was hard to say, since not a trace of inhabitant could be seen, far or wide. Deep fissures, the course of many a mountain stream, cut the road at places, and through these the foot-traveler had to pass on stepping-stones; while wheel carriages, descending into the chaos of rocks and stones, fared even worse, and incurred serious peril to spring and axle in the passage. On the mountain-sides, indeed, some châlets were to be seen, very high up, and scarcely accessible, but ever surrounded with little tracts of greener verdure and more varied foliage. From these heights, too, I could hear the melodious ring of the bells worn by the cattle—sure signs of peasant comfort. "Might not a man find a life of simple cares and few sorrows up yonder?" asked I, as I gazed upward. While I continued to look, the great floating clouds that soared on the mountain-tops began to mass and to mingle together, thickening and darkening at every moment, and then, as though overweighted, slowly to descend, shutting out châlet and shady copse and crag, as they fell, on their way to the plain beneath. It was a grievous change from the bright picture a few moments back, and not the less disheartening, that the heavily charged mist now melted into rain, that soon fell in torrents. With not a rock nor a shrub to shelter under, I had nothing for it but to trudge onward to the nearest village, wherever that might be. How speedily the slightest touch of the real will chase away the fictitious and the imaginary! No more dreams nor fancies now, as wet and soaked I plodded on, my knapsack seeming double its true weight, and my stick appearing to take root each time it struck the ground. The fog, too, was so dense that I was forced to feel my way as I went. The dull roar of the Rhine was the only sound for a long time; but this at length became broken by the crashing noise of timber carried down by the torrents, and the louder din of the torrents themselves as they came tumbling down the mountain. I would have retraced my steps to Bregenz, but that I knew the places I had passed dryshod in the morning would by this time have become impassable rivers. My situation was a dreary one, and not without peril, since there was no saying when or where a mountain cataract might not burst its way down the cliffs and sweep clean across the road towards the Rhine.

Had there been one spot to offer shelter, even the poorest and meanest, I would gladly have taken it, and made up my mind to await better weather; but there was not a bank, nor even a bush, to cower under, and I was forced to trudge on. It seemed to me at last that I must have been walking many hours; but having no watch, and being surrounded with impenetrable fog, I could make no guess of the time, when at length a louder and deeper sound appeared to fill the air, and make the very mist vibrate with its din. The surging sound of a great volume of water, sweeping along through rocks and fallen trees, apprised me that I was nearing a torrent; while the road itself, covered with some inches of water, showed that the stream had already risen above its embankments. There was real danger in this; light carriages—the great lumbering diligence itself—had been known to be carried away by these suddenly swollen streams, and I began seriously to fear disaster. Wading cautiously onward, I reached what I judged to be the edge of the torrent, and felt with my stick that the water was here borne madly onward, and at considerable depth. Though through the fog I could make out the opposite bank, and see

that the stream was not a wide one, I plainly perceived that the current was far too powerful for me to breast without assistance, and that no single passenger could attempt it with safety. I may have stood half an hour thus, with the muddy stream surging over my ankles, for I was stunned and stupefied by the danger, when I thought I saw through the mist two gigantic figures looming through the fog, on the opposite bank. When and how they had come there, I knew not, if they were indeed there, and if these figures were not mere specters of my imagination. It was not till having closed my eyes, and opening them again, I beheld the same objects, that I could fully assure myself of their reality.

CHAPTER XL.

I AM DRAGGED AS A PRISONER TO FELDKIRCH.

THE two great figures I had seen looming through the fog while standing in the stream, I at last made out to be two horsemen, who seemed in search of some safe fordable part of the stream to cross over. Their apparent caution was a lesson by which I determined to profit, and I stood a patient observer of their proceedings. At times I could catch their voices, but without distinguishing what they said, and suddenly I heard a plunge, and saw that one had dashed boldly into the flood, and was quickly followed by the other. If the stream did not reach to their knees, as they sat, it was yet so powerful that it tested all the strength of the horses and all the skill of the riders to stem it; and as the water splashed and surged, and as the animals plunged and struggled, I scarcely knew whether they were fated to reach the bank, or be carried down in the current. As they gained about the middle of the stream, I saw that they were mounted gendarmes, heavy men with heavy equipments, favorable enough to stem the tide, but hopelessly incapable to save themselves if overturned. "Go back — hold in — go back! the water is far deeper here!" I cried out at the top of my voice; but either not hearing, or not heeding my warning, on they came, and, as I spoke, one plunged forward, and went headlong down under the water, but, rising immediately, his horse struck boldly out, and, after a few struggles, gained the bank. The other, more fortunate, had headed up the stream, and reached the shore without difficulty.

With the natural prompting of a man towards those who had just overcome a great peril, I hastened to say how glad I felt at their safety, and from what intense fear their landing had rescued me; when one, a corporal, as his cuff bespoke, muttered a coarse exclamation of impatience, and something like a malediction on the service that exposed men to such hazards, and at the same instant the other dashed boldly up the bank, and with a bound placed his horse at my side, as though to cut off my retreat.

"Who are you?" cried the corporal to me, in a stern voice.

"A traveler," said I, trying to look majestic and indignant.

"So I see; and of what nation?"

"Of that nation which no man insults with impunity."

"Russia?"

"No; certainly not—England."

"Whence from last?"

"From Bregenz."

"And from Constance by Lindau?" asked he quickly, as he read from a slip of paper he had just drawn from his belt.

I assented, but not without certain misgivings, as I saw so much was known as to my movements.

"Now for your passport. Let me see it," said the corporal again. "Just so," said he, folding it up. "Traveling on foot, and marked 'suspected.'"

Though he muttered these words to his companion, I perceived that he cared very little for my having overheard them.

"Suspected of what, or by whom?" asked I, angrily.

Instead of paying any attention to my question, the two men now conversed together in a low tone and confidentially.

"Come," said I, with an assumed boldness, "if you have quite done with that passport of mine, give it to me, and let me pursue my journey."

So eager were they in their own converse, that this speech, too, was unheeded; and now, grown rasher by impunity and impatience, I stepped stoutly forward and attempted to take the passport from the soldier's hand.

"Sturm und Gewitter!" swore out the fellow, while he struck me sharply on the wrist, "do you mean to try force with us?" And the other drew his saber, and flourishing it over his head, held the point of it within a few inches of my chest.

I cannot imagine whence came the courage that now filled my heart, for I know I am not naturally brave, but I felt for an instant that I could have stormed a breach; and, with an insulting laugh, I said: "Oh,

of course, cut me down. I am unarmed and defenseless. It is an admirable opportunity for the display of Austrian chivalry."

"Bey'm Henker! It's very hard not to slice off his ear," said the soldier, seeming to ask leave for this act of valor.

"Get out your cords," said the corporal; "we're losing too much time here."

"Am I a prisoner then?" asked I, in some trepidation.

"I suspect you are, and likely to be for some time to come," was the gruff answer.

"On what charge—what is alleged against me?" cried I, passionately.

"What has sent a better-looking fellow to Spielberg," was the haughty rejoinder.

"If I *am* your prisoner," said I haughtily—"and I warn you at once of your peril in daring to arrest a British subject traveling peacefully—you are not going to tie my hands! You are not going to treat me as a felon?" I screamed out these words in a voice of wildest passion, as the soldier, who had dismounted for the purpose, was now proceeding to tie my wrists together with a stout cord, and in a manner that displayed very little concern for the pain he occasioned me.

As escape was totally out of the question I threw myself upon the last resource of the injured. I fell back upon eloquence. I really wish I could remember even faintly the outline of my discourse; for, though not by any means a fluent German, the indignation that makes men poets converted me into a great master of prose, and I told them a vast number of curious, but not complimentary, traits of the land they belonged to. I gave, too, a rapid historical sketch of their campaigns against the French, showing how they were always beaten, the only novelty being whether they ran away or capitulated. I reminded them that the victory over *me* would resound through Europe, being the only successful achievement of their arms for the last half century. I expressed a fervent hope that the corporal would be decorated with the "Maria Theresa," and his companion obtain the "valor medal," for what they had done. Pensions, I hinted, were difficult in the present state of their finances, but rank and honor certainly ought to await them. I don't know at what exact period of my peroration it was that I was literally "pulled up," each of the horsemen holding a line fastened to my wrists, and giving me a drag forward that nearly carried me off my feet, and flat on my face. I stumbled, but recovered myself; and now saw that, bound as I was, with a gendarme on each side of me, it required all the activity I could muster, to keep my legs.

Another whispered conversation here took place across me, and I thought I heard the words Bregenz and Feldkirch interchanged, giving me to surmise that they were discussing to which place they should repair. My faint hope of returning to the former town was, however, soon extinguished, as the corporal, turning to me, said:

"Our orders are to bring you alive to headquarters. We'll do our best; but if, in crossing these torrents, you prefer to be drowned, it's no fault of ours."

"Do you mean by that," cried I, "that I am to be dragged through the water in this fashion?"

"I mean that you are to come along as best you may."

"It is all worthy of you, quite worthy!" screamed I, in a voice of wildest rage. "You reserve all your bravery for those who cannot resist you—and you are right, for they are your only successes. The Turks beat you"—here they chucked me close up, and dashed into the stream. "The Prussians beat you!" I was now up to my waist in water. "The Swiss beat you!" Down I went over head and ears. "The French always—thrashed you"—down again—"at Elm—Auster—litz—Aspern"—nearly suffocated, I yelled out, "Wagram!"—and down I went, never to know any further consciousness till I felt myself lying on the soaked and muddy road, and heard a gruff voice saying: "Come along—we don't intend to pass the night here!"

CHAPTER XLI.

THE ACT OF ACCUSATION.

Benumbed, bedraggled, and bewildered, I entered Feldkirch late at night, my wrists cut with the cords, my clothes torn by frequent falls, my limbs aching with bruises, and my wet rags chafing my skin. No wonder was it that I was at once consigned from the charge of a gaoler to the care of a doctor, and ere the day broke I was in a raging fever.

I would not, if I could, preserve any memory of that grievous interval. Happily for me, no clear traces remain on my mind—pangs of suffering are so mingled with little details of the locality, faces, words, ludicrous images of a wandering intellect, long hours of silent brooding, sound of church bells and such other tokens as cross the lives of busy men in the daily walk

of life—all came and went within my brain, and still I lay there in fever.

In my first return of consciousness, I perceived I was the sole occupant of a long arched gallery, with a number of beds arranged along each side of it. In their uniform simplicity, and the severe air of the few articles of furniture, my old experiences at once recalled the hospital; not that I arrived at this conclusion without much labor and a considerable mental effort. It was a short journey, to be sure, but I was walking with sprained ankles. It was, however, a great joy and a great triumph to me to accomplish even this much. It was the recognition to myself that I was once more on the road to health, and again to feel the sympathies that make a brotherhood of this life of ours; and so happy was I with the prospect, that when I went to sleep at night my last thought was of the pleasure that morning would bring me. And I was not disappointed; the next day, and the next, and several more that followed, were all passed in a calm and tranquil enjoyment. Looking back upon this period, I have often been disposed to imagine that when we lie in the convalescence that follows some severe illness, with no demands upon our bodily strength, no call made upon our muscular energies, the very activity of digestion not evoked, as our nourishment is of the simplest and lightest, our brain must of necessity exercise its functions more freely, untrammeled by passing cares or the worries incident to daily life, and that at such times our intellect has probably a more uncontested action than at any other period of our existence. I do not want to pursue my theory, or endeavor to sustain it; my reader has here enough to induce him to join his experience to my own, or reject the notion altogether.

I lay thus, not impatiently, for above a fortnight. I regained strength very slowly; the least effort or exertion was sure to overcome me. But I wished for none; and, as I lay there, gazing for whole days long at a great coat-of-arms over the end of the gallery, where a huge double-headed eagle seemed to me screaming in the agony of strangulation, but yet never to be choked outright, I reveled in many a strange rambling as to the fate of the land of which it was the emblem and the shield. Doubtless some remnant of my passionate assault on Austria lingered in my brain, and gave this turn to its operations.

My nurse was one of that sisterhood whose charities call down many a blessing on the Church that organizes their benevolences. She was what is called a "graue Schwester;" and of a truth she seemed the incarnation of greyness. It was not her dress alone, but her face and hands, her noiseless gait, her undemonstrative stare, her half-husky whisper, and her monotonous ways, had all a sort of pervading greyness that enveloped her, just as a cloud-mist wraps a landscape. There was, besides, a kind of fog-like indistinctness in her few and muttered words that made a fitting atmosphere of drowsy uniformity for the sick-room.

Her first care, on my recovery, was to supply me with a number of little religious books—lives of saints and martyrs, accounts of miracles, and narratives of holy pilgrimages—and I devoured them with all the zest of a devotee. They seemed to supply the very excitement my mind craved for, and the good soul little suspected how much more she was ministering to a love for the marvelous than to a spirit of piety. In the "Flowers of St. Francis," for instance, I found an adventure-seeker after my own heart. To be sure, his search was after sinners in need of a helping hand to rescue them; but, as his contests with Satan were described as stand-up encounters, with very hard knocks on each side, they were just as exciting combats to read of as any I had ever perused in stories of chivalry.

Mistaking my zest for these readings for something far more praiseworthy, "the grey sister" enjoined me very seriously to turn from the evil advisers I had formerly consorted with, and frequent the society of better-minded and wiser men. Out of these counsels, dark and dim at first, but gradually growing clearer, I learned that I was regarded as a member of some terrible secret society, banded together for the direst and blackest of objects: the subversion of thrones, overthrow of dynasties, and assassination of sovereigns being all labors of love to us. She had a full catalogue of my colleagues, from Sand, who killed Kotzebue, to Orsini, and seemed thoroughly persuaded that I was a very advanced member of the order. It was only after a long time, and with great address on my part, that I obtained these revelations from her; and she owned that nothing but witnessing how the holy studies had influenced me would ever have induced her to make these avowals. As my convalescence progressed, and I was able to sit up for an hour or so in the day, she told me that I might very soon expect a visit from the Staats Procurator, a kind of district attorney-general, to examine me. So little able was I to carry my mind back to

the bygone events of my life, that I heard this as a sort of vague hope that the inquiry would strike out some clue by which I could connect myself with the past, for I was sorely puzzled to learn what and who I had been before I came there. Was I a prosecutor, or was I a prisoner? Never was a knotty point more patiently investigated, but, alas! most hopelessly. The intense interest of the inquiry, however, served totally to withdraw me from my previous readings, and "the grey sister" was shocked to see the mark in my book remain for days long unchanged. She took courage at length to address me on the subject, and even went so far as to ask if Satan himself had not taken occasional opportunity of her absence to come and sit beside my bed? I eagerly caught at the suggestion, and said it was as she suspected: that he never gave me a moment's peace, now torturing me with menaces, now asking for explanations, how this could be reconciled with that, and why such a thing should not have prevented such another?

