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OF

BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 3873.

THE HEALERS. By MAARTEN MAARTENS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE HEALERS

BY

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Schwartz

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1906.

TO ADA

IN REMEMBRANCE.

THE HEALERS.

CHAPTER I.

We live, nowadays, so fast, and so flabbily, that even many of his contemporaries have probably forgotten the famous Leyden Professor Lisse. Thirty years ago Thomas Borculo, Baron Lisse of Bardwyk, was known to every charwoman and to every charwoman's child in the somnolent old city—the famous, eccentric old Professor of Bacteriology, whom everybody laughed at, and whom everybody respected, by his queer name of "Baron Semicolon." That honorary title had been bestowed on him by the silly world of Philistines, in ignorant recognition of the wonderful Semicolon Bacillus, the Professor's own especial variety of the Comma; the Semicolon Bacillus, which, whenever you came near enough, was certain to leap from his lips—metaphorically.

It is only natural that his own peculiar poison—his private proverty, so to speak, in death—became the

central interest of Thomas Lisse's life. He slew many hundreds of rabbits in demonstrating how certain his microbe would be to murder a human being, if only it could once get inside. It never did. For there dwell, it appears, in the mouth of every living creature that possesses one, myriads of other bacteria which destroy the Semicolon the moment it comes into contact with the saliva. It has therefore to be injected direct into the blood of rabbits and frogs. During fifty long years—he lived to be nearly ninety—the Professor begged, bought or stole every more or less available corpse, in the steadily increasing expectation of finding his microbe somewhere. He would shake his head, with a twist that grew pathetic, as the hair turned a silvery white.

"Better luck," he would say, wiping his dark-stained knife, "next time!"

"Oh, Jane!" he insisted to his wife, "if only it *once* could get past the tonsils!"

"I wonder," mused the lady, pressing her hand to her breast, "would it be wrong to pray that it might?"

Their only son, Edward, grew up in the persistent, all-pervading atmosphere of the Semicolon. The three girls did not, being early sent to boarding-school. Their mother was in the habit of remarking, very justly, that she could not educate ordinary girls. "Had my girls," she said, "been out of the common——!" She knew

nothing of what her girls were, little enough about her son.

But a son, being masculine, is an immense possibility of achievement, unlike girls. Of herself Jane Borculo would have said, had the form of expression occurred to her: "Give me pantaloons to stand in, and I will stir the world!"

Meanwhile, she was but a feeble woman, with a taste for higher things. A bit of a character in her way, though perhaps not so much so as she looked to herself and her local surroundings. Of an ancient provincial family, high-born and high-church, she had been intended, by circumstance, to behave exactly like her cousins and her aunts. Instead of which, she had soon amazed everybody, as she intended, by the heights and depths of her divergences. A little Greek—the New Testament in the original; a little Hebrew—Hosea with a crib. Hosea—because the text is so corrupt, you know. The intellectual fad of the moment: Were the Hebrews Aryas? Was man once a monkey? Renan and Strauss, inside out. Plato and Spinoza, rather wrong side up. Yet the whole of it not nearly so silly as it sounds thus summarily set down, really rather respectable compared with the life which is a giggle between two balls. And an excellent preparation, anyway, for a plain woman, close on thirty, who is going to send off a sudden letter to that "unusual" bachelor, Lisse, the head of a historic

house and a scientist (and as such a mocked member of her own uncongenial set), to tell him how splendid it is of him to devote his great intellect to unrewarded work. Lisse laughed at the effusion, but he asked the writer of it to become his wife.

"By Jove!" says the Baron's younger brother, the Colonel. "Yes, science, by Jove! The doctors used to cut up people to see how they were made. But Thomas cuts 'em up to see how the worms are made inside 'em! Yes, by Jove, Baron Lisse cuts up pauper corpses to see if there's worms inside!" On the Colonel's repeating this remark, defiantly, and expectantly, the Baron mildly answered the soldier, that, indeed, the scientist preferred to do his cutting after death.

Everyone having prophesied that the two "intellectuals" would early sicken of mutual discomfort, a regretful world had to follow their leisurely and contented progress to a very distant grave. They lived in placid contemplation of their work and of each other. True, Jane at once confessed, in the midst of her multifarious poetry-writing, that she had never been able to take an intelligent interest in signs of punctuation. "They have always seemed to me," she said, "dead, un-vital things." "The Semicolon," replied the Professor, smiling, "is very much alive!" And, living with the creature daily, in her rather disordered household (disordered until Eliza entered it and put everything in its place with a bump),

the Baroness got to be on speaking terms with even the Semicolon. She felt she could accustom herself to almost anything but household duties. She would sit for hours in her husband's study, at her own bureau, scribbling "*Balaam*, a religious epic in thirteen cantos," which she was incessantly rewriting, while he occupied himself with his investigations behind her back. Behind her back—that was the chief stipulation of their matrimonial contract. The whole long chamber was arranged for it. Near the door, her littered writing-table placed crossways, screened, sat the Baroness: she felt her way to her elbow-chair, with closed eyes. If a danger arose that some painful sound might penetrate to the lady, the Professor cried: "Mind!" and immediately she covered her ears. With true womanly heroism she had decided, that she did not object to the smells. She, who as a child, at grandmamma's, in the "blue" room, had lain awake crying because of the naphthaline.

"My dear Thomas, listen to this!"

The Professor, suppressing a movement not of impatience, but of suspense, would pause, a quivering frog in one hand:

"I am all attention, dear Jane."

For their courtesy to each other was of this old-fashioned kind, a pretty punctiliousness of flourishes and bows. The lady, her fussy cap thrust awry on the fuzzy

brown ringlets, held up the big sheet over which her handwriting sprawled huge:

> "Serene, the ass her gentle head downbent.
> They suffer not who suffer innocent!"

"I like that!" declared the lady, her eyes lovingly resting on the page.

"It is indeed," said the Professor, "a beautiful thought." He musingly repeated the last line. The frog jerked its wounded leg.

"Well expressed?" persisted the lady, with some apprehension.

"Most admirably," assented the Professor. "Does that end your fourth canto, my love?"

"No. Why, my dear? Why? Do you think the fourth canto too long? Why?"

"Oh, only because you rhymed, my dear."

"I often rhyme in the middle."

"And what is to hinder you?" answered the Professor humbly. "Mind!" The Baroness closed herself up at once. From out her deafness and darkness she repeated: "I often rhyme in the middle," and dropped a blot. She frequently dropped blots. Even when her short-sighted eyes were open, she did not always perceive where they fell.

Thus they sat, day by day, in long spells of silent sympathy, with the hush of the quiet back-room (the

"garden-chamber" they call it) around them, and the lilacs and chestnuts close against the window-panes, and a contemplative cat, in the quiet garden, on the quiet Leyden canal. The house was very stately and silent. The girls were happy in their foreign "seminary." The summer holidays all spent together at the family seat of Bardwyk. The Baroness tried vainly to take a proper interest in the villagers there: the Baron succeeded better. Once he endeavoured to inoculate them, in an epidemic, but the heads of the commune called on him, and appealed to his generosity to desist. They understood him as their feudal lord, who talked about their crops and rents (quite incorrectly), but not as a "perfecter." The property, however, outside the house and park was small. The Professor and his wife were always glad to get back to the Leyden study. The children enjoyed Bardwyk, but the company of their parents bored them, because the concern of those parents about their likes and dislikes was so manifestly conscientious. The Baroness would ask after pets by their wrong names, and what mother could get over that?

Edward, the son, was not unhappy at the Leyden Grammar School. He was a quiet, healthy boy, unassuming, fond of books of adventure, of games and of pets. His great friend was the gardener at Bardwyk, who looked after such of the dumb creatures as could not be taken to Leyden. But certain lop-eared rabbits and

many fancy pigeons and a couple of dogs were allowed to live at the back of the garden in town. The Baroness took an irregular interest in Edward: she did her very best. The Professor loved him, from day to day, in a fatherly manner, without much contact of any kind. Eliza, the maid, looked admirably after his clothes. And during the too brief summer-months he found much companionship in the gardener.

At meal-times Edward came into touch with the Semicolon. And his mother would take him into corners, and tell him what a wonderful man his father was. Edward had an immense veneration for both parents. He loathed the Semicolon. Once—at last, being fifteen—he burst out at dinner, and, choking, cried that the disgusting thing had got into his soup! "It's gone down my throat!" cried Edward passionately. For one incredible moment the Professor almost wished it had. However, he said nothing, but only carefully recorked the little bottle he had been holding out for inspection, as he thought, to his admiring son.

"Oh, Eddy!" exclaimed the Baroness, lifting her inky hands. She thought the ceiling must drop on her poor Professor's grizzly head.

"I can't help it," persisted the desperate Edward, "I'm sick of the Semicolon!"

"That," replied his father gently, "is precisely what no one has ever been." He saw no humour of any kind

in this simple statement, but fortunately for Edward, Edward did. He returned to his repast with fresh courage and tried hard to be polite. In his own room, preparing his lessons for the morrow, all through the Spanish War of Succession he thought regretfully of his father and longed to go down to him. As he flung his books together, he became aware that his mother was standing behind him. Her eyes were red, a sight he had never seen before. For no woman's life can be tearful that believes in her permanent bore. "I can't help it," said the red-cheeked Edward, near crying himself. Has any man of us ever forgotten the first tears in the eyes of a woman he loves?

"That I should live to hear *you* speak rudely of the bacillus!" said the Baroness.

"I wish the beastly thing," returned her son, "were undiscovered still."

"And your father an unknown searcher? Child, never say such a wicked thing to him!"

"Of course not, mother! Besides, where'd be the good? God himself couldn't undiscover the bacillus."

"Edward, do not be atheistical. If you do not even love science, you can have no excuse for profanity!" Edward gazed apologetically at his mother, the odd little figure in brown silk and lace cap: his mother gazed at her finger-tips, as she often did, surely without observing them. "My son," said the Baroness, in her stateliest

manner, "your father owes to the Semicolon his position as the foremost Scientist of the day!"

"Yes," said Edward humbly. But he added, as if speaking to himself: "They cut you open, and they look at the worms inside."

"Your uncle!" screamed the Baroness. "Your poor uncle, the Colonel! Your poor dear uncle Frank!"

"But, mother——"

"You quote him!" The excited Baroness dropped her voice to a whisper and came quite close to Edward. "Your uncle Frank is a fool," she said. She walked away rapidly down Edward's little room, but she soon had to stop and turn. "*That* secret is out, then," she said. "I had made up my mind never to tell you. But, of course, you might have found out some day for yourself. He is in *Balaam*, Edward. A fool-warrior, all bluster and babble, that the Queen *never* listens to. You'll find him there, when you're old enough. His name is Imphi-Boshek."

"When shall I be old enough?" asked Edward adroitly. But he was immensely proud of, and immensely inquisitive anent, *Balaam*. No other boy at the Grammar School had a mother who composed epics. "Now, mother, you always say 'next year,' and I'm nearly sixteen. If I had *Balaam* to keep me going, I daresay I could bear the bacillus all right."

"When you give proofs of ripe judgment, and dis-

cretion," replied the Baroness stiffly. But she looked uncomfortable, and her manner betokened evasion. "It isn't finished," she added, as a palpable afterthought.

"Nor is the bacillus. Nor ever will be," protested Edward.

"My son, this is an evening of confessions," replied the Baroness. "I can't let you read *Balaam,* because I've put in all our relations." She sat down on Edward's bed and covered her face with her hands. "You'd find them there and betray me," she said.

"Won't they find themselves?" demanded Edward.

"Nobody ever recognises his own literary portrait," answered the Baroness, still in the same position. "And they don't see each other as we see them, you know."

"Mother," suggested Edward, not sure whether he oughtn't to feel a little mean, "if you'll read me *Balaam* of Sunday evenings, I'll do my very best to get on with the bacillus."

But the Baroness rose from the bed, every inch the little great lady she could be when she chose. Her son quailed before her. "Edward," she said, "I have lost no opportunity of showing you what a giant your father is. I taught you to read from the article on him, written by myself, in *Who's Who?* Of the Semicolon, as you will have noticed, I never spoke. I was withheld by a—can one say 'an awe'? The Semicolon is your enormous

father's enormous life-work, Edward! He, and he only, is fit to discuss it with his son."

As she spake thus magnificently, the old clock in the passage boomed ten long strokes: at the tenth the room door flung open, and a female figure appeared in the aperture, a figure such as would have struck terror to the heart of the boldest mistress on earth. A prim maid-servant of the old-fashioned, immaculate type, in stiff dress and huge cap.

"The Professor's bath!" vociferated this apparition, in the querulous tone of protest so habitual to the indispensable Abigail.

"Eliza!" exclaimed the Baroness, whisking round, her very attitude apologetic, "his bath—oh, of course—yes, his bath! Go, Edward, go, tell him immediately! And remember the Prodigal Son!"

Edward lingered, shamefaced. "I forgot about father's cold," he said. "Is it better?"—in the boyish, booby way.

"Were your father an ordinary man, Edward, a cold with him would be—a cold. There would be only ourselves to consider. But now! A sneeze of your father's may mean an eruption——"

"Yes, measles begin that way," said Eliza.

"A volcanic eruption in the whole world of science!" continued the Baroness, raising her voice. "That whole world is watching him. He is on the eve of his most

important discovery! My responsibility is greater than I can bear!"

"The water'll get cold," said the maid.

"You are right, Eliza. It was Providence sent you into this family twelve years ago. I never was a nurse——"

"No," said the maid.

"I am not even a housekeeper. You are our Pivot, Eliza. I have taught all my friends to call you our Pivot. You cannot deny that I properly appreciate you."

"Humph!" said the maid.

Spake Edward, in the dimness of his father's doorway: "Mother sends me to say your bath is getting cold, father, and I oughtn't to have been your son." In the excess of his emotion he realised that the prodigal had gone dreadfully astray. With a lurch he tried to right him. "I ain't worthy," he said, "to be your son!"

From the distant halo of shaded lamplight, in the deep recess of studious silence, the Professor lifted a thoughtful head. "Mind!" he cried. "Oh, is it you, Edward?" He hastily flung a cloth across the heap of fluffiness, over which his tall figure had been bending, and came down the book-clad study. "What nonsense are you talking, boy? Why, you've never even asked for more pocket-money!" His voice altered. "You are only young, only young," he said. "A time will come, when you will share my struggles, and my triumphs. Strange that you should have spoken so on this night of

all others. It is an important night for me. But I cannot let your mother's bath get cold."

"Eliza says——" began Edward, but the Professor did not listen. "Your mother is the Pivot on which this household turns. It is like her to award that honour to Eliza. Your mother is a marvellous woman, child. You can trust her judgment on all matters, excepting myself. And even there her error is pleasing." The Professor, with his hand on Edward's shoulder, gently pushed the boy across the threshold. "Hot water applied to the feet can have no effect on the chest." he said, "it is a popular fallacy. Like almost all medical treatment. Strange that the wife of Professor Lisse should still talk of catching cold." The domestic tyrant here thrust her cap over the banisters, and the master of the house hastened upstairs.

Edward had barely thrown off his own upper clothing, when he heard his father calling him. He found the illustrious invalid sitting half-buried beneath a heterogeneous mountain of many-coloured wraps, under which presumably fumed the hot-water tub. The vast apartment was illumined by a solitary candle. Before the funeral hangings of the pillared bedstead steamed the Professor, like a sacrifice in front of some mysterious sanctuary.

"My son," began the Professor, somewhat in the tones of a hierophant, "I would not have the sun go down

upon my wrath. I am speaking figuratively, for I never lost my temper in my life, and the sun went down before you said your silly little say. But I mean, before you go to sleep, child, I would assure you I am not angry with you at all. Your mother fears you would not sleep a wink, unless I told you. Don't agitate yourself, Edward. You are young still, very young. By the time you are a medical student, you will love the Semicolon almost more than you love me!"

"I am nearly sixteen," said the goaded Edward.

"Exactly. When I was nearly sixteen, the dream of my life was to be a cavalry officer. Now, can you imagine me a cavalry officer, prancing about like a circus monkey? Look at me! Can you imagine me a cavalry officer, prancing about in crimson and gold?"

"No," said Edward.

"Nor can I." The Professor caught at a falling shawl. "Thus, in our youth, do we misunderstand our vocations. We imagine ourselves masters of our fate. So passed the unconscious Balaam on his road!"

"Way," said a voice behind the green hangings.

"Way. When you are a man, you will *thirst* to devote your days and nights to the Semicolon."

"Never," said Edward, in sheer eager anxiety not to mislead his parents. A cry broke from the Professor.

For the woman, Eliza, had inserted a spout under the pile of shawls and blankets. The night-capped Baroness

tore aside the bed-curtains. "All men are butter-fingers!" cried the injured hand-maid, "Butter-toes!"

"Monster!" exclaimed her mistress, trembling, "to scald the Professor!" "It was Edward scalded me," said the invalid. The Baroness burst into tears.

"Not that I really mind, Edward," continued the Professor soothingly, "because some day you will be a greater scientist than myself." "Impossible!" sobbed the Baroness. "Impossible!" echoed Edward. The maid tucked in the blankets, loyal to all three.

"If I die to-night," cried the Professor, "the whole work of my life is wasted!" He half rose in his excitement, amid shrill shrieks from the women. Eliza dug in draperies all about him. "My son will complete it," said the Baron, subsiding.

"You will li-li-li-live to see Edward a grandfather," gasped the Baroness. Her husband shook his shaggy head. "The work of my life," he said, "*may* be completed to-morrow. I can have no secrets from you, Jane. Please leave off crying. If the rabbit I have left in my study survives till to-morrow morning, then Edward may become a cavalry officer whenever he likes." "I don't want to be a cavalry officer," protested Edward. "In blue and crimson," continued his father sorrowfully, "like your uncle Francis Lisse."

"Who is a fool!" said the voice from the bed. The

Professor started. "My dear, surely there were truths we had decided to ignore?"

"I told Edward. I told him about Imphi-Boshek," confessed the Baroness. Her drooped head, in the big night-cap, hung a picture of guilty regret.

Edward went back to his own room much depressed. He had no particular desire to prance about with an unused sword between his legs; too modest, or perhaps as yet too young, for parade, and already over-sensitive as regards killing or causing pain. He wanted to do like his cousins and school-comrades, take a degree at the university, go into the civil service, work his way up. The Professor always spoke of Edward as the impecunious heir to a great name. "I am a poor man," said the Professor. "My enormous scientific outlay is the only luxury I allow myself. *Pro bono publico.*" Thomas Borculo, thirteenth Baron Lisse of Bardwyk, drank water (tepid rain-water, too, it was in those days), and smoked halfpenny cigars. His clothes looked as if they had been bestowed on him, after considerable wear and tear, by the much shorter man they had originally been made for. It is a palpable calumny, however, that he once went to a dinner with his coat on inside out. Smart his outfit was not. Fierce struggles with Eliza about chemical stains had resulted in a compromise of cuffless flannel shirts. But his appearance, somehow, was as dignified as it was shabby: it impressed you—

the spare figure, the shaven jaws, the eagle beak—in spite of your smiles. And the woman, who had once exchanged a few words with him, if she met him afterwards sailing along the still Leyden streets, his top-hat tilted backwards (such a hat!) and his gaze fixed on cloud-land, was certain, whatever might be her social position, of refined recognition and appropriate salute. In his huge, exceedingly untidy study nothing looked as if it had ever been anywhere else. As for the dust that accumulated all over it—for Eliza had distinctly stated that she must either stop outside or come in—like many a wise man, he beheld it gladly, not for its own stupid sake, but for all it bespoke of danger averted, of vexation that might have been.

The scientific Baron and his letters-loving spouse enjoyed universal esteem in their expansive circle. They had stooped without losing caste, always a difficult and an exceedingly popular feat. Nor was the Baron a mere academic dreamer. In those days of incipient sanitation he had done something as regards filtering the water the poor people drank. His grateful towns-people elected him to their queer little Council. He regularly attended its meetings from a sense of duty, and, from a sense of dulness, as regularly spoke on subjects with which he was frequently acquainted.

Edward was proud of his father's pump. He liked passing it on his way to the Grammar School. Nowa-

days its construction is said to meet every requirement for the propagation of infection, but then, that will be affirmed ten years hence of all our sanitary marvels of to-day.

"If only the dear old chap wouldn't talk about the microbes at meals!" reflected Edward, as he clambered into his bed. "There oughtn't to be such creatures at all, and, if there are, we'd be much happier without knowing about them!" On this reflection he fancied he was going to sail away into oblivion: to his astonishment he found his brain wide-awake, all over commas and dots! He did not know, how, by the sudden utterance of his thought —the pent-up oppression of years—he had lifted, as it were, the sealed lid off the casket, whence wide fumes now overspread his future sky. But he did know—or at least dimly realised—that what he turned away from with such vehemence, was not really the talk about the microbes, nor even the microbes themselves, but the enormous mass of suffering their discovery represented—the horror of the experiments newly beginning all over the world. He had heard something—as little as possible —of the ceaseless, measureless tortures of the modern laboratory—the "serum" business. The thing was just starting in those days. Edward thought of his pets.

One of his rabbits—the brown bunny with the white star on its forehead—was ill. He felt anxious about it. He wished Jan could see it, the gardener at Bardwyk.

Rabbits were jolly beasts to rub up against your cheek, feeling warm. How quiet the house was! He lay staring open-eyed.

Suddenly he sat up in bed, listening with bated breath. He had heard that sound for some time. The house had not been so quiet as he thought.

There, it came again. Yes, the house must be very quiet to hear it! Almost inaudible, madly persistent, from the room underneath, through the boarded ceiling, faint, irresistibly reiterant, the feeblest of tremors, a soft, barely possible squeak. He heard it again, and again, and again. He hid away under the bed-clothes, but it was worse there, when he couldn't hear it. And now he stood on the floor in his night-shirt. There it was again. It was going to stop. He would never get away from it. The timidest, gently imploring cry! It would go on all night.

He had never before, in his life, heard the continuous expression of conscious pain. It seemed almost incredible to him that so weak a note should penetrate so far: he was unaware that no sound carries like the utterance of sentient suffering. What the sound meant he of course understood at once. He remembered his father's farewell words: "If the rabbit in my study survives till to-morrow morning—then Edward may become whatever he likes!"

He lay with his head under the bed-clothes. He threw them off again. The clock outside tolled mid-

night. Seven hours—eight hours—more? Escape was impossible.

He was half-way down the staircase, shrinking, trembling with cold. In the doorway of the big, dark room he stood still. A dead hush—no, that long quivering gasp of pain. He struck a light.

By the window he found it, strapped down in the usual way upon a board. A tiny white rabbit, shivering, squeaking, as it drew its painful breath. It lifted its pink eyes and looked at him, thrilling, throbbing from head to foot. Perhaps, if it hadn't looked at him! If it hadn't squeaked, as it looked. He seized up a heavy book and struck at it, struck again and again, till the head fell back and the eyes glazed over and the little body sank motionless—inert. Then he fled upstairs again, back into bed, and lay listening in the blessed unbroken silence.

As he lay listening, his own thoughts began to speak. Even while he struck he had felt what he was doing to his father, to himself. But now his thoughts talked about it very plainly. No, of course he wasn't going to blubber. He was only fifteen. He lay awake with those thoughts till near dawn.

Next morning the Professor strolled in to breakfast, with his usual mild air of preoccupied repose. "No," he said, as he chipped an egg, "the rabbit was dead."

"Poor little beast," replied the Baroness. "Oh, Thomas,

I know it's only right and a fine thing to sacrifice one's life on the altar of science! As you have done."

"And as Edward will do after me," said the Professor.

Edward's eyes were fixed upon his tasteless bread and butter. He lifted them. An immense power of subjectivity seemed to come over him from a hitherto unknown source. "The rabbit didn't sacrifice itself!" he said.

"It had not the intellect," replied the Professor, gazing earnestly at his son. "Like you and me."

CHAPTER II.

From that night of his great independent utterance and his great independent action Edward Lisse became a separate self. It is easy enough to commit a crime, especially if that crime have a semblance of virtue, but we all know how difficult it is to get away from the consequences. The boy was far too conscientious not to see that he had killed the rabbit because its squeak had come in his way. He forgot more and more that, in striking, he had abandoned his own chance of freedom: he realised with increasing acuity the possible damage he had done to his father's scientific career. Confess he dared not, for fear, not of anger, but of scorn. What would his mother say, who had endured, all these years, the vague horror of vivisection?

"The criminal baby!" the Baroness had exclaimed, two years ago, of a young practitioner who had, fatally, stopped an operation. Edward could not have endured that his mother should think such a thought of him.

The Professor, having once proclaimed his failure, henceforth dropped the microbe entirely out of all conversation with his son. What this resolve must have

cost him can hardly be imagined. The subject was tabooed. Moments arose when Edward longed to cry out: "Tell me about your researches! Has everything gone wrong through my killing of the rabbit?" After the first months of silence all explanation became impossible. Once or twice Edward tried to begin, but his father somehow stopped him dead. These years of Edward's youth, despite the daily round of work and play (both equally successful), are heavy with remembered misery. But perhaps he now remembers more than he really suffered. For, all his life long, he has had a gift for turning sharp corners and going straight ahead. So, once his mind was made up that he couldn't tell, that his father didn't want to listen, he did his work as brightly, and played his game as briskly, as any other boy. But he gave away his rabbits, and went in for a pecking raven instead.

The Baron, meanwhile, talked about politics at dinner, politics at breakfast. He became immersed in politics. At that time, as ever in Holland, believers and freethinkers were fighting their pseudo-political religious war: at that time, as usual, the freethinkers had the gurgling believers by the throat. The Baron's mighty intellect unbent itself to politics. He spoke in the Town Council, and presently at public meetings, on the questions of the day, with all his well-known fluency and grasp of other subjects than the one on hand.

There is a well-known story in Leyden of a student who, having to be examined by Lisse in zoology, read up the elephant only, and when asked: How many legs has the centipede? How many tusks has the rhinoceros? made answer: The elephant has four. The elephant has two, and so on. Thus, not having missed a single question (How many wings has the dragon-fly? The elephant has none), he is said to have passed with honours. Whether the story be historical or not, it well describes the Professor's attitude towards the wide fields of human knowledge. He ballooned all over them in his bacteriological car.

So he was naturally successful in present-day politics, where profound knowledge of any subject is always the one thing that an electoral audience will not stand. His own world was certainly surprised to see him rise up a High-Church Tory. There spoke the baronial blood. In the lecture-room the origin of species, the ascent of man, the whole monkey-business, if you please; on the platform the first chapter of Genesis in the original Dutch. The crowd cared nothing for the lecture-room, as long as it got the hustings. In Parliament the Baron's easy babblings were not so well received. For he used to get up in the middle of all the theological squabbles and talk sanitation, and nobody cared about sanitating anything, in Parliament, or wanted to see it done. Three-quarters of the Baron's political activity must be assigned

to the Baroness, who stopped *Balaam* to read and excerpt all sorts of wearisome reports. She had an unhappy knack, amid her yawnings and poetic musings, of copying wrong figures and leaving out "nots," but she wrote on earnestly, her cap more than ever awry, her precious manuscript locked away in a drawer of the writing-table—and, really, as far as the welfare of the nation is concerned, what matter the nots and the figures of parliamentary reports? A completed *Balaam* would have been a far greater boon.

Edward also became a High-Church Tory, prouder than ever of his father, and eagerly working in his cause. He even fought a great hulking Socialist for saying openly in the village, at election-time, that God was no respecter of persons. He was most dreadfully distressed afterwards, when he found the text was in the Bible. The girls, when they came home for their brief holidays, were all High-Church Tories too. The whole family rejoiced in this common bond of interest and sympathy.

At eighteen Edward passed from the Grammar School to the University. His final examination was a great success. The Latin Oration—the highest honour—fell to his share. On the evening of that auspicious day a big dinner-party, of all the relations, assembled to make much of him. Eliza's arrangements were excellent. The Baroness (in a new plum-coloured silk, with a crooked bodice) read a poem: the Professor made a speech. He

toasted, in glowing periods, the "Spes Patriæ," comparing the University to a filter, and the rising tide of youth to a drain! When the last guest had wished Edward a brilliant career, in the service of his country, the Professor called his son into his study and ceremoniously locked the door.

"Edward," he said, "I am fifty-seven, and this moment is the most important of my life."

Edward, a favourable type of fair-haired, fresh-coloured, young Dutchman, well-groomed and properly clothed, wished the dear old father wouldn't put things quite so dramatically. The expression reminded him of that unfortunate evening nearly three years ago. He looked down at the neat points of his patent leather shoes.

"Unless I except that of my birth," said the accurate Professor. *His* eyes sank to his shirt-front. It was horribly crumpled, but that he would have considered the normal condition of shirt-fronts.

"And of my death," he added thoughtfully. Edward's growing discomfort found relief in a (strictly internal) smile. For either of two incompatible qualities will carry a poor human soul through life's storms without utter shipwreck: a sense of the ridiculous or a veneration for the absurd. Edward possessed the former: the latter brightened his mother's path.

"My son!" The Professor fidgeted his worsted-

stockinged feet into the brilliant slippers waiting for them, the Baroness's annual birthday gift, worked in stitches alternately too loose or too tight. "I have been preparing for this evening, more or less, all your life!"

"Preparing beastly microbic preparations," thought Edward, with a shudder, but he only said, in an interested voice: "Yes, father."

The Professor appeared grateful for this faint encouragement. He pulled down his unwonted wrist-bands and examined the wine-stains upon them. "But especially," he continued, "since that evening, three years ago, —you remember!—when my great experiment failed!"

"Yes," said Edward in a low voice. He drew the rosebud from his button-hole and flung it in the fire. It was faded, yet, immediately afterwards, he plucked it off again, and, while his father was speaking, he walked across the room and found a vase for it.

"After that evening I devoted myself to politics"—the Professor stood lighting his long Gouda pipe—"at least, in my spare moments. I fear I have not been able to take sufficient interest in Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Their place-hunting is so temporary: my Semicolon is eternal." The Professor gazed thoughtfully into the glowing bowl of the pipe: then he drew the mouthpiece slowly from his lips, and, pointing it at Edward: "As you didn't want to become a soldier—and I can't say I regret it, for a soldier's life seems to

me either actively nocuous or positively inane (like a microbe's, doing nothing or doing harm), you must try and be a statesman, Edward!"

Edward's heart gave a leap. "'Tis a poor career," said the Professor.

There he stood, the dear old untidy father, the man with the crusading blood in him, that had gained a name for himself throughout Europe in the fight with deadlier than any pagan foes.

"It's no use putting the flower into that vase: I've had carbolic in it. There are two requirements only. They are negative. No conscience: no nerves. Physiologically the two are probably one. I fear you have more than the average of both." The Professor settled down again to his chair, his pipe, his slippers, his solemn gaze into the flame. "You don't care for history?" he asked suddenly.

"N-not much."

"I cannot blame you. The study of history is little more than the gradual unravelling of lies about crimes. There is nothing certain but science, my boy: all the mistakes must be ours."

"I admire science," replied Edward beautifully. He stood opposite his father, awkwardly holding his rose.

"And the science which alleviates suffering is the one above all others," continued the Professor, not heeding

this last remark. "Social science! Pooh! A conflict of interests! In the laboratory there is peace."

"Peace—oh, father!"

The Professor fixed his keen gaze on his distressful young son and heir. "Say it all!" he prompted.

"I was thinking of the howls of the victims."

"Ah! I am punished for having married a poetess. You mustn't mind victims in politics, Eddie. Your path lies over them." The Professor's gaze returned to the fire. "That point being quite settled, my future Prime Minister," he said, "we now come to number two. When my experiment failed, child, I never repeated it. You will wonder why. It was decisive. And, besides, I was uncomfortable about it—afraid. There was something strange about that rabbit's death."

"I killed it!" cried Edward. "Oh, I'm so glad I've told you."

The Professor drew forth two slow puffs of his pipe. "You," he said. "I concluded as much when I saw the creature's battered head. So I saw you would never do for the laboratory."

"I couldn't stand its cries," pleaded Edward.

"Quite so. That is why I entered Parliament."

Edward fell back for one long moment. Then he flung himself forward and caught his father's hand in both his own.

"There! there!" said the Professor, very red about

the nose. "It wasn't really so much of a nuisance. The spread of the microbe of folly in a crowd is ever interesting. But it's terribly monotonous. My Semicolon shows variations."

"You did it to help me on," said Edward.

"And to study the thing, and to find out all about it. There's nothing left for you but that or the army, when you're Baron Lisse. For we all must do something, Edward."

"Don't, father."

"But, before you turn your back on all my old plans for you, Edward, I've one condition—in fact it is a *sine qua non*. It's an enormous one; I don't deny that—Is the door locked? Very well. I said this was the most important evening of my life. You have noticed my little cough?" Edward nodded.

"I tell your mother it is a bad habit. But my eminent colleague Longman calls it by another name." The Professor, very agitated, drew a small box from his pocket. "Sit down, Edward: swallow one of these. I couldn't have lived without them. I suppose you never thought of me as 'nervous?' Sons don't. Jenkins' 'pills.' The Paris man's. A quack's." The Professor sighed heavily. "Yes, a quack's. Every doctor prescribes his own medicines and swallows a quack's!" He extracted a pill. "Thank heaven," he added devoutly, "no deaths lie at *my* door but those of dumb beasts."

Edward had disposed, not too willingly, of his rather dingy pill.

"Please tell me, father"—he steadied his voice—"what Professor Longman says about your cough."

"He says—now, Edward, you mustn't mind too much—these are simple physiological events of frequent occurrence—he says that he doesn't think I can live six months!"

"Father!" The agony in the cry painfully rewarded Baron Lisse for many a weary hour of the Babble-shop.

"Now, take another pill, Edward, and mind, your mother mustn't know. Why, I haven't even told Eliza. You must look after your sisters. It'll be all right. There'll be money enough. I had to tell you this brusquely to-night, Edward, because—why, bless me, don't look like that! All men die. I don't think I looked like that when my father died. True, I was forty-five. But, Edward, you must be a man to-night and help me!" The Professor had risen and placed both his hands on his son's shoulders. "When that experiment failed—well, I won't allude to it again, but I've always made up my mind to use my own body, when the time came. It has come: I've got Longman's verdict here in writing," he tapped his breast-pocket. "I went and got it this morning; I can't do anything without your help, Edward. It's worth while." These

last words he added, as if speaking to himself. "Oh, more than worth while!"

The long room, with its sombre bookshelves, its many arcana of investigation and of torture, seemed listening for more. Edward's troubled eyes were fixed on his mother's writing-table. The Professor, having got over the worst, proceeded briskly. "I shall lie down on that sofa. I shall inject the antidote. Then you will administer the chloroform. Ten minutes later you must inject the virus. Now, you see why it was absolutely necessary for me to tell you everything. Then you must leave me and go to bed. I shall wake up to-morrow morning. I am sure of it."

"None the worse?" cried Edward. His father hesitated one moment, and in that moment Edward said, "No."