Instead of expressing any astonishment at my confession, she appeared to regard it as one of the most ordinary incidents, and referred me to my books, and especially to St. Francis, to see that these were usual and every-day snares in use. She went further, and in her zeal actually showed a sort of contempt for the evil one in his intellectual capacity that startled me; showing how St. Jude always got the better of him, and that he was a mere child when opposed by the craft of St. Anthony of Pavia.

"It is the truth," said she, "always conquers him. Whenever, by any chance, he can catch you concealing or evading, trying to make out reasons that are inconsistent, or affecting intentions that you had not, then he is your master."

There was such an air of matter-of-fact about all she said, that when—our first conversation on this theme over—she left the room, a cold sweat broke over me at the thought that my next visitor would be the "Lebendige Satan" himself.

It had come to this, that I had furnished my own mind with such a subject of terror that I could not endure to be alone, and lay there trembling at every noise, and shrinking at every shadow that crossed the floor. Many and many times, as the dupe of my own deceivings, did I find myself talking aloud in self-defense, averring that I wanted to be good, and honest, and faithful, and that whenever I lapsed from the right path, it was in moments of erring reason, sure to be followed after by sincere repentance.

It was after an access of this kind "the grey sister" found me one morning, bathed in cold perspiration, my eyes fixed, my lips livid, and my fingers fast knotted together.

"I see," said she, "he has given you a severe turn of it to-day. What was the temptation?"

For a long while I refused to answer; I was weak as well as irritable, and I desired peace, but she persisted and pressed hard to know what subject we had been discussing together.

"I'll tell you then," said I fiercely, for a sudden thought, prompted perhaps by a sense of anger, flashed across me: "he has just told me that you are his sister."

She screamed out wildly, and rushing to the end of the gallery, threw herself at the foot of a little altar.

Satisfied with my vengeance, I lay back, and said no more. I may have dropped into a half-slumber afterwards, for I remember nothing till, just as evening began to fall, one of the servants came up and placed a table and two chairs beside my bed, with writing materials and a large book, and shortly after, two men dressed in black, and with square black caps on their heads, took their places at the table, and conversed together in low whispers.

Resolving to treat them with a show of complete indifference, I turned away and pretended to go to sleep.

"The Herr Staats Procurator Schlässel has come to read the act of accusation," said the shorter man, who seemed a subordinate; "take care that you pay proper respect to the law and the authorities."

"Let him read away," said I, with a wave of my hand, "I will listen."

In a low sing-song, dreary tone, he began to recite the titles and dignities of the emperor. I listened for a while, but as he got down to the Banat and Herzegovine, sleep overcame me, and I dozed away, waking up to hear him detailing what seemed his own greatness, how he was "Ober" this, and "Unter" that, till I fairly lost myself in the maze of his description. Judging from the monotonous, business-like persistence of his manner, that he had a long road before him, I wrapped myself comfortably in the bedclothes, closed my eyes, and soon slept.

There were two candles burning on the table when I next opened my eyes, and my friend the procurator was reading away as before. I tried to interest myself for a second or two; I rubbed my eyes and endeavored to be wakeful; but I could not, and

was fast settling down into my former state, when certain words struck on my ear and aroused me :

"The well-born Herr von Rigges further denounces the prisoner Harpar——"

"Read that again," cried I, aloud, "for I cannot clearly follow what you say."

"'The well-born Herr von Rigges,'" repeated he, "'further denounces the prisoner Harpar as one of a sect banded together for the darkest purposes of revolution!'"

"Forgive my importunity, Herr Procurator," said I, in my most insinuating tone, "but in compassion for the weakness of faculties sorely tried by fever, will you tell me who is Rigges?"

"Who is Rigges? Is that your question?" said he, slowly.

"Yes, sir; that was my question."

He turned over several pages of his voluminous report, and proceeded to search for the passage he wanted.

"Here it is," said he, at last; and he read out: "'The so-called Rigges, being a well-born and not-the-less-from-a-mercantile-object-engaging pursuit highly-placed and much-honored subject of her Majesty the Queen of England, of the age of forty-two years and eight months, unmarried, and professing the Protestant religion.' Is that sufficient?"

"Quite so; and now, will you, with equal urbanity, inform me who is Harpar?"

"Who is Harpar? Who is Harpar? You surely do not ask me that?"

"I do; such is my question."

"I must confess that you surprise me. You ask me for information about yourself!"

"Oh, indeed! So that I am Harpar?"

"You can, of course, deny it. We are in a measure prepared for that. The proofs of your identity will be, however, forthcoming; not to add, that it will be difficult to disprove the offense."

"Ha, the offense! I'm really curious about that. What is the offense with which I am charged?"

"What I have been reading these two hours. What I have recited with all the clearness, brevity, and perspicuity that characterize our imperial and royal legislation, making our code at once the envy and admiration of all Europe."

"I am sure of that. But what have I done?"

"With what for a dullness-charged and much-beclouded intellect are you afflicted," cried he, "not to have followed the greatly-by-circumstances-corroborated, and in-various-ways-by-proofs-brought-home narrative that I have already read out!"

"I have not heard one word of it!"

"What a deplorable and all-the-more-therefore-hopeless intelligence is yours! I will begin it once more." And with a heavy sigh he turned over the first pages of his manuscript.

"Nay, Herr Procurator," interposed I, hastily. "I have the less claim to exact this sacrifice on your part, that, even when you have rendered it, it will be all fruitless and unprofitable. I am just recovering from a severe illness. I am, as you have very acutely remarked, a man of very narrow and limited faculties in my best of moments, and I am now still lower in the scale of intelligence. Were you to read that lucid document till we were both grey-headed, it would leave me just as uninformed as to imputed crime as I now am."

"I perceive," said he, gravely. Then, turning to his clerk, he bade him write down, "'And the so-called Harpar, having duly heard and with decorously-lent attention listened to the foregoing act, did thereupon enter his plea of mental incapacity and derangement.'"

"Nay, Herr Procurator, I would simply record that, however open to follow some plain narrative, the forms and subtleties of a legal document only bewilder me."

"What for an ingeniously-worded and with-artifice-cunningly-conceived excuse have we here?" exclaimed he, indignantly. "Is it from England, with her seventeen hundred and odd volumes of an incomplete code, that the imperial and royal government is to learn legislation? You are charged with offenses that are known to every state of civilization: highway assault and molestation—attack with arms and deadly implements, stimulated by base and long-heretofore and with bitterness-imagined plans of vengeance on your countryman and former associate, the so-named Rigges. From him, too, proceeds the information as to your political character, and the ever-to-be deplored and only-with-blood-expiated error of republicanism by which you are actuated. This brief, but not-the-less-on-that-account lucid exposition, it is my duty first to read out, and then leave with you. With all your from-a-wrong-impulse-proceeding and a-spirit-of-opposition-suggested objections, I have no wish nor duty to meddle. The benign and ever paternal rule under which we live gives, even to the most-with-accusation-surrounded and with-strong-presumption-implicated prisoner, every facility of defense. Having read and matured this indictment,

you will, after a week, make choice of an advocate."

"Am I to be confronted with my accuser?"

"I sincerely hope that the indecent spectacle of insulting attack and offensive rejoinder thus suggested, is unknown to the administration of our law."

"How, then, can you be certain that I am the man he accuses of having molested him?"

"You are not here to assail, nor I to defend, the with-ages-consolidated and by-much-tact-accumulated wisdom of our imperial and royal code."

"Might he not say, when he saw me, 'I never set eyes on this man before'?"

He turned again to his clerk, and dictated something of which I could but catch the concluding words—"And thereby imputing perjury to the so-called Rigges."

It was all I could do to repress an outburst of anger at this unjustifiable system of inference, but I did restrain myself, and merely said, "I impute nothing, Herr Procurator: I simply suggest a possible case, that everything suffered by Rigges was inflicted by some other than I."

"If you had accomplices, name them," said he, solemnly.

This overcame all my prudent resolves. I was nowise prepared for such a perversity of misconception, and, losing all patience and all respect for his authority, I burst out into a most intemperate attack on Austria, her code, her system, her ignorant indifference to all European enlightenment, her bigoted adherence to forms either unmeaning or pernicious, winding up all with a pleasant prediction that in a few short years the world would have seen the last of this stolid and unteachable empire.

Instead of deigning a reply, he merely bent down to the table, and I saw by the movement of his lips, and the rapid course of the clerk's pen, that my statement was being reduced to writing.

"When you have completed that," said I, gravely, "I have some further observations to record."

"In a moment—in a moment," patiently responded the procurator; "we have only got to 'the besotted stupidity of her pretentious officials.'"

The calm quietude of his manner, as he said this, threw me into a fit of laughter, which lasted several minutes.

"There, there," said I, "that will do; I will keep the remainder of my remarks for another time and place."

"'Reserving to himself,'" dictated he, "'the right of uttering still more bitter and untruthful comments on a future occasion.'" And the clerk wrote the words as he spoke them.

"You will sign this here," said he, presenting me with the pen.

"Nothing of the kind, Herr Procurator. I will not lend myself to any, even the most ordinary, form of your stupid system."

"'And refuses to sign the foregoing,'" dictated he, in the same unmoved voice. This done, he arose, and proceeded to draw on his gloves. "The act of allegation I now commit to your hands," said he, calmly, "and you will have a week to reflect upon the course you desire to adopt."

"One question before you go: Is the person called Rigges here at this moment, and can I see him?"

He consulted for a few seconds with his subordinate, and then replied, "These questions, we are of opinion, are irrelevant to the defense, and need not be answered."

"I only ask you as a favor, Herr Procurator," said I.

"The law recognizes no favors nor accepts courtesies."

"Does it also reject common sense? Is it deaf to all intelligence?—is it indifferent to every appeal to reason?—is it dead to——"

But he would not wait for more, and, having saluted me thrice profoundly, retired from the gallery, and left me alone with my indignation.

The great pile of paper still lay on the table next me, and, in my anger, I hurled it from me to the middle of the room, venting I know not what passionate wrath at the same time on everything German. "This the land of primitive simplicity and patriarchal virtues, forsooth! This the country of elevated tastes and generous instincts! Why, it is all bureau and barrack!" I went on for a long time in this strain, and I felt the better for it. The operative surgeons tell us that no men recover so certainly or so speedily after great operations as the fellows who scream out and make a terrible uproar. It is your patient, self-controling creature who sinks under the suffering he will not confess; and I am confident that it is a wise practice to blow off the steam of one's indignation, and say all the most bitter things one can think of in moments of disappointment, and, so to say, prepare the chambers of your mind for the reception of better company.

After a while I got up, gathered the papers together, and prepared to read them. Legal amplifications and circumlocutions are of all lands and peoples; but

for the triumph of this diffusiveness commend me to the Germans. To such an extent was this the case, that I reached the eighth page of the precious paper before I got finally out of the titular description of the vice-governor, in whose district the event was laid. Armed, however, with heroic resolution, I persevered, and read on through the entire night—I will not say without occasional refreshers in the shape of short naps—but the day was already breaking when I turned over the last page, and read the concluding little blessing on the emperor, under whose benign reign all the good was encouraged, all evil punished, and the Hoch-gelehrter—Hoch wohl-geborner Herr der Hofrath, Ober Procurators-fiscal Secretär, charged with the due execution of the present decree.

In the language of *précis* writing, the event might be stated thus: "A certain Englishman named Rigges, traveling by post, arrived at the torrent of Dornbirn a short time before noon, and while waiting there for the arrival of some peasants to accompany his carriage through the stream, was joined by a foot-traveler, by whom he was speedily recognized. Whatever the nature of the relations previously subsisting between them—and it may be presumed they were not of the most amiable—no sooner had they exchanged glances than they engaged in deadly conflict. Rigges was well armed; the stranger had no weapon whatever, but was a man of surpassing strength, for he tore the door of the carriage from its hinges, and dragged Rigges out upon the road before the other could offer any resistance. The postilion, who had gone to summon the peasants, was speedily recalled by the report of firearms. Three shots were fired in rapid succession, and, when he reached the spot, it was to see two men struggling violently in the torrent, the stranger dragging Rigges with all his might towards the middle of the stream, and the other screaming wildly for succor. The conflict was a terrible one, for the foot-traveler seemed determined on self-destruction, if he could only involve the other in his own fate. At last Rigges's strength gave way, and the other threw himself upon him, and they both went down beneath the water.

"The stranger emerged in an instant, but one of the peasants on the bank struck him a violent blow with his ash pole, and he fell back into the stream. Meanwhile, the others had rescued Rigges, who lay panting, but unconscious, on the ground. They were yet ministering to his recovery, when they heard a wild shout of derisive triumph, and now saw that the other, though carried away by the torrent, had gained a small shingly bank in the middle of the Rhine, and was waving his hat in mockery of them. They were too much occupied with the care of the wounded man, however, to bestow more attention on him. One of Rigges's arms was badly fractured, and his jaw also broken, while he complained still more of the pain of some internal injuries; so severe, indeed, were his sufferings, that he had to be carried on a litter to Feldkirch. His first care on arriving was to denounce the assailant, whose name he gave as Harpar, declaring him to be a most notorious member of a "rouge" society, and one whose capture was an object of European interest. In fact, Rigges went so far as to pretend that he had himself periled life in the attempt to secure him.

"Detachments of mounted gendarmes were immediately sent off in pursuit, the order being to arrest any foot-traveler whose suspicious appearance might challenge scrutiny."

It is needless to say how much I appeared to fulfill the signs they sought for, not to add that the intemperance of my language, when captured, was in itself sufficient to establish a grave charge against me. It is true, there was in the act of allegation a lengthened description of me, with which my own appearance but ill corresponded. I was described as of middle age, of a strong frame and muscular habit, and with an expression that denoted energy and fierceness. How much of that vigor must they imagine had been washed away by the torrent, to leave me the poor, helpless-looking thing I now appeared!

I know it is a very weak confession, I feel as I make it how damaging to my character is the acknowledgment, and how seriously I compromise myself in my reader's estimation; but I cannot help owning that I felt very proud to be thought so wicked, to be classed with those Brutuses of modern history, who were scattering explosive shells like bonbons and throwing grenades broadcast like "confetti" in a carnival. I fancied how that miserable Staats Procurator must have trembled in his inmost heart as he sat there in close proximity with such an infuriate desperado as I was. I hoped that every look, every gesture, every word of mine, struck terror into his abject soul. It must also unquestionably do them good, these besotted, self-satisfied, narrow-minded Germans, to know how an Englishman, a born Briton, regards their miserable system of government, and that poor and meager

phantasm they call their "civilization." Well, they have had their opportunity now, and I hope they will make much of it.

As I pondered over the late incident, as recorded in the allegation, I remembered the name of Rigges as that of the man Harpar mentioned as having "run" or escaped with their joint finances, and had very little difficulty in filling up the probable circumstances of their rencontre. It was easy to see how Rigges, traveling "extra-post," with all the appearance of wealth and station, could impute to the poor wayfarer any criminality he pleased. Cunningly enough, too, he had hit upon the precise imputation which was sure to enlist Austrian sympathies in the pursuit, and calling him a "Socialist and a Rouge" was almost sealing his fate at once. How glad I felt that the poor fellow had escaped, even though it cost me all the penalty of personating him! yes, I really was generous enough for that sentiment, though I perceive that my reader smiles incredulously as I declare it. "No, no," mutters he, "the arrant snob must not try to impose upon us in that fashion. He was trembling to the very marrow of his bones, and nothing was further from his thoughts than self-sacrifice or devotion." I know your opinion of me takes this lively shape—I feel it, and I shrink under it; but I know, besides, that I owe all this depreciating estimate of me to nothing so much as my own frankness and candor. If my reader, therefore, scruples to accord me the merit of the generosity that I lay claim to, let him revel in the depreciating confession that I am about to make. I knew that when it was discovered I was not Harpar, I must instantly be set at liberty. I felt this, and could therefore be at any moment the arbiter of my own freedom. To do this, of course, would set in motion a search after the real delinquent, and I determined I would keep my secret till he had ample time to get away. When I had satisfied myself that all pursuit of him must be hopeless, I would declare myself to be Potts, and proudly demand my liberation.

My convalescence made now such progress that I was able to walk about the gallery, and indeed occasionally to stroll out upon a long terrace which flanked the entire building, and gaze upon a garden, beyond which again I could see the town of Feldkirch, and the open platz in which the weekly market was held. By the recurrence of these—they always fell upon a Saturday—was I enabled to mark time, and I now reckoned that three weeks had gone over since the day of the Herr Procurator's visit, and yet I had heard nothing more of him, nor of the accusation against me. I was seriously thinking whether my wisest plan might not be to take French leave and walk off, when my gaoler came one morning to announce that I was to be transferred to Innspruck, where, in due course, my trial would take place.

"What if I refuse to go?" said I; "what if I. demand my liberation here on the spot?"

"I don't imagine that you'd delay your journey much by that, my good friend," said he; "the imperial and royal government takes little heed of foolish remonstrances."

"What if the imperial and royal government, in the plenitude of its sagacity, should be in the wrong? What if I be not the person who is accused of this crime? What if the real man be now at liberty? What if the accuser himself will declare, when he sees me, that he never met me before, nor so much as heard of me?"

"Well, all that may happen; I won't say it is impossible, but it cannot occur here, for the Herr von Rigges has already set off for Innspruck, and you are to follow him to-morrow."

CHAPTER XLII.

A GLIMPSE OF AN OLD FRIEND.

If there be anything in our English habits upon which no difference of opinion can exist, it is our proneness to extend to a foreigner a degree of sympathy and an amount of interest that we obstinately deny to our own people. The English artist struggling all but hopelessly against the town's indifference has but to displace the consonants or multiply the vowels of his name to be a fashion forthwith and a success. Strange and incomprehensible tendency in a nation so overwhelmingly impressed with a sense of its own vast superiority! But so it is. Mr. Brady may sing to empty benches, while il Signor Bradini would "bring down the house." What set me thinking over this was, that though Silvio Pellico was a stock theme for English pity and compassion, I very much doubted if a single tear would fall for the misfortunes of Potts. And yet there was a marvelous similarity in our suffering. In each case was the Austrian the gaoler; in each case was the victim a creature of tender mould and gentle nature.

I traveled in a sort of covered cart, with a mounted gendarme at either side of me.

Indeed, the one faintly alleviating circumstance of my captivity was the sight of those two heavily equipped giants, armed to the teeth, who were supposed to be essential to my safe-conduct. It was such an acknowledgment of what they had to apprehend from my well-known prowess and daring, so palpable a confession that every precaution was necessary against the bold intrepidity of a man of my stamp! At times, I almost wished they had put chains upon me. I thought how well it would read in my Memoirs; how I was heavily "manacled"—a great word that—"orders being given to the escort to shoot me if I showed the slightest intention to escape." It was an intense pleasure to me to imagine myself a sort of Nana Sahib, and whenever we halted at some wayside public, and the idle loungers would draw aside the canvas covering and stare in at me, I did my utmost to call up an expression of ogre-like ferocity and wildness, and it was with a thrill of ecstasy I saw a little child clasp its mother by the neck, and scream out to come away as it beheld me.

On the second night of our journey we halted at a little village at the foot of the Arlberg, called Steuben, where, in default of a regular prison, they lodged me in an old tower, the lower part of which was used for a stable. It stood in the very center of the town, and from its narrow and barred windows I could catch glimpses of the little world that moved about in happy freedom beneath me. I could see the Marktplatz, from which the booths were now being taken down, and could mark that preparations for some approaching ceremony were going on, but of what nature I could not guess. A large place was neatly swept out, and at last strewn with sawdust—signs unerring of some exhibition of legerdemain or conjuring, of which the Tyrolese are warm admirers. The arrangements were somewhat more portentous than are usually observed in open-air representations, for I saw seats prepared for the dignitaries of the village, and an evident design to mark the entertainment as under the most distinguished protection. The crowd—now considerable—observed all the decorous bearing of citizens in presence of their authorities.

I nestled myself snugly in the deep recess of the window to watch the proceedings, nor had I long to wait; some half-dozen gayly-dressed individuals having now pierced their way through the throng, and commenced those peculiar gambols which bespeak backbones of gristle and legs of pasteboard. It is a class of performance I enjoy vastly. The two fellows who lap over each other like the links of a chain, and the creature who rolls himself about like a ball, and the licensed freedoms of that man of the world—the clown—never weary me, and I believe I laugh at them with all the more zest that I have so often laughed at them before. It was plain, after a while, that a more brilliant part of the spectacle was yet to come; for a large, bluff-looking man, in cocked-hat and jack-boots, now entered the ring and indignantly ejected the clowns by sundry admonitions with a lash-whip, which I perceived were not merely make-believes.

"Ah, here he comes! here he is!" was now uttered in accents of eager interest, and an avenue was quickly made through the crowd for the new performer. There was delay after this, and though doubtless the crowd below could satisfy their curiosity, I was so highly perched and so straitened in my embrasure that I had to wait, with what patience I might, the new arrival. I was deep in my guesses what sort of "artist" he might prove, when I saw the head of a horse peering over the shoulders of the audience, and then the entire figure of the quadruped as he emerged into the circle, all sheeted and shrouded from gaze. With one dexterous sweep the groom removed all the clothing, and there stood before me my own lost treasure—Blondel himself! I would have known him among ten thousand. He was thinner, perhaps, certainly thinner, but in all other respects the same; his silky mane and his long tassel of a tail hung just as gracefully as of yore, and as he ambled around, he moved his head with a courteous inclination, as though to acknowledge the plaudits he met with.

There was in his air the dignity that said, "I am one who has seen better days. It was not always thus with me. Applaud if you must, and if you will; but remember that I accept your plaudits with reserve, perhaps even with reluctance." Poor fellow, my heart bled for him! I felt as though I saw a cathedral canon cutting somersaults, and all this while, by some strange inconsistency, I had not a sympathy to bestow on the human actors in the scene. "As for them," thought I, "they have accepted this degradation of their own free will. If they had not shirked honest labor they need never have been clowns or pantaloons; but Blondel—Blondel, whom fate had stamped as the palfrey of some high-born maiden, or at least, the favorite steed of one who knew how to lavish care on an object of such perfection—Blondel, who had borne himself so proudly in high places, and who,

even in his declining fortunes had been the friend and fellow-traveler of——Yes, why should I shame to say it? Posterity will speak of Potts without the detracting malice and envious rancor of contemporaries; and when, in some future age, a great philanthropist or statesman should claim the credit of some marvelous discovery, some wondrous secret by which humanity may be bettered, a learned critic will tell the world how this great invention was evidently known to Potts, how at such a line, or at such a page, we shall find that Potts knew it all."

The wild cheering of the crowd beneath cut short these speculations, and now I saw Blondel cantering gayly round the circle, with a handkerchief in his mouth. If in sportive levity it chanced to fall, he would instantly wheel about and seize it, and then, whisking his tail and shaking his long forelock, resume his course again. It was fine, too, to mark the haughty indifference he manifested towards that whip-cracking monster who stood in the center, and affected to direct his motions. Not alone did he reject his suggestions, but in a spirit of round defiance did he canter up behind him, and alight with his fore-legs on the fellow's shoulders. I am not sure whether the spectators regarded the tableau as I did, but to *me* it seemed an allegorical representation of man and his master.

The hard breathing of a person close behind me now made me turn my head, and I saw the gaoler, who had come with my supper. A thought flashed suddenly across me. "Go down to those mountebanks, and ask if they will sell that cream-colored pony," said I. "Bargain as though you wanted him for yourself—he is old and of little value, and you may perhaps secure him for eighty or ninety florins, and if so, you shall have ten more for your pains. It is a caprice of mine, nothing more, but help me to gratify it."

He heard me with evident astonishment, and then gravely asked if I had forgotten the circumstance that I was a prisoner, and likely to remain so for some time.

"Do as I bade you," said I, "and leave the result to me. There, lose no more time about it, for I see the performance is drawing to a close."

"Nay, nay," said he; "the best of all is yet to come. The pretty Moorish girl has not yet appeared. Ha! here she is."

As he spoke he crept up into the window beside me, not less eager for the spectacle than myself. A vigorous cheer, and a loud clapping of hands below, announced that the favorite was in sight long before she was visible to our eyes.

"What can she do?" asked I peevishly, perhaps, for I was provoked how completely she had eclipsed poor Blondel in public favor. "What can she do? Is she a rope-dancer, or does she ride in the games of the ring?" "There, there! Look at her—yonder she goes! and there's the young prince—they call him a prince, at least—who follows her everywhere."

I could not but smile at the poor gaoler's simplicity, and would willingly have explained to him that we have outlived the age of Cinderellas. Indeed, I had half turned towards him with this object, when a perfect roar of the crowd beneath me drew off my attention from him to what was going on below. I soon saw what it was that entranced the public: it was the young girl, who now, standing on Blondel's back, was careering round the circle at full speed. It is an exercise in which neither the horse nor the rider is seen to advantage; the heavy, monotonous tramp of the beast, cramped by the narrow limits, becomes a stilty, wooden gallop. The rider, too, more careful of her balance than intent upon graceful action, restricts herself to a few, and by no means picturesque, attitudes. With all this, the girl now before me seemed herself so intensely to enter into the enjoyment of the scene, that all her gestures sprang out of a sort of irrepressible delight. Far from unsteadying her foot, or limiting her action, the speed of the horse appeared to assist the changeful bendings of her graceful figure, as now, dropping on one knee, she would lean over to caress him, or, now, standing erect, with folded arms and leg advanced, appeared to dare him to displace her. Faultlessly graceful as she was, there was that in her own evident enjoyment that imparted a strange delight to the beholder, and gave to the spectacle the sort of magnetism by which pleasure finds its way from heart to heart throughout a multitude. At least, I suppose this must have been so, for in the joyous cheering of that crowd there was a ring of wild delight far different from mere applause.

At last, poor Blondel, blown and wearied, turned abruptly into the middle of the ring, and with panting sides and shaking tail came to a dead halt. The girl, with a graceful slide, seated herself on his back and patted him playfully. And to me this was by far the most graceful movement of the whole.

It was really a picture! and so natural and so easy withal, that one forgot all about

her spangles and tinsel, the golden fillet of her hair, and the tawdry fringe of her sandals; and, what was even harder still, heard not the hoarse-mouthed enthusiasm that greeted her. At length, a tall man, well-dressed and of striking appearance, pushed his way into the ring, and politely presented her with a bouquet, at which piece of courtesy the audience, noways jealous, again redoubled their applause. She now looked round her with an air of triumphant pleasure, and while, with a playful gesture, she flung back the ringlets on her neck, she lifted her face full to my view and it was Tintefleck! With all my might I cried out, "Catinka! Catinka!" I know not why, but the impulse never waited to argue the question. Though I screamed my loudest, the great height at which I was placed, and the humming din of the crowd, totally drowned my words. Again and again I tried it, but to no purpose. There she sat, slowly making the round of the circus, while the stranger walked at her side, to all seeming conversing as though no busy and prying multitude stood watching and observing them. Wearied with my failure to attract notice, I turned to address the gaoler, but he had already gone, and I was alone. I next endeavored by a signal to call attention to me, and, at last, saw how two or three of the crowd had observed my waving a handkerchief, and were pointing it out to others. Doubtless they wondered how a poor captive could care for the pleasant follies of a life of whose commonest joys he was to be no sharer, and still greater was their astonishment as I flung forth a piece of money—a gold napoleon, it was—which they speedily caught up and gave to Catinka. How I watched her as she took it and showed it to the stranger! He, by his gesture, seemed angry, and made a motion as though asking her to throw it away; and then there seemed some discussion between them, and his petulance increased; and she, too, grew passionate, and, leaping from the horse, strode haughtily across the circus and disappeared. And then arose a tumult and confusion, the mob shouting madly for the Moorish girl to come back, and many much disposed to avenge her absence on the stranger. As for him, he pushed the mob haughtily aside and went his way, and though for a while the crowd continued to vent its expressions of displeasure and disappointment, the performance soon concluded, and all went their several roads homewards; and when I looked out upon the empty Platz, over which the dusky shadows of the old houses were now stealing to mingle together, and instead of the scene of bustle and excitement saw a few lingering townsfolk moody and purposeless, I asked myself if the whole incidents were not a vision mind-drawn and invented. There was not one single clue by which I could trace it to reality.

More than once in my life had my dreamy temperament played me such pranks; and, strangely too, even when I had assured myself of the deception, there would yet linger in my mind thoughts and impressions strong enough to influence my actions, just as we often see that our disbelief in a scandalous story is not sufficient to disabuse us of a certain power it wields over us.