"Hush, silly boy. We must hurry, or your mother will be sending Eliza. This experiment, Edward, crowns my life. There isn't much left of it anyway. If I survive, just time enough to publish my discovery. If I die, I deserve no better, for the muddle-headed old fool I must have been."

"If—if——!" sobbed Edward.

The Professor lifted his mighty head; the grey hairs spread around it like a halo. "To-night," he cried, "we touch the greatest discovery, in medicine, that the world has ever seen. If I do not achieve it to-night, someone else will to-morrow: it is in the air! Soon all disease

will be prevented by inoculation—the homeopathy of the microbe! I have worked for this discovery all my life long: it *shall* be mine!"

"Father!"

"This one thing, at least, you can do for me, to—to undo all the harm that you have done."

Edward cowered in his corner. "But, father, if you were to——"

"Die! You would bury me next Saturday, instead of next spring!"

"Kill yourself," whispered Edward.

"I should no more have killed myself," explained the Professor calmly, "than you would, when you risk your life over a hurdle or in a boat. Be reasonable, Edward. The risk is infinitesimal; the probable gain to the world untold." As he spoke, he had already taken off his coat and busied himself with his simple preparations. He turned to where his son was sitting, dumbly watching. "Edward, I don't like mentioning these things," he said, "but, surely, there are considerations a Baron Lisse may value more highly than six months of a waning life." Then he lay down and inserted the needle into his skinny arm and showed Edward how to work the chloroform. "Tell your mother I shall be busy here all night. Good-bye till to-morrow morning. I am sorry I had to fluster you like this, child. It couldn't be helped. Serum S.,

mind, the little bottle to the left. Good night, Edward. Work hard and die easy." His eyes closed.

Edward stood with the little bottle in his hand, the little bottle to the left. Serum S. He lifted his eyes to the clock. Two minutes gone already. "Father!" No reply.

Somebody was knocking at the door. He started, nearly dropping the precious bottle, and went to see. Eliza stood in the passage. "Time to put out the gas," she said, rude and loud, "unless the Professor intends to stay messing here all night!"

"He does," replied Edward. "I shall go upstairs in ten minutes."

The maid peered through the chink. "After the dinner-party!" she protested. "It's very bad for him. You should look to your cough, Professor!" she called into the silent room.

Edward closed the door on her: his finger clung round the bottle in his hand. He lifted his eyes again to the clock, very slowly. How long was it since he had last ventured to look in that direction? The ten minutes were over. The minute-hand was hurrying round the dial. It no longer mattered how it ran.

His father would awaken now for certain. That was Edward's only prominent idea. The experiment must take some other shape. His father would awaken!

Up till this evening Edward had never bestowed a

serious thought upon death: and now suddenly it stood plain, in the middle of his heart, beside his father. He waited, watching the unconscious figure, the useless bottle in his hand. Then he went and put it back in its place and sat down by the wreck of the fire.

He cowered there, a hopeless huddle, asking himself wearily, again and again: had he acted wrongly or rightly? And at last, from sheer emotion and exhaustion, he sank into uneasy sleep.

When he woke the room was grey and bitterly cold. The dull morning had come, and the first thing his eyes beheld was the Professor, hanging, slightly lifted up, against the side of the sofa, his face ashen, his look dazed.

"Edward!" gasped the Professor.

"Yes, father!"

The Professor uttered such a cry as Edward, in all his later intercourse with men distraught, has never heard again, "It has succeeded!" screamed the Professor. "I'm dead-sick, but that's only the chloroform! It has succeeded! Oh, my God!" He lay muttering: "The thing's certain. Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. Thy salvation: yes, it's Thy salvation, for a suffering humanity."

Edward had risen, trembling from head to foot. "Father, I didn't do it!" he gasped in the twilight. "I couldn't. Oh, I couldn't kill you, father!"

The Professor lay quite still. "Oh, father, speak to me."

"Yes, Edward. Go away now, child. Go to bed. Go to sleep," came in feeblest accents from the sofa. "Go, child! You meant well, boy. I understand, child. Go!"

"Father, surely in some other manner——"

"No, one does not do this sort of thing twice. As for me *I* could not, now the anti-toxin has got into my blood. Never mind, child. Let me sleep! I am dead tired and sick. Send me Eliza, if she is already up. Go, child!"

"Father!" Edward flung himself down by the sofa. *I* will carry on your work, whatever happens! I will devote my life to it, father! God helping me. Oh father, I will!"

"Yes, child, yes," murmured the Professor. "We can talk about it to-morrow. Now send me Eliza, child."

Edward went out. On the stairs he met his mother coming down. The Baroness, as we know, was not the sort of woman to be much troubled by disorder in her home circle, and besides, she had long been accustomed to her husband's irregular night-work. But at sight of Edward, in creased dress-clothes and manifest distress, she exclaimed aloud.

"My father was busy. I stayed to help him."

"Quite right!" said the Baroness; "once in a way.

Now go and lie down. Yes, yes, you must help your father."

"We had a long talk about my future. I am to study medicine," continued Edward, burning his ships.

"Of course," said the Baroness placidly. "I have never doubted that."

She brought her boy a cup of tea, as soon as Eliza had found leisure to make it (for the Baroness could not make tea). On the tray lay a tall pile of papers, which the lady, having established herself by the bedside, solemnly removed to her lap.

"You remember my promise!" she cried triumphantly, "Edward, you are ripe! Drink your tea, while I read you *Balaam!*"

With much rustling of pages, coughing and a heightened colour, she began:

"Sing, Muse, the Seer, the Angel and the Ass!"

She looked over the pages at him. "Now, how do you like that?"

He was so weary, the room went round with him. "Very much," he said.

"When I wrote that opening line, Edward, you were a curly darling of five! Your father was working at his wonderful discoveries behind my back. And it struck me the four nouns were an excellent description of our family. The Ass being your poor uncle Francis, who,

for instance, has always said you'd never do for a scientist!"

"You forget my sisters," said Edward, trying to steady his brain.

"Oh, well—yes!" replied their mother, and returned to her reading.

CHAPTER III.

In this manner did Edward become a medical student at Leyden University. "We are puppets," remarked the Professor, and he resigned his seat in Parliament. "But Providence," objected the Baroness, "pulls our strings." "Undoubtedly," assented her husband. "Mind!" It is not proven that he ever deliberately employed this closure to arrest theological discussion. He had felt no compunction about accepting Edward's sacrifice: on the contrary, he deemed the boy very lucky to have seen his mistake in time. "A unique opportunity!" he said, "to become my successor! Edward very nearly missed it!" For preliminary studies in botany and chemistry Edward showed plenty of aptitude. He had always liked flowers, and messing about with electrical machines and experiments. "He is not at all my idea of a jurist," said the Professor. "Nor mine of a poet," declared the Baroness with a sigh. Presently Thomasine, the eldest daughter, came home from her finishing school at Geneva, presumably "finished," and that was a great satisfaction to Edward, who had always considered her his—rather far-away—"chum."

The wickedest action of the Baroness's half-century of existence had been the bestowal of so absurd an appellation on her second child. Her son she had been compelled to call after his grandfather. "I shall never have another boy!" had been her cry, amid abundance of tears. Did Providence resent this querulous prophecy? Had she been granted a succession of male children, she would probably have called one of them Balaam, for some parents will shrink from no cruelty in matters of this kind. The Professor concentrated all his attention on nourishment and vaccination, the cow and the calf.

Out of oppression of the sweet, however, cometh forth sweetness. We know that the name of a rose—and nothing on earth is so habitually misnomered—does not injure its fragrance; moreover, it gains by being crushed. From earliest infancy Thomasine Lisse bore the weight of her mother's fond freak. She got to accept perpetual teasing as if she rather liked it. At school she early became a bit of a mother to her younger sisters. On her return from Geneva she settled into a vacant corner as her brother's special counsellor and friend.

He stood in need of such a confederate. At home he was as much alone as ever: at college his studies naturally threw him among rather a rough lot of class-fellows, away from his own set of friends, whom he only met at their play. To the Professor, naturally, such a blending of two social milieux had ever seemed a thing of beauty.

"A name," he would exclaim, "as great in science as if it belonged to a cow-herd! As noble as if it were borne by a fool!" Needless to say, the Professor was well and busy. After six months he again consulted the eminent Longman, who said he could hardly live a year.

Before that year was out, Pasteur gave his great discovery to the world. When the Professor read of it, in the common little provincial paper, he turned whiter than the sheet in his hand, but he instantly forgave his son. He waited for a moment, with his back to the desk at which the Baroness sat scribbling: then, sure of his voice, he turned in his chair and made a clean breast of the whole business to his wife. "So Edward has saved his father's life!" said the Baroness, weeping. Her tears fell in stains on the wet page of *Balaam,* but there need be no rewriting of the untidy manuscript on that account.

"I should have survived!" cried the Professor, and struck the newspaper. "This discovery of Pasteur's proves I could not but survive! I knew it," he added.

"Edward did not," replied the Baroness, "so he saved his father's life."

"As a woman's your reasoning is correct, my dear," said the Professor, and he went and kissed her forehead, "but it wouldn't do for me and Pasteur." He corrected himself, with an odd little bow in the direction of the

newspaper. "For Pasteur and me," he said. "Ah, Jane —Jane—the whole world may thank God for Pasteur."

The Baroness dropped her penholder: it rolled in a long blue smear down her soiled mauve skirt. She cried out:

"Am I to understand, Professor, that this man, Pasteur, has run away with your discovery?"

"No; you are not," replied the Baron, quite shortly, for him.

"Then who, pray, is going to be thanked for it, you or he?"

"He," said the Baron, looking splendid.

The lady's lips twitched. With a big wrench, however, she controlled her feelings, and the words that slowly fell from her, like drops of vitriol, also belied in nothing the dignified little Baroness Jane. "I might as well let Eliza publish *Balaam,"* she said. But the next moment a contented smile stole over her clever countenance. "I knew I could trust our son to behave just right," she said; "he has saved his father's life."

"Exactly," said the Baron, resigned.

"And——" continued the lady. She rose. She flourished her pen. "Oh, Thomas! I see my opportunity! Oh, what an opportunity! I am in my eleventh canto, but *this"*—she flung down the open sheet—"must *wait!* I shall write a drama, of which you will be the centre, you, my husband, my hero! Your great

self-surrender, Edward's sublime dilemma! What a theme!" She sat down again. "Meanwhile Thomasine can copy out the ten completed cantos. Not a letter that she makes is like anything I was taught in my youth, but people nowadays seem to read them all the more readily on that account."

"Poor Thomasine!" said the Professor reflectively. But at this the Baroness not unnaturally bridled. "Surely copying poetry is as good an occupation for any young girl," she protested, "as examining the human body under the skin! Faugh!"

"It's the more interesting side," said the Professor.

"A woman has no business with it," replied the Baroness incisively. For it was a sore point with her that Thomasine had plunged into Edward's anatomical studies of mornings, on condition that he should accompany her to dances of nights. This close collaboration could not but render the Baroness jealous, as she sat at her writing-table with her back to her husband's beasts.

But you don't get to the beasts in the first year of your medical studies. There dawned a day, however, a dark, winter day, on which Edward burst into his sister's little boudoir, his face all broken up in blotches, white and red. He tramped about the narrow floor: then he went and stood by the window, gazing into the cloudy sky. To whom should he go but to Thomasine? His

father never alluded to his studies, from some curious idea that Edward's scientific personality must develop independently, not as a reflection of paternal eminence.

"We had our first vivisection this morning," said Edward, his back to his sister. "You can't imagine what it's like, till you've seen it done." She was silent.

"Do you know, I liked the work well enough! Father's right: 'tis the finest vocation on earth: I was quite happy in it. Of course I knew this must come, but I thought it can't be much crueller than shooting or angling, and I go in for those as much as ever I can. What hypocrites we are, Tommy!"

Still she was silent, with the silence that is sympathy expressed.

"But oh, this bit's too awful!" he burst out. "At the laboratory—only think!—they keep a whole herd of small dogs, on purpose, for us to break their bones and set them, over and over again. You should see the poor wretches driven in, wheedling and whining, and trying to lick the white-aproned people's hands. They know well enough what's going to happen. And, then, to hear them howling afterwards!" He pressed his cheeks against the chilly window-pane. "I can hear them howling now!"

Still Thomasine did not reply. She was one of those few women whose silence, when a man's fresh sorrow comes to him, seems but its congenial accompaniment,

as a hedgerow, unseen but felt, that we reach in a gale of wind. She sat there, motionless, in the quiet little blue and white chamber, with the many little bits of herself all around her—the books and the ferns, and the luminous cross overhead. And before the soothing stillness had grown oppressive, she got up and came behind her brother and stood there, with the winter sadness against her sunshiny girl-face and the glow of her golden hair. "I will do your frogs for you," she said.

"Nonsense," he answered, and put his arm around her with a brotherly hug. "You'll make a man of me yet," he added, laughing. She kissed him, indignantly.

"You're a man every inch of you," she protested, "or you wouldn't have done it at all." She did not say what "it" was, but everyone knew in that household, excepting the Baroness, blissfully unconscious, to Edward's supreme satisfaction, of her children's mental struggles. The Baroness, in fact, was prevented by her own cast of mind from realising the existence of any great "mentality" in a young man, even her own son, who brought back silver prize cups from rowing matches and athletic sports. It required all her husband's powers of persuasion to make her remember that Edward had left the Grammar School as "Primus" of his class. "The boy does his best," she said, after various readings of *Balaam*, "but I cannot think he possesses 'intellectuality.' Not like you, Thomas. He lacks fine feeling.

But he is a dear boy. Some of us must have muscles and some of us must have brains." Her mind was at rest about Edward.

The Professor's soul however, would occasionally jigger and wriggle like any small beast at the farther end of his own dissecting pins. For the Baron would awake in it and point out to the Scientist that Pasteur's discovery had left no task for Edward to complete. The Scientist would reply to the Baron, that other wide fields of bacteriology awaited the coming explorer. The Professor never doubted for a moment that Edward was a genius, nor could he see the use of being a genius, unless you devoted your gifts to bacteriology. Besides, Edward never complained, and that proved him to be altogether happy, for, if anything annoyed him, he told you so, witness his frank outburst at the mature age of fifteen. And how can any human being, possessed of brains, feel otherwise than jubilant, once he had escaped from ancestral inanity and was sailing away over new seas of philosophic research? The Professor wished he had had such a father as himself: his life would have been very much easier. The thought is not an uncommon one.

But the problem of Edward's future development was unexpectedly solved by the arrival of Laura. She was introduced by Uncle Francis, in a manner distinctly his own.

On a snowy winter evening, an evening of dirt and

dulness, Uncle Francis drove up in a fly to the dark old house on the dark canal. He walked straight into the sitting-room, unannounced, and Eliza, as she slowly closed the door behind him, shouted through the aperture: "The Colonel! You know his way!"

The Baron's younger brother was a bachelor, a brave soldier who had volunteered for India, a brusque-mannered man of the world. He had a bachelor's selfishness and a soldier's generosity: had you written to beg for a charity, he would perhaps not have troubled to answer you, but he would certainly have bidden his orderly send you a P.O.O. He had an idea that he could manage most things better than the people who looked after them, and, especially, he read out of his daily paper the daily renewed conviction that his dearly loved country was hastening to the dogs. For his wise brother he possessed a boundless admiration, as you and I, from our understandable earth, appreciate the unnecessary stars. He could not but regret that such an intellect should be wasted on "worms:" what satisfaction he had at first derived from the Baron's excursion into Parliament had been much dulled by the discovery that his brother's speeches, as read in the papers, were so manifestly inferior to the orations he, the Colonel, concocted every morning, while shaving. "Sanitation, by Jove! While this country is cascading to the dogs! The men who made this country great, sir," says the

Colonel, slapping his red and blue breast, "drained their —cups! They crossed the ocean in tubs that were— faugh! and they brought back all the perfumes of the Indies!" His sister-in-law Colonel Lisse did not properly appreciate: her poetry he condemned unread. The word he used was "silly."

"All well?" He planted himself on the hearth-rug and looked round. Yes, all were in health, even the Professor, whom his eminent colleague had recently assured that the hole in his only remaining lung had, unconscionably, healed. When the Professor's dead body was opened thirty years later, the missing lung was found to have, apparently, regrown.

"Girls well too?" asked the Colonel. The Baroness appeared to be aware that the two dear girls at boarding-school wanted for nothing.

"Girls should be educated at home!" said the Colonel. He buttoned his long frock-coat, like a glove. His untidy brother, limp in an easy-chair, gazed at him with kindliest interest. The Baroness became engrossed in her knitting.

"And exceptions prove the rule," added the Colonel, as Thomasine rose up before him. "No tea, thanks!" Twenty years ago, at the christening, to which he had been bidden as a godfather, instead of the historic name he had expected, this ridiculous appellation, carefully kept secret, had struck the infuriated uncle, and knocked

him over, like a bomb. He never called his niece by her name: on the mug which he sent her he left the shield intended for initials a blank.

"Tea," said the Colonel, "destroys the brain."

"I take six cups a day," remarked the Professor.

"Yours can stand the strain," replied the Colonel. His cropped hair stood up, white, over his clean, red-brick face: the too-black moustaches flourished fiercely across his cheeks. "Dear me," he said, "I believe I am becoming a poet, in my old age, Jane, like you!"

The Baroness only coughed. To herself she said "Imphi-Boshek," and found the usual compensation in the secret thought.

"Home influence for girls," persisted the Colonel, "I was reading in the *Hague Courant* this morning——"

"So you still read the *Hague Courant,*" said the Professor, with a touch of irritation in his voice.

"My dear Thomas, you needn't talk politics to *me.* I simply look at the papers to see how things are getting wrong."

"On?" The Professor lifted his hand, maliciously, to his ear.

"Wrong!" shouted the Colonel. "And no politics, Thomas, are required for *that!* Moreover, as for my political principles, you all know them. The three P's!" The Colonel looked round defiantly. "The three P's," he repeated. "Prince! Parson! Police! Palace,

Pulpit and Prison! The three pillars of the State, Thomas. The three P's. You remember my old comrade Baleyne?"

"We remember about him," replied the Baroness, looking in all sorts of places for her ball of wool.

"He is dead," said the Colonel solemnly.

"What did he die of?" replied the Baroness, while searching. She invariably propounded that question, like so many people, who seem to put it in a sort of sub-emotion, lest they also should die of a particular something some day.

"Of fever. At Palembang. He has left an only daughter, aged nineteen."

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Thomasine.

"Where is she?" asked the Baroness perfunctorily, pleased to have recovered her wool.

"In a cab at the door," said the Colonel.

"At this door!" demanded the Professor. Thomasine had sprung from her chair. The Baroness gave such a jump, that the ball ran away onto the floor.

The Colonel stood immovable, with his eyes on his watch. "I couldn't do it in less," he said, "I had to explain about home influence."

"Fiddlesticks! What has home influence——" began the Baroness.

"I want you to take her in for a short time, Jane," explained the Colonel: all the "martiality" (the expres-

sion is Edward's) seemed to have gone out of him. "He has sent her to me, you see. She arrived at my quarters last night."

"Sent her to you! Arrived at your quarters! Outrageous!" The Baroness half rose, dropping all her odds and ends to right and left. "Keep her!" The Baroness sat down upon her knitting needles.

"I can only do that in one possible way!" replied the Colonel, inspecting the chandelier.

"What way, pray?"

"Marry her," answered the Colonel ruefully.

The Baroness's first far-away fears had been for Edward: they swept round at once to the peril nearer at hand. "She can't stop in that cab," said the Baroness.

Thomasine took this as a permission to go and fetch her.

"Is she white or black?" inquired Edward, looking up from an illustrated paper.

"Brown," replied his uncle.

Thomasine was already half-way down the stairs; she found Eliza seated on a step.

"I've got a convert in the cupboard-room," said Eliza.

"A what?"

"A convert. One of those black bonzes the missionaries bring over, to make believe they've got dozens more over there!"

"Let me pass to her at once, please, Eliza."

"Oh, certainly, Miss; is she to go into the drawing-room? I shouldn't have thought converted niggers were quite in the Colonel's line, or perhaps she's only just enough converted for him!" There the prim, starched creature sniggered audibly, and complainingly commenced following her young mistress down the passage. "I did wrong, I suppose, as usual, to let her in, but I couldn't bear to leave a young female unprotected, sitting chatting, as amicable as possible, with a tipsy cabman at Baron Lisse's door."

"Was she talking to him? Was he really tipsy?" Thomasine put the questions nervously, her hand on the door-handle.

"Pray, why should he not be?" replied the righteous Eliza. "Don't you pry into the common people, Freule, but just leave the likes of me to know about the likes of them." She checked the Freule. "Now what can the Colonel want with native Christians?" she demanded. "He certainly hasn't dressed this one correct."

"You will know all about her to-morrow, Eliza!"

But that was not at all Eliza's idea of her position in the family. "I daresay I did wrong," she persisted, with the plaintive note that was always successful in the case of the Baroness. Consciously impeccable, she enjoyed suggesting illusory errors on her part. Her life was a long devotion to the "quality" she imagined she despised,

and a persistent disparagement of her own class, whom she would allow nobody but herself to condemn.

"I am frozen quite dead," said Laura Baleyne. The two girls entered the drawing-room together, side by side, North and South, calm and storm.

The Professor rose and swept the stranger his very best court bow.

"Fortunately not quite," said the Professor.

The young lady cast the poor old crumpled gentleman a glance which too plainly expressed contempt for such scientific exactitude. She sat down on a low settee by the fire and wrapped her cloak, in great swathings, all about her. It was a marvellous cloak, dark crimson cloth outside, but, inside, a magnificent tiger-skin, tawny and striped, with a head, goggle-eyed, in the hood. The two ladies Lisse contemplated it with attention.

"I like you," said Laura, nodding to the Baroness, and loosening the furry folds about her slender neck. The Colonel smiled uncomfortable approval.

"Thank you," replied drily, Jane, Baroness Lisse.

"*You* don't look like as if you came out of a band-box, like the women over here," continued the fair visitor. "One can see that you move about and drop things and don't trouble to pick them up."

"Oh, thank you!" said again Jane, Baroness Lisse. But she tried to hunt, unnoticed, for the wretched ball of worsted. The Colonel, stiffly stooping, dragged it

from its hiding-place and ostentatiously deposited it on the tea-table.

"Yes, that's what men are good for," said the youthful equatorian, nodding gravely. She threw back—with a sudden jerk that caused the poor Professor to start and cough—the whole splendour of the tiger-skin, and lay back against it in her sombre travelling-dress, under the full reflection of the leaping flames.

"Why, old gentleman, don't you agree with me?"

It was the Colonel's turn to jump, on the hearth-rug. "This is my brother!" he said very loud, "Baron Lisse!"

The lithe young creature against the tiger-skin opened wide a pair of great black eyes, like stars, in a clear-brown, oval face. "Well, isn't he old?" she queried. "Surely, nobody minds being called old, when they've got to be as old as he! Or she!" A sweep of a long thin hand in the direction of the Baroness, who smiled in the most friendly manner.

"I don't mind at all," said the Baroness, "I shall be fifty next June."

"You don't look it," flashed the Colonel.

"Old's old and young's young," opined Laura, with a slow glance of intelligence at Thomasine and Edward. The latter was trying his hardest to keep his eyes away from everybody else's, especially from Thomasine's. But there was no mirth in the Colonel's answer.

"You won't say that, young lady, when you're between

the two ages yourself——" The Colonel's eyes went searching, with but faint desire to see, for a looking-glass. He did not therefore immediately observe how Laura's pretty lips hung pouting.

"You always contradict me," she protested. "Nobody ever contradicted me in Sumatra. Does everybody always contradict everybody else in Holland?"

"They do," said Edward, breaking his long silence with rather unnecessary energy. "'Tis our most marked national characteristic. In this country everybody persistently disapproves of everybody else." The challenge in his look and his voice were for Thomasine, but, before she could fly to her customary defence of the fatherland, Laura disconcerted everybody by bursting into vehement tears.

"I don't want to be disapproved of," she sobbed. "I —I don't believe I'm all—disapprovable! It is so cold and uncomfortable, and I know I shall never do as they want me too! Oh, Colonel Lisse, why did poor father send me to Europe? Oh--oh—oh—oh, I want to go back to Palembang!" She flung herself back recklessly into the great tiger-skin: she dragged a paw of it across her face: the soft fur welled up all around her.

"My dear," said the Colonel kindly, "he sent you to me."

The dark face flashed forth from behind the tiger-paw, in a ripple of laughter.

"My dear!" she echoed gaily. "And we only met yesterday. Now *that* would be improper at Palembang!"

Again the two ladies Lisse exchanged glances. The Colonel's tanned skin does not easily show change of colour, but it can. To the gently nurtured womankind of his own family he was at that moment an object of unmixed commiseration. His niece came to his relief.

"Mother, shall I show Miss Baleyne to her room?" she said, and, without awaiting further parley, she carried the young stranger, tiger skin and all, away. When the door had securely closed upon the two girls, the Professor's eyes flew round to Edward's, *via* the Colonel, and father and son laughed till the chandelier rang. The Baroness knitted. Edward desisted first.

"Poor little thing," he said.

The grateful Colonel caught at the words.

"Yes, educated, you know," he said, "at Palembang."

"Not 'educated?'" The Baroness lifted her face to her brother-in-law. She had neither begun to laugh nor stopped smiling.

"Quite so, Jane. Not educated. Dragged up anyhow. Petted. Spoilt. Native servants. Mother dead. A great loss, that, Jane." The Colonel shook his head. "Father dead now. Brave man, father! So here she is. His legacy."

"He has left her to you?" The Professor's mirth had gone suddenly grave, like an owl.

"He has, Thomas."

"And what has he left to her?"

"Me."

The Baroness's smile grew perceptibly thinner. "Laugh, my dear!" she said almost spitefully, to her husband.

Immediately Edward swept a stumbling curtsey to the Colonel.

"My dear!" he repeated, "but that, you know, would be improper at Palembang!" And again he began to laugh, but his father spoke, annoyed.

"And what, pray, are you going to do with your legacy, Francis?"

"Not marry her, unless you compel me to. That's the one thing I feel clear about. And so I've brought her here."

"School," said the Baroness, knitting fast.

"My dear Jane, she's nineteen."

"Family," said the Baroness, knitting faster.

"Yes, but where? who? what? how?" cried the distracted soldier.

"Here for the present," said Baron Lisse.

CHAPTER IV.

So, for the next few weeks, the exotic Laura blossomed on the sluggish Leyden canal. Meanwhile the Colonel advertised and inquired, in a restless search for "refined comfortable homes." "I should like to stay here and amuse you all," said Laura to the Baroness, "but the Colonel says you're not refined and comfortable. And I'm so anxious to learn just what one ought to do. It's all so odd and difficult. Of course you're not what we should call comfortable at Palembang, but, then, everything's little and poor here, compared to the East." Clever as the Baroness knew herself to be, she could not have told what intentions lay behind Laura's innocent smiles. "The Colonel says you always say," remarked Laura, "that you cannot manage ordinary girls!" Now this was manifestly unfair to the Baroness, who never would have described the beautiful Sumatran as "an ordinary girl." On the contrary, she perceived in her magnificent material for a great Oriental figure to be worked with fine effect into *Balaam*, and, expressly abandoning *Edward, or the Crusader's Sacrifice,* she harked back to the eleventh canto of her epic, which is

enlivened, as we are now all aware, by the appearance of the lurid Moabite Princess, Liriam. The daughter of the house still sat copying, copying, in that clear, firm hand of hers, for hours.

Laura Baleyne could not, for the life of her, have copied anything or anybody. Besides, her handwriting ran along, charmingly unreadable, in what may be described as arabesques. But she rarely troubled to write anything, except little pencil scrawls to Edward to come and amuse her at once. Such a summons the young gentleman found frequent occasion to obey, leaving scraps of his work with Thomasine.

"I am cold, cold," reiterated Laura, who seemed to have consumed in a fortnight the store of caloric which lasts so many old Indians through their first two winters in the North. So she spent much of her time by the drawing-room fire, on the sofa, or better still, on the rug, in the tiger-skin. And this is the story of the tiger-skin. Had Major Baleyne become possessed of it, and its original occupant, two minutes sooner, there would not have been a little brown baby inside the occupant, as there was. Says Laura, puffing up the horrible thing and inserting her own shapely arm: "With a little imagination you can see it there still." Her own imagination was boundless. If she closed her eyes, she said, she could dream every perfume of the East. Then she opened them (sometimes a little moist) on the Leyden canal.

"Yours is the finest vocation on earth," she said to Edward, "I have wished, all my life, I could study medicine!"

"You?" He laughed.

"Yes. Aren't women beginning to, all over the world? But not at Palembang. I could have done it quite as well as Thomasine."

"You would sicken at the sight of blood." Her reply was unexpected. She drew a long pin from her hair and scratched across her arm. "I love blood," she said, watching the slow drops as they shaped themselves. "Blood's life. The one thing you doctors know nothing about. The wonderful human life! If all this were to flow out, I should be a lump of clay. Why? Where did my soul go to? You can't see life come, but you can see it go! If only we knew what it is—life! I love to see it flow!" She crouched, amid the mass of the dead monster, and squeezed her arm. "By George!" thought Edward, watching her. That thought was to him a new one. All the rest of his life he remembered all about it, and remembered that it took the form of "By George!"

"Yes, I should like above all things to study as you do," she continued. "I envy you. Not because I want to find out about the hideous diseases that we oughtn't to have and that nobody can cure! The horrible, stupid diseases that are all a mistake we make for ourselves by living wrong. But because I could get down deeper into

the soul-body—oh, you know what I mean, though I can't express it technically—the force that makes the body, well or ill, what it is—the life that people are only just beginning to understand about and believe in!" She paused for a moment; then she turned and looked straight into his eyes. "Are you happy in your choice?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered quickly. "You know I am not going to practise as a physician. My father says that means two-thirds humbug and one-third worry. My father is the greatest bacteriologist living. I shall hope to carry on his work."

The reply was a long-drawn shake of the head. "Why do you do that?" he demanded.

"Don't ask me," she replied, and then added: "But I want to tell you. Oh, I know what you mean by bac —what do you call it? Curing people by making them ill till they don't mind it! Filling them up with disease-germs, instead of strengthening their vital force!" He stared at her in amused amazement.

"Don't stare at me like that!" she cried irritably—steadying him at once. "You scientific men always think no one ought to talk that can't use your proper jargon! I wish you could have talked to my father: he'd have explained! The tropics are a hot-bed of microbes: fill a man up with all the fever-seeds till they're acclimatised! 'Tis that what you bactey—oh you know—ologists say.

Instead of providing him with the strength to weed his garden clean!"

"If we had the recipe for the universal weed-killer——" began Edward.

"You've never looked for it! Never! I tell you—oh, I care so much: I can't keep silence! I've been watching you these weeks—I know I'm stupid, and not properly educated and don't know how to behave—but I can see, I can see—you're starting on this splendid labour of your life all wrong! Leave your father's Semicolon to your father. He has thirty years before him yet!"

"I fear you are very much mistaken," he replied, greatly hurt, in his filial affection, by her matter-of-fact tone. The tragi-comic Longman-episode, with its far-reaching effect on Edward's future, had certainly bred in his mind a general contempt for medical practice and practices, but it had left a vague conviction with him, nevertheless, that his father's days were numbered.

"I am not mistaken," she answered, solemn as a judge. "I know for certain." She saw that her manner was causing him annoyance. "I read it in his hand," she added softly. "Ah, now, mock me, if you want to. Mock!"

A moment's silence: then his lips were at her ear. "Will you look at my hand?" he whispered. She hid her face deep down in the thick folds of the tiger-skin,

"No!" came from under it in tones of muffled vehemence. "No! No!"

"Why, I believe you have looked at it already, on the sly, and discovered that I died in my teens."

"Oh, mock!" she said again; "mock! Had you lived where I come from, you would not laugh at superstition! Father used to laugh before he was converted. Do you know what converted father? I was not always his only child. I had an elder sister—ah, beautiful! One evening she was sitting in the verandah—she was sixteen—and an old Chinese pedlar came worrying her with his wares. She was angry with him—she was passionate as she was kind-hearted—and she bade him desist, and he would not, and she flung from her one of the toys he had placed in her lap and it broke. She threw him money, but it could not appease him; he turned at the compound-gate, and he cursed her. 'This day week,' he said, 'I will come to you at this hour. I will fetch you. I shall not fail.' She would not look at her watch, as she passed into the house, but the clock struck six, so she knew. My father laughed—ah!"—the girl shuddered—"and she laughed also, and I! Five days later she sickened with fierce fever: in her delirium she never ceased calling the Chinaman! We told her the wrong date, hanging the calendar by the bedside, but she shook her head. On the fatal Saturday she was silent, and slept much: while she slept, I pushed forward,

a full hour, the slow hands of the clock. As the shadows were falling—our swift eastern sunset—she woke. 'What time is it?' she asked me. I said 'Seven.' She whispered: I bent over her: she whispered again: 'Does the Chinaman forget me?' She whispered these words even fainter, till, as the clock struck seven, which was six, she died."

"And the Chinaman?" questioned Edward, breathless in spite of himself. Laura slowly resumed control of her voice. "The Chinaman was never seen again. The doctor explained everything to my father, all but the changed hour on the clock. Ah, yes, they explain! But at last even the doctor said—how well I remember it! —'There be things on this earth of ours, Horatio, that you and I know nothing about!' And he slapped on his helmet, and went off." She had half lifted herself up, on the hearth-rug, in the earnestness of her narration: she now sank back, suddenly limp. "I have never understood what he meant by calling father Horatio, for father's Christian name was John."

This problem Edward left unsolved: when he opened his lips, it was merely to say: "Strange!" She had covered her face with her hands, but at the serious tone of his voice, she dropped them gladly: "Ah!" she cried, "I am so pleased! You are not one of the idiots who snigger and pass on!" "But what has this to do with my studying medicine?" he pleaded. "What do you mean by my taking up the thing wrong?" She moved

her lips: her colour came and went. "Oh, what do I know?" she burst out; "I am only a poor, ignorant girl. I don't even know how to behave!" She would talk no more. Resolutely turning her hot face to the congenial blaze, she begged him to get her the French novel he had promised, Daudet's pathetic *Jack,* the new book that everyone was reading. The Baroness had cried over it. How dreadful to think a mother could thus neglect her child!

The Christmas holidays had just brought back the two younger girls, and, dear me, the house was so full and noisy you could hardly, sighed the Baroness, find time for a quiet read! She trusted Thomasine would marry ere Jane came home for good, next year. And the Colonel had shown his usual lack of consideration—but what, pray, could Imphi-Boshek consider *with?*—in foisting this unwholesome exotic upon them at Christmas time to corrupt with fantastic perfumes the lavender-kept hearts of the school-girls. To be sure, he now wrote that he expected soon to find a suitable home for her. Pray what would you call "suitable?" The Zoo?

"Fie!" spake the Professor. For no human male can endure to be very rude about a pretty woman. Long centuries of experience have led us to defend her, instinctively, against her sex. And the chivalrous, enthusiastic Professor was far too simply human in all his impulses not to make kindliest room for the brown waif

that had dropped into his family as it were out of some far-distant cocoa-nut tree. "Cocoa-nut," indeed, the Baroness (a good woman, but feminine), had already dubbed her. Eliza never spoke of this dark-skinned creature otherwise than as "The Witch," and hinted at swarthiest reasons for doing so. Begged to be explicit, she replied, whilst the stream of her insinuations flowed on, that wild horses would not drag another word from her. The prophecy was a facile one in Leyden. One speculates what would have been the actual effect of a live wild horse prancing down the moss-grown streets in search of Eliza.

But in Eliza's little autocracy no one had the wish or the courage to exert influence of any kind. The Baroness, securely ensconced between screen and writing-table, would remark to her husband, with a shade of resentment in her voice:

"My dear, there's Eliza! I can hear her coming down the passage. Why can't she let us alone?" For the maid walked with an iambic step (how vexed would she have been to know this!) a lift, and a far-sounding bang.

"We're safe in the sanctum," replied the Professor, applying his eye to his microscope. ("Sanctum, indeed," says Eliza. *"Den!"* She unreasonably designates the Semicolon as "Vermin!" She is mortally afraid of the unexplored side of the Professor's door. "Full of creep-

ing things," she says, "like Peter's blanket." The Professor encourages this view.)

"I suppose she's in one of her rare paroxysms of self-distrust," sighs the Baroness. "The last was about dismissing the fat butcher, because he cried."

"He was not only fat, but also good-looking," replies the Professor.

"My dear!"

"My dear, I beg your pardon. And, also, he was a Primitive Calvinist, like Eliza herself."

Meanwhile Eliza is heard fidgeting at the door and shrilly protesting that butter is up again a penny in the pound, and she daren't take the responsibility upon her! The Baroness, with poised pen, answers as shrilly that the kitchen might just as well eat "Marjoram" (she means "margarine"). Eliza screams disapproval. The Professor appears in the doorway.

"The rise of butter, Eliza," he begins, "is an economic process——"

"If you call it economic!" snorts Eliza.

"Which passes absolutely beyond our control!"

"I deny it," cries Eliza. "I never let the key of the larder out of my sight."

"You don't understand," mildly retorts the Professor, and closes the door again.

The step of the murmuring maid is heard clanking away into silence, down the marble lobby. "She has

driven Imphi's reply right out of my poor head," sorrows the Baroness, "and it was so idiotically inane. Just the thing Frank was bound to have said! But it's impossible to compose really good poetry when you're crushed by the whole burden of a household like ours."

The Professor steals behind her chair and kisses her on the forehead. "Yes, dearest, you are our Pivot," he says.

But at this the downright Baroness wipes her eyes. "No, Eliza is that," she replies cheerfully, and starts in fresh search of Imphi's response.

"I wonder," she says presently, having reached the passage where Liriam gives Balaam, by mistake, the love-potion intended for Balak, "I wonder if Eliza really has reasons for calling Laura a witch." She lays down her pen and gazes contemplatively at the portrait of the Professor, in student costume, on her bit of wall. That is all she ever sees, for the screen is between her and the rest of the room and the garden.

"She always has reasons," replies the Professor, moving his microscope.

"I mean reasonable reasons."

"No woman ever has those for calling another woman a witch."

"Why 'woman,' Professor?"

"A man may—if she have bewitched him."

"Poor Laura!" says the scornfully tranquil Baroness.

Poor Laura lay, without any thought of bewitching

anybody, on the tiger-skin by the biggest fire in the house, gracefully curved over her novel, her day-dreams and her chocolates. The chocolates were often provided by Edward, and sometimes by the Professor. In the day-dreams the Professor had no share. The young lady discovered a persistent liking for expensive sweets. "So natural after all, mamma," argued Thomasine. "In an Oriental houri," admitted the Baroness. "I understand that in the harems they eat Salaam Aleikoum all day." "What is a houri, mamma?" The Baroness blushed, obliged to confess rather hastily that she did not know. "But I am sorry that I called Miss Baleyne a houri," she said, "for I fear it is something improper."

On New Year's Eve—Saint Sylvester, they call it in Holland—Laura appeared in such a low-backed scarlet glory as that simple Dutch household was quite unaccustomed to see. "St. Sylvester" calls all the world, and his worldliest wife, to evening service, once in the year, if never before. "Good gracious!" exclaimed the Baroness, "you are not going to church like that!" No, Laura was not going to church. "You are a heathen, then? A Mohammedan? Your religion," persisted the irate mother of three daughters, "is that of the people in the tropics, the blacks?" "Neither theirs nor yours," replied Laura, with spirit, "but I promised my father never to enter a church." Her lips trembled: she burst into tears. Such a confession of course rendered further exhortation im-

possible, but the Baroness, seizing her gold-clasped "Church Book," did not stay to dry the tears.

Nor could Edward. He thought of them a good deal, however, during the long, long sermon, and he came to the conclusion that it is a mistake to say weeping disfigures all women. When a man has reached that stage, it is time he should reflect upon witchcraft.

At the traditional midnight supper of oysters and mulled wine, Laura was as vivacious as any of them, with that rather self-conscious gaiety which belongs to the change of the year. She betrayed a fascinating ignorance of all the best-known Dutch customs: the young people crowded around her with laughter and shrill little cries. Suddenly her own merriment died down, to a thrill of perfervid interest. Into a bowl of water—the suggestion had been Edward's—they were dropping melted wax to read the future by. She waited to the last, shrinking back. Edward's fate had been a ring. She took the spoon, closed her eyes, turned it swiftly. "A cross!" cried the second girl, Jane.

"But, surely, my dear Laura!" expostulated the Baroness, "surely you, who are an atheist, attach no importance to portents?" The Baroness's own prognostic had been a (bay?) wreath. The beautiful Indian, without replying, rustled away in her trailing scarlet silk, to the farther end of the room. The quiet "Freules" gazed after her.

"But atheists are always superstitious, my dears!" remarked the Baroness, smacking her lips to her three daughters. "Dear Laura," she added very kindly. "You ought to read your Bible! Begin this year! I should like to give you one. I wish I could read a chapter with you every morning, if only I could find the time! We might go straight through. I read it in the original, you know, so I could explain to you all the passages that other people don't understand."

"Oh, how I wish they'd taught us that at school!" cried two of the three daughters. They all admired their gifted mother, as variously as Edward did.

"I never went to school," the Baroness continued complacently, sticking her waxen wreath around her little finger, and breaking it. Oh, brittle glory! "I had a governess who couldn't spell. But I remember when I was only seventeen, your uncle Francis came in one evening and asked me to join their dancing-class. 'I couldn't,' I said; 'I spend my evenings with Phaedo.' 'Can't somebody else look after him?' asked your uncle Francis. He thought Phaedo was a little dog, Thomas —he thought he was a little dog!"

"And why shouldn't he?" replied the Professor. "What business has a soldier with the immortality of the soul?" The Professor sat sipping his glass of mulled wine and considering his own little ball of wax. "World-wide fame!" Thomasine had explained it to mean.

"Now, had you read the *Phaedo,* Laura," said the Baroness, "you would have known that atheism is nonsense, and that the soul survives after death!"

"I know it now!" exclaimed Laura. "The Scarlet Sin" (Eliza's just-coined gibe) stood in front of the Professor, with tightly compressed hands. "I am not a freethinker," she hurried on, at bay, in a fury her furtive indifference might long have foretold. "Still less an atheist. I know as well as you,—better!—a hundred times better—that there exist all around us Powers of evil and of good. I fear them and love them and serve them and fight them! They are all around us! They are listening to me now!"

The youngest girl, Jacoba, screamed, as if she had seen a ghost. "My poor child," said the Baroness softly, sorrowfully (yet delighted with this new sort of "Endor" light on Liriam), "has nobody ever told you that all that is very wrong?" Laura turned on her. "You let a donkey talk!" she exclaimed. "Who was it, think you, talked in the donkey? A spirit or the donkey's soul?' She opened her arms, spreading them forward. "They are everywhere," she said in a low voice. "The invisible intelligences. They are all around us. If only we could see them!" Jacoba looked round swiftly, trying to peer behind her own back. Jane shut her eyes.

"Quite possibly!" said the Professor, and soothingly

sipped his wine. "Tra-la-la! You believe no such nonsense!" cried the Baroness. "I believe," said the Professor, "whatever can be proved." "And the Protestant religion," protested the Baroness. "Of course," said Baron Lisse.

Edward, proverbially politer than most of the brothers in Leyden, had dug Jacoba in the ribs with an audible "Idiot!" when she screamed, thereby giving her a sudden foretaste of fraternal frenzies in the near future. He now frowned heavily, and quick Laura caught the frown.

"Proof?" she cried, "you shall have your proof tonight! As much as you want of it! Before the year is out! That is how you all talk—give us proof! You ask for it and you hurry away! None of you ever comes for it! Proof! nothing is easier!" She glanced at the clock. "Push that table here, Edward!"—the Baroness started—"Mr. Edward! The little round table will do admirably. Ah, you want proof that there are spirits around us, listening in this room? Now, all come here, girls! Hold your hands thus—let me teach you! Ah, you want to know the future, do you? I can show you a better way than dropping wax. Oh no, Mr. Edward, you need not turn the lamps down:—no—no—we can have the full light of the lamps!" The young people closed up round the table, fingers joining, in a tremble of expectation and pale-faced delight. "Thomas, forbid this!" whispered the Baroness. He drew nearer to her.

"My dear, it's a joke—only table-turning! Far better let them do it, and explain the whole thing afterwards." She felt that she could not, at her age, begin disagreeing with her husband, so she stood watching the excited group round the table. Presently—well, even under such favourable circumstances of course it takes a little time—the thing began to revolve: a few minutes later it rapped. The Baroness sank into a corner, muttering an exorcism, a sudden memory of child-days, half a century ago, with a Catholic nurse, in Brabant. The five young people, their eyes flashing, quivered round the restless piece of furniture. The Professor sat smiling placidly. Explain it all presently. A purely physical effect.

"Hush!" said Laura imperiously, in the deepening silence. "Listen, while I ask! Is my father dead?" The table answered: "Yes." "When did he die?" The table spelt his age, forty-seven. "Shall I live as long as that?" "No," replied the table. "It never varies," said Laura.

"Let us stop!" protested Edward. "No! No!" cried the breathless girls. They were eager to ask a dozen momentous questions: the table stammered forth answers in its usual cumbersome way. The Baroness had drawn gradually nearer; she laid a slow hand upon Laura's bare arm. "Ask it——," she said, gazing across at her coughing husband; "ask it——" She turned away and went back to her chair in the dark corner. Jacoba now wanted to know all about marriage, and "who to?"

"what sort of a uniform?" The Baroness's murmur sounded distant between the rappings:

> "In sorrow, and in sickness too,
> Saints Thomas and Bartholomew!"

The Baron sat nodding his head over human foolishness. In the midst of all this perturbation the solemn clock struck twelve: they would hardly have been aware of it but for the sudden accompaniment of the clashing church bells outside. All halted and stared at each other. The table stood still. It had just announced that two misfortunes would befall the house of Lisse in the following year. The next moment it was flying round again, so that it might, if possible, particularise the approaching evils. The Professor alone saw the door glide slowly open and Eliza appear on the threshold, a flaming bowl in her anxious hands. "You didn't ring," she began in irritated protest, "so I thought I had better come, and I wish you a——" Here she caught sight of the whisking, bumping table. Straight down, with a single crash —her first and only time of dropping—the liquid fire ran all over the carpeted floor!

"Misfortune number one," said the Baroness from her corner with almost a sigh of relief. Edward ran for the hearthrug to extinguish the flames. The girls grouped themselves in alarm round the guilty table. The Professor, with outstretched arm, addressed himself directly

to Eliza. "A purely physical phenomenon," he was saying. "Charcot has demonstrated on his patients that the muscles——" In his eagerness to point the truth at her he advanced into the burning puddle, and as he skipped back precipitately the grim Calvinism of Eliza caught at the proffered simile. She held her long bony finger inverted abysmally over the blue flames that separated them. "The end," she said, "of all witches and sorcerers. H—e—double l."

That night there was no more table-turning. Before the girls went up to their rooms the Professor explained everything. When he thought he had quite done, Laura, with lips she had bitten till they bled, told him, told them all, her dreadful Chinaman story. He explained that to her also. At least, he told her why the army surgeon had called her father Horatio.

Next morning Eliza gave warning. She said she loved only one thing better than the Lisse family, and that was her immortal soul. The Baroness, little given to foolish weeping, sought her husband in tears. "Misfortune number two," she sobbed. "If Eliza goes, I must bury my talent in a napkin. I have always called her the Pi—pi—pivot on which this entire household turns."

"You wrong yourself," said the Professor gravely. He sat sorting his numerous New Year's cards in two great heaps, one of those he must acknowledge and one of those he could ignore. But he had got them trans-

posed in his mind, and was methodically tearing up the wrong ones.

"And this misfortune will not come off," added the Professor gravely. As of course it did not. Eliza had never before been anywhere near giving notice, and she certainly cried a great deal and was very much in earnest. But Thomasine explained to her, that departure, by immediately making true the table's prophecy of terrible misfortune, would irresistibly convert the Baroness to the certainties of spirit-rapping, and Eliza said: "Let me think that out!" An hour or two later she called her young mistress, with much display of mystery, and led her, finger on lips and toes a-tiptoe, down the gloomy side-passage to the door of the guest-room at the further end. By that door, which was closed and locked, she sank prone, and, peeping through a chink in the lower panel, motioned to Thomasine to come and do the same. To her disgust and amazement the Freule refused, even when adjured by her mother's salvation! What Eliza saw, shuddering, was this. The brown Witch, in a loose Eastern garment, all yellow sunflowers and blue dragons, seated by a table, rigid, her eyes bandaged, seemingly asleep, while one hand, with a pencil, moved in nervous shakes and trembles on a great sheet of paper spread in front of her.

CHAPTER V.

TERMS of the Peace: First, that the Baroness reject the housemaid's proposal to send the green carpet to the cleaner's. Secondly, that the Baroness promise solemnly to remove the Witch from the house at the earliest opportunity. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," quoted Eliza, standing, her arms akimbo. Literal execution is rendered impracticable by the laxity of Dutch law (which has abolished all forms of capital punishment): the passage must therefore be amended: "in thine house." The Baroness promised cheerfully. To her brother-in-law, who came to dinner on New Year's Day, she remarked that a promise is always a sacred thing.

"Not from a woman to a woman," said the Colonel. "Nor," he added, slowly thinking it out, "from a woman to a man."

The Baroness contemplated him with her habitual expression of compassion. In her epic Imphi-Boshek ever babbled fatuity. She would punish him by marrying him to the sorceress Liriam. Woe betide him, if he tried on anything of the kind in real life.

"How's the poem progressing?" he demanded ab-

ruptly, anxious to divert her thoughts from the wrong-doings of Laura.

"The fool gets his deserts," she replied grimly. He laughed, more uproariously, she fancied, than the occasion required. "That's right," he said, "I hate a fool. Marriage, I presume?" His perspicuity alarmed her. "What made you guess?" she demanded anxiously. "Oh, marriage is the inevitable punishment of a fool." She heaved a contented sigh. Through her mind passed, in still complacency, the thought of her own long union with this man's elder brother, the wedlock of two so diversified, yet so strangely kindred, geniuses; she rose up, eager to find the Professor. At his study-door she knocked, as always. "Have you got that frog," she cried, "skipping about, without its brain?"

The Professor opened the door wide. "Half its brain," he corrected her. "No living creature can exist without any brain at all."

"Indeed!" she replied, presumably thinking of the man she had just quitted.

"The frog's dead," said the Professor, "but there's a pigeon that—oh, it's got away!"

He ran to her writing-table. She closed her eyes tight immediately, standing well inside the door. "O Thomas, that's against the rules," she cried, almost indignantly.

He skipped about: there were sounds of falling furni-

ture, and flutterings, and the bang of a book. "Escapes always are," he gasped back at her. "Open your eyes!" He stood at his end of the room, with heaving chest. The Baroness sat down hurriedly in her near corner: the distressed pigeon had made disastrous trouble on the rumpled sheets of *Balaam, an Epic.*

"Is it very bad?" asked the Professor nervously.

"Oh, *I* shouldn't mind," she gave answer, "but I'll copy the worst page at once, because Thomasine is so painfully neat." Ten minutes later she looked up from her desk: "'The Princess spake: Is Imphi-Boshek here?' I forgot," she said, "your brother's in the drawing-room."

Imphi-Boshek, meanwhile, was trying to convince the Princess that the staid old patrician mansion on the Leyden Canal was not the proper place for table-turning. The Princess listened demurely, but demureness with her was a very put-on trait.

"I'm sure to do wrong, whatever I do," she flashed out unexpectedly at her fatherly adviser. "So I may as well do what I like. What's the use, pray, of restricting your misbehaviour to the doing of things you don't like?"

"I beg your pardon!" said the amiable Colonel.

She shrugged her shoulders, a thing she could do gracefully, and turned away. "The Professor is a dear old man," she said, "and the girls are sweet and kind, especially that poor angel, Thomasine. And the Baroness

means well also—oh yes, I can quite understand about the Baroness—of course she is a *very* stupid woman, but she means well."

"Then my nephew Edward is the only member of the family you don't like?" said the simple Colonel.

"I dislike the whole family," she answered him pat. "There is nothing more dreadful to live with than the people who you feel mean well."

"Have patience but a few days longer," he begged. "I have probably found a suitable home for you." "Ah!" she gasped. The Colonel was not the man to fathom that cry. "Meanwhile avoid, if possible, annoying my sister-in-law. I am surprised to hear you call her 'stupid': we have always thought her too clever by half. She reads Plato: you can hardly be aware of that! She has a theory of her own about Balaam's ass, which she has published in a German review. She thinks the ass was the Prophet's wife——"

"A learned woman is always a stupid woman," interrupted Laura pettishly, stretching her shapely figure in the light of the flames. "I never learned anything at all, but I am not stupid, I! At least, not in her way of imagining one knows all things. I know I am ignorant, I. Like all such stupid people she can only believe the unreasonable. Now you!"—Laura turned those great stars of hers on the dapper little Colonel—"you have been in our Indian lands; you know of the mysteries

that surround us there, the wonders that happen daily. You have seen how much nearer, in those climes, is the supernatural, the unearthly. You have heard the voices in the empty chamber, have watched the pebbles fall from the white-washed ceiling, have felt the siri-juice spirt from the stone wall——"

"Hush! hush!" he interrupted her, "you shouldn't let your mind revert to these things, now you've got to a Christian country. They used to make me deuced uncomfortable, I know. You try to believe in Balaam. It does one a lot of good. I am not learned like the Baroness, nor clever like you. I am a soldier, and, I trust, a gentleman. I believe in my three "K's," and always have. My King! my Kirk! my Country! That's enough for me, and you can emotion enough out of them, I promise you, for all three are going to the dogs. My paper was saying only this morning that the King has had his rheumatism very bad again."

"Not that I care twopence about magic," she resumed, "no, nor about spirit-rapping. Such things are but squibs and crackers outside the temple, noises in the street. They do to attract the crowd of passers-by. Go, Colonel, and talk of the day's diversion to the girls."

"I have already done so. I am arranging a distant excursion on skates. I am sorry that is an amusement in which you cannot participate."

At this stage the Professor entered in search of

Imphi-Boshek. "And my brother is coming too," said the Colonel.

"At his age!" exclaimed the Sumatran.

"Skaters have no age," replied the Professor, vexed.

She lay back, looking at him, hesitating, gathering courage. "Do not go," she said.

"But, my dear young lady——"

"Do not go. Please don't!" Her eyes were pleading: her hands plucked at her dress. The two old men stood staring at her—the one, his tall figure flung forward, his dusty grey locks falling back like a mane from his keen, inquisitive face; the other erect, in an attitude of protest, at attention, his pale eyes wide open over the fierce curl of his moustache. She rose, in her shimmery, tight-fitting green gown. "I entreat of you, for your own sake—I entreat of you not to go!" she said.

But even to this appeal the Professor, like any rational Dutchman who gets a rare chance of a spin on the ice, remained obdurate. The more so as Laura refused all explanation of her demand. Very unwillingly she made a final attempt to influence the Baroness. "Oh, most certainly, he must go," exclaimed the Baroness. "I can tell what will raise my husband's spirits, my dear Laura, though I don't know—and don't want to—about yours." The Baroness laughed at her little joke, all by herself, for quibbles didn't lie in Laura's way. All the

long, lovely day of the excursion the latter locked herself up in her bedroom, "talking with the Devil all the time," said Eliza, who tried, vainly, to catch scraps of the conversation through the keyhole.

The Professor came home in an ecstasy. To his last day he remained an enthusiastic enjoyer of small pleasures—an excellent recipe, amongst others, for keeping young. "You see what a boy I am!" he exclaimed, coughing. All laughed at the Southerner's morbid terror of ice.

In the night, however, he gasped himself awake. In the morning his temperature was 100. The family doctor, hastily summoned, suggested pneumonia. This doctor's name was Postle—the man who invented Postle's Aerated Bibs. He was a little man with a sharp nose, a frown, and an air of knowing better than you. He rose from a careful auscultation, and fixed his wise eyes on the expectant Edward.

"Both lungs are affected," he said.

"Impossible!" cried Edward indignantly.

"Sir!" cried the fat little doctor, more indignantly still. He had known Edward from a baby. He had taken an interest in him even earlier. Edward had worn the thirteenth—no, the fourteenth—aerated bib. The sale has now surpassed thirty thousand.

"Sir!" repeated Dr. Postle, swiftly defiant.

"He has only one," explained Edward.

Absurd!" said the doctor, tapping the stethoscope.

"So Longman has told him," persisted Edward.

"Ah!" said Postle. He put his finger to his nose. "The symptoms must be reflex," he said. "Yes, undoubtedly, the symptoms are reflex. A very common complication," he said. "Be sure that I shall take it into account."

Whatever the symptoms were (and be sure they were not forgotten in Postle's account), they very nearly did for the Professor. He got so dead-tired of coughing, there came a moment when he felt he would rather die than cough any more. He had to do a lot of coughing after that. When Laura walked into the room at last, and stilled his ceaseless shaking, he called her an angel from heaven. To herself, and to Edward, not to the Baroness.

The Professor had never had an acute illness before, and the household was immediately and hopelessly upset over him. Over his temperature, and his diet, and the doctor's face, and the heat (or the cold, or the smoke) of the sick-room, and all the hourly cackle and flutter which accompany everywhere birth, danger, and death.

In the universal confusion, and while the certified nurse was committing the usual errors—omitting to shake down the thermometer, and leaving the window open to close the door, or *vice versâ,* and waking the patient (at the wrong hour) to give him his medicine, which she

had forgotten, and then giving him the wrong one, or his lotion—while all was in the average state of turmoil and exhaustion, and Eliza sat weeping in her closet over failures to produce an unaccustomed calf's-foot jelly, the "Exotic" picked herself off the drawing-room sofa, abandoning her French novel and half-emptied box of sweetmeats, and walked through the sick man's door (which the certified nurse had left open in her descent, after three vain ringings, to find out why her own afternoon tea was seven minutes late). She—Laura—unlocked that door to Edward, when he pressed through, as it were, to tell her that the hospital nurse was enjoying hysterical weepings and sal volatile downstairs. "I know nothing about treatments," said Laura, "but I know about invalids." The Professor declared gratefully next morning: "I have slept. I have slept a couple of hours at a stretch."

She moved about noiselessly, and her movements had none of the stealthy tremor of "gliding:" she gave the sick man what he wanted before he had asked for it: she rested sufficiently, when he did not need her, so that, as soon as he called for her, she could come to him without drawn cheeks or tired eyes or checked gasps. Above all, she had none of that forced gaiety of tone which is taught to the profession. In a word, she was a model carer for the sick. The "Sister," creeping upstairs to take her place for the night, hung over the landing

and informed Eliza in a stage whisper that "some people'd a thousand times rather see their patients succumb than employ some means that some people employed to get them better by." Eliza banged-to her door, incapable of a righteous answer, but, having heard of a house where spirit-rapping failed because, as the spirit-rapper said, it contained too many Bibles, she dragged the prayer-books upstairs from their present disuse, and piled them up against the wall of the Professor's bedroom, in the passage, where they somehow toppled over in the silence of the small hours, nearly frightening the nurse, sound asleep over a comic paper, into "fits." Eliza did not sleep much, praying day and night that Providence might employ even the Witch to restore her Professor.

It was only two days later that Edward surprised Laura in the act of "mesmerising" the patient, by means of magnetic passes down his face and limbs. "She calms my cough, I tell you. She puts me to sleep," wearily insisted the Professor. Edward, standing by, confounded, saw that it was true. In those days hypnotism was an infant science: Charcot was only just beginning to convince the world of its legitimacy. To Edward, dimly realising an undreamed and distant future, a whole new field of medical research, psychic, and therefore, to his bent of mind, unexpectedly attractive—to Edward the moment remains unforgetable, when he saw his father

sink, under those simple passes, into slow but certain repose. "Do I know how? No, I know nothing," answered Laura. "I know that it is the spirit which is ill, not the body. The light burns low, not the lamp. O Edward, leave your searchings into sickness, and study the health of the soul!"

The first use the Professor made of his incipient convalescence was to assure Laura, with many graceful utterances of gratitude, that the expression of the Baroness's face meant worry, worry alone. Thereupon Laura noticed that expression, and told Edward she didn't mind. The Baroness, weeping herself ill during many long hours in the now deserted study, composed verses of prayer for her husband's recovery. They are by far the best things she ever wrote. When the patient was definitely mending, she also thanked Laura quite prettily. To her husband she said: *"non tali auxilio,"* but, dear me! he was very considerably mended before she said that.

He was so much mended that the Colonel had been allowed to come and see him. "And you needn't tell *me,"* said the Colonel, "that our skating excursion had anything to do with your illness. Pshaw! As if healthy bodily exercise could make a man ill! There are three causes of disease, three only: I call them the three 'In's'—Intemperance, Inaction, and In—which is my third 'In,' Jane?" "Incapacity," answered the Baroness

promptly. "Possibly. I always enjoy excellent health myself." The Baroness dropped a stitch.

"And I quite agree with the *Hague Courant* that the causes of our illnesses are never what we think. Oh no, it was speaking, I remember now, of our political ills. But if the skating *had* had anything to do with it (which it hadn't), the fault would have been yours, Laura! For it is you that would have—what is the new word?—hip—hip———"

"Hurrah!" said Laura.

"Hypotheked the Professor into believing he must fall ill."

"The Professor would allow nobody to hypothek him, whatever that may mean," interposed the Professor's wife severely.

"The whole thing is a mystery," said the invalid himself in humble tones, "a mystery I cannot at present pretend to fathom." The Colonel rose from his chair. "Well, well, it is time I was going," he remarked. "I—I have a little bit of news, Laura, which I fancy will not be altogether disagreeable. I have found an admirable home for you. A widow lady, who takes a couple of paying guests, at Brussels." He stood watching her face. They all watched her. She lifted her eyes. "Indeed?" she said.

The Baroness flew after her brother-in-law. "My dear Francis—now, *when?* Dr. Postle considers it most

important she should be removed from the patient! She —she agitates him so, says Dr. Postle. Do you think, possibly, you could manage—an early day—next week?"

"To-morrow, if need be," replied the Colonel, looking up from below, outwardly calm.

"Oh certainly, if you prefer it so," replied the Baroness. "We shall expect you, then, in the forenoon." She ran back to the others. The wicked spirit-business, and perhaps even more the curing of the Professor, now it was accomplished, filled her with not unreasonable wrath. "My brother would wish you to leave for Brussels to-morrow," she said. "He finds that his military duties will take up all his time next week."

"They are terribly engrossing!" said Laura. "How he must regret the ease of active service in the East."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Edward, when, for a moment, that same evening, they were alone.

"To-morrow night at Brussels," repeated Laura. "With a widow lady who takes paying guests!"

"I should much like to ask you something, but I dare not."

"Dare," she said softly.

"It is: you—who seem to—foresee all sorts of things —did you not foresee this?"

He was startled by the vehemence with which she flashed round at him. "Do you take me for a fortune-teller?" she asked. "Do you think I spend my nights

over the cards?" She dropped her voice to a whine: "Cross your poor gipsy's hand with silver!"

"But you knew about my father's illness," he persisted gently.

"Knew?—nay, I did not know. I had a presentiment of threatening disaster—no more!" She sat silent for several moments, struggling with her thoughts. "There is a side to my life," she said almost in a whisper, "which —which—I cannot speak of it to anyone. Least of all to you. Good night!"

But immediately afterwards she once more stood before him, trembling, as was her manner when strongly agitated, from head to foot. "Edward," she said, "oh, forgive me, but I cannot keep silent! Who knows if we shall ever meet again? No, I am not a fortune-teller, but—this one thing I can see—I can see it in your eyes —I have read it there long ago, plain—you, who were born to raise those eyes to the light, you are turning them, from a sense of filial duty, upon corruption, and you loathe, as I should loathe, the sight! You have no desire to investigate the causes of diseases: you are utterly ignorant of the joys of studying life! Oh, if I could but help you! But what do I know of science? Nothing, I tell you. I only know that these things exist." She turned away, yet, over her shoulder:

"Promise me that you will not destroy your whole

future! Promise me that you will examine these questions, will try to understand what they mean!"

"I promise," he said.

"Promise me by something binding! Ah, no, I should not have said that. You are not an Oriental! Promise me by nothing at all."

"I promise you," he said, "by my father's first sleep that night."

CHAPTER VI.

NEXT morning Edward's eyes were heavy with unaccustomed wakefulness. His mother gave him a kindly glance. "He studies too hard," thought the Baroness. "How he enjoys his work!" A telegram came from the Colonel to say he would be in the train on its arrival at Leyden Station, whither Edward must therefore accompany Miss Baleyne. "Please, no girls!" said the telegram. Uncle Francis disliked leave-takings around railway compartments, and "weeping crowds."

When Edward came back from the station, his mother met him in the hall. "So that is over," said the Baroness. "Thank God."

Edward, not so grateful, looked uncomfortable and remained silent.

"Your poor father—she excited him so, says Dr. Postle!"

"She put him to sleep!" cried Edward.

"Edward, you, a young student, will not pretend to know better than a university doctor!"

"She knows better than the whole lot of them!" cried Edward.

The Baroness smiled. "You had better stop studying medicine," she said, "and go in for conjuring tricks."

Then she repented. "It is pleasant to see how devoted you are to your dear father. I understand both you and him perfectly. The Lisses were always chivalrous to women. But Dr. Postle says that is all nonsense and fancy about putting him to sleep. How clever Dr. Postle is, Edward! He always knew exactly what had happened the day before."

"I have something to tell you," said Edward.

"From your uncle? I daresay it is not worth hearing. I am very angry with your uncle for having brought the girl here. She was not a fit companion for my daughters."

"O mother, don't say any more! Don't!" Edward's face had gone white. "I want to tell you——"

"It would be like Imphi-Boshek to go and marry her, only, thank Heaven! he is far too poor and too honourable to think of such a thing!"

"He won't marry her!" cried Edward in an agony.

"I should think not, indeed: a little brown——"

"For I've asked her to wait for me, and she's said she will!"

There was a bench somewhere near, and the Baroness sat down on it.

"She'll have to wait a long time," she said. Then, presently:

"Did this take place between the house and the railway-station?" she asked.

"I love her," replied Edward.

"Well, well!" said the Baroness. "Your father married his first love, and you will not. Your father was the exception, Edward, and you are the rule."

"I shall never love anyone else," declared Edward.

"That is very beautiful, Edward, but not in connection with Miss Laura Baleyne." Hereupon little Dr. Postle came slowly down the stairs.

"I am very pleased with my illustrious patient today. I find him much calmer," he said. The Baroness looked at Edward, and Edward laughed rudely.

"Do you think he could bear a shock?" asked the Baroness. Edward turned to her in silent appeal. "What sort of a shock?" said the doctor.

"The discovery that his own—brother is a fool!" replied the infuriated, yet still cautious, Baroness. Edward gave a sigh of relief.

Little Doctor Postle grinned. "His son would be a different matter," he answered, "but he's safe there. I hear great praise of you as a student, Jonker. Some day you will equal your father, carry on his work! Hereditary genius, Baroness! Last night, at the Medical

Society, the Professor was saying no specimens were as neatly done as yours."

Edward listened horror-struck. It had never occurred to him as thinkable, that these inevitable aids to his study would attract anyone's attention—far less that they would command praise. "Why, my sister did them!" he cried, instantly. The Baroness beat a tatoo on the arm of her wooden bench.

"So *that* secret's out!" said the Baroness.

"I never knew it was a secret," replied the indignant Edward.

"And Thomasine," added his mother, when the doctor had departed, "must find a husband after *that* as best she can."

"Thomasine says she likes it," protested Edward, feeling guilty, his habitual attitude towards his parents.

"I thank Heaven," replied the Baroness—and really, considering the misfortunes which had befallen her that morning, she was in a remarkably benedictory vein of mind—"I thank Heaven that *that* at least is absolutely untrue. Eliza has—I am unaware how—seen her shrinking and actually weeping over the loathsome work."

"She shall never touch a specimen again," said Edward in a shaky voice, and went into his father's room. The Baroness followed him.

The invalid was sitting up in an armchair, with many pillows, enjoying his convalescence. "Dr. Postle has just

been telling me something, Edward, that has caused me the liveliest satisfaction. It appears they were remarking at the Medical Society last night——"

"Yes, but Thomasine did those," said Edward.

"And Edward intends to marry Laura," put in the Baroness, taking her stand behind the invalid's chair, "and to set up a Hall of Magic, like the one we saw in London—you remember—the Plymouth Brethren!"

"The Davenport Brothers was the name," corrected the Professor sharply. "Let us, my dear, be accurate first and then aggravating. Pardon me. But what is this nonsense about Laura?"

"I have asked her to wait till I can marry her," said Edward doggedly. "We are both young, and she says she will."

The Professor solemnly extracted and swallowed one of Jenkins' pills. Then he said, looking straight in front of him: "Edward, I think you will admit that I am of all living bacteriologists——"

"The greatest!" cried the Baroness.

"By no means, Jane. You forget Pasteur."

"And where, pray, would Pasteur's fame have been but for you, Edward?" cried the Baroness, who now, being very angry with her son, saw things differently. Edward winced.

"Certainly not the greatest," continued the Professor quickly, "but, all things considered, perhaps the safest

authority as regards infection. Well, my boy, I can honestly assure you that, at this early stage of the disease, it is quite as impossible for you, as for anyone, to foresee whether it is going to be chronic or acute."

"Yours was chronic the first day!" cried the unwise Baroness. The Baron smiled: "My dear, that again, is feminine logic. Son Edward, speaking as man to man, and as medicus to medicus, I must warn you that your diagnosis is premature."

"You laugh at me!" exclaimed Edward in amazement.

"No indeed! Do you think, for a father, this is a laughing matter?"

"I shall never love any other girl!"