Oh, what a long and dreary night was that, harassed with doubts, and worn out with speculations! My mind had been much weakened by my fever, and whenever I followed a train of thought too long, confusion was sure to ensue. The terror of this chaotic condition, where all people, and lands, and ideas, and incidents, jostle against each other in mad turmoil, can only be estimated by one who has felt it. Like the awful rush of sensations of him who is sliding down some steep descent to a tremendous precipice, one feels the gradual approach of that dreamy condition where reason is lost, and the mind a mere waif upon the waters.

"Here's your breakfast," said the gaoler, as he stopped the course of my reverie. "And the brigadier hopes you'll be speedy with it, for you must reach Maltz by nightfall."

"Tell me," said I, eagerly, "was there a circus company here yesterday evening? Did they exhibit on the Platz there?"

"You are a deep one, you are!" muttered he, sulkily, to himself, and left the cell.

CHAPTER XLIII.

I AM CONFINED IN THE AMBRAS SCHLOSS.

I BORE up admirably on my journey. I felt I was doing a very heroic thing. By my personation of Harpar, I was securing that poor fellow's escape, and giving him ample time to get over the Austrian frontier, and many a mile away from the beaks of the Double Eagle. I had read of such things in history, and I resolved I would not derogate from the proudest records of such self-devotion. Had I but remembered how long my illness had lasted, I might have easily seen that Harpar could by this time have arrived at Calcutta; but, unfortunately

for me, I had no gauge of time whatever, and completely forgot the long interval of my fever.

On reaching Innspruck, I was sent on to an old château some ten miles away, called the Ambras Schloss, and being consigned to the charge of a retired artillery officer there, they seemed to have totally forgotten all about me. I lived with my old gaoler just as if I were his friend : we worked together in the garden, pruned and raked, and hoed and weeded ; we smoked and fished, and mended our nets on wet days, and read, living exactly as might any two people in a remote out-of-the-world spot.

There is a sort of armory at the Ambras, chiefly of old Tyrolese weapons of an early period—maces and halberds, and double-handed swords, and such like—and one of our pastimes was arranging, and settling, and cataloguing them, for which, in the ancient records of the Schloss, there was ample material. This was an occupation that amused me vastly, and I took to it with great zeal, and with such success that old Hirsch, the gaoler, at last consigned the whole to my charge, along with the task of exhibiting the collection to strangers —a source from which the honest veteran derived the better part of his means of life.

At first, I scarcely liked my function as showman, but like all my other experiences in life, habit sufficed to reconcile me, and I took to the occupation as though I had been born to it. If now and then some rude or vulgar traveler would ruffle my temper by some illiterate remark or stupid question, I was well repaid by intercourse with a different stamp. They were to me such peeps at the world as a monk might have from the windows of his cloister, tempting, perhaps, but always blended with the sense of the security that encompassed him, and defended him from the cares of existence.

Perhaps the consciousness that I could assert my innocence and procure my freedom at any moment for the first few months reconciled me to this strange life ; but certainly, after a while, I ceased to care for any other existence, and never troubled my head either about past or future. I had, in fact, arrived at the great monastic elevation, in which a man, ceasing to be human, reaches the dignity of a vegetable.

I had begun, as I have said, by an act of heroism, in accepting all the penalties of another, and, long after I ceased to revert to this sacrifice, the impulse it had once given still continued to move me. If Hirsch never alluded to my imputed crime to me, I was equally reserved towards him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A VISIT FROM THE HON. GREY BULLER.

From time to time, a couple of grave, judicial-looking men would arrive and pass the forenoon at the Ambras Schloss, in reading out certain documents to me. I never paid much attention to them, but my ear at moments would catch the strangest possible allegations as to my exalted political opinions, the dangerous associates I was bound up with, and the secret societies I belonged to. I heard once, too, and by mere accident, how, at Steuben, I had asked the gaoler to procure me a horse, and thrown gold in handfuls from the windows of my prison, to bribe the townsfolk to my rescue ; and I laughed to myself to think what a deal of pleading and proof it would take to rebut all these allegations, and how little likely it was I would ever engage in such a conflict.

By long dwelling on the thought of my noble devotion, and how it would read when I was dead and gone, I had extinguished within my heart all desire for other distinction, speculating only on what strange and ingenious theories men would spin for the secret clue to my motives. "True," they would say, "Potts never cared for Harpar. He was not a man to whom Potts would have attached himself under any circumstances ; they were, as individuals, totally unlike and unsympathetic. How, then, explain this extraordinary act of self-sacrifice ? Was he prompted by the hope that the iniquities of the Austrian police system would receive their death-blow from his story, and that the mound that covered him in the churchyard would be the altar of liberty to thousands ? Or was Potts one of those enthusiastic creatures only too eager to carry the load of some other pilgrim in life ?"

While I used thus to reason and speculate I little knew that I had become a sort of European notoriety. Some Englishwoman, however, some vagrant tourist, had put me in her book as the half-witted creature who showed the coins and curiosities at Ambras, and mentioned how, for I know not how many years, I was never heard to utter a syllable except on questions of old armor and antiquities. In consequence I was also asked for by my traveling countrymen, and my peculiarities treated with all that playful good taste for which tourists are famous. I remember one day having refused to perform the showman to a British family. I had a headache, or was sulky, or a fit of rebellion had got hold of me, but I sauntered out

into the grounds and would not see them. In my walk through a close alley of laurels, I chanced to overhear the stranger conversing with Hirsch, and making myself the subject of his inquiries; and, as I listened, I heard Hirsch say that one entire room of the château was devoted to the papers and documents in my case, and that probably it would occupy a quick reader about twelve months to peruse them. He added that, as I made no application for a trial myself, nor any of my friends showed an inclination to bestir themselves about me, the government would very probably leave me to live and die where I was. Thereupon the Briton broke out into a wrothy fit of indignant eloquence. He denounced the Hapsburgs and praised the habeas corpus; he raved of the power of England, our press, our public opinion, our new frigates. He said he would make Europe ring with the case. It was as bad, it was worse than, Caspar Hauser's, for he was an idiot outright, and *I* appeared to have the enjoyment of certain faculties. He said it should appear in the *Times*, and be mentioned in the House; and, as I listened, the strangest glow ran through me, a mild and pleasurable enthusiasm, to think that all the might, majesty and power of Great Britain was about to interest itself in behalf of Potts!

The Briton kept his word; the time, too, favored him. It was a moment when wandering Englishmen were exhuming grievances throughout every land of Europe; and while one had discovered some case of religious intolerance in Norway, another beat him out of the field with the cold-blooded atrocities of Naples. My Englishman chanced to be an M.P., and therefore he asked, "in his place," if the Foreign Secretary had any information to afford the House with respect to the case of the man called Harper, or Harpar, he was not certain which, and who had been confined for upwards of ten months in a dungeon in Austria, on allegations of which the accused knew nothing whatever, and attested by witnesses with whom he had never been confronted.

In the absence of his chief, the Under-Secretary rose to assure the right honorable gentleman that the case was one which had for a considerable time engaged the attention of the department he belonged to, and that the most unremitting exertions of her Majesty's envoy at Vienna were now being devoted to obtain the fullest information as to the charges imputed to Harpar, and he hoped in a few days to be able to lay the result of his inquiry on the table of the House.

It was about a week after this that Hirsch came to tell me that a member of her Majesty's legation at Vienna had arrived to investigate my case, and interrogate me in person. I am half ashamed to say how vaingloriously I thought of the importance thus lent me. I felt somehow as though the nation missed me. Waiting, patiently, as it might be, for my return, and yet no tidings coming, they said, "What has become of Potts?" It was clearly a case upon which they would not admit of any mystification or deceit. "No secret tribunals, no hole-and-corner-commitments with us! Where is he? Produce him. Say, with what is he charged?" I was going to be the man of the day. I knew it, I felt it; I saw a great tableau of my life unrolling itself before me. Potts, the young enthusiast after virtue — hopeful, affectionate, confiding, giving his young heart to that fair-haired girl as freely as he would have bestowed a moss-rose; and she, making light of the gift, and with a woman's coquetry, torturing him by a jealous levity till he resented the wrong, and tore himself away. And then, Catinka—how I tried the gold of my nature in that crucible, and would not fall in love with her before I had made her worthy of my love; and when I had failed in that, how I had turned from love to friendship, and offered myself the victim for a man I never cared about. No matter; the world will know me at last. Men will recognize the grand stuff that I'm made of. If commentators spend years in exploring the recondite passages of great writers, and making out beauties where there were only obscurities, why should not all the dark parts of my nature come out as favorably, and some flattering interpreter say, "Potts was for a long time misconceived; few men were more wrongfully judged by their contemporaries. It was to a mere accident, after all, we owe it that we are now enabled to render him the justice so long denied him. His was one of those remarkable natures in which it is difficult to say whether humility or self-confidence predominated"?

Then I thought of the national excitement to discover the missing Potts, just as if I had been a lost Arctic voyager. Expeditions sent out to track me—all the thousand speculations as to whether I had gone this way or that—where and from whom the latest tidings of me could be traced—the heroic offers of new discoverers to seek me living, or, sad alternative, restore to the country that mourned me the *reliquiæ Pottsi*. I always grew tender in my moods of self-compassion, and I felt my eyes swimming now in pity for my fate;

and let me add in this place my protest against the vulgar error which stigmatizes as selfishness the mere fact of a man's susceptibility. How, I would simply ask, can he feel for others who has no sense of sympathy with his own suffering nature? If the well of human kindness be dried up within him, how can he give to the parched throats the refreshing waters of compassion?

Deal with the fact how you may, I was very sorry for myself, and seriously doubted if as sincere a mourner would bewail me when I was gone.

If a little time had been given me, I would have endeavored to get up my snug little chamber somewhat more like a prison cell. I would have substituted some straw for my comfortable bed, and gracefully draped a few chains upon the walls and some stray torture implements out of the armory; but the envoy came like a "thief in the night," and was already on the stairs when he was announced.

"Oh! this is his den, is it?" cried he, from without, as he slowly ascended the stairs. "Egad! he hasn't much to complain of in the matter of a lodging. I only wish our fellows were as well off at Vienna." And with these words there entered into my room a tall young fellow, with a light brown mustache, dressed in a loose traveling suit, and with the lounging air of a man sauntering into a *café*. He did not remove his hat as he came in, or take the cigar from his mouth—the latter circumstance imparting a certain confusion to his speech that made him occasionally scarce intelligible. Only deigning to bestow a passing look on me, he moved towards the window, and looked out on the grand panorama of the Tyrol Alps, as they enclose the valley of Innspruck.

"Well," said he, to himself, "all this ain't so bad for a dungeon!"

The tone startled me. I looked again at him; I rallied myself to an effort of memory, and at once recalled the young fellow I had met on the South-Western line, and from whom I had accidentally carried away the despatch-bag. To my beard, and my long imprisonment, I trusted for not being recognized, and I sat patiently awaiting my examination.

"An Englishman, I suppose?" asked he, turning hastily around. "And of English parents?"

"Yes," was my reply, for I determined on brevity wherever possible.

"What brought you into this scrape? I mean, why did you come here at all?"

"I was traveling."

"Traveling? Stuff and nonsense! Why should fellows like you travel? What's your rank in life?"

"A gentleman."

"Ah! but whose gentleman, my worthy friend? Ain't you a flunkey? There, it's out! I say, have you got a match to light my cigar? Thanks; all right. Look here, now—don't let us be beating about the bush all the day—I believe this government is just as sick of you as you are of them. You've been here two months—ain't it so?"

"Ten months and upwards."

"Well, ten months. And you want to get away?"

I made no answer; indeed, his free-and-easy manner so disconcerted me that I could not speak, and he went on—

"I suspect they haven't got much against you, or that they don't care about it; and, besides, they are civil to us just now. At all events, it can be done—you understand? —it can be done."

"Indeed," said I, half superciliously.

"Yes," resumed he, "I think so; not but you'd have managed better in leaving the thing to *us*. That stupid notion you all have of writing letters to newspapers and getting some troublesome fellow to ask questions in the House—that's what spoils everything! How can *we* negotiate when the whole story is in the *Times* or the *Daily News*?"

"I opine, sir, that you are ascribing to me an activity and energy I have no claim to."

"Well, if you didn't write those letters, somebody else did. I don't care a rush for the difference. You see here's how the matter stands. This Mr. Brigges, or Rigges, has gone off, and doesn't care to prosecute, and all his allegations against you fall to the ground. Well, these people fancy they could carry on the thing themselves, you understand; we think not. They say they have got a strong case; perhaps they have; but we ask, 'What's the use of it? Sending the poor beggar to Spielberg won't save you, will it?' And so we put it to them this way: 'Draw stakes, let him off, and both can cry quits.' There give me another light. Isn't that the common-sense view of it?"

"I scarcely dare to say that I understand you aright."

"Oh, I can guess why. I have had dealings with fellows of your sort before. You don't fancy my not alluding to compensation, eh? You want to hear about the money part of the matter?"

And he laughed aloud, but whether at *my* mercenary spirit, or *his own* shrewdness in detecting it, I do not really know.

"The girl, with a graceful slide, seated herself on his back."

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"Well, I'm afraid," continued he, "you'll be disappointed there. These Austrians are hard up; besides, they never do pay. It's against their system, and so we never ask them."

"Would it be too much, sir, to ask why I have been imprisoned?"

"Perhaps not; but a great deal too much for me to tell you. The confounded papers would fill a cart, and that's the reason I say, cut your stick, my man, and get away." Again he turned to the window, and, looking out, asked, "Any shooting about here? There ought to be cocks in that wood yonder?" and without caring for reply, went on, "After all you know what bosh it is to talk about chains and dungeons, and bread-and-water, and the rest of it. You've been living in clover here. That old fellow below tells me that you dine with him every day; that you might have gone into Innspruck, to the theater if you liked it—I'll swear there are snipes in that low land next the river.—Think it over, Rigges, think it over."

"I am not Rigges."

"Oh, I forgot! You're the other fellow. Well, think it over, Harpar."

"My name is not Harpar, sir."

"What do I care for a stray vowel or two? Maybe you call yourself Harpar, or Harpér? It's all the same to *us*."

"It is not the question of a vowel or two, sir; and I desire you to remark it is the graver one of a mistaken identity!" I said this with a high-sounding importance that I thought must astound him, but his light and frivolous nature was impervious to rebuke.