"That, Edward, is a symptom of the acutest attack."

Edward stood away from his parents, gazing at them —the dear old father's thin grey face in its cloud of grizzly hair, against the pillows, the clear-eyed mother bending over it, a little more crumpled, if possible, than usual. "I have sacrificed my own inclinations in everything, till now!" he burst out. "You won't thwart me again—will you?—in this?"

"Sacrifice? Thwart him?" exclaimed the astonished Baroness; "what does the poor child mean?"

"I am a child no longer," answered Edward, "I am a man, as willing as when I was a child, to please you.

I love you as much as I ever loved you." He stopped, biting his lips.

A slow flush spread over the Professor's white cheeks: he lay back, playing gently with the tassels of his faded dressing-gown. "Edward is right," he said softly. "I am glad that he speaks of his—sacrifice. Yes, let us speak of it. Had I died, Edward, I should have had a miserable death-bed confession to make. I may as well make it now. That great work of mine is ended. Pasteur has given my discovery to the world."

"And how came Pasteur to be ready before you?" persisted the Baroness. Her husband checked her, but Edward said low: "He had no son that hindered him." In the silence that followed, the Professor's gaze sank to the roses upon his feet. The Baroness murmured: "Ah!" But at that sound the Professor looked up swiftly, with an entire change of manner and tone. "Absurd!" he exclaimed, "Edward saved my life! When, trusting to Longman, I foolishly, wickedly risked it. Do you understand me, Jane? Do you hear me, son? You saved my life, Edward! And, what's more, I now know I still have both my lungs. No medical man could have my pneumonia, and not find out how many lungs he'd got. I may live for thirty years more! Why not? What fools these practising doctors be! There's only one hope for medical science and that's bacteriology!" For the first time his eyes sought the face of his son: he

looked at him sadly: "Believe me, I thought you had fully come round to my way of thinking. Why, all your professors praised you, and, only this morning"—he stopped dead: "But don't waste your time on the other medical fal-de-lals," he said. "If there's anything this last illness would have taught me—only, I found it out thirty years ago—it's that all our so-called therapeutics are bosh!" Thereupon, the Professor, his fingers shaking somewhat, took another pill. "Bosh," he murmured. "And Pasteur's discovery the *first step on the right road.* Ah, what a career! If I were young!"

"Laura prophesied before your illness that you would live to a great age!" said Edward.

"A Deborah!" remarked the Baroness. "I really must compose a poem in which Laura, as Deborah, controls the courses of the stars."

"She certainly controlled my cough somehow, better than Postle," retorted the Professor thoughtfully. "I do not pretend, as yet, to understand fully about Laura. But, Edward, if I live to a great age, I shall make some marvellous discoveries, and I shall see you doing—something—great—somewhere." He held out his hand; his son took it reverently.

"And what, pray, is to be Edward's special vocation?" interposed the Baroness. "Is he to be a great thinker? A great poet? Ah, I used to dream so! But his infant verses on which all my hopes were built, where

are they? They seemed to drop from him, when we put him into pants? You were thirteen, Edward, when for my birthday you rhymed 'child' and 'joined'—and I said: No!"

"So be it," said the Professor testily, much overwrought. "We must accept the fact, that our son is himself. Tardily. Face right round, Edward: there's plenty of other work waiting! The fault's mine." The Professor tightened his hands on the knobs of his old armchair and closed his tired eyes. Humble as he was, he could not but realise at that moment, that he was acting well, and wisely.

"I can't," said Edward.

"Yes, you can. Dou't make it harder for me than it is already. You are young, as you say, and Laura can wait—a couple of years." He opened his eyes and saw the hesitation in Edward's. He lifted himself, trembling, on his feet, clinging to the arms of the chair. "You believe," he cried, in quivering tones, "that I am acting thus to—to put obstacles in your way—to keep back your marriage with Laura!—Jane!—Jane!—our son believes this of me—of me!"

Edward flung himself down on his father's chair. "No! no! no!" he exclaimed; "only I'm trying to think how to tell you! *I* want to go on now! I've promised her and besides, I want to. She's cast a new light on

the whole thing for me, father! I want to find out, not what kills people, but what gives them new life!"

"I trust you understand what he means?" asked the Baroness, a pink spot in the middle of each cheek.

"I do," replied the Professor, and laid one hand on his son's head. "You had better go to Paris for a year, then, Edward, and work under Charcot. We know nothing here as yet of these new influences in therapeutics, but Laura has at least proved to you and me, by a strange chance, that they exist. I presume they are capable of scientific treatment. Charcot is your man. We can't have a Doctor Lisse a quack, Edward. I admit that up till now all therapeutics were quackery. I would never have had you practice as a physician, but, still less can I have you going about as a mesmerist. You must spare me that!"

"But Charcot is as great a name, even, as Pasteur," pleaded Edward, catching at this proffered straw.

"I admit it," replied his father, almost in a whisper, "but they are the two extremes of modern science. The whole field of medical research lies between them. I prefer our corner. You must go and look at the other end, my son!"

CHAPTER VII.

It was only last year that Vienna bestowed its great Gold Medal of Merit on the famous Dutch psychologist, Edward Lisse. The medal they award so rarely that medical men all the world over have come to look upon it as the highest recognition their genius can obtain. Laura was present at the ceremony. The Professor also undertook the journey (it killed him). He said that psychiatry was still in its infancy, but, so far, his son Edward seemed a very good nurse.

Edward, however, was a long way off from the Gold Medal of Merit, when he departed, amid widespread disapproval, to undertake that course of study in Paris on which his father felt regretfully bound to insist. His mother, being somewhat recovered from her first shock of disappointed fury, kissed him quite as tenderly as ever, but she requested him to sit down beside her, on the morning of his departure, and read him a long passage from *Balaam*, which set forth, how the ass (having deteriorated in its old age, as the prophet went on improving) refused to follow its master's instructions and ran down an incline and got killed. It may be seen from this catastrophe to one of the principal characters that

the poem had reached its final canto. "I shall not long survive my husband," said the Baroness. Ever since she had heard of Laura's prediction, she persisted in declaring that the Professor would be numbered with his fathers "comparatively young." There were many known forefathers in the family: the comparison would certainly have exceeded the Baroness's very limited mathematical powers. Eliza, having heard the name "Paris," of course said her inevitable say about that city of sin. Thomasine, after a first and last little dispute with her mother about delay in the copying of *Balaam*, sat hemming, occasionally red-eyed, a vast quantity of handkerchiefs. The girls wrote from Geneva that there were such excellent schools in Paris, and that Parisian French was much purer than Swiss. Their mother intended to reply judiciously, but forgot.

So Edward studied for a year, under Charcot, and with Bernheim at Nancy, all the latest developments of hypnotism, suggestion, double personality, etcetera, according to the awakening light of that day. He saw the strange sights of the Salpétrière Hospital, psychic vagaries so fantastic that they require actual experience for belief. At that moment the Gascon peasant-girl, Barbette, who could speak only patois in her natural condition, but answered in her trance every foreigner that addressed her, was the wonder and vexation of the scientific world. Almost immediately after Edward's arrival the famous

doctor sent for him, to the hospital. To his dying day he will never forget that morning, the cold grey light of a sunless March, the straight lines of tall white building, the courtyard and railings, the clank of keys. Strange noises everywhere, muffled and shrill, the incongruous noises of many hundreds of female voices, all more or less crazy, amid meaningless thumpings, foolish falls. Then the long, bare dormitory, deserted at that hour, and by the girl's bed, with only one assistant, in a respectful attitude behind him, the great man.

Charcot was in the zenith of his fame and his achievement. The fine Napoleonic head, of which he grew to be so vain, proclaimed in its classical outlines and self-conscious but penetrating gaze the calm force of this masterful manipulator of weak minds.

"Ask her, in your own language, how she feels!" he said. Edward, bending over the cataleptic form on the white bed, repeated the question in Dutch.

"Again!" said the great man impatiently. Edward obeyed.

The girl's bloodless face contracted: she gasped and struggled for some minutes: then, over her lips, in the same language, one word came haltingly: "P-p-pain." The Professor, recognising it by its likeness to German, turned to his assistant. "You see!" he said. "We will repeat this in the lecture-room. Good day, Mr. Lisse."

Edward followed the assistant in such manifest amazement, that the young French doctor smiled. "It is a case," he said, "of hypnotic communication. Very remarkable, certainly, but you will see more remarkable sights here, if you remain." As, indeed, Edward did, in the hospital wards and in the class-rooms immortalised by Gervex's famous picture. But none of them could approach, in intensity, the revelation of this his first glimpse into an intangible world. From the hospital itself he wrote home to his father: "Tell my mother, that Laura's extravaganzas are scientifically ascertainable facts!" "If Edward read his Bible as I do," retorted the Baroness, "he would know that the Egyptian doctors could change sticks into snakes. The Hebrew word is——"

"Mind!" cried the Professor, who had just semi-coloned a cat.

All *that* sort of scientific investigation—the serum torture—was now definitely over for Edward. He could restrict himself to the experiments on the patients, which, being mental gymnastics, were often perhaps unpleasant or even injurious, but practically caused no pain. The lobe-extracting, and all the paralytic pigeon business he could surely take for granted. He grew daily more interested in this wonderful study of the human mind distraught, and therefore more grateful—and therefore more devoted—to Laura, who in delivering him

from his nightmare of fleshly putrefaction, had shown him where his real vocation lay. Laura, therein a true woman, wrote her exiled love all she could find to sound bright about Brussels. She also entreated him to convert Charcot to spiritism. "As soon convince an engineer," said Edward, "that a breeze drives the train."

The great machinist of minds soon picked out the promising young Dutchman. "Your name," he said once, in his rather pontifical manner, "is a vast responsibility, of which you seem to be aware. I must afford you opportunities to distinguish yourself. You will avail yourself of them." Edward bowed to the ground. Men bowed low to Charcot, and he liked it. Not many days later he again addressed Edward: "I have an interesting case," he said, "a rather unusual one, I should like to place under your most careful observation. It is a young English boy of position. I require a gentleman, a man of the world, for these people, one who is it and looks it." His cold gaze rested on Edward. "I shall come out every Saturday. My secretary will give you the address."

That same afternoon Edward, in a new top-hat, inquired at the Etablissement Ducrot for the Villa des Peupliers. He had come out by the Ceinture railway to this unknown corner of Paris. "Ducrot" was, and doubtless is, one of the largest and best of the Auteuil Maisons de Santé. The buildings stand in three acres of

heavily timbered grounds behind a grey stone wall. A couple of separate villas lie away from the central part, hidden away among their own trees. To one of these a blue-shaven, white-aproned French servant conducted Edward along a neat pathway of flowering shrubs. Here and there as they went, amid the ripe October foliage, shone the red and white squares of modern French masonry, the red and white stripes of corresponding "Marquises," the glitter of a parasol or a gaily coloured hat. The whole place wore an air of reposeful luxury which contrasted curiously, in Edward's mind, with the crowded order of the public hospital.

At a locked side-gate, in a hedge, another man-servant, manifestly an Englishman, received him. "The new doctor from Mushoo Pshah-koh?" said the man: "I don't think Sir James can see you at present. But I'll ask Mr. Graye." Here, therefore, begins, indirectly, the story of Thomasine.

"My name is Graye," said the pleasant-faced young Englishman, scrambling off the sofa. His hair and eyes were dark against a clear Southern complexion, but his build and get-up and general appearance were Saxon, and of the best. "I am not your patient," he added quickly: a shadow flitted over his face.

"I am only starting as a doctor, but I could have told you as much as that," replied Edward.

"You don't think I look crazy?"

"No," replied Edward, somewhat taken aback.

"So much the better. Your patient is my nephew, poor chap! Are you a Frenchman? Pardon me, but my French is so beastly bad" (*si bêtement mauvais* was the way he put it)—"Dutch?—oh, then, I am sure you understand English—the Dutch are such linguists!" (*les Zollandais sont de si bongs langoustes*).

"My sisters had an English nurse," replied Edward —and so the young men's conversations became less arduous to record.

"What a blessing! For me, I mean. I had a French nurse, but all the French I could remember after she was gone was *Ciel!* I said it a hundred times a day, so as not to forget it, I suppose, but my mother somehow didn't take to it." Edward laughed, and Kenneth Graye stopped to look at him. "Look here, you are the new doctor, and no mistake?" said Graye. "All right. I beg your pardon, only you don't look a bit like the first one. Sir James didn't care for the first one—poor chap, that don't prove much—still! So, after the second visit I had to ask Professor Charcot for someone else. I hope he'll be nice about you—he ought to be. You—you won't mind if he isn't, will you? You see, he's so —so—quite——"

"He is a patient, and I am a doctor," replied the future Baron Lisse, with his head just a trifle thrown back.

"Quite so. Still, when a fellow's a decent sort of chap himself, he likes to be treated decently. As a rule, however, I can rather trust my poor nephew to feel the difference. I'm sorry to say he flung a cup of hot milk over the former doctor, so, you see, I had to prepare you a bit, but really, honestly, it was rather the man's own fault. He——"

"Don't tell me!" interrupted Edward. "If I am capable of producing such an effect as that, I had much better not try to avoid it!" The other gazed at him in astonishment. "You will never be a mad-doctor, Sir Graye," said Edward. Again the shadow fell over the Englishman's face. "No," he answered. "By-the-bye, my name is simply Mr. Kenneth Graye." The man-servant appeared in an inner doorway. "Sir James is quite ready, is he, Barton? Well, shall we go in?" Kenneth paused, with his hand on the door-handle. "May I ask you to remember that, although he cannot speak, he hears every word, and understands a great many. We don't know exactly what, or how much he understands."

The inner room, to which the *banal* little French drawing-room formed an antechamber, was heavily curtained and almost entirely dark. It occupied, with two windows on one side, and one on the other, a whole corner of the low, grey-walled, grey-shuttered villa, whose line of six tall windows (one of them the front door) opened out on a long French *perron*. After all the

clear autumn brightness and whiteness outside, this black cavity, outlined by many streaks of sunshine against crevices, struck chill with its impression of intentional gloom. The lucent world seemed violently shuttered out from the horror within.

"This is my nephew," said Kenneth's voice, hushed, in the shadows, "Sir James Graye. James, this is the new doctor, much nicer than the old one." There was no sound in reply.

As his eyes got accustomed, Edward saw what there was to be seen. In an enormous armchair, behind which the manservant stood, watchful, lay huddled up a little figure that might have belonged to a boy of ten. In reality, however, Sir James Graye was several years older. Shape he had none to speak of, being a shrunken mass of unformed limbs, like a bag with some dead beast in it; only his head emerged, sunk on one side, expressionless, long-drawn, as a fox-terrier's, without the dog's intelligent eye.

"Say something to the doctor, James," prompted his uncle. "He has come a long way to see you." This time a grunt issued somewhere from the bundle. Edward recognised in it the tone of dissatisfaction. "If you like," he said, "I will come again some other day." No reply.

"But perhaps I can first do something to make you more comfortable," continued Edward; "you are very

uncomfortable, aren't you?" The same grunt, twice as loud as before.

"If you please, Mr. Graye," put in the servant, "I can see as Sir James feels cold, but when I light the wood-fire, he cries out, sir. I suppose he don't like the flicker of the flames."

Kenneth motioned the man aside. "How often must I tell you," he said sharply, "not to speak about Sir James in his presence? It always puts him out."

"It's almost impossible to avoid it, sir," muttered the man, patiently creeping back to his place. Edward had stood looking down, with unquenchable pity, on the bundle of wretchedness before him. "If I bring you a nice little stove from Paris," he said, "you can make the room as warm as you like and yet keep it quite dark." After a pause another grunt broke the silence, a grunt of satisfaction this time. Both the servant and Kenneth, almost simultaneously, gave a gasp of relief. After that, not much more was attainable. The three men stood for some minutes, quite still, around the inert mass in the corner of the big chair. Once more it uttered its dull note of discontent. Then Kenneth Graye led Edward out of the room.

"Well, now you have seen him," said Graye as soon as they were alone together. "And so now you know."

The light was all around them. The foliage swung golden against the verandah outside.

"It is not an unusual case, replied Edward.

"It is our case," said Kenneth Graye.

There was a moment's silence, then Kenneth resumed:

"He has three notes—only. You heard two. You were fortunate: we rarely hear the second, excepting when he likes his meals. The third is one of fear."

"Does he always sit in the dark?" asked Edward.

"Yes, always. As soon as we take him out, he closes his eyes. Things seem to frighten him."

"Has it ever occurred to you that the light might possibly hurt his brain?"

"His——? I beg your pardon," the young Englishman recovered himself, the dark cheeks suffused with sudden confusion. "His eyes have often been examined and pronounced all right." Edward did not point out that he had not spoken of the eyes.

"I may as well tell you," continued Graye, "that we have consulted any number of doctors all over Europe. We have been doing hardly anything else since his birth."

"Was it necessary to consult so many?"

"You mean that he is hopelessly incurable?"

"I have no right to say that."

Kenneth Graye took a cigar from the mantelpiece—a French mantelpiece with a window over it and ormolu ornaments against the glass. "I will tell you about it, if you have leisure," he said; "I think we may feel pretty

safe that he will like you now." And, after he had settled himself and his visitor in unsuitable gilt *bergères* beside the cheerful wood-fire: "My nephew is a posthumous child. He is nearly sixteen years old. You would never have thought that? Well, I suppose you have seen similar cases. My brother died a couple of months before his birth. He was a good deal older than I."

"Yes?" said Edward, politely interrogative, puffing at his cigar.

"My sister-in-law had been quite crushed by her husband's death—stupefied, so to speak. Her child was born prematurely after weeks of anxiety, during which she did not seem to care. When she discovered what sort of a child it was, a great remorse seemed to seize her—poor thing! as if she had been to blame, and she devoted the rest of her life to him, day and night. She had an idea that doctors would cure him—poor thing!" He stopped, stared into the fire smoking.

"She is dead, I presume?" questioned Edward.

"Yes, she died three years ago."

Edward hesitated. Then: "But if you are so certain that doctors can do nothing——"

"I did not say anything of the kind," interrupted Kenneth.

"Forgive me if I read your thoughts wrongly."

"No, you read them right enough; you are evidently accustomed to looking people through, though you can't

be much older than I am. I'll tell you the rest. She made me promise, on her death-bed, to look after James, and to go on consulting doctors till I got him better. Somewhat better, at any rate. I don't suppose she thought we'd ever get him like you and me. Yet, I don't know." Again he waited: the words seemed to come from him, as if drawn forth against his will. "She was a very religious woman. She said God had given him his soul. I can't tell you about it, but—but, yes, she thought he would be a great deal better—more conscious—before he died." He looked anxiously askance at Edward, waiting for that horrible expression, the sort of hidden contemptuousness, which comes so frequently, when religion is mentioned, into the smileless eyes of the medical man.

"Thanks," he said suddenly. "I mean, I'm glad you take it like that. You see he is quite unconscious. Or rather, I should say, we can't get at him: we can't find out what he thinks—what he knows and what he doesn't. Isn't it awful? He hears us, of course, but we can't half say when he understands and when he doesn't. Usually, I fancy, he doesn't. He can only make one of those three noises in reply, and most times he doesn't do that. I trust I needn't tell you about his habits?—they are those of idiots."

"I know," said Edward very quickly. "His food interests him, I suppose."

"Yes, his food interests him, and heat and cold, and he wants to sit in the dark. I think that is about all. Oh, and I fear I must add, he likes the doctor to come —daily."

Edward's face changed. "That is the most remarkable fact you have told me as yet!"

"Why?"

"You are sure he wants the doctor—as doctor?"

"Oh yes—he won't see strangers, screams—but he cries, if the doctor hasn't been. It's—it's even very trying for the doctor."

"Then why, if I may ask, do not you, who are doubtless rich, have a doctor living with him?"

"Because, if we do, he won't see him after a time. I fancy he then confuses him—excuse me—with a strange servant."

Edward sat thinking.

"Why do you consider that so important?" asked Kenneth, watching his face.

"I am hardly able yet to discuss the case," replied Edward.

"Yes, you are! Look here; I've been discussing a lot of it. You must make allowances for me. I've got it on the brain, rather. We've been to all sorts of places and—well, now, here we are with Charcot. He's a big man, isn't he, Charcot?"

"The biggest living," answered Edward fervently, "for this sort of thing."

"But it's—it's—I don't want to explain, but you can understand what it means being boxed up here in this Maison de Santé all day. And here you are, after the last man, speaking English and—and—well, you're a God-send. The word's out, and you'll forgive a man who—I say, why does it matter so much, that James cares to see the doctor?"

"If it means anything, don't you think it might mean that he—wants to get well?"

"By Jove!" cried Kenneth. "Poor chappie! Oh, I don't think that's possible! Do you think he could possibly have sense enough for that! Poor chappie!"

"I don't know. I can't say at all. He must feel conscious of being different from others."

"That is a subject we have of course always avoided. When we ask him if he is happy or unhappy, his replies are invariably dependent on some creature-comfort or discomfort of the hour."

"You have never noticed any indication of a mental mood?"

"Never."

"Nor his mother?"

"Nor his mother. She always tried to make him understand about—religion. God, you know. I cannot tell you how much she tried."

Edward laid down the remnant of his cigar. "There is no hereditary taint? You know we always ask that question now?"

The other started. His answer came very slow. "Yes, you always ask that question now. Why? Heredity can't help James."

"It is for our sakes, the sake of science. You see, we are beginning to grope after great truths, we doctors. It was about time we began. Was the taint on the mother's side?"

"I did not say there was any at all." The young Englishman's voice shook.

"No; I was only wondering if it had been on the mother's side?" The question seemed to hang in the air awaiting reply.

"I cannot tell you." Kenneth Graye got up. "I have been keeping you too long. Thanks for coming. Good night."

CHAPTER VIII.

"This latest case you describe to me, my dear boy," writes the Professor, "I must honestly confess does not attract me very much. I have never been able to take an interest in those abnormal conditions which are merely the result of anatomical defects. All disease finds its source either in misconstruction or in microbic infection —if I live as long as Laura has promised me, I am confident I shall see this novel truth recognised by the whole world. For me there exists no doubt that a microbe of madness will be discovered in the not very distant future—may you be its discoverer!—but idiocy is simply bad building, and it seems to me there remains no more to be said." To this letter the Baroness added a postscript, admonishing Edward to be sure and tell her whether the idiot's head went up at the back in a peak. The postscript caused Edward to shout with laughter in his little Paris bedroom, for uncle Frank's bald cranium arose at once before his mental view.

But his father's verdict depressed him greatly, for it coincided too painfully with his own. He could do nothing for James Graye. Every afternoon, unwillingly,

he now took the train out to Auteuil, and by doing so earned, presumably, twenty-five francs. It was the first money he had ever earned, and the thought of it made him flush up, at night, in bed, as if he were a swindler. Only, swindlers don't blush. When he definitely resolved to stick to his father's profession, he had also decided to follow it in his father's way. Scientific research was to be his object only. "I nowise object," said the Professor, drawing a deep breath with both his lungs, "to the money-making of a Postle or a Longman. Their trade is as strictly honourable as any other man's. But it is not the lifework of a Baron Lisse." Edward, hot and cold, had at last ventured to tell his chief that he felt he was doing nothing for the patient. "When you are as old as I am," replied the illustrious doctor, smiling, "you will wait till the patient discovers that!"

Kenneth implored him not to discontinue his visits.

"Good heavens!" he cried, "can't you consider *me?* I hadn't a soul to speak to till you came along. I'm locked up here with—with James——" He broke off. "Yes, I've been to the Embassy, and I know one or two people slightly, but I don't care, as a matter of fact, to leave James so long alone, and I can't ask anyone *here!* The only one that comes is Miss MacClachlin."

"Miss——?"

"MacClachlin. She's Scotch, you know, like us. We're Scotch. Miss MacClachlin's an enormously rich

old spinster, with a beautiful place in Aberdeenshire, which she's left to come and work among the butcher-boys at La Villette. Kindness to animals is her especial fad. She's got a Guild of Mercy at the Abattoirs. She don't know any French, but she does a lot of good. Fact is, she's overworked herself among her butchers, and so she's come out here to Auteuil for a few douches. You're bound to meet her in this room some day."

As Edward did, shortly after. Miss MacClachlin could only have been called "old" by unthinkingly cruel young bachelordom. She was probably little over thirty-five, but then Kenneth was under thirty. "My dear young friend," she had called him at first, and in so far she herself was to blame for his estimate. More recently she had dropped the "young."

She was stout, brisk, and pleasant-looking, with cheerful black eyes that said "I want to help somebody," and a double chin that said "I can."

"I am worn out with getting up my Sheep-feast," she was saying to Kenneth, "my *Fate de Moo-tongs!*" Both young men expressed courteous interest.

"Oh, I can't tell you all about it. And, besides, of course, you wouldn't really care. But it's my League, you know"—she nodded to Edward—"I call them the *Chevaliers de Bétail,* instead of *Bataille:* it's pronounced just the same, and the French are so chivalrous: they like that! Our motto is *'Miséricorde aux Moutons,'*

'Mercy to the Muttons,' you know," she laughed. "But, oh, you can't think how cruel they are to the poor dumb beasties. Well, not exactly dumb: I wish they were." She stopped abruptly and turned her quick eyes on Edward. "Have you ever gone into the question of the Siegmund mask?"

"I fear not," said Edward.

She flung up her eyebrows. "There's a lot for you to learn yet, I can see. I wonder if you ever knew——" She faced round to Kenneth. "Do *you* know, my dear friend, that our Congress on International Cattle-Transport is to come off, in this city, next month?"

"Don't ask me," answered Kenneth.

She now threw up her hands. "Nothing astonishes me so much as to realise constantly in what separate circles we all trot our little day! Mine at least is a wide one, I am glad to say."

"And mine is a very narrow one," said Kenneth.

His tone made her veer round hastily to Edward, and began speaking faster than ever.

"You must let me send you a few numbers of our paper, *The Cry of the Cow*. I dare say you think it sounds silly, but we are doing a good work: I can assure you it is a good work. In our parliament—and, really, this must be said for our nation, that we *are* foremost in philanthropic effort abroad—a question is to be asked next week about the freezing of live sheep

from Australia. It appears that, *en route,* some of the sheep came unfrozen, and——" She shuddered. "But, I forgot: you are a doctor, and a foreign doctor. Forgive my speaking plainly, but how can I ask pity for animals from a man who approves of, who practises vivisection!" She repeated in genuine horror, "who practises vivisection," and she tried to draw back her skirt, unnoticed, from contact with Edward's boot.

"Oh, come now," put in Kenneth," I'm sure he don't like more vivisection than he can help."

"What do you mean by that, my dear friend? If you had studied the subject at all, you would know that vivisection is not a help of any kind, but a positive hindrance to research. That has been demonstrated a hundred times. I was reading only the other day in the *Anti-Vivisectionist* a most awful account—oh, too dreadful!—of horrible experiments by some fearful Dutch professor, to determine the influence of the water drunk by cows on their milk."

Edward gazed at the ceiling.

"But that's very important, surely," said Kenneth.

"Of course it is," replied the lady sarcastically. "That's how all you men speak when you don't take in the *Anti-Vivisectionist.* Unfortunately we don't drink the milk of the vivisected rabbits as a rule. I suppose the professor does."

Edward stared at the ceiling.

"That accounts for his brains, the idiot."

"Do you know about his experiments?" asked Kenneth of Edward.

"The world-renowned idiot," persisted Miss MacClachlin.

"You are speaking of my father," said Edward. He had turned rather green, but he had been telling himself for the last minute that a woman cannot insult a man in matters of this kind.

"I am sorry," said Miss MacClachlin promptly, "that I was speaking of your father. I cannot say I am sorry I spoke. When I used that word, I used it theoretically, seeing the gentleman is unknown to me."

"Yes," said Edward, "a practical idiot is a very different thing from my father."

"Good Lord!" said Kenneth Graye.

"You must forgive me. I have a warm heart, and I see a lot of torture, and—no, I cannot say a good word for vivisection."

"I wish to God it were not necessary," answered Edward with fervour. "My father is one of the gentlest, and kindest, and humblest of men."

"And a great noble in his own country, according to the newspaper," remarked Miss MacClachlin, in eager search of something pleasant to say. "I remember it struck me as so odd, and the editor also, that a great noble should vivisectionise rabbits! I forget his title."

Edward nearly laughed. "My father's name is Baron Lisse."

"Hereditary, I presume?" said Miss MacClachlin.

Edward kept back his laughter no longer. "I'm afraid we look upon these matters from a very different point of view. In my country we *never* reward intellect with a title of nobility. It seems so incongruous."

"*We* do," said incisive Miss MacClachlin, "but we like the hereditary ones best." She took out her watch and whisked round again to Kenneth. "And how is Sir James?"

"You promised last week not to ask me that question again," replied Graye. "There's nothing to tell about James."

"I promised, and, like the sensible woman I am, I break my promise. I have reflected a great deal on the subject, and I now feel sure you are quite wrong in your treatment of your poor nephew. I am glad to be able to say so in the presence of his doctor. Yes, yes, my dear Mr. Graye, you must not mind my speaking out. What Sir James needs—what every sentient creature needs—is an interest. A human interest. Human sympathy with something. It isn't in him, you say? It's in every living creature. As a child, I had a toad——"

At this moment a tall female figure appeared on the *perron* in front of the closed French window. It was lean and bony under its flaring garments, and its long

swarthy countenance sported a moustache. In its arms it hugged, awkwardly battling against its bosom, a sprawling, kicking, very nearly victorious lamb. Miss MacClachlin motioned it eagerly away, but the figure fell forward, lamb and all, in a loud thump against the casement.

"It's my maid," said the Scotch lady coolly to Edward. "She's never punctual except when I shouldn't mind her being late. I timed her exactly to follow me in ten minutes, but I lost five talking to you. My life, as Mr. Graye knows, is a railway time-table, and I fine myself, like they do the engine-drivers, if I am two minutes late. I recommend the system to you: it lengthens your life out wonderfully."

"It must make you feel like a live Bradshaw," said Kenneth.

"Order, my dear friend, is Heaven's first law." Another fall against the window.

"Or like Clapham Junction with the signalman gone mad," continued Kenneth, lifting the latch and letting in, with a certain precipitation, the maid and the lamb. The former immediately dropped the latter, and Kenneth flung-to the window with a precipitancy greater still.

"You are a full minute too early, Hortense," said Miss MacClachlin; "but never mind!"

"The dear lamb—it has eaten all my ribbons," replied the maid. And indeed a white and pink ruche

she wore, very showy, presented a piteously bedraggled appearance.

"I will give you new ones, and—nicer." (The maid pulled a face.) "Could you catch it, Mr. Graye? I have brought it for poor dear Sir James. No; now listen to me—listen now, doctor: it is such a touching story."—The lamb was located on the hearthrug, where Kenneth held it down: it wore a white and blue sash round its neck, whereon glittered golden the letters "M. M." It looked nervous.—"A couple of weeks ago I told my butcher-boys at La Villette about your nephew, and how rich he was, and how lonesome, and how sad—*tout soûl,* eh, Hortense?—and none of them laughed, though Hortense says I told them poor Sir James was always drunk. And yesterday three of the very nicest—there are nearly two hundred, and there ought to be ten times as many—brought me this little lamb, that they'd spent their own sous on buying for the *pover milor anglais qui est toujours—soûl.* There, I said it right this time, did I not, Hortense?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle," said the maid, with a sneer in her eyes.

"And I told them I would bring it myself. You see the 'M. M.' on the sash, doctor—it doesn't mean Maria MacClachlin, it's the badge of our League. And now, Mr. Graye, you must let me present the little dear to Sir James myself, so that I may tell my *bushays* all about it.

You will see what a wonderful effect it'll have on him—probably—the having something to love."

"Impossible!" cried Kenneth, from the floor. He held the animal firmly, but his voice shook with excitement. "Doctor, do please explain to this lady how absolutely impossible it is that she should see Sir James Graye."

"Doctor, he is surely mistaken! He must be mistaken!" Miss MacClachlin appealed to Edward. "Human sympathy——" The lamb squeaked, under Kenneth's pressure: he loosened his hold suddenly, with the compunction of a kind-hearted man, lost his balance, half-kneeling on the hearthrug, caught at the escaping quadruped, and banged, with it in his arms, against the door to the inner chamber, as Edward stood explaining to Miss MacClachlin that, really, her request was ungrantable.

"And what am I to say to my *garsongs?*" demanded the lady indignantly.

The man Barton had opened the door.

"Did you knock, Mr. Graye?" he asked.

The lamb leaped, for escape, between his legs, almost tumbling him over, and disappeared into the darkness beyond.

The yells that arose in the unseen distance were so appalling that they struck terror to even Miss MacClachlin's sturdy soul. The idiot's cries were not like those of a human being: they resembled more the shriek of animals in distress, of horses, for instance, caught in

a fire. His uncle and the doctor now simultaneously rushed to his assistance. The maid backed to the closed window with *"Jésus, Maria's!* The light flooding in through the still open door showed the two indistinct figures in the background: the vague mass of the frightened animal, a dull grey against the curtains, shaking and leaping, the other terrible shape in a corner, immovable, undistinguishable, screaming its inhuman note. The entrance of its pursuers sent the trembling beast off wildly towards the corner. The idiot, who could use his arms with less difficulty than his legs, flung, shrieking yet more shrilly as it came towards him, a cushion, which brought it to its knees. It tried to rise, caught its legs in the ribbons, fell heavily, and rose with a foreleg hanging broken.

"Yes, the joint is broken," said Edward, with the throbbing little beast on his lap. "We had better show Sir James," he added, "what it was that frightened him." For in spite of all his uncle's soothing, the idiot continued to scream. The doctor had already obtained a certain influence over the lad. He ordered the curtains to be drawn aside for the nonce.

"It is a lamb—look!" he said. "Its leg is broken. It can't walk, well—like you."

Sir James stopped screaming, and began to cry.

"Should you like me to try and mend its leg?"

The boy gave his satisfied grunt.

Kenneth Graye began assuring Miss MacClachlin that numberless attempts had already been made to interest his nephew in pets.

"The result has invariably been the same," he said: "he won't have them near him at any price. He cries till we take them away."

"Perhaps you should have persevered," said Miss MacClachlin, but she added contritely, "I think I could help Dr. Lisse about the splints." And indeed she did, deftly.

When she took her leave, the lamb, beautifully bandaged, was slumbering on Sir James's big chair. He had managed to explain that he wanted it. No one, as yet, understood why.

CHAPTER IX.

"AHA!" said Miss MacClachlin, promenading about her chamber in the main pavilion of the "Etablissement Ducrot." "Aha! and aha! and aha! So he sits all day with the lamb in his lap, does he? We shall see who is right, Hortense—we shall see!"

"Mademoiselle has always right," said the waiting-woman.

Miss MacClachlin checked her walk and eyed her maid. The Scotch lady was a person of commanding and substantial presence, distinguished-looking and ever admirably apparelled. "I come to Paris," she used to say, "for two things I can never get at home, clothes and converts. At home every one is pious and ill-dressed." Now she looked at her flaunting tire-woman, the lean, long figure, all black frizzle and red furbelow, and the tire-woman quailed beneath her glance. For the glance spake: "You would mock me," and the woman's eyes unwillingly confessed: "I cry grace."

Aloud Miss MacClachlin remarked: "In English we say 'is right.' When I engaged you at the Bureau de

Placement, Hortense, you were warranted to speak English like a native."

"A native; it is English for an oyster," replied Hortense demurely, "and to speak like an oyster, in French, it means to speak like a fool."

Miss MacClachlin laughed grimly. "You are far from a fool," she said, "that is what I esteem in you. So you needn't always make the same mistakes over and over again."

The maid dropped her eyes to the floor. "To make the same mistakes," she said, "is so much easier than to make new ones. Mistakes are like sins. Mademoiselle also will commit the same. Mistakes, I mean, of course."

"You are quite unreasonable!" cried Miss MacClachlin angrily. "When the Bureau replied to my advertisement, they knew I had expressly asked for a female who could speak both languages fluently. These were my very words: 'A respectable French female acquainted with colloquial English and the *argot* and habits of the Paris slums.'"

"Mademoiselle demanded a good deal," said Hortense. "It is all obtainable—but the 'respectable'; *there* was the *accroc*. However, Mademoiselle got even her. Even the 'habits of the slums' did Mademoiselle get. These I know. From my poor sister, who did *mal tourner*." Hortense produced a pocket-handkerchief, and, behind it, winked her eye.

Miss MacClachlin felt the wink. She felt it all along, all day; and, as an entirely new experience of maid-servants, or of women, it was a terrible trial to her. Nobody winked near Miss MacClachlin at Rowangowan Hall.

"As you allude to the subject, let us speak of it, once for all," she said nervously—and, really, no other subject could have made Miss MacClachlin nervous. "You were to know about my butcher-boys, so you could translate between me and them: you were very expensive on that account. 'But,' I said, 'under no circumstances may she flirt with them.' 'That will be ten francs extra, then,' said the Madame of the Bureau. I agreed to the ten francs."

"Surely I have kept to my part of the engagement," cried the maid, offended.

"I am by no means certain about the ten francs," said Miss MacClachlin.

"Twice a week I translate for Mademoiselle at the preachings."

"They are not preachings—lectures, Hortense."

"Lectures?" repeated Hortense, translating into her own language. "Would they were. Mademoiselle is of a fluency in her colloquials! Often my brain reels, as I seek for the *argot!* Only last night when Mademoiselle exclaimed, 'Marry, come up!'—how was I, a poor

Frenchwoman, to know that it did not mean, '*Venez m'épouser!*' "

"It was part of a quotation! you might have guessed——"

"But there is no cause to feel annoyed! Mademoiselle obtained what we call a *succès fou!* All the three hundred of her audience, like a man, they cried back: '*Volontiers!*' "

"Hortense," said Miss MacClachlin, turning in desperation, "I believe you are simply *canaille!*"

"Ah, Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle has no idea of the French words she uses! It is good she has a wise one to control her slang. Mademoiselle would say I am faithful as a dog!" The woman's face expressed no feeling, for the berth was an incredibly good one, and she intended to stick to it.

"I don't believe you're respectable a bit." Miss MacClachlin sat down, square, in her handsome tea-gown, her cheeks a faint pink.

"Did a French mistress so speak toward the end of the month," replied Hortense, with sudden asperity, "I should say it was done to deprive me of my extra. But the English, I know, are not like that; they are not *regardant.*"

"How often must I tell you I am Scotch?"

"The distinction, Mademoiselle, whatever it may mean, does not cross the Channel. It is, I doubt not,

to the advantage of the Scots." Miss MacClachlin smiled, despite herself, and, feeling her hopeless dependence on this red-ribboned, black-souled creature for her charitable work at La Villette, she proceeded to pay, in full, the month's wages, and even added a golden Napoleon, because Hortense was teaching a brute of a shock-headed young butcher to read.

As the maid gathered up her money, furtively clicking the gold pieces on the table to make sure they were genuine, Edward Lisse was announced. "You sent for me, Mademoiselle?" he began.

"Yes, I ventured to do so. We have a friend in common in this great city; that must be my excuse."

"She is charming," thought Edward. After all, a man always thinks a woman charming, when she is kindly, and pleasant-looking, and well-dressed.

"I mean Mr. Graye," she continued. "Of course you like him? Everybody must."

"I wish Sir James did," said Edward. "But, as far as we can make out, he cares for nobody."

"Except you."

"That is one of those sudden imbecile fancies which don't count. He seems to have got some sort of idea into his head that I shall do him good. But it is almost impossible to know what he thinks." Miss MacClachlin shuddered. "Don't let's talk about Sir James," she said. "My nerves are the best in Scotland (which is saying a

good deal), but I shall never forget those yells! However, it is nonsense my saying this"—she braced herself —"for Sir James is what I asked you to come and talk about, unless professional etiquette forbids."

"That depends," said Edward. He cast a glance round the room: prominent, on a stand, was a photograph of a great house among woods, against a river-bank. Quick Miss MacClachlin followed the glance. "This is my little holiday," she said, "with Dr. Ducrot. I believe in his douches. To-morrow I go back to Belleville: you must come and see me there some day among my butchers. But now, as for this professional etiquette, you must forgive me if I sin against it. It is a mystery of the priesthood, a code all to itself. No outside mortals can fathom it."

"I'm afraid I've never learned it, then," said Edward.

She laughed; then, suddenly grave: "I ought to know about it," she said, "for it killed my nearest relation." Edward looked polite inquiry. "I lived with an old aunt, yonder!" she nodded her head in the direction of the photograph. "She was seized with a hemorrhage, and we sent telegrams for a professor both to Edinburgh and to Aberdeen. Two arrived by the same train, but one of them treats hemorrhage with cold water and the other foments, so they couldn't both undertake the case. The question of professional etiquette was, which had been called in first, the Edinburgh man who had

first got his telegram or the Aberdeen man to whom the first telegram had been sent. While they were bowing to each other over it in the drawing-room, my aunt bled to death."

Edward expressed proper sympathy.

"I was deeply thankful to be assured afterwards," said Miss MacClachlin, "that the cold water man would have had the first claim."

"Why, may I ask?"

"My aunt was of the old school. She had a rooted aversion to cold water." This communication was followed by a pause of solemn reflection. Then the lady resumed: "I am very anxious to know whether you think that poor idiot will ever recover the use of his reason?"

"You put me the very question I am unable to answer," replied Edward in a suddenly agitated voice. His tone caused Miss MacClachlin also to lose control over herself.

"What!" she exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that that—*that*——"

"I am studying Sir James Graye. I imagine—I am beginning to think—Miss MacClachlin, you must give me leave to say no more."

"Incredible!" said Miss MacClachlin, drawing a deep breath. "I have one other question to which you will hardly object. Independently of his mental condition,

is there anything in his constitution which would—preclude his living to be an old man?"

"In his physical constitution, no."

"No?" she turned to him excitedly. "I had thought all such idiots as *that* were—were constitutionally defective and died young?"

"You were mistaken." A wonder crossed Edward's mind whether Maria MacClachlin had hoped to marry "Sir Kenneth." For he had found out about these British rules of inheritance now.

"Merciful God!" said Miss MacClachlin under her breath. "Poor Kenneth Graye! You will tell me next," she added presently, "that this thing will marry and get children."

"Even that is not unthinkable," replied Edward bitterly, "in an age of shameless adoration of the dollar!" He checked himself. "I know only one rule of professional etiquette," he said, "but that is discretion." He rose to depart.

Miss MacClachlin rose also.

"You have done me a very great service," she said. "You have given me exactly the information I required. One word more. You have never noticed anything peculiar about Mr. Graye?"

"Peculiar? No. What do you mean?"

"You have seen a great deal of him lately, and

under these trying circumstances. He has never struck you as in any way abnormal?"

"Abnormal? No, of course not. No, indeed. Except that he is an abnormally nice man."

"I thoroughly agree with you," said Maria MacClachlin heartily.

CHAPTER X.

"I HAVE brought the Christmas parcel for Mademoiselle," said Hortense.

Miss MacClachlin, who had sat in a reverie since Edward's departure, turned a far-away look towards the corded box.

"It is from Scotland," added Hortense.

"From home!" cried Maria MacClachlin.

"Ah! that is the note I heard in Mademoiselle's voice when the butcher-boy asked whether she would much love him to become a Protestant."

"But you know that I asked you to tell him that I would still much rather have him not tie the calves' legs so tight. I wonder who could send me anything from home."

"At the douane they nearly stopped it, for it appears that it is forbidden. Almost everything, as Mademoiselle knows, is forbidden at the douane. It is terrible there. No foreigners should send parcels to Paris." Meanwhile the maid was busy unfastening, while her mistress watched with irresistible curiosity.

"I said that Mademoiselle was connected with the Embassy," remarked the maid.

"Hortense!"

"Not that they believed me!" She lifted out, from many wrappings, a dirty discoloured linen bag, and, untying it, disclosed an enormous black ball.

"They said it was a bomb," announced Hortense, standing away from it.

"A plum-pudding!" cried Miss MacClachlin, her eyes moistening. "A plum-pudding from home!"

"They wanted to cut it open!" continued Hortense, "but the Brigadier was afraid of breaking his sword. They passed it at last as *Matériel de construction*—how say you in English?—building material!" Hortense possessed a positive genius for the enjoyment of freshly made lies. In fact it was her great life-happiness. It possessed her, to speak more correctly, like dram-drinking.

"Nannie must have made it," said Maria MacClachlin, still in the same thrilled voice. "My old nurse. And sent it over here, just in time for Christmas Eve, from Rowangowan."

"And Mademoiselle's butcher-boys, that have their entertainment to-morrow, they can eat it—they will not die!"

"No—no foreigner shall touch that pudding!" Miss MacClachlin stretched out her hand as if to protect it. "Not even you, Hortense!"

"I thank Heaven, I love life," replied the maid; "yet,

presumably, if Mademoiselle eat it all herself, it will first need cooking—a little less—hard?"

"It is boiled; it only wants warming," said Miss MacClachlin humbly. "Poor old Nannie! Dear thing!"

"I will ask the chef then here, and Mademoiselle can have it all by herself for her supper——"

Maria MacClachlin rose and motioned this strange handmaiden away. With her own hands she packed the ball into the box again, and, lifting it on high as a symbol or an offertory, carried it downstairs, through the cold December night, across the gardens.

"Let me in, Barton," she said on the steps of the villa. "This isn't British soil, but it's as near to it as I can get."

"God bless my soul, Miss!" said Barton.

"We all need that, Barton," replied Maria MacClachlin. "And never more than on Christmas Eve."

Kenneth Graye rose in astonishment as the little pudding procession entered the sitting-room.

"You're not over-cheerful here," said Maria, glancing round, "not a sprig of holly, or——"

"H'm," said Barton.

"Mistletoe," continued Miss MacClachlin stoutly. She placed the pudding on the table.

"Whom should I have it for?" asked Kenneth. "We have never been able to make my nephew see the difference between his mother and—God."

"Begging your pardon, Mr. Graye," put in Barton, who was a loquacious servant, "perhaps there wasn't so very much."

"My old nurse has sent me this, made with her own hands. You've got a kitchen in this house, haven't you? It seemed like an insult to Nannie to let it go down into that French basement with a woman like Hortense." She gazed down upon her pudding. "It's choke full of love," she said.

A few moments later she was busy, with her mauve satin sleeves tucked up, in the dirty and disused little kitchen, under a flaring gas-lamp. Barton had been sent back to his charge, with many "Really, Mr. Graye, you must allow me's."

Kenneth was down on the moist flags, blowing with a bellows at the range. When the pudding had been lifted smoking on its platter she turned to her helpmate, hot and triumphant.

"I am a teetotaller," she said, "but I fear you have brandy in the house."

"I fear I have."

"I should like to light up my pudding, please."

It flamed gloriously in the little sitting-room. "For auld lang syne," said Maria MacClachlin, nibbling a piece of the non-brandied inside, and bestowing a plentiful helping on Kenneth.

"He'd eat the whole of it, if we'd let him," replied

the latter to her question anent his nephew. "James's appetite is voracious."

She leant back in her chair, looking at the young man opposite.

"Dr. Lisse says there is no reason," she said slowly, "why he shouldn't live to be quite an old man."

He laid down the fork he had been toying with. She had no idea how hard she had hit him with the one truth into which he had, purposely, never inquired.

"How odd that we should be sitting here together, like this, on Christmas Eve, eating Nannie's plum-pudding! It makes old friends of us. I wish, Mr. Graye, I could help you with—with the heavier side of your life."

"There are few heavier things in life than plum-pudding," said Kenneth, laying down his fork again.

"How cruel of you to say that! But your digestion is good: you are young: you can bear trouble. You can bear even your existence, which must be such an awful thing!"

"Please don't," said Kenneth.

She bent forward, her clear eyes close to him. He sat, looking back at her, uncomfortable. When she next spoke, she said quite abruptly:

"I am thirty-five."

He resolved to eat more plum-pudding rather than sit staring thus.

"It is the bigger part of a life," she added.

"Half way, says Dante," was his reply.

"My dear friend, let me share your burden. You can't possibly go on like this, through the coming years, alone!"

He wondered was the pudding choking him—does plum-pudding turn a dark skin red?

"To hear Dr. Lisse talk, Sir James will survive you!" Maria hastened on. "Only think what that means! Had he told me there was any chance of deliverance I should never—believe me, dear friend—I should never have dared to speak! But now—now! Let me share your work, and you mine! There are moments when my butcher-boys certainly need a man: there must be moments when your nephew would be all the better for a woman's help! I have been more successful than you had expected, already, with the lamb!"

"True," said Kenneth.

"Who knows what I might do for him? And you, you could teach my bushays golf!"

"But I hardly understand——"

"Yes, you do. I am asking you to marry me. I realise that you cannot offer yourself to any woman. You have nothing to give. You cannot propose to a girl to share your lifelong watch over this idiot. But a woman, if she have no false shame, can say: I am willing. And I do!" She stood up before him, handsome

in her enthusiasm. "Let me help you! A life of trouble is so terrible to bear alone!"

"You are far too good, far too kind," he answered, much distressed. "I could not accept such a sacrifice."

"No sacrifice, but a very real pleasure," she said.

"You have no idea of James's condition."

"More, perhaps, than you think. Dr. Lisse tells me that possibly in the future—perhaps twenty years hence—he may recover—and marry!"

"Impossible!" Kenneth clutched at the table—the room seemed to go round.

"Surely he has told you these things, sooner than me? Am I doing wrong in repeating them? Oh, dear Mr. Graye, I am only trying to convince you! It isn't pleasant for a woman, nor easy, even when she speaks because she knows the man can't. Why should your whole, whole life be ruined? You've only one. It was cruel and selfish of your sister-in-law——"

"Hush! Hush!"

"You're to live on like this till you're an old man, and then, perhaps, the idiot——"

"For God's sake, hush!"

"I don't want to mention it." Her voice had grown calm again. "But—there's Rowangowan. It's far too much for a woman. It wants a man to look after it quite as much as my bushays——"

"You do me far too much honour. Any man would be more than proud. But—I shall never marry."

"I know even why you say that."

He stuttered in the greatest agitation.

"No, you don't. No, you don't."

She looked at him serenely.

"I do. And because I knew, I came here to you thus, on this last day before my return to Belleville, and —offered myself to be your wife."

"You do not know. You cannot mean what you are saying. I——"

"I know."

"If you knew, you would be aware that you are proposing to me to do a wicked thing."

"A wicked thing? No, my friend. Ah, the folly of these doctors! God does not require us to be wise beyond our strength." He had covered his face with one hand. There was silence between them till she said: "You are right not to do this thing because I proposed it. Quite right. But if ever, at any time, in the future, it should be possible for you—or you should wish to—to ask a woman to—a younger girl, a girl you love—if I am anywhere near, come to me, and we, we till talk it over. Wicked! Ah, no! Then God were wicked! Ah, what fools these doctors are! Good night!"

And, leaving her big pudding in the middle of the table, she turned to go softly from the room. But, half-

way, she looked at him and came back. "No, no," she said, as if answering him, "I am to blame, I only. I am a meddlesome, pretentious old maid. I can't see misery anywhere without fancying that I am specially deputed by Providence to cure it. *Miséricorde aux moutons!* And you are by no means a 'mouton,' far from it, my dear friend. You must still allow me to call you that."

"I never had a better friend; but I cannot marry."

"It is that wicked, well-meant talk of yours which has led me astray. Better you, Maria, than nobody, I said to myself. But now mark my words—when you love a young girl who loves you, you will marry her, or you will be a wickeder man than I gave you credit for."

A cry resounded from the inner room.

"That!" he said passionately. "That!—and myself."

"It isn't much to offer," she answered with a woe-begone smile, "and so, I suppose, the circumstances emboldened me. But, little as it is, never mind——" She closed the door. "It was too good," she continued aloud to herself in the hall, "for—don't talk about sacrificing your life, you silly fool!—for you, Maria MacClachlin!"

CHAPTER XI.

NEXT day being Christmas day, Edward brought his patient a box of dried fruits. The patient grunted approval.

"It does seem a pity, poor wretch," says Barton, the servant, "that he ain't allowed to eat hisself to death in one day, and have done with it!"

"One of my troubles," says Kenneth, "is that I have to let Barton talk, or he couldn't stand the strain."

"I wish you the blessings of Christmas, as we say in my country," remarked Edward to Kenneth. The young men, in their daily intercourse, had conceived a sincere liking for one another. To Kenneth, especially, the new doctor's personality was an ever-increasing relief.

"Thanks. I don't understand you're not there," replied Kenneth. "What made you stay here?"

"The lamb's splints have got to be taken off to-day," said Edward, smiling.

"Look here, Lisse, you're beginning to devote yourself too entirely to James. One man's enough for that sort of thing."

"It isn't that only," said honest Edward at once.

"I'm engaged to be married, and my parents don't approve."

"Not an unusual state of affairs in any country, even when the lady is quite eligible."

"She isn't so particularly eligible from their point of view," answered Edward, delighted to talk on, now the subject had at last been started, "rather outside their ideas, you know. No money and no name to speak of. But apart from that, Graye, she's—oh, she's the loveliest creature in the world!"

"Show me her portrait," said the sympathetic Graye. Edward eagerly complied.

"Yes," said Graye, giving it back to him. Then, as Edward waited for a little more, "Well, I think that one word says a good deal, doesn't it? When a man carries a portrait like that in his breast-pocket, he's done for, Edward Lisse."

"We correspond," said Edward, satisfied, "but I have practically undertaken not to see her during this twelvemonth of study. My father hasn't exacted a promise—that wouldn't be like him—but it's a sort of tacit understanding between us."

"She's in Holland?"

"No, at Brussels. But, under the circumstances, our family party would hardly feel as united as of yore."

"You've known her for years?"

"Seven weeks on the day I proposed," answered Edward, laughing.

"Well," remarked Kenneth Graye, "my mother always used to say the happiest matches were those between first cousins or utter strangers. I suppose a man should either marry a woman because he knows her thoroughly, or because he don't know her at all."

"What a philosopher you are!" It was Kenneth's turn to laugh.

"The very thing I am not, of course!" he said. "I am the—what d'ye call it?—impressionist, and you are the philosopher, but I never saw such a fellow as you are for discovering imaginary virtues in your friends!"

"Is philosophy a virtue?" asked Edward, rather sadly, "or is it a compromise?"

However that momentous question may be answered, it is certain that Kenneth's estimate was correct. From his cramped and clouded boyhood, with its consistent admiration of the parents he loved, as it were, over a stone wall, Edward's nature, fundamentally so reserved, and yet so downright honest, had brought away an eager though unconscious appreciation of the good qualities in people widely different from himself. In how far does that most rare objectivity of sympathy account for his early success with the mentally miserable, the morally misbegotten? Most of us are drawn to others by reflections of what is best or worst in our own natures.

Edward's upgrowing must have led him either to ignore goodness altogether, or to see it wherever it lay hid.

"No, no: you are a philosopher," persisted Edward, "I am simply a scientist. Shall we go and take off the splints?"

"One moment!" Kenneth barred the door. "Did you really tell Miss MacClachlin that James might marry some day?"

"I said the thing was not unthinkable. In our age, as the last years have shown us, there are women would marry a hog, if the law would allow them, provided the sty was paved with gold."

"But, speaking seriously, you told her he might get *better?* What made you speak like that? No one has ever made him better, in any way, before!" Kenneth Graye's voice was low with intensity: it demanded a reply.

"I believe—I have a faint hope—I think there is just a chance of doing him a great deal of good." Lisse walked away to the window and spoke fast, looking out. "It looks like fate, your insisting on my speaking to-day. Do you believe in fate? I don't. I don't know. But I know that I had come here wanting to broach the subject—not daring. Your compatriot must take the blame. And Laura—*her* name is Laura—wrote me yesterday to begin on this day. She has what you would call superstitions—presentiments. They would not do in medicine,

but they do very well in the poetry of life. See here!" —he drew a letter from his pocket—"'Why not take this day,' she writes, 'rather than another, this Feast of the New Birth for the whole world? Tell your friend of your projects. I feel confident of success.'"

"What do you propose?" asked Kenneth, still in the same voice.

Edward came and sat down by the table, on which stood all that Sir James had left of Maria MacClachlin's present.

"During these months," he said, "of close observation the impression has daily deepened upon me which I received when we first met. I am certain that, with your nephew, it is not the brain which is defective so much as the way it is placed."

"But what does that mean?" cried Kenneth.

"It means that the brain is there, but he cannot use it. In the commonest forms of idiocy the brain is not developed at all—as if you had a stump instead of a hand, you know. But here the complete hand is tied up, as it were, compressed by the cranium, but the hand is there. Not like scissors with the rivet out, so to speak, but like scissors in a sheath."

"But the result is the same."

"Hitherto the result has been considered the same, but——"

"Well?"

"But I do not see why the cranium, which is visibly too small, should not be enlarged, so as to make room for the brain to expand."

"Has anything of the kind ever been attempted before?"

"No." On that word followed a moment's silence: then Edward said: "But it will be attempted some day by someone else, if not by me."

"And not on my nephew?"

"That does not depend on me. I believe it can be done. And the first idiot to whom it is done with success will thank God that he is a thinking man!"

"'With success'—there you speak the word! And the risk?"

"Is tremendous. I should have spoken much sooner but for that. The operation involves trepanning. It is a matter of life and death."

Kenneth Graye came towards Edward with such suddenness, that the latter involuntarily fell back.

"You do not know what you are doing or saying," cried Kenneth: "you tell me my nephew will live to be an old man, and then you bid me—*me*—imperil his days!"

"Live like this—if you call it life—in this state!"

"Say what you will, but not *me*—me! If you had spoken thus to his mother!—but I—don't you understand? Sir James Graye is rich: he is a great landed

proprietor. I am his guardian, and I am also his heir!" Kenneth stood close to Edward, with wide-open eyes. "I can't do it," he said, "I can't. I can't."

"There is no hurry," replied Edward, "we can consult others first. Of my theory I am certain. It struck me as soon as you told me that your nephew could not bear the light. I believe, moreover, he suffers, mentally, beyond our conception. It is not a question of operating on him or leaving him in peace. It is a choice between attempting to deliver him or abandoning him to his torture."

"You think he suffers torture?" cried Kenneth, in a hoarse voice.

"I think he realises, however dimly, his condition. I expect fresh proof of that to-night. Let us go to him."

The two young men passed into the inner room. Sir James lay dozing in his chair, with the lamb beside him.

"If you please, Mr. Graye," says Barton, "I have to watch that lamb most particular."

Edward carried the animal, in its straw-filled tank, to the far side of the room and began undoing its bandages. Presently he turned and called to Kenneth.

"Tell James that the leg is mended, and the lamb can skip again."

"James," said Kenneth, "the leg is mended. The lamb can skip again." No reply at first, then, very slowly, a faint little noise of approval.

"James, would you like to have it stay with you always now, and skip about the room?"

Again no answer at first. Then a very distinct note of refusal.

"Oh James, you ought to keep it. Who else will look after it! It can't skip as well as it used to do. Its leg will always be stiff." Edward had drawn nearer, leading the lamb, which stumbled and fell forward, in its painful gait. As it dragged itself close to the accustomed arm-chair, the idiot slowly stretched down his long arms towards it and gathered it up into his lap.

"You understand now," said Edward passionately to Kenneth, "why he has never wanted pets? They were always in first-rate condition when you brought them—dogs, of course, that scampered about the room. Chance has given him this wounded beast, and he'll keep him —as long as he doesn't skip too well." Kenneth was silent. "In plainer words," continued Edward, "he knows he is not like other creatures, and the thought is a constant agony to him."

"Here is Dr. Ducrot," said Kenneth; "you don't mind talking it over with him?"

"I want to talk it over with half the faculty," replied Edward. "Think what it means to me! I am planning to inflict all this suffering on a dumb, sentient creature. He can't defend himself: he can't know what I am going

to do to him, and I ask you to let me torture him like this?"

The head of the Etablissement, Ducrot, entered his wealthy patron's presence with many complimentary bows. He liked people who took the little villas. He would come to congratulate them on Christmas Day, if they were English, and again, as a Frenchman, on the *jour de l'an.*

"A merry Grease-mess," he said, and his inquisitive director's gaze wandered to the dish on the table. He was a tall, stout man, with a frockcoat buttoned tight and bulging out downwards. The glassy eyes in his red, grizzle-fringed countenance seemed always squinting to get a better view of his huge rosette of the Legion of Honour.

For reply Edward told him almost immediately of the subject that occupied their thoughts. With brief technicalities he described his great operation, an absolutely new undertaking then, although of late years it has of course been repeated with such signal success by Cremoni. Ducrot, who was a bit of an hotel-manager, but an excellent doctor all the same, listened with discriminating attention. Kenneth meanwhile proffered him the unknown delicacy, of which, being a greedy man, he partook.

"I like to examine," he said, "whatever is novel to me."

At the present hour his admiration for Edward is almost unbounded, and he has long ago forgiven Kenneth Graye.

"If only it were possible," said Dr. Ducrot, "to look inside." He sat down, contemplating regretfully the black crumbs on his plate. "A thing has happened to me this last week, *mon cher collègue,* of which I should hardly dare to speak, but that it bubbles up in my thoughts. A patient here, a bad case of neurasthenia, sent, at the repeated instigation of a friend, a curl of hair cut from the neck to a clairvoyante living at Geneva. I cut it off myself and forwarded it, to convince her of her folly. At the time she was suffering from a temporary inflammation of the throat. She knew not the name of the clairvoyante, nor the clairvoyante hers. Yesterday comes back the reply. I read it myself. 'The person to whom the hair belongs has a bad throat which will soon be better. She is very weak: that will persist.' Incredible!" He threw up one podgy hand—"I read it myself. And drugs are prescribed, harmless herbs, for the throat alleviative, for the neurasthenia absurd. And the charge is ten francs!" Again that movement of the hand, with a heavy, despondent drop. "*Cher collègue,* what are we doctors to answer? We believe in none of these things, of course, yet when they befall us? This marvellous diagnosis is a fact."

"There are more things in heaven and earth,

Horatio," began Kenneth. He caught Edward's eye: it twinkled. "I beg your pardon," cried Kenneth, "I oughn't to have said that. Any fool would have said that."

"No, no!" protested Edward. A dear figure rose up before him in a flaming tiger-skin. "Only we ought to have got on a bit since Shakespeare's time," he said, "but we haven't."

Ducrot, who didn't like being dragged out of his depth, waved his hand.

"One such strange thing happened here before," he continued, "one only. Some years ago a patient was taken suddenly dangerously ill. While we were deliberating how we could send for his wife to the other end of Paris, she knocked at the door. She said afterwards she had heard him calling her, by a pet name known to him only, thrice, half an hour ago, in her room."

"Oh, that's telepathy," said Kenneth. "Everybody nowadays believes in telepathy."

"I told Charcot of it," said the doctor, not heeding him, but addressing Edward, "I told Charcot myself!" He struck his breast and the rosette. "I, Ducrot, I vouch for the truth of it! The great man said: *'Un jour la science parlera.'*"

"It is time," said Edward. "The worst is that, like any infallible religion, she always has to admit to-morrow what she laughed at the day before. Do you

know what we have had at the Salpétrière this last week, for all the world to see? A woman who, in her magnetic trance, reads the contents of a sealed envelope placed on her brow."

"I wish such things did not happen," said Kenneth.

"Why? Because we do not understand them."

"It makes one feel as if all the world were mad." He shook himself together. "As if the sanest might be mad to-morrow."

Ducrot rose. He understood English though he did not speak it. *"Mais non, mais non,"* he said, "madness is a pathological condition of the body. It is an illness that few contract, like ataxy." He walked out, repeating this favourite sentence aloud: "It is an illness that few contract, like ataxy."

On the *perron* he made way, with a great sweep of his hat, for an unknown lady. It was a rule with him never to interfere with visitors to the villas. It amused him now to think, as he ambled off, that so beautiful a young creature should call on Kenneth Graye.

"Faut que le docteur Lisse s'en aille," he said to himself.

"Yes; it is I—Laura: I came," said the visitor, in the drawing-room doorway.

The next thing Kenneth saw was a true lovers' embrace. Explanations followed afterwards.

"Yes, I came. After I had written my letter last

night, I could not stay still. So I took this morning's train. I am come."

"But you shouldn't——"

"Fie! Do you want me to go away again?"

"No; oh no!"

"Well, then, be logical." So he kissed her again.

For Kenneth had softly closed the door on them and stood in the half-dark, gazing at his nephew. Sir James lay in the chair, as always, with the lamb cuddled close against him, his eyes staring downwards at nothing, dead-alive.

This, then, was Kenneth Graye's existence since he had been called away from the university to the dying woman's side. He had promised. "I cannot die," she had gasped in her physical agony, "until you have promised. Help me to die!" With a man of his temperament it hardly required such pressure. He leaped at the idea of succouring this most pitiable head of his race. During three years he had wandered with him from doctor to doctor, hardly letting him out of his sight. He believed that James knew him. It was certain that the boy had grieved for his mother's death—her absence, at any rate.

Kenneth did not regret or complain. He could not but comprehend that his life was one of self-sacrifice, and to some natures such subconscious conviction is a permanent happiness and reward. He had therefore gone

on unthinking, content to know that his daily task had a worthy object, not self-chosen. And who of us, still burdened by consciences, would ask more of their fate?

But now, for the first time, the dilemma of possible deliverance rose straight in his path. He could pass by it and continue as heretofore, yet never without recalling that he might have turned aside. And the turning meant, to this ward of his, certain danger, probable death. And if death, then for himself wealth and rank.

It were easy enough for him, says the healthy man, to let the consensus of doctors decide. But when you have travelled all over Europe with your hopeless and wealthy incurable, the labyrinthine opinions of the doctors leave you seeking, under the search, for your own.

Kenneth stood gazing at this human object, this sentient thing. To speak with it, reasonably, on this or any other matter, was impossible. There it lay, as it had lain for years. Possibly mournful: certainly discontented: glad of good food. A ray of late sunshine, slanting through the curtains, struck its sunken face. It moved peevishly, and grunted its irritated note. Kenneth went over and pulled the curtain.

The lamb looked up, bleated, and, falling from the knees by which it lay, ran, with its clumsy skippings, to the disappearing light. The idiot's dull gaze seemed to follow it; then suddenly Sir James broke into loud, dis-

cordant weeping. In a moment Kenneth was beside him, with words of soothing and endearment; the crying but redoubled, bearing down every attempt to reach the weeper: the man Barton came hurrying in from the passage as Kenneth put his arm round the idiot's neck.

"Oh, Sir James! Sir James!" shouted Barton. "Oh, Mr. Graye, what's the matter? I've never seen him cry like this!"

"Heaven knows what's the matter," said Kenneth Graye. "I have, once before, three days after his mother died."

The idiot filled the house with his hysterical lamentations, terrible to hear. They brought Lisse from the adjoining room, while Laura hung trembling in the doorway.

"Don't! Don't!" murmured the doctor in a strain of supplication, and, after some moments, "Silence!" in stern snaps of command. The idiot heard nothing, shrieking miserably, on and on. It was then that the girl knelt, shrinking beside him, and passed her hands softly, persistently over his face. He flung it away from her at first, weeping as a human dog might weep in the utter abandonment of a howling sorrow, but; as her own hands steadied, by a mighty effort of self-control she drew him gently against the cushions and lulled him there very, very slowly, in rhythmic rise and fall of recurrent movement, till his shrieks died, brokenly, down

to sobs, and his eyelids drooped, with the great tears oozing under them, and gradually, in lessening switches and gasps, he sank to a silent rest. Then she rose, and all four stood looking at him. He was asleep.

"He very seldom cries at all," said Kenneth, "and never like this. Except several days after his mother's death, when he realised, I have always supposed, that she was gone."

"If you please, Mr. Graye," suggested Barton, "I fancy the lamb makes Sir James unhappy."

"He loves it because it is lame," said Edward, "and he cries because he has lamed it."

"By Jove, I believe you are right. If only, as Ducrot said, you could look inside him," cried Kenneth, "and find out whether he ought to be operated on!"

"Shall I try to look inside him?" said Laura.

The men stared at her.

"Cut off some of his hair?" stammered Kenneth, "like Dr. Ducrot."

"Edward,"—she spoke to her lover only,—"you haven't told me what this operation is: don't! I wanted to come this morning. Call it a fancy, a feeling: I don't claim a higher name. I don't understand about these things, myself. But one thing I have discovered since I was at Brussels—by accident—I am what they call a clairvoyante, not a very good one, but still you might try. Put me to sleep, Edward! Hypnotise me, as they

do at the Salpétrière!" In her voice was such a mingling of entreaty and counsel that he could not resist her. He drew her to the bright lamp outside, and a few moments later he laid her, in her trance, beside the sleeping boy. Then, with a shudder he will never forget, he drew the idiot's fingers within her slender hands.

Then Kenneth and he waited in silence. Barton tried in vain to peep through the keyhole.

"It may be—it may be God's answer," whispered Edward under his breath.

As if she had heard him, the sleeping woman began to speak. In slow stammering, at first, then, almost imperceptibly, with increasing assurance: "Oh, the pain—the pain," she said. Her own eyebrows contracted over the fast closed eyes. "The pain!" She moved restlessly, and lapsed into silence. Edward bent over her; with all the experience he had acquired at the great hospital he deepened the sleep from which she was manifestly striving to awake. "Don't! you hurt me!" The lover's heart stood still. "Take away the light!" she resumed immediately, in the same constrained voice, "it hurts my eyes. Such a heavy, pressing pain! My head! The back of the head! It presses, presses, presses! Do you want me to speak, Edward? How can I speak, or think, when it presses so? If it would leave off pressing I think I could—oh don't—don't any more!—it hurts me so!" She fetched a deep sigh, and lay struggling

spasmodically—then she grew utterly still. In the darkness Kenneth put out his hand and clutched Edward's, dropped it, and turned away.