"*We* have nothing to say to that," replied he, carelessly. "You may be Noakes or Styles. I believe they are the names of any fellows who are supposed by courtesy to have no name at all, and it's all alike to *us*. What I have to observe to you is this: nobody cares very much whether you are detained here or not: nobody wants to detain you. Just reflect, therefore, if it's not the best thing you can do to slope off, and make no more fuss about it?"

"Once for all, sir," said I, still more impressively, "I am not the person against whom this charge is made. The authorities have all along mistaken me for another."

"Well, what if they have? Does it signify one kreutzer? We have had trouble enough about the matter already, and do not embroil us any further."

"May I ask, sir, just for information, who are the 'we' you have so frequently alluded to?"

Had I asked him in what division of the globe he understood us then to be conversing, he would not have regarded me with a look of more blank astonishment.

"Who are we?" repeated he. "Did you ask who are we?"

"Yes, sir; that was what I made bold to ask."

"Cool, certainly; what might be called uncommon cool. To what line of life were you brought up, my worthy gent? I have rather a curiosity about your antecedents."

"That same curiosity cost you a trifle once before," said I, no longer able to control myself, and dying to repay his impertinence. "I remember, once upon a time, meeting you on a railroad, and you were so eager to exhibit the skill with which you could read a man's calling, that you bet me a sovereign you could guess mine. You did so, and lost."

"You can't be—no, it's impossible. Are you really the goggle-eyed fellow that walked off with the bag for Kalbbratonstadt?"

"I did, by mistake, carry away a bag on that occasion; and so punctiliously did I repay my error, that I traveled the whole journey to convey those despatches to their destination."

"I know all about it," said he, in a frank, gay manner. "Doubleton told me the whole story. You dined with him and pretended you were, I don't remember whom, and then you took old Mamma Keats off to Como and made her believe you were Louis Philippe; and you made fierce love to your pretty companion, who was fool enough to like you. By Jove! what a rig you must have run. We have all laughed over it a score of times."

"If I knew who 'we' were, I am certain I should feel flattered by any amusement I afforded them, notwithstanding how much more they are indebted to fiction than fact regarding me. I never assumed to be Louis Philippe, nor affected to be any person of distinction. A flighty old lady was foolish enough to imagine me a prince of the Orleans family——"

"You—a prince! Oh, this is too absurd!"

"I confess, sir, I cannot see the matter in this light. I presume the mistake to be one by no means difficult to have occurred. Mrs. Keats has seen a deal of life and the world——"

"Not so much as you fancy," broke he in. "She was a long time in that private asylum up at Brompton, and then down at Staffordshire; altogether, she must have passed five-and-twenty or thirty years in a rather restricted circle."

"Mad! Was she mad?"

"Not what one would call mad, but queer. They were all queer. Hargrave, the second brother, was the fellow that made that shindy in the Mauritius, and our friend Shalley isn't a conjuror. And *we* thought you were larking the old lady; I assure you we did."

"'We' were once more mistaken, then," said I, sneeringly.

"We all said, too, at the time, that Doubleton had been 'let in.' He gave you a good round sum for expenses on the road, didn't he? and you sent it all back to him."

"Every shilling of it."

"So he told us; and that was what puzzled us more than all the rest. Why did you give up the money?"

"Simply, sir, because it was not mine."

"Yes, yes, to be sure, I know that; but I mean, what suggested the restitution?"

"Really, sir, your question leads me to suppose that the 'we' so often referred to are not eminently remarkable for integrity."

"Like their neighbors, I take it—neither better nor worse. But won't you tell why you gave up the tin?"

"I should be hopeless of any attempt to explain my motives, sir; so pray excuse me."

"You were right, at all events," said he, not heeding the sarcasm of my manner. "There's no chance for the knaves now, with the telegraph system. As it was, there were orders flying through Europe to arrest Pottinger—I can't forget the name. We used to have it every day in the Chancellerie: Pottinger, five feet nine, weak-looking and vulgar, low forehead, light hair and eyes, slight lisp, talks German fluently, but ill. I have copied that portrait of you twenty, ay, thirty times."

"And yet, sir, neither the name nor the description applies. I am no more Pottinger than I am ignoble-looking and vulgar."

"What's the name, then?—not Harpar, nor Pottinger? But who cares a rush for the name of fellows like you? You change them just as you do the color of your coat."

"May I take the liberty of asking, sir, just for information, as you said a while ago, how you would take it were I to make as free with you as you have been pleased to do with *me?* To give a mock inventory of your external characteristics, and a false name to yourself?"

"Laugh, probably, if I were amused—throw you out of the window if you offended me."

"The very thing I'd do with you this moment, if I was strong enough," said I, resolutely. And he flung himself into a chair, and laughed as I did not believe he could laugh.

"Well," cried he, at last, "as this room is about fifty feet or so from the ground, it's as well as it is. But now let us wind up this affair. You want to get away from this, I suppose; and as nobody wants to detain you, the thing is easy enough. You needn't make a fuss about compensation, for they'll not give a kreutzer, and you'd better not write a book about it, because 'we' don't stand fellows who write books; so just take a friend's advice, and go off without military honors of any kind."

"I neither acknowledge the friendship nor accept the advice, sir. The motives which induced me to suffer imprisonment for another are quite sufficient to raise me above any desire to make a profit of it."

"I think I understand *you*," said he, with a cunning expression in his half-closed eyes. "You go in for being a 'character.' Haven't I hit it? You want to be thought a strange, eccentric sort of fellow. Now, there was a time the world had a taste for that kind of thing. Romeo Coates, and Brummel, and that Irish fellow that walked to Jerusalem, and half-a-dozen others, used to amuse the town in those days, but it's all as much bygone now as starched neckcloths and Hessian boots. Ours is an age of paletots and easy manners, and you are trying to revive what our grandfathers discarded and got rid of. It won't do, Pottinger; it will not."

"I am not Pottinger; my name is Algernon Sydney Potts."

"Ah! there's the mischief all out at last. What could come of such a collocation of names but a life of incongruity and absurdity! You owe all your griefs to your godfathers, Potts. If they'd have called you Peter, you'd have been a well-conducted poor creature. Well, I'm to give you a passport. Where do you wish to go?"

"I wish, first of all, to go to Como."

"I think I know why. But you're on a wrong cast there. They have left that long since."

"Indeed, and for what place?"

"They've gone to pass the winter at Malta. Mamma Keats required a dry, warm climate, and you'll find them at a little country-house about a mile from Valetta: the Jasmines, I think it's called. I have a brother quartered in the island, and he tells me he has seen them, but they won't receive visits, nor go out anywhere. But, of course, a royal highness is always sure of a welcome. Prince Potts is an 'open sesame!' wherever he goes."

"What atrocious tobacco this is of yours,

Buller," said I, taking a cigar from his case as it lay on the table. "I suppose that you small fry of diplomacy cannot get things in duty free, eh?"

"Try this cheroot; you'll find it better," said he, opening a secret pocket in the case.

"Nothing to boast of," said I, puffing away, while he continued to fill up the blanks in my passport.

"Would you like an introduction to my brother? He's on the government staff there, and knows every one. He's a jolly sort of fellow, besides, and you'll get on well together."

"I don't care if I do," said I, carelessly, "though, as a rule, your red-coat is very bad style—flippant without smartness, and familiar without ease."

"Severe, Potts, but not altogether unjust; but you'll find George above the average of his class, and I think you'll like him."

"Don't let him ask me to his mess," said I, with an insolent drawl. "That's an amount of boredom I could not submit to. Caution him to make no blunder of that kind."

He looked up at me with a strange twinkle in his eyes, which I could not interpret. He was either in intense enjoyment of my smartness, or heaven knows what other sentiment then moved him. At all events, I was in ecstasy at the success of my newly discovered vein, and walked the room, humming a tune, as he wrote the letter that was to present me to his brother.

"Why had I never hit upon this plan before?" thought I. "How was it that it had not occurred that the maxim of homœopathy is equally true in morals as in medicine, and that '*similia similibus curantur!*' So long as I was meek, humble, and submissive, Buller's impertinent presumption only increased at every moment. With every fresh concession of mine he continued to encroach, and now that I had adopted his own strategy, and attacked, he fell back at once." I was proud, very proud, of my discovery. It is a new contribution to that knowledge of life which, notwithstanding all my disasters, I believed to be essentially my gift.

At last he finished his note, folded, sealed, and directed it—"The Hon. George Buller, A. D. C., Government House, Malta, favored by Algernon Sydney Potts, Esq."

"Isn't that all right?" asked he, pointing to my name. "I was within an ace of writing Hampden-Russell, too." And he laughed at his own very meager jest.

"I hope you have merely made this an introduction?" said I.

"Nothing more; but why so?"

"Because it's just as likely that I never present it! I am the slave of the humor I find myself in, and I rarely do anything that costs me the slightest effort." I said this with a close and, indeed, a servile imitation of Charles Matthews in "Used Up;" but it was a grand success, and Buller was palpably vanquished.

"Well, for George's sake, I hope your mood may be the favorable one. Is there anything more I can do for you? Can you think of nothing wherein I may be serviceable?"

"Nothing. Stay, I rather think our people at home might with propriety show my old friend Hirsch here some mark of attention for his conduct towards me. I don't know whether they give a C. B. for that sort of thing, but a sum—a handsome sum—something to mark the service, and the man to whom it was rendered. Don't you think 'we' could manage that?"

"I'll see what can be done. I don't despair of success."

"As for your share in the affair, Buller, I'll take care that it shall be mentioned in the proper quarter. If I *have* a characteristic—my friends say I have many—but if I have one, it is that I never forget the most trifling service of the humblest of those who have aided me. You are young, and have your way to make in life. Go back, therefore, and carry with you the reflection that Potts is your friend."

I saw he was affected at this, for he covered his face with his handkerchief and turned away, and for some seconds his shoulders moved convulsively.

"Yes," said I, with a struggle to become humble, "there are richer men, there are men more influential by family ties and connections, there are men who occupy a more conspicuous position before the public eye, there are men who exercise a wider sway in the world of politics and party; but this I will say, that there is not one—no, not one—individual in the British dominions who, when you come to consider either the difficulties he has overcome, the strength of the prejudices he has conquered, the totally unassisted and unaided struggle he has had to maintain against not alone the errors, for errors are human, but still worse, the ungenerous misconceptions; the —I will go further, and call them the wilful misrepresentations of those who, from education and rank and condition, might be naturally supposed—indeed, confidently affirmed to be—to be——"

"I am certain of it!" cried he, grasping my hand, and rescuing me from a situation very like smothering—"I am certain of it!" And with a hurried salutation, for his feelings were evidently overcoming him, he burst away, and descended the stairs five steps at a time, and although I was sorry he had not waited till I finished my peroration, I was really glad that the act had ended and the curtain fallen.

"What a deal of bad money passes current in this world," said I, as I was alone; "and what a damper it is upon honest industry to think how easy it is to eke out life with a forgery!"

"What do you say to a dinner with me at the 'Swan' in Innspruck, Potts?" cried out Buller, from the courtyard.

"Excuse me, I mean to eat my last cutlet, here, with my old gaoler. It will be an event for the poor fellow as long as he lives. Good-bye, and a safe journey to you."

CHAPTER XLV.

MY CANDID AVOWAL TO KATE HERBERT.

I WAS now bound for the first port in the Mediterranean from which I could take ship for Malta, and the better to carry out my purpose, I resolved never to make acquaintance with any one, or be seduced by any companionship, till I had seen Miss Herbert, and given her the message I was charged with. This time, at least, I would be a faithful envoy, at least as faithful as a man might be who had gone to sleep over his credentials for a twelvemonth. And so I reached Maltz, and took my place by diligence over the Stelvio down to Lecco, never trusting myself with even the very briefest intercourse with my fellow-travelers, and suffering them to indulge in the humblest estimate of me, morally and intellectually—all that I might be true to my object and firm to my fixed purpose. For the first time in my life I tried to present myself in an unfavorable aspect, and I was astonished to find the experiment by no means unpleasing, the reason being, probably, that it was an immense success. I began to see how the surly people are such acute philosophers in life, and what a deal of selfish gratification they must derive from their uncurbed ill-humor. I reached Genoa in time to catch a steamer for Malta. It was crowded, and with what, in another mood, I might have called pleasant people; but I held myself estranged and aloof from all. I could mark many an impertinent allusion to my cold and distant manner, and could see that a young sub on his way to join was even witty at the expense of my retiring disposition. The creature, Groves he was called, used to try to "trot me out," as he phrased it; but I maintained both my resolve and my temper, and gave him no triumph.

I was almost sorry on the morning we dropped anchor in the harbor. The sense of doing something, anything, with a firm persistence had given me cheerfulness and courage. However, I had now a task of some nicety before me, and addressed myself at once to its discharge. At the hotel I learned that the cottage inhabited by Mrs. Keats was in a small nook of one of the bays, and only an easy walk from the town; and so I despatched a message at once with Miss Crofton's note to Miss Herbert, enclosed in a short one from myself, to know if she would permit me to wait upon her, with reference to the matter in the letter. I spoke of myself in the third person and as the bearer of the letter.

While I was turning over the letters and papers in my writing-desk, awaiting her reply, I came upon Buller's note to his brother, and, without any precise idea why, I sent it by a servant to the Government House, with my card. It was completely without a purpose that I did so, and if my reader has not experienced moments of the like "inconsequences," I should totally break down in attempting to account for their meaning.

Miss Herbert's reply came back promptly. She requested that the writer of the note she had just read would favor her with a visit at his earliest convenience.

I set forth immediately. What a strange and thrilling sensation it is when we take up some long-dropped link in life, go back to some broken thread of our existence, and try to attach it to the present! We feel young again in the bygone, and yet far older even than our real age in the thought of the changes time has wrought upon us in the meanwhile. A week or so before, I had looked with impatience for this meeting, and now I grew very faint-hearted as the moment drew nigh. The only way I could summon courage for the occasion was by thinking that in the mission intrusted to me *I* was actually nothing. There were incidents and events not one of which touched me, and I should pass away off the scene when our interview was over, and be no more remembered by her.

It was evident that the communication had engaged her attention to some extent

by the promptitude of her message to me; and with this thought I crossed the little lawn, and rang the bell at the door.

"The gentleman expected by Miss Herbert, sir?" asked a smart English maid. "Come this way, sir. She will see you in a few minutes."