In the darkness Edward remained seated, motionless, by the two softly breathing forms. A faint grey mist of light spread through the chink of the door which Kenneth had left ajar, as he wandered away into the early December night. The silvery shadow lay, indistinct, about the sleepers, wrapt in gloom. When, at last, Edward stirred, it was to unclose the touch of those folded hands. He sat gazing at them, as they lay there together, his beautiful Laura and—he.

To Edward Lisse, having the medical instinct grown strong within him and increasingly blended with his earliest passion of pity, to Edward Lisse this creature was, primarily, not an object of repulsion, but of resolute hope. The weariness, and worse, of daily tending fell to others: ere the doctor made his appearance the patient had always been more or less tidied, pulled together, and set up. And to this doctor the sad-faced, irresponsive unfortunate had taken, as far as in him seemed to be—less ostentatiously than any dog would, that opens attentive eyes and wags a welcoming tail. But Barton, who somehow divined intangible phases by intuitions that he could not enucleate, maintained that Edward's personality, as distinguishable from his "doctordom," was agreeable to Sir James. "Sir James allus likes a doctor,"

said Barton, "but it's not the doctor he likes most in Mr. Lisse." It might have been noticeable that Barton always spoke of Edward as Mr. not Dr. Lisse.

That he likes doctors and craves for them daily, in his solitude, in his silence—my God, what a thought! I can't get away from it, day or night! You can't realise what it means, of dark, pent-up suffering, of hope against hope, semi-conscious, grown sick! It is that set me yearning, and striving and planning to help him. As men strike, without rest, at a wall, in a mine, behind which they know human creatures are gasping for relief. And I'll help him yet!

Yes, Laura, I'll help him now! These words were uppermost in Edward's mind. There was no triumph in them, and little self-confidence: he set his teeth hard. Immense rose before him, as ever in his later career, the certainty of suffering, the inevitable risk. These have always been its subjective weakness, and, possibly, part of its objective strength. As for the prizes of the profession—success, fame, requital, and, surely to some natures the greatest, gratitude—these have appeared, so to speak, round the corner, when all was over, an ever new surprise.

"Heaven help me, I believe I can help him," thought Edward. Not that he actually expected, or could have elucidated, the possible intervention of "Heaven." But the thought was as sincere as the words that had just

fallen from him, when he spoke to Kenneth of God's reply. Such thought fitted into Edward's religious attitude which may be defined as that unwilling certainty we like to dub, semi-scientifically, agnosticism. From youth he had striven, with honest endeavour, to assimilate his father's distinction between *credo quia probatum* in science, and *credo quia absurdum* in religion. He had failed, to his sincere regret, for he could not but see how this pellucid discrimination provided the Professor with two soft yet solid pillows, whereon his unconscious soul slept serene. "Your father," protested the Baroness, quite petulantly, "is the greatest man of science and the most simple-hearted believer in this city. I don't ask of you to rival him in either field, but surely, Edward, your science isn't so overwhelming, compared with his" (a fine twist of the voice here) "that it need keep a little minimum of religion out!" To such reasoning only one reply was possible: Edward went to church.

Church—the Calvinistic predication—afforded him little satisfaction. But to the blatant irreligion of his medical fellow-students his wistful mind felt still less attuned. The University-tone of that day was flatly materialistic: miracles don't happen; spirits are nonsense; corpses are dead; and all that sort of tawdry truth. The Professor's unique church-going was regarded by all his colleagues as an atavistic survival, till it took the quite unexpected shape of a political programme. Then it

disgusted them all. Edward, painfully conscious of his share in his father's incongruous parliamentary developments, quivered under his class-mates' coarse allusions to the Baron's time-serving religiosity. They quoted to him the well-known words of a famous seventeenth-century poet:

> "What cat would lick the candlestick,
> Did grease not to its handle stick?"

"It's my fault," thought poor Edward, loving his father the more. And of course it was his fault, like so many of the innocent things we do. From that night, when he crept down and secretly slew the rabbit, he had never got clear of the confusion between right and wrong. The two certainly were not distinguishable, and, probably, his university teachers were right, who said that neither existed. More reasonable, surely, than his Calvinistic social surroundings which only looked for them, on Sundays, in church.

As an immense relief from the numbed discomfort of such thinkings, came, like the flinging open of a padlocked door, the sudden realisation of a world intangible, not beyond, but within, the world of immediate sense. So much he owed to Laura. Whether his father's abstract divinity were correct or not, his professors' finite materialism was false. The tricks of the spiritists were doubtless largely a delusion, but the five senses as yet

hardly explained the new phenomena of animal magnetism, of telepathy and second-sight. These easily provable incredibilities, at whose vague rumour he had sneered in company with the whole university, suddenly happened before his eyes. There existed, then, in this world which for the last twelve years had been only microbe and matter (with angels, quite unconnected, behind the clouds), there existed vast spiritual forces, as yet only vaguely comprehended. Miracles were possible, for the miracle of to-day is the scientific truth of to-morrow. There, indeed, was a whole new field of congenial study, a wide scope of possible psychic ascent. The dull mass of microbe and matter was become no longer an all-important self-object, but the commonplace garment of the wondrous human soul.

All the rest, that occupied these men, that occupied his own father, entirely, was secondary, transitory, auxiliary, limitable—suddenly dwarfed; the one central fact of the universe, the permanent reality was the psychic personality of man. The Spirit that informs the shapeless material, the essence of all things, the light in the lamp. And that Spirit, in its marvellous transcendental developments, was an object not only of *credos,* to be accepted, *quia absurda,* but of strictly scientific studies, like Charcot's, to be pursued, into the unseen. Whither such study will lead us, who can say? Hardly nearer his mother's God, but at least away from the purblind

assertion that the soul of man or animal is no more than an attribute of its flesh.

Edward stood looking down at "the idiot." "If the religion of my youth be correct," he said, "your soul has nothing to do with your body, and if the teaching of my professors be true, you haven't a soul beyond your body at all, but I believe you have a sort of soul, James Graye, and such soul as you have, more or less, I'll deliver from your body, by God!"

CHAPTER XII.

A FEW days later the Professor, sailing in his wonted manner, with flying coat and tilted hat, and a load of books, down the long Leyden *Gracht,* met the postman, and, stopping short, acknowledged the man's salute with a half-circle sweep of the arm. Whereupon the postman, who, like everybody, was on conversational terms with Baron Lisse, proffered the daily pile of rubbish with which the penny-post has endowed the householder, and also a remark on the seasonable character of the snow: the Professor selecting the remark (with unscientific disapproval of the snow as "rheumatic") and a letter from Edward, sailed rhythmically on.

The letter from Edward he managed to open and read, as he went along, in spite of the people and carts that he met, and his loosely held cargo of volumes. It told how the operation of which Edward had repeatedly written, was now fixed for the second of January, the novel experiment (hitherto restricted to cases of hydrocephalus in infants) having encountered the sympathetic concurrence of the faculty. "Before this consensus that the thing should be tried," wrote Edward, "the uncle has

at last given way! I pity him from the bottom of my heart. His anxiety and uncertainty are worse than mine."

"Pity will be his downfall!" said the Professor sternly. "A doctor may perhaps pity his patient—though it's unscientific—but certainly not his patient's friends." The Professor stood still at a street corner, and held the letter away from him. "The day after to-morrow!" he exclaimed.

"Pardon me," said a voice at his elbow, "but I am surely correct in the impression that I am speaking to the great Baron Lisse?"

"My name is Lisse, sir," replied the Professor, dropping a volume. The stranger picked it up so eagerly that the Professor, in the flurry of mutual compliment, dropped a couple more.

"The difference between you and me, Professor," remarked the stranger, walking away with the Professor's biggest folio under his arm, "is that everybody knows of your greatness, and nobody, as yet, knows of mine." He continued his road reflectively digesting his own statement, and, as the Professor made no attempt to dispute it, "There is an undeniable distinction," added the stranger.

"I think I could carry that book myself," timidly suggested the Professor. But the other hugged the volume more closely. "You are proceeding homewards?"

he said. "Evidently. They told me at the door you were not in. I have waited ten minutes before the door-step. A—a not very—ah—conciliatory domestic, if I may be allowed to say as much!"

The Professor smiled in spite of himself. "I trust nobody was rude to you at my house," he began courteously. The other interrupted him. "Rudeness is a subjective thing. Nobody can be rude to me, for I never feel it. My name, sir, though you do not inquire after it, is Bitterbol. May I ask, Professor Lisse: do you know what this object is?" And with surprising celerity, on the Leyden Canal, he produced, from his tail-pocket, a big hairy brown ball.

"A cocoa-nut," replied the Professor, bowing low to his washerwoman.

"*Cocos butiracea,*" announced Mr. Bitterbol, standing on the Professor's doorstep, and producing from the other pocket a similar fruit. At imminent risk of dropping the folio, he held both brown balls aloft in the wintry face of heaven. The fat washerwoman turned, interested, and the picturesque fishwife stopped scraping the live flounders on the step.

The Professor shuddering at sight of the fishwife's occupation, mounted hastily to his own front-door. "My —my time is much taken," he muttered as he went! "I—I never eat cocoa-nuts. Eliza!"—with a sudden cry of relief—"please take the book from the gentleman!

Good-day!" The Baroness stood in the hall, greatly agitated. "Laura is with Edward!" she said. "She went off to Paris. He has just written to say she is there!" "The operation is the day after to-morrow," replied the Professor. "A much more important matter."

"I advise you to listen to me," cried the stranger, trying to dodge round Eliza. "I assure you there is no one more competent to speak on the subject."

"Of hydrocephalus?" exclaimed the Professor, in amazement, coming back. "Of cocoa-nuts," replied the stranger, abashed.

"There is a similarity," said the Professor, in his most amiable manner, as he attentively inspected the object Mr. Bitterbol had put into his hand. Then he softly deposited it on a box he had not before noticed in the hall. "Although this, of course, my dear," he added apologetically, "is not a case of hydrocephalus."

"It is a case of cocoa-nuts," explained the stranger, "which I ventured to leave here——"

"Though I tried to prevent him," put in Eliza, who was quarrelling with the washerwoman.

"I suppose the man wants money!" suggested the Baroness, whispering—loud. "A natural want, and a pardonable!" mildly responded the Professor.

"I have come, not to ask for money, but to bring it," said the stranger, in a shrill voice. And he walked uninvited into the little waiting-room, which is a feature of

most Dutch houses, heedless of Eliza's cap—a back view of protest—and the Baroness's "Your brother is waiting to see you!"—a broad, but apparently ineffective, hint.

Now, a disregarded hint is a distinct expression of opinion. The stranger, therefore, took a seat without more ado, in the little room, and again addressing the Professor in the same far-reaching voice: "You are the first authority in Europe," he announced, "on microbic infection."

"That," spake the Baroness, "is certainly true;" and she paused in the passage.

"It is outrageous!" cried Eliza; but she meant the price of the flounders.

The Baron delicately closed the door.

"Right!" said Mr. Bitterbol. "Eliminate the women, and come to business!" The Baron smiled his quiet smile, a little frightened, like a mouse, with the cat opposite.

"It is not the slightest good using that word to me," he said. "My brother does all my business. Shall I call him?" And he leaped to the door.

"No!" shouted the stranger, striking his remaining cocoa-nut down in the middle of the table and leaving it there. He sat back from it, with his hands stretched between, big, burly, red, sailor-like, bluff. His voice rose over tempests: his whole manner betokened steering against contrary streams.

"Yonder lies," he said, pointing, "what is going to make your fortune and mine!" The Professor waited.

"*Cocos butiracea!*" continued Mr. Bitterbol, lingering lovingly over the words, "*lactitans frugifera Linnaei.*"

"I am no botanist," said the Professor.

"In these days when the whole world demands with one voice the sterilisation of its chief source of nutriment for the new-born, the old and ailing——"

"And quite right too," put in the Professor.

"Which you, and such as you, have declared to be its chief source of infection!" cried the stranger.

"We could not help that," said the Professor, turning red.

Mr. Bitterbol lifted the cocoa-nut on the tips of two fingers and a thumb.

"The sole milk," he said solemnly, "which is absolutely guaranteed by nature free of possible contact with microbes of any kind."

"Allow me——" began the Professor, immediately argumentative, with finger upraised. But Mr. Bitterbol bore him down: "I will not allow you. Let me explain first. The anxious mothers of Christendom, sir, have a right—they have a right, I say—to demand restitution of this thing you have taken from them! And what have you taken away? Milk, sir! Milk! The food of their puling infants, that cry vainly for nourishment! Their own milk, sir, is contaminated by hereditary disease!

The cows of the country are laden with tuberculosis, typhus, scarlatina, whooping-cough!"

"Not whooping-cough!" protested the Professor.

"They will be to-morrow, then," said Mr. Bitterbol coolly. "The asses—the she-asses that, in our youth, we used to see tinkling along the streets at sunset—we now know they carried death from door to door. The world, sir, disturbed in its inmost bosom—I speak accurately—the distressed maternity of the whole civilised—all too civilised!—human race demands milk—untainted milk! You can't give it." Mr. Bitterbol rose in his excitement and flung his billycock on the floor. The courteous Professor picked it up. "We shall sterilise satisfactorily in time!" said the Professor.

"In time!" cried Mr. Bitterbol indignantly; "what time? If you, at this moment, had a babe on your knee"—the Professor looked down hastily—"what would you reply to it, when it cried: 'Give me milk?' 'Two years hence, my dear, when we have learned to sterilise satisfactorily!' Psha!"

"True," admitted the Professor sadly. "But what would *you* do?"

"I? I should say: 'Take away all yonder contaminated fluids!'" Mr. Bitterbol swept the empty table with a magnificent gesture. "I should say"—he held his cocoanut on high—"'Here is nature's sterilisation! Unspoilt by any contact with animal disease!'" He sat down

suddenly, and, in a matter-of-fact tone: "This variety" —tapping the brown, hairy thing—"from Sumatra——"

"Ah, Sumatra!" ejaculated the Professor.

"You object?"

"By no means. I was only thinking."

"Is especially rich in milk. That milk, sir, is enclosed by nature in an absolutely impenetrable case." Hereupon he split it open with a jack-knife, and the Professor smiled at human logic. "Taste it!" said Mr. Bitterbol. The Professor, whose chief dread at all times was to hurt other people's feelings, laboriously sucked up the liquid from the proffered cup. "That milk, sir, that delicious beverage, that boon, that ambrosia——"

"Nectar," said the Professor. He couldn't help it.

"Nectar, indeed, as you say. That nectar, that ambrosia, we intend to supply to every mother in Christendom, soldered in tin envelopes, as imported, with patent apparatus—patent, mark you: that's the point—with patent apparatus for conveying the fluid direct from the inside of the fruit to the lips of the child, without opening it, and possibly infecting it, as I have done!" He gazed triumphantly at the Professor, who was endeavouring to forget the taste in his mouth.

"All that we now need," said Mr. Bitterbol, "is your name."

"You have the apparatus?" said the Professor incredulously. The other looked him in the face.

"I am a practical man," said Bitterbol, "and an honest one. I won't waste time. I have the apparatus, and, what's more to the point, the patents. The apparatus, of course—you see, I'm frank, and, besides, I couldn't take you in, if I wanted to—is bosh, like all the rest of 'em—filters, sterilisators, the whole blessed lot—you agree to that?"

"Not absolutely," said the Professor uncomfortably.

"Well, then, relatively, which, in this matter, comes to the same thing. But the milk's pure, and the idea's first-rate. What we want is enormous scientific authority. Overwhelming, sir, and conclusive authority. A name, sir, such as Lisse!" Mr. Bitterbol flung up the hand that held the other half of the *Butiracea*—a great splash of white liquid made straight for the Professor.

"You see the abundance of it?" Mr. Bitterbol said coolly. "*Lactitans Linnaei.* Nature's Coco-mother! Or, more simply, Lisse's Mother's Milk!" He checked the Professor. "Not 'sterilised,' which can be easily proved a sham, but sterile by nature, incorruptible, unbacteriable! immicrobable! we will coin the new words for the new thing! It will be easiest in German, but we will do it in all languages of Europe and Asia! We will take your portrait (on every cocoa-nut—see you get it—none genuine without) and your little dissertation—not too short—on the dangers of cow's milk and condensed milk—especially our dangerous rivals, the tins—and your name, sir,

your name! Lisse's Milk, Professor. The simpler the better. With all the explanatory titles underneath, in small caps! Liebig's Meat Extract! Lisse's Milk!"

"Your proposition is absurd," said the Professor.

"You have not yet heard," replied Mr. Bitterbol. "We fully realise your most important share in the undertaking, and we offer you a small royalty on every patent coco-mother sold. The result, sir, will be immense, beyond anything you expect!"

"And who finances this concern?" demanded the Professor, red in the face, but feeling very business-like.

"Your question is a legitimate one," answered Bitterbol, smiling. "Be sure I did not venture to approach you, before I prepared my reply. As a matter of fact, the idea only is mine. I am quite a poor man. But here"—he hurriedly drew a letter from his breast-pocket —"you will see how the scheme appeals to our great financiers!" He spread out the letter. "Read the name at the bottom of that page, sir, the name only! Mechanically the Professor did so, and could not conceal a jerk. Bitterbol laughed aloud. "Aha, you may well jump, Baron! That man guarantees you and me, sir, three hundred thousand francs for advertisement, annually, during five years."

"Incredible!" cried the Professor, who had flushed scarlet at the "you and me."

"Not at all. We shall want quite that. Every

quackery—not that this is a quackery—is entirely a matter of advertisement. My idea, your authority, his advertisements: the thing's done."

"You have used the right word there," stuttered the Professor, no paler. "Quack—quack—quackery."

"I have," asserted Mr. Bitterbol. "Quackery—medicine—whichever you like. Is there a difference?"

"Yes."

"Which?" The Professor searched for a reply.

"Medicine is quackery with a university stamp," said Mr. Bitterbol.

"Then you shall not have mine," retorted the Professor.

"You cannot be speaking seriously. The patent medicines of to-day are as harmless as the old ones, but, what with this silly progress of science (I beg your pardon), people are beginning to prefer a doctor's name attached. Doctor So-and-so's quackery, *i.e.* medicine. I may warn you that the sterilised-milk business is being seriously considered by your great rival——"

"I have no rival: I have only fellow-workers," said the Professor.

"The Colonel asks: do you think he should wait?" cried Eliza at the keyhole. Mr. Bitterbol buttoned his coat. "My proposition," he said, "means many thousands a year to you. Look round at all the great cocoas and patent foods, and the whole gigantic swindle that

makes the world go round! And this isn't a swindle. It's an incontrovertible fact that the nuts in the hall contain no microbes. Examine them. Examine the patent hermetoids, as we have called the cases. Examine the patent sucker—see, what an ingenious thing it is! "These ideas, sir"—he tapped his expanding chest—"are mine! Yonder letter I leave with you——!"

"I must beg of you not to do that," squeaked the Professor. "Whatever people leave with me I always lose."

Mr. Bitterbol hastily regained possession of the letter and substituted a visiting-card. "I will allow you a fortnight," he said. "The proposal is a magnificent one. I say you have no idea what it means. At the expiration of that fortnight I take our scheme to——"

"Don't tell me his name!" cried the Professor. "I shall hear it too soon, if he accepts."

The stranger stood still in the doorway: "I am a poor man. My future is in your hands," he said, rather cleverly. Then he went out, and Eliza slammed the front-door after him.

"Did he want to sell cocoa-nuts?" asked the Baroness, in the drawing-room.

"Yes, thousands of them," replied the Professor.

"You could never eat so many," remarked the Colonel.

The Baroness arched her eyebrows. But she did that, whatever Imphi-Boshek said.

"This being the last day of the year," continued the Colonel, "I thought I should like to come over and tell you about your affairs. I have good news for you, brother: these last investments have been very successful."

The Professor rubbed his hands gleefully. "Aha!" he said. "Very right! very right!"

"What investments are they?" asked the Baroness nervously.

"My dear sister-in-law, what can women understand about such matters? Investments? Financial investments, dear Jane!"

"I see," said the Baroness ironically. "I thought they were other."

"City investments."

"I see," said the Baroness again. "Naturally, the investment of a city is the only sort of investment a soldier would know about." She walked away from them, her feelings being too much for her.

"Ha! Ha! Excellent! First-rate!" shouted the Colonel. "My dear Thomas, what grip! what intellectual attainments! But as I was saying, I am sure the paraffin is going to be very satisfactory."

"Paraffin! I thought it was rubber!" said the Professor.

"Oh, the rubber is going to be very satisfactory, too. We are going to make money, Thomas, money!"

"I thank Heaven," said the Professor fervently.

"And so you may in these days, when everything is going to the dogs. Only this morning, the paper was full of commercial depression. I don't like commercial depression, Thomas. It isn't good for a country. Wealth in a country is a desirable thing, Thomas, if only the right people own it. This polity of ours, as I understand it, rests on three Walls: William, Wisdom (whereby I mean the Intellectuals), and Wealth. We need all three, Thomas!" And the dapper little Colonel twirled round on his patent leather boots and flung up, across his red cheeks, his bellicose moustaches.

"Then where do you come in?" asked the Baroness, by the window.

"I am not one of the Powers: I am only one of the People," he answered sweetly, "Prince, Powers and People! My brother, Baron Lisse, should be one of the Powers."

"He is more than that," replied the Baroness with promptitude. "He is more even than the Prince. He is a Principle!" She struck the window-pane. "He's a Principle!" she said.

"My dear," remarked the Baron very gently, "I trust you know what that means." Then he turned to his brother. "I am glad, very glad, there will be more money," he said. "I have always fancied there would be enough, until last year, when you proved to me that there ought to be more. I detest everything connected

with money, especially the want of it." He repeated this sentiment, which struck him as remarkably correct.

"Nobody should speculate unless they know all about it," replied the Colonel. "My friend Abrahams is a Prop of the Stock Exchange, a Positive Prop. As a Port I understand Amsterdam is doomed, but as a financial centre it is daily increasing in importance. I admit that is a bad sign, but, what will you have?—the whole country is going to the dogs. Meanwhile Abrahams will make our fortunes. When the impending explosion comes, I, as a soldier, hope to die on the Palace steps. You, not being a fighting man, can cut your coupons abroad."

"We will see," said the Baron, his keen eye kindling.

"So I wish you a happy new year," concluded the Colonel, taking up his smartly polished hat. "I understand from Jane that the two girls remain at Geneva, on account of an outbreak of measles in the school?"

"The incubation of measles," replied the Professor, "is a subject on which we are singularly ignorant. But it is certain that travel increases the virulence of a possible attack."

"It is astonishing to me how little you really discover by dissecting the worms out of people's insides." Having said this, the Colonel took his departure. In the doorway, however, he aimed a last thrust at his sister-in-law.

"Here is Eliza! I always think of you three as a trio: the Professor, the Poet, and the Pivot!"

"A better trio, perhaps," said the Baroness bitterly, "than the Professor, the Politician, and the Prop." She came close to her husband, motioning the woman away. "These money-makers!" she said in French. "This Abrahams! your brother!"

"Francis has been remarkably successful. My dear Jane, you are really mistaken in thinking a man must be a fool because he doesn't understand poetry." The Professor spoke testily: he was glad that Thomasine entered the room; she held a number of hats in her hands.

"I had quite forgotten!" cried the Baroness, pushing her cap away. "The cares of a household are beyond me! When I ought to be composing—well, well, Thomasine has completed the tenth canto, so, although she says she doesn't need a reward, and of course she's enjoyed it, I thought I would give her a new hat."

"A new hat!" exclaimed the Professor, in surprise. "Do you care about a new hat, Thomasine?" He added: "Well, well, I suppose it is natural. I don't remember that you, Jane, ever cared about a new hat."

"I don't care so very much," said Thomasine, blushing, "but my best is very old, father: there's a dreadful dent in the brim."

"Is there? I'm sure you always look very nice, child.

But 'tis very natural, dear girl, very natural! I wonder, Jane, has my hat got a dent in it?"

"It has," said Eliza.

"Then why don't you take it out?" cried the Professor, more than testy now, cross.

"Pray where am I to begin?" retorted Eliza. "Your hat, Professor, looks like the crumply paper they make lamp-shades of!"

"Eliza, go away! You can't really want me," interposed the poor Baroness.

"Oh, certainly, if I am em—power—ed," replied the maid, "to tell the cheesemonger exactly what I think of him."

"I'll come," said her mistress, sighing heavily. "We can't change our cheesemonger again. Wait a minute with those hats, Thomasine. Ah me, I wrote only yesterday evening:

> "Too few the hours that sum our little day,
> And yet we fritter, flitter them away!"

Thomasine remained standing in the middle of the room, hung about with ribbons and feathers, like a Maypole.

"Eliza," said the Professor meditatively, "is an admirable servant, but it is a pity that the number of tradespeople in Leyden is limited."

"You have a letter from Edward?" replied Thomasine.

"Yes: poor fellow! The operation is fixed for the day after to-morrow. It is an immensely interesting event. I understand absolutely nothing of psychiatry—we are miles apart—but I can see this is an event of overwhelming interest, Thomasine!"

"I always knew Edward would find his work," said Thomasine.

The Professor looked at her affectionately. "We men are what our women make us," he said. Thomasine hid suddenly behind the biggest hat. Sometimes the reward of half a lifetime drops quite unexpectedly from nowhere, at our feet.

"Those hats," said the Professor timidly, "do not look to me quite the latest fashion. Do you feel sure they are?"

"Dear papa, I suppose so," said the troubled Thomasine.

"I fancy I saw quite different ones at the Hague the other day," the Professor persisted knowingly. "Leyden is hardly the place, I should think, to buy a fashionable hat in. Paris, Paris is the place for hats, Thomasine!" The Professor, flinging back his dusty mane, gazed argumentatively at his daughter.

"Yes, papa. I suppose so!" said Thomasine.

"What would you say to our starting for Paris together, and buying a hat?" cried the Professor. "Buying a couple of hats?"

"Papa, you are joking!"

"I never joke, child. People who deal in microbes don't. Life becomes too serious for a joke. But they can enjoy themselves."

"You would in Paris!"

"I don't know. I enjoyed myself where I developed the Pseudo-Semicolon Cryptophyllus Comma 2 out of the Comma Communis Henshuysii. That was a great discovery, Thomasine."

"It was," said his daughter.

"And you were a dear girl to read up all about it. I really have sometimes believed that, in the end, you almost understood?" The Professor paused. "Yes, you shall go to Paris. I shall be delighted to see Edward's operation. And your mother, of course, will accompany us. Laura is in Paris. Your mother does not approve."

"But will all that not cost a great deal of money?" questioned Thomasine.

"Your uncle Frank says we may spend more money," replied the Professor, rubbing his hands. "We are going to have more money."

"Oh, how delicious!" cried the girl. "O papa, a great man like you ought to get thousands from the state!"

"That is what I always say," remarked the Baroness. "What on earth does it matter whether cheese costs threepence or threepence-halfpenny? Contemptible! Souls like Eliza's consider the price of cheese the end

of existence. There ought to be no cheese in your father's life."

"There is not. I never touch it," said the Professor.

"You are so literal, Thomas: how did you ever come to marry a poetess? Your cheese is Bardwyk—the upkeep of that big place where we only spend the summer holidays.

"My home," said the Baron.

His wife shrugged her shoulders. "Certainly, and I would not sell an oak of it! But what I regret is that your enormous science does not bring you in a proper reward! Other—dabblers run off with ten thousand dollar pieces, or they lend their names to patent screws or foods or pots" (the Professor tingled to his toes), "but you—what do they give you? Gold medals! Cupboards full."

"And orders!" said Thomasine.

"And which of his orders does your father care for?" cried the Baroness.

"St. John of Jerusalem," said the Baron, "The Succour of the Wounded, and the Cross I gained at Gravelotte." For this subject, to which allusions were forbidden in the family circle, thus suddenly crops up here. In 1870 the Baron (though "not a fighting man," as the Colonel says) had insisted on accompanying the Dutch ambulance; and good fortune, as he put it, had enabled him to save

a wounded Bavarian General, under heavy artillery fire —but never mind that!

"I must be off to my lecture," exclaimed the Baron. "Good heavens! I forgot about Paris. We shall start to-morrow morning. Tell your mother, Thomasine!"

Thomasine had expected this sudden decision to agitate the Baroness, but not to the degree, nor in the manner, it did. That lady refused, however, to afford any other explanation of her eager approval than could be found in the natural desire to see Edward. "Laura's presence in Paris!" she said. "Pooh! Nonsense! Miss Laura must look after herself. Besides, Edward writes that she is staying with a charitable Scotch lady, whose work among butchers would interest me greatly. I shall certainly go and have a look at it, though I don't see the use of converting butchers. The most converted butcher that ever was born wouldn't be honest about bones. It isn't in nature. Our last butcher was an Elder, and you should hear the way Eliza says he behaved about the fat."

"Not that I care tuppence about bones and fat—the disgusting things," adds the Baroness peevishly. "I shall be heartily glad to get rid of it all in Paris, where they cut up their dead cattle small. There are no tiresome joints in a French cow, Thomasine, and what isn't beefsteak in its body is chiefly trotters and tripe!"

CHAPTER XIII.

On the morning of the operation the four ladies sat, avoiding each other's glances, in the silent sitting-room, at the hotel, left behind, as women are, with their prayers, when the men are gone forth to act. The presence of the stranger, Miss MacClachlin, made it easier for the Baroness to sit there with Laura. Each lady was endeavouring to divert her own thoughts in a congenial manner. Laura, at a side-table, was spreading out playing-cards, entirely incredulous, as she truthfully averred, yet absorbed. Maria MacClachlin sat labouring to make sense of her Scottish agent's account-sheets, the one thing on earth she felt certain she couldn't do. The Baroness, with much writing-paper all about her, composed yards (hardly metres) of ode to Hygiea, almost too nervous for rhyme and far too nervous for reason. Thomasine sorted her brother's notes and correspondence anent the great matter in hand. There was a good deal to sort: he had indeed not skated, as the Dutch say, "over the ice of a single night."

"I hope you don't object to this sort of thing!" said Laura, suddenly, to the Baroness. She swept all her

cards together and began laying them out again. "I don't believe in it, of course!"

"Daughter of Gods and nurse of men—Oh no, I don't object," replied the Baroness, with pen uplifted.

"I think it is sinful," remarked Maria MacClachlin, looking away from her lines of figures. "I dislike the word 'sin,' but I think that is sinful."

"Oh no, it can't be sinful," answered Laura quickly, "for sinful is doing what you like."

"Throw your cards into the fire!"

"That's what you would like to do with those papers of yours, and *that* would be sinful," said Laura mischievously.

Miss MacClachlin had advanced to the little card-table. "Come!" she said, and swept half the pack off in one fell swoop. Laura rose in agitation. "No! No! I don't believe in it, but you needn't tempt the Fates!"

"The Fates!" cried Maria MacClachlin in horror.

"The powers of evil, whatever you like to call them! The malign Forces that influence our lives!"

"Were you ever baptised?" cried Maria MacClachlin.

"No," said Laura. All the other women uttered exclamations. "My father," added the girl hastily, "said it was a mockery, if nobody intended to keep the promises they made."

"Surely, mother, that is true," put in Thomasine, whose exclamation had been pity only. "Don't burn

those cards!" was the Baroness's sole reply. She spoke peremptorily. She also had risen. "I agree with Laura," she said. "I don't know about Cartomancy, and I should enjoy a game of whist, if I could remember trumps, but there *is* some connection between the Devil's picture-book and the Devil, and, as Laura says, though we don't want his assistance, we—we needn't insult him at this moment,"—she glanced at the clock—"we may as well have him neutral, if we can, Miss MacClachlin."

"Amazing!" said Maria, and laid the cards down. "It is as if I heard my old nurse Nannie, who believes in Kelpies, and all sorts of monsters, that damage your harvests and sprain your wrists."

"And has the second-sight!" exclaimed Laura, "and could see perhaps this very moment what is happening at Auteuil!" She began pacing up and down the room. "If I only had that! If I only had that!" she said.

"It's as uncertain with her as it is with you!" answered Miss MacClachlin, but with less aplomb.

"You cannot deny that she has it? That she saw, at your home in Scotland, when you were ill here in bed!"

"N-n-no," said Miss MacClachlin.

"With a bandage round your head, mind you!"

"I admit the bandage."

"It proves there are spirits," said Laura.

"O Laura!" cried Thomasine. "Surely it only proves

that we don't know all about our souls that the doctors think they do!"

Before Laura could answer, the Baroness, who had retired into the adjoining bedroom, called to her daughter in a voice which caused the latter to hasten to her side.

"Thomasine!" said the Baroness, "a terrible thing has happened!"

The Baroness was quite pale: she steadied herself, trembling, against the mantelpiece.

"Mamma!" cried Thomasine, alarmed.

"Hush, don't let the others hear us! My daughter, I will tell you all." And, hoarse with agitation, trembling there, she hurried on: "You may laugh at me, if you like—of course, you will laugh at me. Laura is right: there are powers of evil. And—and protecting spirits. The Bible says so. That Scotchwoman talks about her Nannie: my old nurse in Brabant—well, yes, she was a Papist, as you know, a pious Papist. We call them Papists, Thomasine, but Catholics is the right word. They are the oldest Church: there must be things they know better than we. Never mind that, now, but my old nurse—she was a very pious woman—very pious and wise, and we never get quite away from our childish associations. She—she taught me my grace, that I still say, mechanically, I fear, before meals. Well, of course, I taught you Protestant ones—but, but I certainly never suffered from indigestion, as your father does. And she

taught me a charm I say, and things have often come right, I can assure you. And I have so many troubles in my household, and I've said that charm in my own room, crying, when Eliza's been contrary, and she's come and said she was sorry, and, you know, Thomasine, it's only a miracle could make Eliza say that! And, when she was dying—nurse, I mean—she sent for me, and she gave me the little image of the Virgin and Child off her poor old wasted neck, and she bade me wear it and give it to my son, if ever I had one, when he started on his career. I knew what it had done for her: she'd often told me about it, when I was a baby. And I didn't wear it, though I'd promised, you see—being a Protestant. But I didn't like not keeping my promise, and the day I put it on at last, I wrote my letter to your father. And, and he married me, as you know, and all my happiness dates from then. And though you can't reason about it, and I know it sounds absurd, it has often helped me and protected me: I can't reason about it, but I've proof, heaps of proof! I sewed it into your father's coat—he never noticed—when he made his great speech in Parliament on Sanitation, that would have been such a success, if they'd only known what Sanitation meant. And—and, oh, lots of times! When I heard about this operation, I wanted so to give Edward my little image, and I couldn't—and then came suddenly this wonderful idea of your father's: it seemed like

a voice from heaven, and I packed it up this morning with a note for Edward, and I gave it to your father, most particularly, to take to him—and, oh, Thomasine, there it lies!" She pointed to a small parcel on the toilet-table, and burst into tears.

"Did papa know?" asked Thomasine, seeking for something to say.

"No—oh no! He wouldn't understand. Your father is very religious, but it's a man's religion. No—no *hors d'œuvres*. The solid meat, plain, and as little as possible of that. I am a woman, Thomasine, only a womanly woman. If I had been a man, I should have been so different from what I am! I must have my religious kickshaws, and my poetry. When I read all my Strauss and Plato, I soon saw I must have my poetry as well. But—oh, it's no use talking!"—she stamped her foot in her anxiety—"I've had proof all my life, that my Virgin and Child brings us good fortune—that's not cards and tricks, like Laura's, but it's religion, our Christian religion—and now at the decisive moment of Edward's career—we've left them lying neglected there!"

"Oh, don't cry, mamma!" faltered Thomasine, still seeking.

The Baroness looked at her quickly.

"Do you want your mother to be wiser," she said, "than the greatest king France ever had?"

"He—he was some—time ago," answered Thomasine.

"But not before the Christian religion! And he was as pious as he was wise. Or do you think the Christian religion has gone on improving since Christ? I have written a poem on Louis XI. Oh, why do we stand arguing here—and time flying—and Edward hasn't got it! We've insulted it!—we've neglected it!—oh—oh—oh——!"

Thomasine glanced at the clock.

"It is ten minutes past eleven," she said. "They can hardly have begun yet."

"But Auteuil is miles from here! And we don't know the way."

"I will try," said Thomasine. "I can find the way. And, oh, at any rate," she rigidly checked a smile, "the Virgin will see, even if I am too late, that we are treating her with proper respect."

"You might ask Miss Mac-what's-her-name to go with you. She knows Paris."

"Better not, mamma. She would ask questions."

"You are ashamed of me," said the Baroness contritely.

"Oh, mamma, don't say such a thing! Of course, it's very new to me. I thought you were as good a Protestant as any of us."

"It's the Virgin *and Child,*" said the Baroness. Thomasine was already getting her things. "But, reason as you may, I've all my experiences to pit against you.

I don't defend myself. I sent you and your sisters to Geneva on purpose: everything's Calvinistic there. But my youth was spent with a dear old nurse, who taught me that our lives are full of saints and devils—and I can't get away from that."

"Have you some French money for me?" said Thomasine.

Her mother gave it her, with a fervent kiss. "Child," said the Baroness, "you are so like your father: I am glad I called you after him—that is another mystery: we are like the people they call us after. Yes, you think of others; I try to. I love you dearly, Thomasine. I wish I could be more for my children, but I—I don't know how. I am glad, however, to have you associated with me in my work. You are interested—are you not, dear?—in *Balaam?*"

"Yes, indeed," said Thomasine, already in the passage. With the aid of the hotel-porter she obtained a cabman who agreed, for twice the legal fare, to convey her out to Auteuil, and, less than half an hour later, having seen him drive off, vociferating, with three times that fare in his pocket, she nervously pushed open the gilt *grille* of the Etablissement Ducrot. It was the cabman, not her errand, that had made her nervous. Like her parents, she detested money squabbles, and was entirely unaccustomed to them.

The wintry garden of the Etablissement looked chill

and deserted. The open-air cure had not yet been invented, and no one, therefore, was sitting or lying in the sodden pathways or on the steaming lawns. A dull grey sky hung heavy against the black tracery of the trees. The bright snow of the Leyden gables seemed many weeks away.

"Là-bas, au fond!" said a white-aproned man with a broom. She found, picking her way through the damp, the little side-gate, the tall cluster of trees, the half-hidden villa. The line of windows, between their shutters, stared at her, repellent. Nothing stirred. Behind those windows, somewhere, the tragedy was enacting. She passed up the few steps to the *perron*—her walk and her touch were ever of the softest—and rang, perhaps a little timidly. Nothing responded, but through the glass door, that stood ajar, she heard the long murmur of a voice. She felt there was no time to be lost, and pushed on, in the direction of the murmur. The door at the end of the hall—it was that of the small dining-room—stood open. Thomasine stood aghast. The murmur was not a murmur, but a smothered cry.

A man lay on his knees, in the gloom of brown wainscoting, against a divan. His face was hidden: his arms and hands were entangled, amongst cushions, before it. From hidden depths of suffering broke forth that half-stifled cry.

Thomasine had never before seen or heard a layman

pray. Only her father's formal reading, of mornings. She trembled and grew crimson, as if she had stumbled on physical nudity. She turned to fly, but as she turned he lifted his head and saw her.

He was on his feet, in an instant, fairly composed, his attitude courteous, his dark face gone pale. Even in that moment of discomfiture, she realised that she had never seen so—distinguished an attitude, so hauntingly exquisite a face.

"I am anxious to speak to Dr. Lisse," she said quickly. "I am his sister. If he has not yet begun——"

"He has begun," said Kenneth in a broken voice, "and I am Kenneth Graye."

The agony that bore down his attempt at reserve was too manifest. And the position, in spite of its embarrassment, came not unnaturally to Thomasine, accustomed, by much parish-work at Leyden, to sympathy with all sorts of distress. Yet we all know how easy it is to sympathise with the indigent.

"Is it——" he stammered, "it must be—something of very great importance that makes you want to speak to him—just now."

"Yes," she said, "but, of course, now he has begun, I cannot disturb him."

"He has begun," repeated Kenneth; and he sank down again, seated on the divan, resting his head against his hands. "They are busy at this moment. They have

been at it for hours and hours!" His haggard eyes sought the timepiece—"Twenty minutes! They are busy. Do you hear anything?" He went to the door. "Hush! Didn't you hear a cry! Hush! I fancy I hear one all the time. Deep down in the cushions I hear them most. They are busy over yonder on the other side, behind that door. People cry out, in spite of chloroform: don't they? But, I suppose, you don't know. I wonder if people cry out in spite of chloroform?"

"Yes, they cry out," said Thomasine, "sometimes; but they don't feel anything!"

"How do the doctors know that?" His own was almost a cry. "Because the patient doesn't remember when he wakes? But perhaps the chloroform only kills the memory, not the pain! They say James always felt pain, though he couldn't tell about it! My God!"

He tried to steady himself. "You see," he said apologetically, "it's a matter of life and death, and I had to decide about it, all by myself, his uncle. Perhaps he's dead already. How very quiet they are."

Thomasine hesitated, whether to go or stay. And then she decided to ask him, quite simply, this stranger with the kindly grief-drawn face.

"Shall I wait for my brother, or shall I go?" she said. He could always indicate his inclination by offering her another room.

"When you found me, I was trying to pray," he

answered abruptly. "We men don't know much, as a rule, about praying. I think, if there were prayers going on in this house"—again he paused to listen—"You remember that beautiful story in the Bible about Moses—Can you pray?"

"Yes," said Thomasine Lisse very gently. "Everyone can."

He looked at her. "I don't believe," he said, "in prayer-book prayers."

Thomasine, amid her Calvinistic surroundings, had never heard of written supplications. "They always sound to me," continued Kenneth, "as if you were praying for someone else." He walked back from the door to the clock. "Oh, my God!" he said, quite low. And that, certainly, was a prayer. At that moment some sort of sound, indefinable, unmistakably reached them from behind the wall at the other side of the passage—to both, whether rightly or wrongly, it shaped itself as a suppressed scream. Kenneth shuddered, and, sinking down by his cushions: "You are a woman," he said, "and, by your face, a good one! Pray!"

Thomasine knelt against the table, hiding out of sight in her muff. In the long, long silence that followed, a thoughtful, breathing silence, listening, holding its breath, amid the solemn yearnings of the silence, the two stranger souls in the little back-room held unrealised communion with each other in God.

"I can't endure it!" cried Kenneth suddenly—and his voice sounded horribly loud. "What's the use of praying—praying? With the whole world going wrong? Perhaps we pray wrong—ask the wrong thing and get it for the asking. Does that account for all the misery? No, no; there's plenty of misery without praying. And, what's worse—I don't know what to ask! I don't want the operation to 'succeed,' whatever that may signify! I mean, not from their medical point of view. What I want is James's good—that only! I want him to be happier, happier, I don't care how! Even if he dies! But, when I say that, a lot of horrible thoughts crop up, that I couldn't repeat aloud,—that people will say that I jumped at the operation as a means to get rid of him, and—and—and they swamp my prayers. My God, will this never end? They've been busy an hour. I—I—what do you say to God, when you speak to Him? I—I want to ask the right thing. Would you very much mind showing me how?"

Thomasine Lisse, who had risen as he commenced speaking, once more sank to her knees. "Our Father in Heaven," she said falteringly, "Our Father—our Father in Heaven, help us! And guide the hands of these men in all they are doing! And have mercy on the soul—and the body—of James Graye!"

"Have mercy," he repeated, his voice steadying to

the words, as he spoke them, "on the soul—and the body—of James Graye."

Thus she stayed, till the distant door flung open, and all the doctors came out together.

"It has succeeded—so far," said Edward Lisse. His square young face had lost most of its natural ruddiness, but the blue eyes shone with a tranquil light. He came out, straight and tall, fair-haired and foreign, amongst the quick Parisian doctors, clever and keen. The Professor lagged behind. "He—he—how?" Kenneth spoke to Edward only.

"It is marvellous! marvellous!" cried Dr. Ducrot. *"Mes compliments, mon cher confrère!"*

"He lives," said Edward. "My sister!" he added, distressed. A young French doctor had run forward. Kenneth, yet quicker than he, had caught Thomasine, as she swayed, and deposited her gently on the divan. "It is my fault," he said, in English. "I behaved like a selfish brute." He ran to the sideboard for water. "I am all right, I never fainted in my life," gasped Thomasine. Then the room went round, in a whirl of interested doctors' faces, and the Professor's voice inquired through darkness: "Whatever is my daughter Thomasine doing here?"

CHAPTER XIV.

"So it looked very risky at first," said the Baroness, and she nodded to Thomasine. "But afterwards, it went much better."

"Yes," replied the Professor, "Edward's diagnosis has certainly been wonderfully correct: the brain was cramped, compressed, as a hand might be squeezed into a jug. They must widen the skull now—an awful thing."

"Just so," said the Baroness, still nodding to her daughter, "but afterwards it went all right."

"Will he be like other people, father?"

"No, child, how can he? True, you haven't seen him. We shall find out in time. It is interesting, most interesting, quite new to me. But your mother's sending you to hear how things were going on was——" He paused.

"Well?" said the Baroness apprehensively.

"Quite right, dear Jane, of course, but just a *little* hard on Thomasine."

"Thomasine tells me she is very glad she went. She was able to amuse the poor uncle meanwhile."

"Not amuse, mamma—occupy." Thomasine walked

away to welcome Laura, in a pale cream dinner-gown. "What lovely clothes you have!" she said.

"Was there an uncle? Oh yes, the dark young man. I didn't observe him," answered the Professor.

"I got them at Brussels. I like to wear nice clothes," said Laura.

"Here comes the hero of the hour!" exclaimed the Baroness, as Edward entered. She solemnly advanced and placed a home-made wreath of laurels on Edward's yellow head. They were dining together, in their hotel sitting-room, and so the little party was complete.

"He looks much more like an Olympian winner in dress-clothes than anything else," said Thomasine. Laura's eyes were on her lover, but she said nothing. "May I take it off?" said the lover himself.

"Yes," replied his mother, "but you must put it on again, at dessert, when I recite you my ode to Hygiea. You are introduced as her priest!"

The Professor, in an anxious aside to Thomasine, pointed out that Æsculapius would have been more correct, as Edward, if anything, was a priest of healing, and he, the Professor, a priest of health. "But don't mention it to your mother for worlds," he added.

"Now, Edward, tell us all your great men said!"

"My great men all spoke of my father's greatness," answered Edward.

And so the dinner began and progressed under the

most favourable auspices. It was not till dessert that the sudden sorrow fell.

The Baroness was standing, erect, over the mandarines and champagne, declaiming to the laurelled (and miserable) Edward, when the hotel porter knocked and produced the telegram. "A reply from your uncle! How quick of him," said the Professor. Edward had torn off the wreath: the Baroness stood, paper in hand.

"Now, surely his telegram can wait," she said. But the Baron had already opened it and was reading it aloud:

"Had misunderstood Abrahams' wire. Paraffin up; rubber also, but it appears we had played for a fall. One hundred thousand required for cover. Wire immediate instructions. Francis."

"What does it mean?" asked the Baron, instinctively holding out the missive to his son.

"It means ruin," said the Baroness, and she sank to the table, crushing her ode amongst the laurel leaves. "It means that you must send Francis Lisse a hundred thousand francs or florins—what does it matter?—to squander, as he has already probably squandered the rest."

"Has Uncle Francis got your money in his hands, dear father?" asked Edward.

"Yes, my boy. I—I know nothing about money matters. He was taking very good care of it. He told

me only the other day, how well things were going. That is why we came here."

"Edward!" cried the Baroness passionately, striking the blue paper with one hand. "Understand this! Explain!"

"I think I can do that," he answered, and he told the eager group of listeners at least what the words of the message meant.

"I must give him this hundred thousand at once?" said the Professor.

"Or the man Abrahams will doubtless sell," replied Edward. "How much loss that may entail, we cannot guess."

"I don't know," said the Professor, "but one thing I do know. There is only one means of meeting further demands."

"No," cried the Baroness.

"My dear, why do you say 'no,' when it is 'yes'?"

"Not that means, anything but that!—Edward, he alludes to the sale of Bardwyk!"

All of them were silent. At last Thomasine said, "We can easily spend the holidays somewhere else."

The Baroness was watching her future daughter-in-law. She had got to acquiesce in Laura, but she now wondered how this adventuress (that fact could hardly be denied) would take the fact of financial, and consequently social, ruin. Perchance this ill-wind would

blow Edward release from uncongenial bonds! Meanwhile Laura sat gazing down at her plate, splitting, carefully, mandarine-pips.

"Edward!" said the poor Professor. "Edward! Edward!" His son went round the table and put an arm round his neck and kissed him on the forehead. "I don't want Bardwyk," said Edward; "you have given me a better inheritance than that." Laura looked up quickly. "His name," said Edward, gazing straight into her eyes. It was then that the Baroness, in a voice broken by passionate weeping—her head against her husband's shoulder, her cap slipping off—broke into that brief improvisation—the only thing of hers which will ever live a little—the fairly well-known:

> "All hail, hereditary lords!
> That hold your fief of pure and lofty soul
> By daily tests of virtue!"

"Hush! Hush!" murmured the Professor, wiping his eyes with the back of the fateful telegram. While they were discussing the catastrophe and trying to fathom it a second messenger arrived, illuminating whatever in the situation might still remain obscure.

"Unless sum provided instantly, sale inevitable. Loss three hundred thousand. Otherwise recovery probable."

"That," said Edward, "is plain enough."

"All but the recovery," said the Baroness.

"A hundred thousand florins is not an incalculable sum," remarked Laura, speaking suddenly.

The remark was unfortunate, under the trying circumstances, in the Baroness's ears. "People who have never had the administration of money, my dear,"—she was a woman, so she said "my dear;" she was a good woman, so she said it undesignedly—"always form a very erroneous conception of the relative value of amounts." Laura answered nothing, but returned to her chipping of pips. The click-click exasperated the Baroness.

"Where is the first telegram?" asked the Baroness tartly. Her husband, having mechanically pushed it into his breast-pocket, drew out a bundle of loose papers and letters to look for it. As he turned them over with unsteady fingers, a visiting card dropped from among the rest and fell on the table. He looked down at it and recognised it: he had not seen the thing since he thrust it out of sight two days ago. It was the card bearing Mr. Bitterbol's address. He realised, with painful distinctness, at once, that here was the means of salvation. For he knew the world of hygienic food-fads, and he could not doubt one moment that, the enormous outlay for advertisements being guaranteed, such a well-organised swindle as this was quite certain of success. All that was needed was his hall-mark, so to speak, on the patent

sucker. How many of his colleagues had done that sort of thing, were doing it every day! What an easy way of preserving and of beautifying the old home! "It means thousands," had said Mr. Bitterbol, in leaving: of course it did. The Baron remembered palatial buildings, seen in various places, almost always belonging to the proprietor of some sort of patent bosh. He had never needed thousands, but he wanted them now. "I am a poor man: my future is in your hands," had said Mr. Bitterbol. The Baron, then, could commit a generous action, a righteous action, and Edward would be lord of a fairer Bardwyk. All this passed quickly enough through his brain, as he sat staring down at the card on the table. The address was turned away from him: he had not yet seen it: he had no idea where the man lived: he had forgotten his name. The Baroness, with the automatic curiosity of her sex, reached to take the bit of pasteboard. "Whose card is this?" she said; "Charcot's? Pasteur's?" He snatched it from her—he snatched—and from her. She stared at him aghast.

The Professor was holding the card in one of the candles on the dinner-table, where it made a nasty smoke and smell. He flung the charred remains on a plate, and drew a deep breath. "I don't know whose the card was, and now I never shall," he said. They were all far too impressed by his great intellect to imagine it could be clouded for a moment. So they only looked uncom-

fortably at each other. "These touts outside the hotels," said Edward, "ought to be stopped by the police."

"Why?" asked Thomasine.

"They tout for the music-halls," answered Edward, "and music-halls are very wicked places."

"I know that," said Thomasine.

"There are none at Bardwyk," said Laura. And again the remark was ill-chosen. For it called up before the eyes of all her four hearers, with the sounds of the Boulevard outside, the peaceful Dutch home, in the simple green village, the stately square house amidst its ancestral meads. Laura, the stranger, had never seen Bardwyk: what could it be to her? She had been thinking of its repose, of its dignity, as things most desirable, and that is why she had spoken. But the Baroness only answered dryly, "No."

"The dear old place," said Thomasine.

"We must reply to the telegram," said Edward. He, the heir, was longing to ask them not to mention Bardwyk again, but Edward had from his father that almost extravagant dread of hurting the feelings of others.

"Will this money, this hundred thousand, save the situation?" demanded Laura. She had left her place and begun walking up and down the room—again to the annoyance of the Baroness, although, really, if Laura did anything well, it was walking. She reiterated her question, stopping short.

"I think it would," said the Professor. "At any rate it would save Bardwyk. We could settle up. I should retire."

"They must have it, then!" said Laura. Nobody answered her, till the Baroness began: "My dear, as I was saying, people unaccustomed——"

"They must have it: I will give it them!" cried Laura.

"You?" She heard Edward alone.

"Yes, dear one. I—I—I!" She stood for one moment looking at him, then, suddenly, she tore open the lace front of her loose dinner-gown, literally rending the flimsy material asunder in her haste, and loosening, with fevered hands, a broad soft-leather little bag that lay flat under her bosom, she scattered its contents in a shower of crumpled papers across the table, over the floor. She stood there pouring them forth, as it were, from her very breast, pouring them out, with eyes streaming towards him in the eager abandonment of her beautiful arms, pouring them out towards her lover. "They are mine! They are mine!" she repeated, "to give to you! I give them to you, dearest! They are mine! They are mine!"

She stopped at last exhausted, her dress all in disorder about her bosom, her face flaming, her hands limp. He was by her side: he had drawn her close: in the presence of the other Lisses he was murmuring broken words of endearment and of wonder. And every-

where around them lay bank-notes, bank-notes on table and floor.

"There is more than a hundred thousand," sobbed Laura; "a great deal more."

"And it is yours!" exclaimed the Baron. The Baroness only said, "Laura Baleyne, I entreat you to forgive me!" But this caused Laura to cry so much more that the fat little great lady had to step off her chair and kiss the Sumatran in Edward's arms. Then they all set to gathering up the banknotes, Dutch and foreign, each of them for so huge an amount, especially the English ones, that the packet was only a thin one, when flattened out, in the end, upon the table.

"And you carry this enormous fortune about with you!" exclaimed the Professor. "In a bundle!" cried his wife. "In three separate ones!" wept Laura; "and I'm so thin it doesn't show!" Then she stopped crying. "My own father wished it to be so," she said. "If you don't much mind, I should like to have a little talk with Edward." The others, bewildered by what was befalling them, left the lovers alone.

"Edward," she said, sitting down, while he stood beside her, "I am glad this has happened, and sorry. You mustn't mind." She placed one finger on the pile of bank-notes. "The money is mine, and it isn't mine."

"O Laura!" Then he waited.

"I will tell you all. It is a long story. You must

listen. I would rather not have told you. It is a painful story."

"Dearest, surely we should have no secrets from each other."

"Yes, I know: that is what people say. But when the secret is a third person's, I am not so sure. However, now there is no choice. My—my mother left my father. She ran away." There was a long pause: Laura, her eyes on her hands, blush after blush mantling her southern skin, was evidently trying to master the emotion in her throat.

He stooped and took the hands in his own and kissed them. He did not speak.

"She left her money behind her: he had it. From the day she ran away she disappeared: he never heard of her again. He could not trace her. He would not touch her money: he said they were divorced. It was hers again. So it accumulated—it doubled. One day, a couple of years ago, we received a letter from a lawyer in America saying she had died there, and enclosing a certificate of her death. That was all we ever heard." Again she hesitated. He pressed the hand he held.

"When my father was dying, not long after, quite towards the end, he—he told me all about this money, and he gave me all of it, like that, just as I have given it to you. He had sent for it from the bank, sold out—what do you call it?—when he knew he was going to—

not to get better. He told me he had sold the—the investments, because, I not being of age, there would be so much legal trouble about every form of having it but bank-notes. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," said Edward. "In India especially they would have made you a Government ward."

"It's all right if you understand," said Laura contentedly. "So father told me to take the money with me to Europe, and to keep it by me, and never to speak of it to anyone. 'For, if you once give it to another person,' he said, 'a banker, or anyone else, they won't allow you to have it back.' He was very nervous and very ill in his terrible fever. I don't know if he was right."

"He was certainly correct," replied Edward cautiously.

"So I put all the money in slips in a bag fitting just round here, and I wore it day and night."

"Night! What a risk!" said Edward, partly to himself, terrified at the thought of possibilities. "How could you sleep a wink with such a breast-plate as that?"

"It wasn't comfortable," she answered, "but you see, father said it was the only way. Oh, you mean thieves? I never thought of thieves. I never heard of anybody being robbed. Did you? And, as for that, banks fail, don't they? and companies go smash. Oh, I never was afraid of thieves."

"But, at any rate, the money is yours, dear—only

not being of age, they would not allow you to have it. But it's yours."

She turned the full gaze of her lustrous eyes upon him: there was such a weird light in them that he could hardly, with his own clear blue ones, encounter it. "Now that," she said, "is just what I wanted to tell you, only it is so difficult. You will laugh at me, as you have laughed before." She took both his hands, as he had taken hers. "Don't laugh at me!" she said piteously. "It is so dificult to tell you, and I must. I do not believe that my mother is dead." Her voice had dropped to a whisper. Bending down he just caught the words.

"But you had the certificate," he said.

"Yes; I don't care about the certificate. She has spoken to me so often since, and told me not to believe it."

"Spoken to you? But who sent it then?"

"She speaks in my sleep, my trance—call it what you like. She doesn't speak—she guides my pencil: she writes—she writes many things. I do not always understand them all. Now laugh!"

"Laura, you must never say that to me again. I never laughed through my father's illness, least of all have I laughed to-day. Who told you how James Graye felt, when all his life he had been unable to tell anyone?"

"She first began speaking to me after my father's death," continued Laura. "She told me that she had

sent him the certificate and the letter, because she wished him to be free. Now, how could I ever have imagined that?"

"I do not affirm that you imagined it. You mustn't mind my confessing to you that I am not prepared as yet to believe in direct communication between mortals and a 'spirit' world, but the possibility of some form of telepathy we scientists can hardly any longer deny."

"Then you see that my mother is alive," she cried joyfully; "you see that. You say she is alive!"

"If she speaks to you, she must certainly be alive."

Her face fell. "Honestly," he added, "you must give me time."

"The money is hers, for she lives," persisted Laura doggedly, "but she has always told me to use it, when an emergency came, and therefore it is mine."

"The emergency has come, certainly," he replied, looking away to the pile of bank-notes. "All the same, the money being yours does not make it ours." She put her hand across her mouth. "Now I have told you all," she said, "take me home. I am very tired, Edward, and you must be almost dead."

CHAPTER XV.

NEXT morning Edward, having spent an almost sleepless night, and held a brief consultation in the morning with his father (who had slept on Jenkins' Pills), telegraphed to Uncle Francis that he must come over to Paris immediately to elucidate his transactions. The answer soon arrived that the Colonel had started, bringing Mr. Abrahams along with him.

Before that answer reached the hotel Edward had, however, departed to see his patient. There was an important consultation at ten. The operation, as has been said, had been completely successful. The patient was in imminent danger.

After the departure of the other great doctors—of the great doctors, rather, for Edward was by no means a great doctor as yet—the young man, his whole heart one mass of burning anxiety for his patient and worry for his parents, remained alone with Kenneth Graye. Kenneth, for the moment, was not good company. He had fallen into a moody stupor, repeating to himself: "What will be, will be. Kismet. Ananke. To bear is

to conquer our fate, and all that sort of thing. Mental chloroform."

When Miss MacClachlin came to inquire, at daybreak, he roused himself to tell her that some people cried out, however much chloroform they got given them. "Which shows," he said, "that chloroform's no good."

"You've been up all night," replied Miss MacClachlin. "As for chloroform, this morning, before Paris awoke, more than two thousand brute beasts, shrieking for mercy, with horror-struck eyes, were cruelly slaughtered at La Villette alone! And yesterday it was the same thing, and to-morrow it will be the same. The whole world is one great death-pit of torture. Are you a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals?"

"Yes," replied Kenneth, smiling in spite of himself. "Does that include giving up eating meat?"

"It ought to include buying your meat of merciful butchers only," said Miss MacClachlin, with decision. "It ought to include the Siegmund Mask, and all that sort of thing. But it doesn't. People are so inconsistent. I knew a woman who subscribed to the Society and hunted. The toad!"

Kenneth did not answer. "I am close on forty," said Maria. (Since Kenneth had declined her proposal, she, from some feminine instinct of self-abasement, rapidly aged herself.) "One thing I have learned about

my fellow-creatures. The masses do what they like, and the classes do what other people do. My poor butcher-boys at La Villette have a better time, really, than all the fine ladies of Mayfair. But they're all wrong—all, both the cheerful brutes and the shiny serpents. And outside them lies Christianity, a dead letter: "Do unto others——" There, there, it's very disheartening, and one would like a good gulp of chloroform: only, as you say, they cry out all the same. Meanwhile, I prefer my bellowing beeves to the—— There, I won't abuse my own sort. Good-bye!"

This conversation had braced Kenneth in parts: he felt fragmentarily more cheerful. "Everybody that's worth his salt has a bad time here below," he reflected, "salting and getting salted. Miss MacClachlin's right. Only the salt that has lost its savour is happy on the dunghill of Mayfair. Look at her, away from that exquisite place in Scotland, in the reek of La Villette!"

"What forces you have to fight against!" he said to Edward, as they came away from the patient, moaning in his fevered sleep. "Disease in a sick body is like the—what's its name?—Hydra!"

"There are worse forces than disease," replied Edward.

"Mental, you mean? One's own thoughts. Yes, indeed!"

"I was self-righteously thinking of the wickedness of

others," replied honest Edward. "Wicked men are the worst to fight, I think. I don't understand about them. Nature at least fights fair."

"I don't agree with you a bit."

"She fights according to rules; only we don't always know them. We must find them out."

"How can you say so! That shows the difference of temperament: what a big human world it is! Now, to me Nature seems the ficklest, falsest of foes, always striking in the dark, and the back. I don't mind fighting men. Especially not, when it's a question of defence. I could get my back to the wall and feel happy till I dropped. I suppose that's my Scotch nature. Still, you Dutchmen ought to be good at a stubborn fight."

"I was not thinking of that sort of open war," replied Edward; "I was thinking of intrigue, and swindling, and fraud."

"Well, even there, I shouldn't mind. I should enjoy acutely the thought that the swindler was getting the worst of it. And, do you know, I imagine, if you will forgive me, that he would. Of course that's my Aberdonian conceit. The Jew story."

"What Jew story?"

Kenneth laughed outright. "Wise men say there are only six good stories going in the world since Adam, but it's an immense satisfaction that there's always a

man hasn't heard all six. There was a Jew came to Aberdeen—— What is it, Barton?"

"I wonder, Mr. Graye, would Mr. Lisse mind having just a look at Sir James?" Under Barton's impassive manner, and his mask, had flashed out for the last day or two, almost ceaselessly, an anxiety which only the continuous presence of Edward could allay.

When the two men went back to the sitting-room, Edward's mind was made up. Therefore he spoke suddenly, as we do when we break resolutely through our reserve. "I have no one to confide in but you. And it is part of my duty to your nephew that my mind should keep as cool as I can manage. The worst fight awaits me this evening, because I know nothing of the weapons." And he told his sympathetic companion all the little he could. They sat some time in silence, thinking it over: at length Kenneth took the pipe from his lips.

"I owe you about as big a debt as any man can owe another," he said slowly. "Whether James gets better or not, you've given all your mind to him for months, and you've found out about his pain, and you've done what you could, at any rate, to stop *that*. We won't say any more about it just now! All right: thanks! I only mean to point out that if there's anything you could possibly think I might be able to do for you, I should remain your debtor, however much it was, just the same."

"If you could help me to understand the man's figures——" said Edward hesitatingly.

"That is just what I was thinking of; only I hardly knew how to propose it. You see, I don't pretend to be good for much, but I do know about finance—administration of property and that sort of thing. I've had to. I've been looking after my nephew *and* his property all this time, doing little else. Why, I know almost as much about these things as Miss MacClachlin, which is saying"—he laughed—"a good deal."

"L'amie des bouchers?"

"Yes, she says she don't understand her agent's accounts, and I'm sure she believes it. But she's as sharp as a needle to prick a penny gone wrong!—and generous beyond—— Hullo, here's Dr. Ducrot!"

"It is marvellous! Marvellous!" cried the French doctor, entering. *"Mes compliments! Encore une fois tous mes compliments, mon cher collègue!"*

"You are too good," answered Edward for the twentieth time, if not to this collaborator—or shall we say confederate?—then to another.

But, walking away, after an inspection of the unconscious patient, across the deserted garden, with the young Dutchman beside him, the proprietor of the Etablissement Ducrot waxed more practical.

"Un moment!" he had said to Edward on the *perron*. They strolled slowly between the leafless shrubs and the

clumps of rhododendron. The fat man with the bulging frock-coat squinted down at his rosette. "If this thing succeeds," he said, "if you can make this English Sir talk somewhat, show a little more sense than before, your reputation is established. Honours will come to you fast."

"My first thought is to ease his pain," replied Edward. "I shall be happy enough, if I can do that."

"Yes. You are lucky in your first patient. Pecuniarily also. He is rich, of course, like all these English milords. He is rich that he burst! Have you discussed as yet your fee with Charcot?"

"No," said Edward violently. But the doctor's red face did not alter in any way. "Well," he answered, with dignified reserve, "I should say you could certainly ask, for this treatment, a hundred thousand francs, or why not five thousand pounds? They prefer to count in their own way, and an odd way it is—five thousand sterlings—eh?—five thousand golden guinea sterlings. It sounds well. Sir Graye, this is my little bill for finding your noble nephew's brain—a marvellous new thing in science! How much?—not much: no—five thousand guinea sterlings."

"He is in the greatest danger!" cried Edward.

"But that does not alter the matter of the little bill. It is a big business: there will be many to pay."

"I do not want any money at all," exclaimed the exasperated Edward.

Ducrot stood still, and now, certainly, his face altered: the grizzled whiskers seemed to curl up round a purple sun. "Impossible!" he shouted. "Ridiculous! Absurd! You injure, you insult the whole profession! Pray, what is to become of us? And of our rightful share? Charcot has certainly a right to ten per cent., for he got you the patient; and I, of course, as you are doubtless aware, receive ten per cent. of all doctors' charges besides my own, in this establishment. You would be robbing us, monsieur, by charging less than five thousand guinea-pounds! I certainly shall place my percentage on that basis. I expect, monsieur, five hundred golden sterlings. I am entitled to them!" A lady passed, coming from a side-walk—a patient. He took off his tall hat with a broad smile and a wide sweep. "And how are your neuralgias, madame? Better? Ah, I am so glad." Then he dropped his voice, and, more calmly: "But, of course, you do not mean what you say. It would be the end, in the beginning, of your career."

"You must let me think about it, Monsieur Ducrot," answered Edward courteously. "This question of payment is quite new to me. It seems an absurd thing that a man should be paid for experimenting on a poor fellow-creature as I have done."

Dr. Ducrot shrugged his shoulders. "I do not under-

stand you," he said acridly. "You had better go for information to some older colleague whom you can trust. Farewell! But remember, I beg of you, that five hundred pounds is my legitimate share."

"Of the plunder," said Edward, alone in the street, between his teeth. But he soon found out how greatly he wronged Ducrot. The claims that came in from other quarters fitted perfectly into the proprietor's statement of the case.

"And what percentage is due," asked Edward of one of the young Salpétrière doctors, "to the medium who decided me to undertake the operation by certifying the existence of constant pain? I should never have risked it but for that. She is the author of the whole thing!"

The young doctor laughed. "We call her a patient, not a professional," he said. "As yet, we do not pay our patients. Have you seen the Professor's latest extraordinary case of this transmission of nerve-action? Oh, you must come. There are two women in one ward, great friends, one of them is deaf and dumb, the other only hysterical. When the two are joined in a hypnotic trance, the hysterical woman is deaf and dumb too. She hears absolutely nothing, not a pistol fired behind her ears!"

"I must come and see that," replied Edward.

"There is no difficulty about that: it is not like telepathy," remarked the young doctor.

"No, telepathy is certainly the great mystery of the moment," said Edward, "for such of us, at least, as do not believe in the miracles of spiritism—the"—he stared the young French doctor full in the face—"the communication of impressions from a distance, the fact, proved by experience and entirely unexplained as yet by science, that people occasionally see and hear sights and sounds that are beyond the reach of their eyes and ears. The thing exists."

"The thing exists," replied the young assistant, "and if Charcot live long enough, he will explain it."

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT 3rd of January was the most crowded and the most emotional—the flurriedest—day of the poor Professor's life. Hasty arrangements had been made in the whole scientific world of the city to do him some sort of immediate honour—all sorts of honour—rather harum-scarum, while preparations and pressure were busy with plans for a great official banquet and reception. The quiet old man, who would have disliked that sort of thing, while accepting it as an honour to his nationality, at all times, was now carried round protesting that urgent business, never for a moment out of his memory, would probably recall him to Leyden next day. With "*mais non! mais non*'s!" vociferating all around him, he was wondering what disaster awaited him in Holland: as he entered the great lecture-room of his greatest living colleague, and all the cosmopolite auditory rose up and cheered him to the echo, he was calculating at what hour of the evening he would find himself face to face with Mr. Abrahams—of Abrahams, Moss, Moses, de Mont-

morency and Company, Bankers. The Baroness, unfit for these medical celebrations, had been carried off by Laura to inspect, with more curiosity than interest, Miss MacClachlin's *Œuvre* at the Abattoirs. Thomasine accompanied her father where ladies could penetrate at all. After her peaceful, if occasionally painful, studies with her brother, the sight of some of the lady-students, for instance, the strenuous Slavs, was rather a shock to her. They were not in Thomasine's line. But the clamorous enthusiasm all around her father imparted to that breathless day in Paris a living delight for all later musings that easily effaces any vexatious impression of momentary money trouble. The absence of Edward, tied down to Sir James Gray's pillow, was a far more real sorrow, as she stood, listening, by her father's side.