I had fully ten minutes to inspect the details of a pretty little drawing-room, one of those little female temples where scattered drawings and books and music, and above all, the delicious odor of fresh flowers, all harmonize together, and set you a-thinking how easily life could glide by with such appliances were they only set in motion by the touch of the enchantress herself. The door opened at last, but it was the maid; she came to say that Mrs. Keats was very poorly that day, and Miss Herbert could not leave her at that moment; and if it were not perfectly convenient to the gentleman to wait, she begged to know when it would suit him to call again?

"As for me," said I, "I have come to Malta solely on this matter; pray say that I will wait as long as she wishes. I am completely at her orders."

I strolled out after this through one of the windows that opened on the lawn, and gaining the sea-side, I sat down upon a rock to bide her coming. I might have sat about half an hour thus, when I heard a rapid step approaching, and I had just time to arise when Miss Herbert stood before me. She started back, and grew pale, very pale, as she recognized me, and for fully a minute there we both stood, unable to speak a word.

"Am I to understand, sir," said she, at last, "that you are the bearer of this letter?" And she held it open towards me.

"Yes," said I, with a great effort at collectedness. "I have much to ask your forgiveness for. It is fully a year since I was charged to place that in your hands, but one mischance after another has befallen me; not to own that in my own purposeless mode of life I have had no enemy worse than my fate."

"I have heard something of your fondness for adventure," said she, with a strange smile that blended a sort of pity with a gentle irony. "After we parted company at Schaffhausen, I believe you traveled for some time on foot? We heard, at least, that you took a fancy to explore a mode of life few persons have penetrated, or, at at least, few of your rank and condition."

"May I ask, what do you believe that rank and condition to be, Miss Herbert?" asked I, firmly.

She blushed deeply at this; perhaps I was too abrupt in the way I spoke, and I hastened to add—

"When I offered to be the bearer of the letter you have just read, I was moved by another wish than merely to render you some service. I wanted to tell you, once for all, that if I lived for a while in a fiction land of my own invention, with day-dreams and fancies, and hopes and ambitions all unreal, I have come to pay the due penalty of my deceit, and confess that nothing can be more humble than I am in birth, station or fortune—my father an apothecary, my name Potts, my means a very few pounds in the world; and yet, with all that avowal, I feel prouder, now that I have made it, than ever I did in the false assumption of some condition I had no claim to."

She held out her hand to me with such a significant air of approval, and smiled so good-naturedly, that I could not help pressing it to my lips and kissing it rapturously.

Taking a seat at my side, and with a voice meant to recall me to a quiet and business-like demeanor, she asked me to read over Miss Crofton's letter. I told her that I knew every line of it by heart, and, more still, I knew the whole story to which it related. It was a topic that required the nicest delicacy to touch on, but, with a frankness that charmed me, she said—

"You have had the candor to tell me freely your story; let me imitate you and reveal mine.

"You know who we are, and whence we have sprung; that my father was a simple laborer on a line of railroad, and, by dint of zeal and intelligence, and an energy that would not be balked or impeded, that he raised himself to station and affluence. You have heard of his connection with Sir Elkanah Crofton and how unfortunately it was broken off; but you cannot know the rest—that is, you cannot know what we alone know, and what is not so much as suspected by others; and of this I can scarcely dare to speak, since it is essentially the secret of my family."

I guessed at once to what she alluded; her troubled manner, her swimming eyes, and her quivering voice, all betraying that she referred to the mystery of her father's fate; while I doubted within myself whether it were right and fitting for me to acknowledge that I knew the secret source of her anxiety, she relieved me from my embarrassment by continuing thus—

"Your kind and generous friends have not suffered themselves to be discouraged by defeat. They have again and again renewed their proposals to my mother, only varying the mode, in the hope that by some

stratagem they might overcome her reasons for refusal. Now, though this rejection, so persistent as it is, may seem ungracious, it is not without a fitting and substantial cause."

Again she faltered and grew confused, and now I saw how she struggled between a natural reserve and an impulse to confide the sorrow that oppressed her to one who might befriend her.

"You may speak freely to me," said I, at last. "I am not ignorant of the mystery you hint at. Crofton has told me what many surmise and some freely believe in."

"But we know it, know it for a certainty," cried she, clasping my hand in her eagerness. "It is no longer a surmise or a suspicion. It is a certainty—a fact! Two letters in his handwriting have reached my mother; one from St. Louis, in America, where he had gone first; the second from an Alpine village, where he was laid up in sickness. He had had a terrible encounter with a man who had done him some gross wrong, and he was wounded in the shoulder; after which he had to cross the Rhine, wading or swimming, and travel many miles ere he could find shelter. When he wrote, however, he was rapidly recovering, and as quickly regaining all his old courage and daring."

"And from that time forward have you had no tidings of him?"

"Nothing but a cheque on a Russian banker in London to pay to my mother's order a sum of money, a considerable one, too; and although she hoped to gain some clue to him through this, she could not succeed, nor have we now any trace of him whatever. I ought to mention," said she, as if catching up a forgotten thread in her narrative, "that in his last letter he enjoined my mother not to receive any payment from the insurance company, nor enter into any compromise with them; and, above all, to live in the hope that we should meet again and be happy."

"And are you still ignorant of where he now is?"

"We only know that a cousin of mine, an officer of engineers at Aden, heard of an Englishman being engaged by the Shah of Persia to report on certain silver mines at Kashan, and from all he could learn, the description would apply to him. My cousin had obtained leave of absence expressly to trace him, and promised in his last letter to bring me himself any tidings he might procure here to Malta. Indeed, when I learned that a stranger had asked to see me, I was full sure it was my cousin Harry."

Was it that her eyes grew darker in color as this name escaped her—was it that a certain tremor shook her voice—or was it the anxiety of my own jealous humor, that made me wretched as I heard of that cousin Harry, now mentioned for the first time?

"What reparation can I make you for so blank a disappointment?" said I, with a sad, half-bitter tone.

"Be the same kind friend that he would have proved himself if it had been his fortune to have come first," said she; and though she spoke calmly, she blushed deeply! "Here," said she, hurriedly, taking a small printed paragraph from a letter, and eagerly, as it seemed, trying to recover her former manner—"here is a slip I have cut out of the *Levant Herald*. I found it about two months since. It ran thus: 'The person who had contracted for the works at Pera, and who now turns out to be an Englishman, is reported to have had a violent altercation yesterday with Musted Pasha, in consequence of which he has thrown up his contract, and demanded his passport for Russia. It is rumored here that the Russian ambassador is no stranger to this rupture.' Vague as this is, I feel persuaded that he is the person alluded to, and that it is from Constantinople we must trace him."

"Well," cried I, "I am ready. I will set out at once."

"Oh! can I believe you will do us this great service?" cried she, with swimming eyes and clasped hands.

"This time you will find me faithful," said I, gravely. "He who has said and done so many foolish things as I have, must, by one good action, give bail for his future character."

"You are a true friend, and you have all my confidence."

"Mrs. Keats's compliments, miss," said the maid at this moment, "and hopes the gentleman will stay to dinner with you, though she cannot come down herself."

"She imagines you are my cousin, whom she is aware I have been expecting," said Miss Herbert, in a whisper, and evidently appearing uncertain how to act.

"Oh!" said I, with an anguish I could not repress, "would that I could change my lot with his!"

"Very well, Mary," said Miss Herbert; "thank your mistress from me, and say the gentleman accepts her invitation with pleasure. Is it too much presumption on my part, sir, to say so?" said she, with a low whisper, while a half malicious twinkle lit up her eyes, and I could not speak with happiness.

Determined, however, to give an earnest of my zeal in her cause, I declared I would at once return to the town, and learn when the first packet sailed for Constantinople. The dinner hour was seven, so that I had fully five hours yet to make my inquiries ere we met at table. I wondered at myself how business-like and practical I had become; but a strong impulse now impelled me, and seemed to add a sort of strength to my whole nature.

"As cousin Harry is the mirror of punctuality, and you now represent him, Mr. Potts," said she, shaking my hand, "pray remember not to be later than seven."

CHAPTER XLVI.

CAPTAIN ROGERS STANDS MY FRIEND.

"Constantinople, Odessa, and the Levant.—The *Cyclops*, five hundred horse-power, to sail on Wednesday morning, at eight o'clock. For freight or passage apply to Captain Robert B. Rogers."

This announcement, which I found amidst a great many others in a frame over the fireplace in the coffee-room, struck me forcibly, first of all, because, not belonging to the regular mail packets, it suggested a cheap passage; and, secondly, it promised an early departure, and the vessel was to sail on the very next morning—an amount of promptitude that I felt would gratify Miss Herbert.

Now, although I had been living for a considerable time back at the cost of the Imperial House of Hapsburg, my resources for such an expedition as was opening before me were of the most slender kind. I made a careful examination of all my worldly wealth, and it amounted to the sum of forty-three pounds some odd shillings. On *terra firma*, I could, of course, economize to any extent. With self-denial and resolution I could live on very little. Life in the East, I had often heard, was singularly cheap and inexpensive. All I had read of Oriental habits in the "Arabian Nights" and "Tales of the Genii," assured me that with a few dates and a watermelon a man dined fully as well as need be; and the delicious warmth of the climate rendered shelter a complete superfluity. Before forming anything like a correct budget, I must ascertain what would be the cost of my passage to Constantinople, and so I rang for the waiter to direct me to the address of the advertiser.

"That's the captain yonder, sir," whispered the waiter, and he pointed to a stout, weather-beaten man, who, with his hands in the pockets of his pilot-coat, was standing in front of the fire, smoking a cigar.

Although I had never seen him before, the features reminded me of some one I had met with, and suddenly I bethought me of the skipper with whom I had sailed from Ireland for Milford, and who had given me a letter for his brother "Bob"—the very Robert Rogers now before me.

"Do you know this handwriting, captain?" said I, drawing the letter from my pocket-book.

"That's my brother Joe's," said he, not offering to take the letter from my hand, or removing the cigar from his mouth, but talking with all the unconcern in life. "That's Joe's own scrawl, and there ain't a worse from this to himself."

"The letter is for you," said I, rather offended at his coolness.

"So I see. Stick it up there, over the chimney; Joe has never anything to say that won't keep."

"It is a letter of introduction, sir," said I, still more haughtily.

"And what if it be? Won't that keep? Whom is it to introduce?"

"The humble individual before you, Captain Rogers."

"So that's it!" said he, slowly. "Well, read it out for me, for, to tell you the truth, there's no harder navigation to me than one of Joe's scrawls."

"I believe I can master it," said I, opening and reading what originally had been composed and drawn up by myself. When I came to "Algernon Sydney Potts, a man so completely after your own heart," he drew his cigar from his mouth, and laying his hand on my shoulder, turned me slowly around till the light fell full upon me.

"No, Joseph," said he, deliberately, "not a bit of it, my boy. This ain't my sort of chap at all!"

I almost choked with anger, but somehow there was such an apparent earnestness in the man, and such a total absence of all wish to offend, that I read on to the end.

"Well," said he, as I concluded, "he usedn't to be so wordy as that. I wonder what came over him. Mayhap he wasn't well."

What a comment on a style that might have adorned the "Correct Letter Writer!"

"He was, on the contrary, in the enjoyment of perfect health, sir," said I, tartly.

"All I can pick out of it is, I ain't to offer you any money; and as there isn't any direction easier to follow, nor pleasanter to obey, here's my hand!" And he wrung

mine with a grip that would have flattened a chain cable.

"What's your line, here? You ain't sodgering, are you?"

"No; I'm traveling, for pleasure, for information, for pastime, as one might say."

"In the general do-nothing and careless line of business? That ain't mine. No, by jingo! I don't eat my fish without catching, ay, and salting them too, I ain't ashamed to say. I'm captain, supercargo, and pilot of my own craft; take every lunar that is taken aboard. I've writ every line that ever is writ in the log-book, and I vaccinated every man and boy aboard for the natural small-pox with these fingers and this tool that you see here!" And he produced an old and very rusty instrument of veterinary surgery from his vest-pocket, where it lay with copper money, tobacco quids, and lucifer matches.

I quickly remembered the character for inordinate boastfulness his brother had given me, and of which he thus, without any provocation on my part, afforded me a slight specimen. Now, perhaps, at this stage of my narrative, I might never have alluded to him at all, if it were not for the opportunity it gives me of recording how nobly and how resolutely I resisted what may be called the most trying temptation of human nature. An inveterate dram-drinker has been known to turn away from the proffered glass; an incurable gambler has been seen to decline the invitation to "cut in;" dignitaries of the church have begged off being made bishops; but is there any mention in history of an anecdote-monger suffering himself to be patiently vanquished, and retiring from the field without firing off at least an "incident that occurred to himself"? If ever a man was sorely tried, *I* was. Here was this coarsely-minded, vulgar dog, with nothing pictorial or imaginative in his nature, heaping story upon story of his own feats and achievements, in which not one solitary situation ever suggested an interest or awakened an anxiety; and I, who could have shot my tigers, crippled my leopards, hamstrung my lionesses, rescued men from drowning, and women from fire—with little life-touches to thrill the heart and force tears from the eyes of a stock-broker—I, I say, had to stand there and listen in silence! Watching a creature banging away at a target that he never hit, with an old flint musket, while you held in your hand a short Enfield that would have driven the ball through the bull's-eye, is nothing to this; and to tell the truth, it nearly choked me. Twice I had to cough down the words, "Now let me mention a personal fact." But I did succeed, and I am proud to say I only grew very red in the face, and felt that singing noise in the ears and general state of muddle that forebodes a fit. But I rallied, and said in a voice, slow from the dignity of a self-conquest—

"Can you take me as a passenger to Constantinople?"

"To Constantinople? Ay, to the Persian Gulf, to Point de Galle, to Cochin China, to Ross River; don't think to puzzle me with navigation, my lad."

"Are there many other passengers?"

"I could have five hundred, if I'd take 'em! Put Bob Rogers on a placard, and see what'll happen. If I said, 'I'm a-going to sea on a plank to-morrow,' there's men would rather come along with me than go in the *Queen* or the *Hannibal.* I don't say they're right, mind ye; but I won't say they're wrong, neither."

"Oh, why didn't I meet this wretch when I was a child? Why didn't my father find a Helot like this, to tell lies before me, and frighten me with their horrid ugliness?" This was the thought that flashed through me as I listened. I felt, besides, that such stupid, purposeless inventions corrupted and blunted the taste for graceful narrative, just in the same way that an undeserving recipient of charity offends the pleasure of real benevolence.

"May I ask, Captain Rogers, what is the fare?" said I, with a bland courtesy.

"That depends upon the man, sir. If you was Ramsam Can-tanker-abad, I'd say five hundred gold pagodas. If you was a Cockney stripling, with a fresh-water face, and a spunyarn whisker, I'd call it a matter of seven or eight pound."

"And you sail at eight?"

"To the minute. When Bob Rogers says eight o'clock the first turn of the paddles will be the first stroke of the hour."

"Then book me, pray, for a berth; and, for surety's sake, I'll go aboard to-night."

"Meet me, then, here, at ten o'clock, and I'll take you off in my gig, an honor to be proud on, my lad; but as Joe's friend, I'll do it."

I bowed my acknowledgments and went off, neither delighted with my new acquaintance, nor myself for the patience I had shown him. After all, I had secured an early passage, and was thus able to show Kate Herbert that I was not going to let the grass grow under my feet this time, and that she might reckon on my zeal to serve her in future. As I retraced my road to the cottage I forgot all about Captain Rogers, and only thought of Kate, and the

interests that were hers. It was next to a certainty that her father was yet alive; but how to find him in a strange land, with a feigned name, and most probably with every aid and appliance to complete his disguisement! It was, doubtless, a noble enterprise to devote one's self for such as she was, but not very hopeful withal; and then I went over various plans for my future guidance: what I should do if I fell sick? what if my money failed me? what if I were waylaid by Arabs, or carried away to some fearful region in the mountains, and made to feed a pet alligator, or a domestic boa-constrictor? I hoped sincerely that I was overestimating my possible perils, but it was wise to give a large margin to the unknown; and so I did not curb myself in the least.

As I entered the grounds, the night was falling, and I could see that the lamps were already lighted in the drawing-room. What surprised me, however, was to see a very smart groom, well mounted, and leading another horse up and down before the door. There was evidently a visitor within, and I felt indisposed to enter till he had gone away. My curiosity, however, prompted me to ask the groom the name of his master, and he replied, "The Honorable Captain Buller."

The very essence of all jealousy is, that it is unreasoning. It is well known that husbands—that much-believing and much-belied class—always suspect every one but the right man; and now, without the faintest clue to a suspicion, I grew actually sick with jealousy!

Nor was it altogether blamable in me, for, as I looked through the uncurtained window, I could see the captain, a fine-looking, rather tigerish sort of fellow, standing with his back to the fireplace, while he talked to Miss Herbert, who sat some distance off at a work-table. There was in his air that amount of jaunty ease and self-possession that said, "I am at home here; in this fortress I hold the chief command." There was about him, too, the tone of an assumed superiority, which, when displayed by a man towards a woman, takes the most offensive of all possible aspects.

As he talked, he moved at last towards a window, and, opening it, held out his hand to see if it were raining.

"I hope," cried he, "you'll not send me back with a refusal; her ladyship counts upon you as the chief ornament of her ball."

"We never go to balls, sir," was the dry response.

"But make this occasion the exception. If you only knew how lamentably we are off for pretty people, you'd pity us. Such garrison wives and daughters are unknown to the oldest inhabitant of the island. Surely Mrs. Keats will be quite well by Wednesday, and she'll not be so cruel as to deny you to us for this once."

"I can but repeat my excuses—I never go out."

"If you say so, I think I'll abandon all share in the enterprise. It was a point of honor with me to persuade you; in fact, I pledged myself to succeed, and if you really persist in a refusal, I'll just pitch all these notes in the fire, and go off yachting till the whole thing is over." And with this he drew forth a mass of notes from his sabertasche, and proceeded to con over the addresses: "'Mrs. Hilyard,' 'Mr. Barnes,' 'Mr. Clintosh,' 'Lady Blagden.' Oh, Lady Blagden! Why it would be worth while coming only to see her and Sir John; and here are the Crosbys, too; and what have we here! Oh! this is a note from Grey. You don't know my brother Grey—he'd amuse you immensely. Just listen to this, by way of a letter of introduction:

"'DEAR GEORGE:—Cherish the cove that will hand you this note as the most sublime snob I have ever met in all my home and foreign experiences. In a large garrison like yours, you can have no difficulty in finding fellows to give him a field day. I commit him, therefore, to your worthy keeping, to dine him, draw him forth, and pitch him out of the window when you've done with him. No harm if it is from the topmost story of the highest barrack in Malta. His name is Potts—seriously and truthfully, Potts. Birth, parentage, and belongings all unknown to

"'Yours ever,

"'GREY BULLER.'"

"You are unfortunate, sir, in confiding your correspondence to me," said Kate, rising from her seat, "for that gentleman is a friend, a sincere and valued friend, of my own, and you could scarcely have found a more certain way to offend me than to speak of him slightingly."

"You can't mean that you know him—ever met him?"

"I know him and respect him, and I will not listen to one word to his disparagement. Nay, more, sir, I will feel myself at liberty, if I think it fitting, to tell Mr. Potts the honorable mode in which your brother has discharged the task of an introduction, its good faith, and gentlemanlike feeling."

"Pray let us have him at the mess first.

Don't spoil our sport till we have at least one evening out of him."

But she did not wait for him to finish his speech, and left the room.

It is but fair to own he took his reverses with great coolness; he tightened his sword-belt, set his cap on his head before the glass, stroked down his mustache, and then lighting a cigar, swaggered off to the door with the lounging swing of his order.

As for myself, I hastened back to the town, and with such speed that I traversed the mile in something like thirteen minutes. I had no very clear or collected plan of action, but I resolved to ask Captain Rogers to be my friend, and see me through this conjuncture. He had just dined as I entered the coffee-room, and consented to have his brandy-and-water removed to my bedroom while I opened my business with him.

I will not, at this eleventh hour of revelations, inflict upon my reader the details, but simply be satisfied to state that I found the skipper far more practical than I looked for. He evidently, besides, had a taste for these sort of adventures, and prided himself on his conduct of them. "Go back now, and eat your dinner comfortably with your friends; leave everything to me, and I promise you one thing—the *Cyclops* shall not get full steam up till we have settled this small transaction."

CHAPTER XLVII.

MY DUELING AMBITION AGAIN DISAPPOINTED.

Though I was a few minutes late for dinner, Miss Herbert did not chide me for delay. She was charming in her reception of me; nor was the fascination diminished to me by feeling with what generous warmth she had defended and upheld me.

There is a marvelous charm in the being defended by one you love, and of whose kind feeling towards you you had never dared to assure yourself till the very moment that confirmed it. I don't know if I ever felt in such spirits in my life. Not that I was gay or light-hearted so much as happy—happy in the sense of a self-esteem I had not known till then. And what a spirit of cordial familiarity was there now between us! She spoke to me of her daily life, its habits, and even of its trials; not complainingly, nor fretfully, far from it, but in a way to imply that these were the burdens meted out to all, and that none should arrogantly imagine he was to escape the lot of his fellows. And then we talked of the Croftons, of whom she was curious to hear details—their ages, appearance, manner, and so on—lastly, how I came to know them, and thus imperceptibly led me to tell of myself and of my story. I am sure that we each of us had enough of care upon our hearts, and yet none would have ever guessed it to have seen how joyously and merrily we laughed over some of the incidents of my chequered career. She bantered me, too, on the feeble and wayward impulses by which I had suffered myself to be moved, and gravely asked me, had I accomplished any single one of all the objects I had set before my mind in starting.

Far more earnestly, however, did we discuss the future. She heard with joy that I had already secured a passage for Constantinople, and declared that she could not dismiss from her mind the impression that I was destined to aid their return to happiness and prosperity. I liked the notion, too, of there being a fate in our first meeting; a fate in that acquaintanceship with the Croftons, which gave the occasion to seek her out again; and, last of all, if it might be so, a fate in the influence I was to exercise over their fortunes. I was so absorbed in these pleasant themes, that I, with as little of the lion in my heart as any man breathing, never once thought of the quarrel and its impending consequences. How my heart beat as her soft breath fanned me while she spoke! As she was telling me when and from whence I was to write to her, the servant came to say that a gentleman outside begged to see Mr. Potts. I hurried to the hall.

"Not come to disturb you, Potts," said the skipper, in a brisk tone; "only thought it best to make your mind easy. It's all right."

"A thousand thanks, captain," said I, warmly. "I knew, when the negotiation was in your hands, it would be so."

"Yes; his friend, a Major Colesby, boggled a bit at first. Couldn't see the thing in the light I put it. Asked very often 'Who were you?' asked too, 'Who I was?' Good that! it made me laugh. Rather late in the day, I take it, to ask who Bob Rogers is! But in the end, as I said, it all comes right, quite right."

"And his apology was full, ample, and explicit? Was it in writing, Rogers? I'd like it in writing."

"Like what in writing?"

"His apology, or explanation, or whatever you like to call it."

"Who ever spoke of such a thing? Who

so much as dreamed of it? Haven't I told you the affair is all right? and what does all right mean, eh?—what does it mean?"

"I know what it ought to mean," said I, angrily.

"So do I, and so do most men in this island, sir. It means twelve paces under the Battery wall, fire together, and as many shots as the aggrieved asks for. That's all right, isn't it?"

"In one sense it is so," said I, with a mock composure.

"Well, that's the only sense I ever meant to consider it by. Go back now to your tea, or your sugar and water, or whatever it is, and when you come home to-night, step into my room, and we'll have a cosy chat and a cigar. There's one or two trifling things that I do not understand in this affair, and I put my own explanation on them, and maybe it ain't the right one. Not that it signifies *now*, you perceive, because you are here to the fore, and can set them right. But by this time to-morrow you might be where—I won't mention—we may as well put them straight this evening."

"I'll beat you up, depend upon it," said I, affecting a slap-dash style. "I can't tell you how glad I am to have fallen into your hands, Rogers. You suit me exactly."

"Well it's more than I expected when I saw you first, and I kept saying to myself, 'Whatever could have persuaded Joe to send me a creature like that?' To tell the truth, I thought you were in the cheap funeral line."

"Droll dog!" said I, while my fingers were writhing and twisting with passion.

"Not that it's fair to take a fellow by his looks. I'm aware of that, Potts. But go back to the parlor—that's the second time the maid has come out to see what keeps you. Go back, and enjoy yourself; maybe you won't have so pleasant an opportunity soon again."

This was the parting speech of the wretch as he buttoned the collar of his coat, and with a short nod bade me good-bye, and left me.

"Why did you not ask your friend to take a cup of tea with us?" said Kate, as I re-entered the drawing-room.

"Oh! it was the skipper, a rough sort of creature, not exactly made for drawing-room life; besides, he only came to ask me a question."

"I hope it was not a very unpleasant one, for you look pale and anxious."

"Nothing of the kind—a mere formal matter about my baggage."

It was no use; from that moment, I was the most miserable of mankind. What availed it to speculate any longer on the future? How could I interest myself in what years might bring forth? Hours, and a very few of them, were all that were left to me. Poor girl! how tenderly she tried to divert my sorrow; she, most probably, ascribed it to the prospect of our speedy separation; and with delicacy and tact, she tried to trace out some faint outlines of what painters call "extreme distance"—a sort of future, where all the skies would be rose-colored and all the mountains blue. I am sure, if a choice had been given me at that instant, I would rather have been a courageous man than the greatest genius in the universe. *I* knew better what was before. At last it came to ten o'clock, and I arose to say good-bye. I found it very hard not to fall upon her neck, and say, "Don't be angry with poor Potts; this is his last as it is his first embrace."

"Wear that ring for me and for my sake," said she, giving me one from her finger; "don't refuse me—it has no value save what you may attach to it from having been mine."

Oh dear! what a gulp it costs me not to say, "I'll never take it off while I live," and then add, "which will be about eight hours and a half more."

When I got into the open air, I ran as if a pack of wolves were in pursuit of me. I cannot say why, but the rapid motion served to warm my blood, so that when I reached the hotel, I felt more assured and more resolute.

Rogers was asleep, and so soundly, that I had to pull the pillow from beneath his head before I could awaken him; and when I had accomplished the feat, either the remote effect of his brandy-and-water, or his drowsiness, had so obscured his faculties, that all he could mumble out was, "Hit him where he can't be spliced—hit him where they can't splice him!" I tried for a long time to recall him to sense and intelligence, but I got nothing from him save the one inestimable precept; and so I went to my room, and throwing myself on my bed in my cloak, prepared for a night of gloomy retrospect and gloomier anticipation; but, odd enough, I was asleep the moment I lay down.

"Get up, old fellow," cried Rogers, shaking me violently, just as the dawn was breaking; "we're lucky if we can get aboard before they catch us."

"What do you mean?" said I. "What's happened?"

"The governor has got wind of our shindy, and put all the red-coats in arrest, and ordered the police to nab us too."

"Bless him! bless him!" muttered I.

"Ay, so say I. He be blessed!" cried he, catching up my words: "but let us make off through the garden; my gig is down in the offing, and they'll pull in when they hear my whistle. Ain't it provoking—ain't it enough to make a man swear?"

"I have no words for what I feel, Rogers," said I, bustling about to collect my stray articles through the room. "If I ever chance upon that governor—he has only five years of it—I believe——"

"Come along! I see the boat coming round the point yonder." And with this we slipped noiselessly down the stairs, down the street, and gained the jetty.

"Steam up?" asked the skipper, as he jumped into the gig.

"Ay, ay, sir; and we're short on the anchor too."

In less than half an hour we were under way, and I don't think I ever admired a land prospect receding from view with more intense delight than I did that, my last glimpse of Malta.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FINAL ADVENTURES AND SETTLEMENT.

Our voyage had nothing remarkable to record; we reached Constantinople in due course, and during the few days the *Cyclops* remained, I had abundant time to discover that there was no trace of any one resembling him I sought for. By the advice of Rogers, I accompanied him to Odessa. There, too, I was not more fortunate; and though I instituted the most persevering inquiries, all I could learn was that some Americans were employed by the Russian Government in raising the frigates sunk at Sebastopol, and that it was not impossible an Englishman, such as I described, might have met an engagement amongst them. At all events, one of the coasting craft was already at Odessa, and I went on board of her to make my inquiry. I learned from the mate, who was a German, that they had come over on rather a strange errand, which was to convey a corps of circus people to Balaclava. The American contractor at that place being in want of some amusement, had arranged with these people to give some weeks' performances there, but that, from an incident that had just occurred, the project had failed. This was no less than the elopement of the chief dancer, a young girl of great beauty, with a young prince of Bavaria. It was rumored that he had married her, but my informant gave little credence to this version, and averred that he had bought, not only herself, but a favorite old Arab horse she rode, for thirty thousand piastres. I asked eagerly where the others of the corps were to be found, and heard they had crossed over to Simoom, all broken up and disjointed, the chief clown having died of grief after the girl's flight.

If I heard this tale rudely narrated, and not always with the sort of comment that went with my sympathies, I sorrowed sincerely over it, for I guessed upon whom these events had fallen, and recognized poor old Vaterchen and the dark-eyed Tintefleck.

"You've fallen into the black melancholies these some days back," said Rogers to me. "Rouse up, and take a cruise with me. I'm going over to Balaclava with these steam-boilers, and then to Sinope, and so back to the Bosphorus. Come aboard to-night, it will do you good."

I took his counsel, and at noon next day we dropped anchor at Balaclava. We had scarcely passed our "health papers," when a boat came out with a message to inquire if we had a doctor on board who could speak English, for the American contractor had fallen from one of the scaffolds that morning, and was lying dreadfully injured up at Sebastopol, but unable to explain himself to the Russian surgeons. I was not without some small skill in medicine; and, besides, out of common humanity, I felt it my duty to set out, and at about sunset I reached Sebastopol.

Being supposed to be a physician of great skill and eminence, I was treated by all the persons about with much deference, and, after very few minutes' delay, introduced into the room where the sick man lay. He had ordered that when an English doctor could be found, they were to leave them perfectly alone together; so that, as I entered, the door was closed immediately, and I found myself alone by the bedside of the sufferer. The curtain was closely drawn across the windows, and it was already dusk, so that all I could discover was the figure of a man, who lay breathing very heavily, and with the irregular action that implies great pain.

"Are you English?" said he, in a strong, full voice. "Well, feel that pulse, and tell me if it means sinking—I suspect it does."

I took his hand and laid my finger on

the artery. It was beating furiously—far too fast to count, but not weakly nor faintly.

"No," said I; "this is fever, but not debility."

"I don't want subtleties," rejoined he, roughly. "I want to know am I dying? Draw the curtain there, open the window full, and have a look at me."

I did as he bade me, and returned to the bedside. It was all I could do not to cry out with astonishment; for, though terribly disfigured by his wounds, his eyes actually covered by the torn scalp that hung over them, I saw that it was Harpar lay before me, his large reddish beard now matted and clotted with blood.

"Well, what's the verdict?" cried he, sternly: "don't keep me in suspense."

"I do not perceive any grave symptoms so far——"

"No cant, my good friend, no cant! It's out of place just now. Be honest, and say what it is to be—live or die?"

"So far as I can judge, I say, live."

"Well, then, set about the repairs at once. Ask for what you want—they'll bring it."

Deeming it better not to occasion any shock whatever to a man in his state, I forebore declaring who I was, and set about my office, with what skill I could.

With the aid of a Russian surgeon, who spoke German well, I managed to dress the wounds and bandage the fractured arm, during which the patient never spoke once, nor, indeed, seemed to be at all concerned in what was going on.

"You can stay here, I hope," said he to me, when all was finished. "At least, you'll see me through the worst of it. I can afford to pay, and pay well."

"I'll stay," said I, imitating his own laconic way; and no more was said.

Now, though it was not my intention to pass myself off for a physician, or derive any, even the smallest, advantage from the assumption of such a character, I saw that, remote as the poor sufferer was from his friends and country, and totally destitute of even companionship, it would have been cruel to desert him until he was sufficiently recovered to be left with servants.

From his calm composure, and the self-control he was able to exercise, I had formed a far too favorable opinion of his case. When I saw him first the inflammatory symptoms had not yet set in; so that, at my next visit, I found him in a high fever, raving wildly. In his wanderings he imagined himself ever directing some gigantic enterprise, with hundreds of men at his command, whose efforts he was cheering or chiding alternately. The indomitable will of a most resolute nature was displayed in all he said; and though his bodily sufferings must have been intense, he only alluded to them to show how little power they had to arrest his activity. His ever-recurring cry was, "It can be done, men! It can be done! See that we do it!"

I own that, even though stretched on a sick-bed, and raving madly, this man's unquenchable energy impressed me greatly; and I often fancied to myself what must have been the resources of such a bold spirit in sad contrast to a nature pliant and yielding like mine. To the violence of the first access, there soon succeeded the far more dangerous state of low fever, through which I never left him. Care and incessant watching could alone save him, and I devoted myself to the last with the resolve to make this effort the first of a new and changed existence.

Day and night in the sick-room, I lost appetite and strength, while an unceasing care preyed upon me and deprived me even of rest. The very vacillations of the sick man's malady had affected my nerves, rendering me over-anxious, so that, just as he had passed the great crisis of the malady, I was stricken down with it myself.

My first day of convalescence, after seven weeks of fever, found me sitting at a little window that looked upon the sea, or rather the harbor of Sebastopol, where two frigates and some smaller vessels were at anchor. A group of lighters and such unpicturesque craft occupied another part of the scene, engaged, as it seemed, in operations for raising other vessels. It was in gazing for a long while at these, and guessing their occupation, that I learned to trace out the past, and why and how I had come to be sitting there. Every morning the German servant who tended me through my illness, used to bring me the "Herr Baron's" compliments to know how I was, and now he came to say that, as the Herr Baron was able to walk so far, he begged that he might be permitted to come and pay me a visit. I was aware of the Russian custom of giving titles to all who served the government in positions of high trust, and was, therefore, not astonished when the announcement of the Herr Baron was followed by the entrance of Harpar, who, sadly reduced, and leaning on a crutch, made his way slowly to where I sat. I attempted to rise to receive him, but he cried out, half-sternly:

"Sit still! we are neither of us in good trim for ceremony."

He motioned to the servants to leave us alone; then laying his wasted hand in mine, for we were each too weak to grasp the other, he said—

"I know all about it. It was you saved my life, and risked your own to do it."

I muttered out some unmeaning words—I know not well what—about duty and the like.

"I don't care a brass button for the motive. You stood to me like a man." As he said this, he looked hard at me, and, shading the light with his hand, peered into my face. "Haven't we met before this? Is not your name Potts?"

"Yes; and you're Harpar."

He reddened, but so slightly that but for the previous paleness of his sickly cheek it would not have been noticeable.

"I have often thought about *you*," said he, musingly. "This is not the only service you have done me; the first was at Lindau; mayhap you have forgotten it. You lent me two hundred florins, and, if I'm not much mistaken, when you were far from being rich yourself."

He leaned his head on his hand, and seemed to have fallen into a musing fit.

"And, after all," said I, "of the best turn I ever did you, you have never heard in your life, and, what is more, might never hear, if not from myself. Do you remember an altercation on the road to Feldkirch, with a man called Rigges?"

"To be sure I do; he smashed the small-bone of this arm for me: but I gave him worse than I got. They never could find that bullet I sent into his side, and he died of it at Palermo. But what share in this did you bear?"

"Not the worst nor the best; but I was imprisoned for a twelvemonth in your place."

"Imprisoned for *me?*"

"Yes; they assumed that I was Harpar, and as I took no steps to undeceive them, there I remained till they seemed to have forgotten all about me."

Harpar questioned me closely and keenly as to the reasons that prompted this act of mine—an act all the more remarkable, as, to use his own words, "We were men who had no friendship for each other, actually strangers; and," added he, significantly, "the sort of fellows who, somehow, do not usually 'hit it off' together. You a man of leisure, with your own dreamy mode of life; I, a hard worker, who could not enjoy idleness; and in this sense, far more likely to hold each other cheaply than otherwise."

I attempted to account for this piece of devotion as best I might, but not very successfully, since I was only endeavoring to explain what I really did not well understand myself. Nor could a vague desire to do something generous, merely because it *was* generous, satisfy the practical intelligence of him who heard me.

"Well," said he at last, "all that machinery you have described is so new and strange to me, I can tell nothing as to how it ought to work: but I'm as grateful to you as a man can be for a service which he could not have rendered *himself*, nor has the slightest notion of what could have prompted *you* to do. Now, let me hear by what chance you came here?"

"You must listen to a long story to learn that," said I; and as he declared that he had nothing more pressing to do with his time, I began, almost as I have begun with my reader. On my first mention of Crofton, he asked me to repeat the name; and when I spoke of meeting Miss Herbert at the Milford station, he slightly moved his chair, as if to avoid the strong light from the window; but from that moment till I finished, he never interrupted me by a word, nor interposed a question.

"And it was she gave you that old seal-ring I see on your finger?" said he, at last.

"Yes," said I. "How came you to guess that?"

"Because *I* gave it to her the day she was sixteen! I am her father."

I drew a long breath, and could only clutch his arm with astonishment, without being able to speak.

"It's all well known in England, now. Everybody has been paid in full, my creditors have met in a body, and signed a request to me to come back and recommence business. They have done more, they have bought up the lease of the foundry, and sent it out to me. Ay, and old Elkanah's mortgage, too, is redeemed, and I don't owe a shilling."

"You must have worked hard to accomplish all this?"

"Pretty hard, no doubt. You remember those little boats with the holes in them at Lindau. *They* did the business for me. I was fool enough at that time to imagine that you had got a clue to my discovery, and were after me to pick up all the details. I ought to have known better! It was easy enough to see that *you* could have no head for anything with a 'tough bone' in it. Light, thoughtless creatures of *your* kind are never dangerous anywhere!"

I was not quite sure whether I was expected to return thanks for this speech in my favor, and, therefore, only made some very unintelligible mutterings.

There's only one liner now to be raised, and all the guns are already out of her, but I can return to-morrow. I am free; my contract is completed; and the *Ignatief* sloop of war is at my orders at Balaclava to convey me to any port I please in Europe."

He said this so boastfully and so vaingloriously, that I really felt Potts in his humility was not the smaller man of the two. Nor, perhaps, was my irritation the less, at seeing how little surprise our singular meeting had caused him, and how much he regarded all I had done in his behalf as being ordinary and commonplace services. But, perhaps, the *coup de grace* of my misery came as he said—

"Though I forwarded that ten-pound note you lent me to Rome, perhaps you'll like to have it now. If you need any more, say so."

My heart was in my mouth, and I felt that I'd have died of starvation rather than accept the humblest benefit at his hands.

"Very well," said he to my refusal; "all the better that you've no need of cash, for, to tell the truth, Potts, you're not much of a doctor, nor are you very remarkable as a man of genius; and it is a kind thing of Providence when such fellows as you are born with even a 'pewter spoon' in their mouths."

I nearly choked, but I said nothing.

"If you'd like me to land you anywhere in the Levant, or down towards the Spanish coast, only tell me."

"No, nothing of the kind. I'm going north; I'm going to Moscow, to Tobolsk; I'm going to Persia and Astracan," said I, in wildest confusion.

"Well, I can give you a capital traveling cloak—it's one of those buntas they make in the Banat, and you'll need it, for they have fearfully severe cold in those countries."

With this, and not waiting my resolute refusal, he rose, hobbled out of the room, and I—ay, there's no concealing it—burst out a-crying!

Weak and sick as I was, I procured an "araba" that night, and, without one word of adieu, set out for Krim.

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It was about two years after this—my father had died in the interval, leaving me a small but sufficient fortune to live on, and I had just arrived in Paris, after a long desultory ramble through the east of Europe—I was standing one morning early in one of the small alleys of the Champs Elysées, watching with half listless curiosity the various grooms as they passed to exercise their horses in the Bois de Boulogne. Group after group passed me of those magnificent animals in which Paris is now more than the rival of London, and at length I was struck by the appearance of a very smartly-dressed groom, who led along beside him a small-sized horse, completely sheeted and shrouded from view. Believing that this must prove some creature of rare beauty, an Arab of purest descent, I followed them as they went, and at last overtook them.

The groom was English, and by my offer of a cigar, somewhat better than the one he was smoking, he was very willing to satisfy my curiosity.

"I suppose he has Arab blood in him," said he, half contemptuously; "but he's forty years old now if he's a day. What they keep him for I don't know, but they make as much work about him as if he was a Christian: and, as for myself, I have nothing else to do than walk him twice a day to his exercise, and take care that his oats are well bruised and mixed with linseed, for he hasn't a tooth left."

"I suppose his master is some very rich man, who can afford himself a caprice like this."

"For the matter of money, he has enough of it. He is the Prince Ernest Maximilian of Wurtemberg, and, except the emperor, has the best stables in Paris. But I don't think that *he* cares much for the old horse; it's the *princess* likes him, and she constantly drives out to the wood here, and when we come to a quiet spot, where there are no strangers, she makes me take off all the body-clothes and the hood, and she'll get out of the carriage and pat him. And he knows her, that he does! and lifts up that old leg of his when she comes towards him, and tries to whinny, too. But here she comes now, and it won't do if I'm seen talking to you, so just drop behind me, sir, and never notice me."

I crossed the road, and had but reached the opposite pathway, when a carriage stopped, and the old horse drew up beside it. After a word or two, the groom took off the hood, and there was Blondel! But my amazement was lost in the greater shock, that the princess, whose jeweled hand held out the sugar to him, was no other than Catinka!

I cannot say with what motive I was impelled—perhaps the action was too quick for either—but I drew nigh to the carriage, and raising my hat respectfully, asked if her highness would deign to remember an old acquaintance.

"I am unfortunate enough, sir, not to be able to recall you," said she, in the most perfect Parisian French.

"My name you may have forgotten, madam, but scarcely so either our first meeting at Schaffhausen, or our last at Bregenz."

"These are all riddles to me, sir; and I am sure you are too well bred to persist in an error after you have recognized it to be such." With a cold smile and a haughty bow, she motioned the coachman to drive on, and I saw her no more.

Stung to the very quick, but yet not without a misgiving that I might be possibly mistaken, I hurried to the police department, where the list of strangers was preserved. By sending in my card I was admitted to see one of the chiefs of the department, who politely informed me that the princess was totally unknown as to family, and not included in the Gotha Almanack.

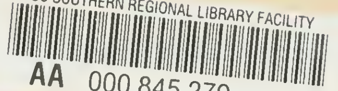
"May I ask," said he, as I prepared to retire, "if this letter here—it has been with us for more than a year—is for your address? It came with an enclosure covering any possible expense in reaching your address, and has lain here ever since."

"Yes," said I, "my name is Algernon Sydney Potts."

Strange are the changes and vicissitudes of life! Just as I stood there, shocked and overwhelmed with one trait of cold ingratitude, I found a letter from Kate (she who was once Kate Herbert), telling me how they had sent messengers after me through Europe, and begging, if these lines should ever reach me, to come to them in Wales. "My father loves you, my mother longs to know you, and none can be more eager to thank you than your friend, Kate Whalley."

I set off for England that night—I left for Wales the next morning—and I have never quitted it since that day.

THE END OF VOLUME VI.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