"It is wonderful, but wearing," gasped the Professor, as he sank into an armchair in his own sitting-room. The long winter evening had fallen.

"Your brother will be here in a couple of hours," said the Baroness a little tremulously. "By-the-bye"—her face broadened to a full smile, as when the sun breaks triumphant through clouds—"I found five newspaper reporters waiting for you when I got back from the Mercy for the Muttons business. I interviewed them all, or I should say, I let them interview me. They were

exceedingly sympathetic about *Balaam*. I read them pieces, and they said they were delighted by the sound. Liriam's great speech to the king is to appear in the *Temps*. I expect a proof to-night. I wonder if Thomasine could manage a French translation?"

"Not metrical, mamma," said Thomasine.

The Baroness smiled. "No; none of my children have my gift. Edward was a great disappointment; that was, after his infant *début*. Well, well, he has disappointed you too, Thomas, all his life long, but he's coming right in the end."

"He will be a bigger man than I," said the Professor. "And a wiser one, I trust," he added with a sigh.

"At least he will have no brother to ruin him," said the lady. She thrust her hand among the Professor's pile of letters, cards, and invitations, the accumulation of the afternoon's successive posts. "All these!" she said. "Let me look if my proof is among them."

"Don't let us judge Francis till we know everything," remonstrated the Professor. "He says, 'recovery probable.'"

The Baroness vouchsafed no answer: she was maturing a base plan for inserting Imphi-Boshek, where most amply characterised as a fool, in the *Figaro*, a harmless but sufficiently sardonic revenge. "The *Figaro* is going

to bring an article on 'Wedded Genius,' my dear," she remarked, "whereby it means you and me."

But at this moment Laura, who had been listlessly sorting the envelopes, lifted one for closer scrutiny, and laid it down before the Professor. "That letter," she said, pointing, "is written by a thief."

"How so, my dear?" The Professor got his spectacles: he fumbled a good deal. "How so?"

"I suppose you don't believe in graphology; well, you needn't. But, in doubt abstain, as they say in French, and so don't have any business transactions with the writer of that letter; I tell you he's a thief."

The Professor had opened the envelope. An exclamation leaped from his lips. "It is a personal letter from the man Abrahams," he said, "with a number of technicalities I should never be able to make out!"

Laura had taken the letter. "Well, he's a thief," she said. "It' quite plain in his handwriting. There may be a lot of nonsense about graphology, but certain characteristics are unmistakable, and dishonesty, like vanity, is one of them. Your Mr. Abrahams will rob you, if he can."

"Of course: he's a banker," said the mediæval, muddle-headed Baroness.

"Why, my dear, that's the attitude of the Romish Church!" cried the Professor, always analytical.

"It has attitudes worth noting," replied his lady sagely.

"This Abrahams! This Abrahams!" said the Professor. And again, by no means for the first time that day, he took a pill. "So much the worse for me, if he is a thief! Heaven knows how I am to meet him! As for your graphology, I should think it highly probable the thing exists. And if so, it must be reducible to some form of science. I have not studied the subject, Laura. People's handwriting manifestly changes with their mental and moral development. Personally I am persuaded nothing would influence a man's mental growth as much as an injection of Semicolon Serum, if we could get it to reach the brain. It would be most interesting to compare a subject's writing before and after that injection. Most interesting. Most interesting." The Professor sat pondering: nobody interrupted him, when he did that. But there are many pseudo-sciences," he recommenced presently, "far better left uninvestigated. They have their use. Of such is legitimate quackery. Now, these pills"—he tapped the box—"it would be quite easy for me to analyse them. I should find nothing inside. But I am careful not to do so. I rejoice in their influence. Unanalysed they calm me, and send me to sleep." He sighed. "The world is very complicated," he said.

"It is full, full, full!" cried Laura—"full of intangible wonders on every hand."

"Properly analysed, my dear, you would probably find the whole thing was a single microbe," replied the Professor. "At present the theory is that it is a primal cell. Good heavens, how shall I fight this man! I don't understand a word he says!" With these words he rose to prepare for the spiritless dinner, a very different thing from the animated feast of the day before. Despite his abundance of conversational interests, the one engrossing thought came cropping up constantly of the approaching ordeal he felt so unfit to meet.

Before the meal was over the waiter brought in the card of Mr. Kenneth Graye. He was the bearer of a note from Edward. "I dare not leave my patient. His temperature is 103. Consult Graye. You may trust him absolutely."

"My brother will be here in twenty minutes," said the Baron, "with the other—gentleman."

"Our idea—your son's and mine—was that I should appear as the person willing to advance the required sum," said Graye, established with a cup of coffee and a rudimental home-feeling amongst these kindly, simple folks. For Laura had a lazy smile for everybody, and the Baroness, like so many elderly women of her class,

looked far less dangerous at first sight than she, quite unconsciously, was.

"That, of course, would procure me a title to go into everything. And then, at least, I could give you my opinion, for what it is worth."

"I should indeed be glad of it," said the Professor. "Indeed I know nobody in Paris whom I could consult as to the exact difference between a bond and a share."

Kenneth felt not the slightest inclination to smile. The compact being now ratified, the little party awaited the early irruption of the two financiers. By the Englishman's advice, swiftly seconded, the men remained alone to meet the men.

"My dear Jane," said the Baron, "why not? You do not imagine I am afraid!"

The Colonel, brave soldier, looked the more disconcerted of the two brothers, when they stood opposite each other. Mr. Abrahams, naturally, seemed placidity itself. He was a thin, little, marble-faced man, with a black stand-up fringe round his polished skull, and lots of tiny grey veins about his keen eyes and his rounded nose.

"Yez, quite so," he said, dragging his words, "yez, an English shentleman, yez!"

"Who, I understand you to say, dear brother, would

be willing to advance the amount required?" spake the Colonel tremulously.

"If the state of affairs were fully explained to him," hastily subjoined the Professor.

"Possibly," put in Kenneth.

"Oh, possibly, of course," corrected the Professor.

"If the state of affairs were fully explained to him," said Kenneth. Mr. Abrahams half lifted his drooping lids and took a long stare at the speaker.

"I shall be only too pleased to find a good investment for my money," added Kenneth, amiably returning the stare. "Mr. Abrahams will be so kind as to go into particulars, I am sure. He will remember that he has to do with three men who are none of them, strictly speaking, men of business."

"Ah, that is always such a difficulty!" said Mr. Abrahams. "You are not in commerce?"

"No."

"I had wished that you were."

"I am sorry, but it can't be helped," said Kenneth. Mr. Abrahams, opening his cigar-case, slowly selected a cigar. Kenneth looked at the Baron, who nodded. "May I smoke? Oh, thanks," said Kenneth, hastily producing his pipe. "It does clear the brain," he added. All lighted up. Dutchmen soon do.

Brains, in another five minutes, needed more clearing

than they got. Mr. Abrahams explained a great deal, especially his explanations. They required a lot of explaining—all felt that, even he—and the more he explained, the plainer it became that they wanted just a little beyond what they were getting. From the little muddle of papers heaped up before the Colonel, Mr. Abrahams extracted what evidence he deemed necessary. The Colonel, suddenly called upon for a document, invariably produced the wrong one: Mr. Abrahams, through his pince-nez, selected another. "Oh yes, of course: I beg your pardon. How stupid of me!" said the Colonel. As for the facts which had to be explained, or explained away, they were simple enough. Mr. Abrahams had undertaken, on behalf of Colonel Lisse, vast speculations in petrol and rubber, especially petrol. It appears that, unfortunately, under Mr. Abrahams' supervision, the Colonel and these products had played a sort of see-saw with each other, for when the market dropped, the Colonel was playing for a rise, and when the market rose, he was playing for a fall. It is, therefore, not so difficult to understand that, having been warned when things were "down," he should have hurried to congratulate his brother on seeing them "up." His instructions, with regard to most of these transactions, had been verbal, excepting two or three brief notes—"The blue envelope, I think. No, not that one"

—the eye-glass—"Thanks"—which clearly bore out Mr. Abrahams' assertions. As things stood at present—and really Messrs. Abrahams, Moss, Moses, de Montmorency and Company had been almost invariably lenient in the matter of cover—as things stood at this moment, it looked like madness to realise.

"And like madness to continue," said the Professor. He had long ago lost the thread on which Mr. Abrahams strung his ciphers, but he understood as much as that. The sums paid in by the Colonel already were enormous. There was a painful silence after the Professor's remark. It was broken by a knock, and a waiter, and another visiting card.

"Pasteur!" said the Professor aloud. He rose in the greatest agitation. "I will come down," he said, "immediately. Gentlemen, you must excuse me. Even this crisis of my life, for such it is, cannot allow me to keep Pasteur waiting at my door." He bowed to them all and hurried from the room.

"We cannot decide, in any case, to-night," remarked Kenneth.

"But we must. I have only time here in Paris till to-morrow noon-day. And I have a most important matter, far more important than this, at eleven o'clock."

"This matter is important as far as it goes," replied Kenneth coolly. "Nothing could be done to-night, if we

wished. I cannot leave my nephew, who is very ill, but if you will come to me to-morrow at ten, we can settle the business. You lose nothing by that."

"Ah, it is the nephew on whom Dr. Lisse performs the great operation, the English milord!" said Abrahams.

"Dr. Lisse has operated on my nephew," answered Kenneth.

"Ah!" Mr. Abrahams' "Ah!" expressed approval of English milords, immense operations and resultant wealth. "Well, yes. I will manage to come to-morrow," he said. He had never had an English milord among his clients before. "And Colonel Lisse will kindly leave me these papers," said Kenneth. The Colonel left them with alacrity.

"I cannot say good night to the Baron: perhaps I might see Mademoiselle for a moment. I must get back to Auteuil," said Kenneth,—the Colonel was preparing to escort Mr. Abrahams to another hotel. Thomasine came from the inner room and stood facing Kenneth, in pretty maiden confusion, for thought of their first meeting the day before.

"This man is a thief," said Kenneth.

Thomasine started. "So said Miss Baleyne."

"She was right then. Yes, he is a common thief."

"So we shall get our money back!" said Thomasine. "Through the police."

He smiled a very joyless smile. "No, for he is a successful thief," he answered. "The law never touches a successful financier. And it always can find terms to arrest and condemn, *if it wishes,* one that has failed. Perhaps you have never noticed that?"

"I know so little of these things," said Thomasine.

"Naturally. I think I may say, that this Mr. Abrahams has not only swindled and defrauded, but actually thieved. However, if we went to a lawyer, he would doubtless say there was no redress. There never is."

"What, then, must we do?" said Thomasine.

"May I explain? Just one minute. When I first began to look after my nephew's affairs, I soon came into contact with a couple of cases of manifest rascality. I remember so well going to our lawyer, quite simply: 'Would you just put this right for me? Get these people condemned.' He was an honest man, and he told me at once that the right was on my side and the law on theirs. 'And, if it wasn't,' he said, 'they'd bring it round to their side, by trickery and perjury—they always do. In legal proceedings no honest man ever stands a chance against a rogue.' That was a lawyer's verdict. I don't know about your country, but it's bound to be the same."

"How dreadful! We never had anything to do with

law before," said Thomasine. Her eyes filled with indignant tears, but she drove them back.

"Do you know what one of our greatest chancellors —greatest lawyers, you know—said? If a man, in the street, were to demand my coat or threaten legal proceedings, I should leave him my coat and walk on in my shirt. That, in all my memories, is the most awful condensation of human suffering into one sentence that I know. That little story has actually saddened my life. If I brutally tell it to you, it is because I want to explain, brutally, why I can give you so little assistance, why I smiled—Heaven help me: I felt that you saw it—when you said: 'Through the police!' An honest man against a clever rogue has but one means—brute force."

"My father cannot employ that," said Thomasine.

For a moment he did not answer. Perhaps, in his mind's eye, he was watching a free fight between Mr. Abrahams and the Professor. "The man is coming to me to-morrow," he said, "and I believe I shall be able to do something with him. At any rate we shall release the Colonel out of his toils. It is so good of you all to trust me, a complete stranger, in this matter. I cannot tell you how I feel it. It is a quite new experience for me. I—I feel it deeply." The conclusion was lame: he wisely stopped.

"We—it is we must thank you very gratefully," said Thomasine.

"I hope you may yet have some little cause. In any case I will do my very best. But I wanted you to be sure you could trust me to do that." He looked at her.

"Yes, we can trust you to do that," she replied.

"And my best isn't law and lawyers," he said. He took her hand, wondering whether, in the foreign way, he oughtn't to—mightn't—kiss it? But he came to the hurried conclusion, that, probably, when you felt no desire to do so, it was the proper thing to do.

On his way home he matured his plan. "If you please, Mr. Graye," said Barton, "Sir James just moans and moans."

"He has his share of life," said Kenneth. He turned from the door. Edward stood behind him.

"You think all life is suffering," said Edward.

"No. I think, for some natures it is a long placidity, and for others it is all torrent and spray. The whole thing is a question of temperament. I fear I can sympathise with James: he is very untutored. He cries in his pain, but you never felt pleasure to equal his dinner."

"You are bitter," said Edward, almost tenderly, "especially about yourself."

"I admit that life is hardest for the best. James is an idiot."

"And you are not."

"No. A hundred times I have wished I were." His voice sounded from unknown depths.

"Why do you say that, Graye? It is not a right thing to say."

"Don't ask me why I say it: I have the best of reasons." His back was turned to his friend.

"You are sorry for us," said Edward frankly; "you see this rogue triumphant: it sickens you to see him. I admit that the people who care about the sufferings of others suffer in this world almost more than human flesh can bear. I admit that fully. Almost all great suffering is vicarious. The people who enjoy life are the people who confine themselves to their own immediate pabulum. Very well. Like cows."

"Don't malign the dumb creatures."

"I only mean that when a cow ruminates, it never chews another's cud."

Kenneth lighted his pipe. "I sha'n't ruminate any more. What made a doctor of you, Edward Lisse?" He veered round. "Why don't you answer? Was it pity for your own sufferings? Your health seems to me pretty good."

"My father was a doctor," said Edward uncomfortably.

"Yes, curiosity made a doctor of your father, and pity made a doctor of you." He held out his hand. "Good night! You will, if you live but a little longer, leave the world a trifle happier than you found it. What mortal could desire more! But I?"

"Whatsoever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might," replied Edward. "That's in the Bible, isn't it? Or something similar. I am not in the habit of quoting the Bible at people, but I leave that for you to ruminate, Kenneth Graye."

CHAPTER XVII.

"I THINK I have made the situation very manifest," said Mr. Abrahams to Kenneth. They were sitting in the little dark dining-room, away from the sick-chamber and the bright front of the house. Mr. Abrahams had spread out the bits of papers and gone into those unfortunate details.

"Oh, very manifest," answered Kenneth. "I hope you found that cigar pretty decent? You don't mind my pipe?"

"The cigar is a dream," said the financier, who could be poetical on some subjects. "These, you see, are the deplorable figures. If there is any other question you would ask, I shall be only too pleased to reply to it."

"There is one question I should still like to ask," answered Kenneth, sorting the banker's memoranda, according to their dates, as they had been sent in to Colonel Lisse. Abrahams and he had been busy for forty minutes: he was sick of the man.

"It is this," he said, selecting a paper, and laying it before the financier. "Why is this one so different from the rest?"

"Different? How do you mean?" The banker's voice was quite steady: only his clammy cheek turned a little grey.

"Well, you see wherein it is different from all the rest!"

"I must beg of you to explain your meaning," said Mr. Abrahams stiffly.

"Every one of these statements of sales has under it the words: "For which we accordingly credit your account, value to-day." All of the smaller ones have. But here is one of an enormous sale of stock—eighty-five thousand florins odd—on which the words are missing. How comes that?"

"If the words are missing, it is of course because the account was not credited," replied the stockbroker insolently. Yes, his tone was suddenly insolent: he coolly relighted his cigar. The insolence of the tone decided Kenneth: it was all he needed. It subsequently meant a small fortune to the Lisses.

"And why was it not credited, do you think?"

"Because it was paid out of hand, of course."

"A cash payment! It is a large sum for a cash payment."

"That depends on the business," said Mr. Abrahams, with a lofty lift of his oriental eyebrows.

"Undoubtedly. Still——" Kenneth glanced at the paper. On the seventeenth of November, a cash pay-

ment of eighty-five thousand odd. Your cash account, of course, would bear that out?"

"Of course it would. Do you doubt it?"

"I do not doubt it." Kenneth could not quite keep the sneer out of his voice. "It is unfortunate that the Colonel does not remember the cash payment of so enormous a sum."

"The poor stupid Colonel is a brave soldier," said Mr. Abrahams. "May I take another of those most excellent cigars?"

"Help yourself. Colonel Lisse is a bad man of business: he avers that he never received any money—this enormous sum would have had to be paid in bank-notes—but that all payments were credited by you to his account."

"He is a bad man of business," said Mr. Abrahams, lighting up.

"But not so bad as to forget receiving, say, eighty-five bank-notes, and the rest. Do you think he dropped them or lost them?"

"Do *you* think that a banking-house—even so great an one as ours—could make a mistake about one cent. in its cash payments and not hunt down that mistake before the day closed?"

"No," said Kenneth, and he went round and locked the door.

"What do you mean? What do you mean to in-

sinuate?" cried Mr. Abrahams, half rising. "Let me tell you, sir, that in my country properly kept books are evidence, legal evidence!"

"I don't doubt it," replied Kenneth, standing thoughtfully by the door. "That's just the sort of infamous enactment lawyers would make. I daresay it's the same in my country. Legal evidence—against an honest man's word—a tradesman's cooked accounts—by G——!"

"You insinuate! You insinuate!" cried Abrahams in a loud fury, behind which he hid his funk. He was not a man of violent measures, his success had been made by smiles and sneers. The locking of the door had greatly disconcerted him.

"I insinuate nothing. I state that those few words were intentionally omitted. The thing is beautifully simple, when you come to think of it. I suppose the Colonel ought to have noticed the omission when he got your memorandum. But what would that have availed him, even if he had written at once? Your books are legal evidence! By Jove!"

"I am a swindler, then? A common swindler!" stammered Mr. Abrahams. His sharp eyes went black.

"Why use the word? And really your method is so simple a child might have applied it. Simple and beautifully complete!"

"The law, sir, will decide between us. We shall see

whether you have the right to call me—me—me!" he pointed to his breast, "a swindler."

"I have called you no such thing. But I certainly shall not contradict you. I haven't time. You are due somewhere at eleven. It is a quarter to. You have just time to put those words, which were omitted, at the foot of that account."

"You are mad."

"Not yet," said Kenneth in his saddest voice.

"It is absurd."

"It becomes less absurd," said Kenneth, "when I tell you it must be done at once."

"You use violence! You threaten?"

"Not exactly. But you can't leave this house till it is done."

"I will cry out. I will rouse the neighbourhood!"

"You may cry out as much as you like, but you will not rouse the neighbourhood. This is a sort of private asylum, and ours is the quietest corner of the grounds. Did anyone hear you, they would think it was my nephew."

"It is a *guet-apens!*"

"Call it whatever you like, but write 'for which amount we accordingly credit your account, value to-day.' That's all."

"I will never do it." Mr. Abrahams put his hands behind his back.

"Then you will not keep your appointment at eleven."

"I must!" shrieked Abrahams. "And I must leave for Amsterdam at twelve!"

"You will do neither."

"I must. I must telegraph to Amsterdam. I must."

Mr. Abrahams, as has been said, was eminently fitted for warfare, but not of this downright sort. And he had told the truth in stating that the interests which had brought him to Paris were far greater than the Baron's paltry ruin.

"I don't threaten, but you had better make up your mind. Ah!" Kenneth snatched the paper off the table. "You were going to tear it up, were you, you rascally thief! Oh, I know you are a great banker, an honourable banker—I can see the little rosette in your buttonhole! But now, I *will* threaten. If you tear this up, I shall dash your brains out with yonder bottle." He nodded to the sideboard. "No, I haven't a revolver about me, but the bottle will quite do. You don't expect me to do it: I can see that in your eyes. But you will, when you hear that you're locked in with a madman. Quite a pretty sort of madman, if you treat him properly, but a madman all the same, and a nasty madman, if you treat him wrongly!" He advanced towards the shrinking banker. His dark face glowed: his black eyes were blazing with a frantic fire: his whole voice had changed to a scream: with one hand he caught at the

bottle and swung it on high. "Fool," he shrieked, "scoundrel fool, to have raised the devil in me." He flung the paper on the table. "There it lies! Destroy it, if you dare! If you do, you will keep your next appointment in hell!"

The banker fell back into the farthest corner and cried out: Kenneth laughed.

No one came. The clock hurried on. Kenneth spoke again; "Write quickly and get away. If you wait much longer, it may be too late. I cannot hold out much longer. I have been yearning to kill you, ever since you came into the room."

"It is robbery with violence," wailed the banker.

"Don't talk much more! And don't ask for explanations! But listen to me, for God's sake! When I say to you: write and go." He steadied himself, keeping down his arms by a visible effort. His voice and the change of his face were so terrible that Abrahams stammered: "Mercy!"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake write and go!" Abrahams glanced at the window, at the door, at the clock, at the man standing before him, a compressed fury, with the loaded bottle in one hand. The man, seeing the glances, laughed again, and as the stockbroker heard that laugh, he seized the pen and with trembling fingers wrote the sentence required of him. The other took the paper and read the words aloud. Then he drew the key

from his pocket and flung it on the table. "Go!" he said. "You will get the Colonel's instructions to-morrow. Go!"

When the banker had fumbled and stumbled himself out of sight, Kenneth Graye sank his head on the table —on the little heap of papers—with a groan, then another—and another—long, shuddering, like the death-agony of a wounded beast.

Thus Barton found him a full hour later. "Mr. Kenneth!" said the frightened servant, "Mr. Kenneth! For God's sake bear up!"

Kenneth looked at him stupidly. "It's all right, Barton," he stammered. "I'm—oh, it's all right: you mustn't mind."

"Mr. Lisse was asking for you, sir—shall I tell him you're not well?"

"Yes—yes."

"Or, perhaps, it'd be better for you to see him—change your thoughts. I ought to have disobeyed your orders, when I heard you crying out!"

"I didn't cry out—did I? The—the man I had business with cried out. Is that you, Lisse? Come in! I'm all right."

"What has happened to you?" asked Edward, looking fixedly at him.

"Nothing. It was rather an unpleasant interview, but I've got some of the money back."

"Don't let's talk of it now. James is better. Go and lie down."

"No, no, why should I? Where's my pipe?"

"Go and lie down in the dark—to please me: there's a good fellow! What you want is rest."

When Barton came back to Edward, the latter was still standing in the dining-room.

"Is your master often like this?" he asked.

"How do you mean, Mr. Lisse?"

"I ask you, is your master often like this?"

"And I take the liberty, sir, of asking you, how do you mean?"

"Do your best for him when he is," said Edward.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I AM a fool," said the Colonel.

"I beg your pardon?" remarked the Baroness, looking up from her newspapers. Half a dozen lay around her.

"I say that I am a fool, Jane."

"Nobody else has said it," replied the Baroness drily.

"Perhaps nobody knows so well as I," remarked her brother-in-law humbly. "Had you ever noticed the fact before, Thomasine?"

"No, uncle. Is a gentleman always a fool, when a thief succeeds in robbing him?"

"Dear girl," said the Professor, patting his daughter's hand.

"That may be as it may be," replied the Colonel gratefully. "All the same *I* am a fool, and I here make public confession of the fact. A man is a fool when he meddles and muddles in things he don't know about. And to rehabilitate—yea, that is the word—myself in the eyes of my family I hereby further announce that I am going to return to the one thing I *do* know about.

I have written this morning to the Minister volunteering for active service in Acheen."

There was a general outcry. "At your age!" said the Baroness.

"I am over fifty," replied Colonel Lisse.

"Is it wise? Is it necessary?" asked his brother.

"As for that, I must leave others to judge. But things are going to the dogs there to such an extent, that I can hardly do much harm." At this moment Kenneth Graye was announced. "Mr. Graye," said the Colonel, "I do not know whether you are aware that Cæsar was a very bad hand at all money matters. I have no wish to compare myself with Cæsar; all I mean is, you may be a good soldier, and a fool about pounds, shillings, and pence. I am going back to try and get some more work where *this* came from"—they all noticed that the Colonel wore his war-medal—"I start for the Hague this evening. If I fall, Thomas, you must put three F's on my grave under the bananas, three F's only —nothing more." He waited for them to ask what the three F's would stand for, but as nobody did so, he spake solemnly, annoyed:

"'Francis, Fighter, Fool.' But none of the nigger boys need know the meaning. Let them think it is: Francis fighting fell." He sat down heavily, and, in sepulchral tones, repeated: "Francis fighting fell."

"That is a beautiful thought," said the Baroness,

with a rapt expression. "The soldier's grave under the bananas. Francis fighting fell." After a moment she added: "It would be a memorable end, Francis. Worthy of the finest poem I could write."

"I sha'n't do it on that account," replied the Colonel, with sudden acerbity. "For King and Country, Thomas!"

"God send you safe back to us all!" said the Professor. The Baroness, who had been knitting her brows in thought, rose, looked at her watch, thrust her newspapers into a heap and marched up to her brother-in-law. "When all is said and done," she spake, "you are worthy of the name you bear, Francis Lisse." "'Tis a good name," said he. "And a great," asserted the Baroness, looking at her husband. "Three men bear it at this moment, and each of them is fighting as bravely as ever did the warrior knights of old. Mr. Graye," she said, "you alone know Paris; will you take me where I want to go?" On the stairs she added: "I am in a great hurry. Do you know the Rue Drouot?"

"Certainly. It isn't far." So they raced along the Boulevard together. She refused to let him call a cab. "I avoid their cabs," she said. "They ill-treat their horses so." He wondered whether she knew about the things rendered necessary by the very existence of the Institut Pasteur. Perhaps she guessed his thoughts. "My husband always calls out, 'Mind!'" she said vaguely, "and, of course, his experiments are a blessing to man-

kind. Oh, let's hurry; I'm afraid I shall be too late. Is this the street? And the office of the *Figaro?*"

"Come with me, I beg of you," she said, all flurry and nervousness. She gave her name. "Ah, the wife of the great scientist!" She was shown into a sub-editor's room. "Your article will be a great success, Madame la Baronne!" "I have come to stop it," she gasped. "At least, to take out part. The quotation from my poem."

The journalist stared at her with decent vexation. "But—impossible—the whole thing is set up!"

"Oh, not yet!" she pleaded. "Surely not yet! I felt sure I should be in time. Let me give you another piece!"

"But, Madame," remonstrated the editor, smiling at the poor author's vanity—the usual thing—"I regret to think, how few of our readers will be able to appreciate it. To these few, however, the description of"—he glanced at a sheet before him—"Imphi-Boshek will doubtless appeal."

"It cannot be changed?" said the Baroness helplessly.

"I greatly regret!" Monsieur Gardin lifted a deprecatory hand.

The Baroness joined Kenneth in the lobby. "Yes, I shall need to have a cab after all," she said. In the fiacre, she wiped her eyes. "I hope you don't mind seeing an old woman cry," she said.

"It makes me wretched to see a woman cry!" he answered. "I wish I could help you more."

"Oh, it's not the money," she answered. "I don't fancy money would ever make me shed tears. But I've lived fifty-five years without committing a mean action, and I've committed one now." He did not know what to answer, uncomfortable, locked up with this confession in a cab.

"It's a mean action known only to myself," she said. "It hurts nobody."

"That must surely diminish its meanness very considerably," he replied. But the Baroness said she did not agree with him and sobbed once or twice during the short drive back to the hotel. At the last moment, however, her femininity got the better of her. "I don't know what you may think," she said, "I've held up my brother-in-law to ridicule in the *Figaro*." He could not keep back his look of horror and alarm. What?—the whole money scandal? "It's only my own ridicule," she continued. "Nobody could possibly guess it was he, except my husband and son, and they won't see the paper."

"I'm afraid, Baroness," he said, as he helped her to alight, "the world is too full of crimes to make room for yours. Could I talk to you a moment about this money business?" he added. "I don't want to trouble the Professor. Shall I tell you?"

"Oh no, don't," she said pathetically. "Talk to Thomasine. I shouldn't understand. It really doesn't matter very much: I may say that, as you seem to care so kindly. If there isn't any money left, we can easily live without." And with head erect, and reddened eyes, she sailed into the sitting-room. "Thomasine," she said, "go and talk with Mr. Graye about these horrid investments! Tell him at any rate, that Laura has plenty, or he'll be wanting to give too much to Edward."

Alone with her husband, she added: "We have no call to live on charity yet."

"No, indeed: yet it looks rather like it with Laura."

"No, Thomas. If Laura pays for Bardwyk, it must belong to her and Edward. Surely, you don't want it?"

"My dear," replied the Professor, "can you imagine my wanting anything but my laboratory? As long as Bardwyk belongs to Edward, I am perfectly content,"

Meanwhile Kenneth was explaining to Thomasine, that the best thing her parents could do with the sum he had succeeded in recovering was to wind up all transactions with Abrahams, Moss, etcetera. "I am afraid there will not be much left," he said. "When all is settled, certainly not enough to keep up a large country-house——"

"But all that is so much simpler with us," she put in.

He pulled a face, and her heart sank.

"However, I understand that your future sister-in-law——" he hesitated.

"My sister-in-law is not us," she said. "We shall be very poor, then, shall we?" Before he could find an answer, she continued tremulously: "I may never see you again: I have been wanting to ask you—I shall not stay at home, with my two sisters coming back—I suppose you have many grand relations in your country—perhaps you could—could help me to find a place as governess. I have been very well educated——"

"You!" he exclaimed; "you, in your social position——"

"Don't you think that makes it easier?" she interrupted him. "One can never lose one's privilege of birth."

"You can hardly have an idea of the position of a governess in England."

"I know that your social distinctions are more clearly defined than ours. But that also makes things easier."

"But I should have thought, if you really decide on anything of the kind—nursing——"

"No, I could not be a nurse. You will mock at my reason: it sounds so conceited. I know too much of medicine!"

"But all nurses think they know a lot about medicine."

She laughed, in spite of her trouble. "How prettily

you put that," she said. "They think they do, and that keeps them happy. But I have studied with my brother, you know—I should see how things were going, and the doctor's mistakes—sometimes—and I couldn't stand that."

"As far as I am concerned," he answered almost roughly, "I am dead against you going as a governess, but of course I'll help you always, in any way I can."

"Thank you," she said, and he made up his mind that he could kiss her hand quite as easily as Laura's, who seemed gracefully to expect it.

"These tiresome money matters," said Laura. "These tiresome, tiresome money matters. Edward, why don't you take my money and pay the people and have done with it?"

"Dearest, you are not even of age."

She sat up, alarmed. "Oh, we can't wait till I'm twenty-three."

"That is not necessary. At least, I mean, your marriage'll put you right there."

"Oh, well then, let's marry at once! Take me to a church this afternoon, Edward, and use the money, and let's talk of something else."

"You'll want your guardian's consent. Who *is* your guardian? Uncle Francis, of course."

"I haven't got a guardian. Oh yes, your uncle Francis,

I suppose. But he doesn't know about the money, you see."

He sat thinking.

"When we are married," he said, "and you have bought Bardwyk, then Bardwyk will belong to you." She looked at him for a moment, as if she were going to cry; then she answered: "And I shall live in it all by myself." Whereupon he laughed and kissed her. "James is better this morning again," he said. "Only think—if he pulls through!"

"We will take him to Bardwyk," she replied, "and nurse him there. I have been thinking that might be our wedding trip. Edward, I don't think there ought to be these big houses standing empty—do you? Don't you think it's a wickedness in our days, with our views? You must put your patients away in Bardwyk, among the woods and the flowers, and nurse them back to life."

He took her in his arms again rapturously, and kissed her on her lips, on her eyes, on her hair.

"Hush! hush!" she murmured, her Oriental blood aflame. "Edward, dear, I wonder if your mother thinks me improved? I've been trying hard in Brussels to Europeanise myself, to make myself fit for the fine name you are going to give me. I fear I shall never be a great lady—but—but—oh, Edward, there's another thing troubles me so very much. My mother no longer speaks to me as she used to do." Two great tears

stood in her luminous eyes. He was silent. "Say something," she whispered. "Dearest, what shall I say?" "Some day you will believe when you understand," she said. "I try to understand, when I believe. Meanwhile, we will take your patients to Bardwyk, and you will study them there."

"The home of the Lisses a lunatic asylum!" says the Baroness. But the Professor thinks Laura is right.

The Professor, however, had more important things to think about. He got hold of Edward. "My boy," he said, "I hope you will not misunderstand me——"

"No, I quite agree with you," answered Edward, "and I told Kenneth Graye so."

"But we have not yet spoken of the matter."

"Yes, Graye told me he had offered to advance you the money till my marriage. He is a poor man, however—he did not tell you that—and the money——"

"Money! Money! I have other matters in my head than this everlasting money," exclaimed the Professor. "Will you listen for a moment, and let me talk sense?"

Edward composed his features. The Professor took a pill, at sight of which Edward considerately sat down. The Professor followed his example.

"My boy," said the Professor, "fate has willed that you should, most unexpectedly, be given the opportunity of making good whatever you may have marred eight years ago. Few men are so favoured."

"Dear father, what is it you refer to?" asked Edward.

"Boy, you cannot have forgotten—I never wished to speak of it again, but circumstances compel me—that night, when I had asked you to inject——"

"I have not forgotten; it decided my whole future," said Edward hastily.

"You do not regret that decision?" The Professor bent forward in keenest anxiety.

"I rejoice in it—now," replied Edward.

"I am glad of that; I am glad to have been the means," said the Professor complacently. And Edward, his heart full of thoughts of Laura, let the dear old father talk. "As I was remarking," continued the Professor, vainly trying to tranquillise his voice, "you are now offered an exceptional opportunity of putting the thing right. I do not deny that this was the consideration which brought me to Paris. The moment has come, Edward; the moment has come. You can now inject the serum direct into the open brain of Sir James Graye."

"Father!" cried Edward, aghast.

"It is absolutely certain that the result will be marvellous," declared the Professor. "Brown Sequard's rejuvenescent serum is absurd; he will prove that presently by dying. I cannot understand how the Academy can treat him seriously. But his theory is sound, and there is no doubt that the Semicolon serum, though it will not rejuvenesce, will successfully combat its own microbes.

What more do you want? It is supremely important at this moment to semicolonise James Graye's brains!"

"But, father——"

"But me no buts, but listen," interrupted the Professor angrily. "I have devoted my whole life to this thing: you see here in Paris with what success. I am certain of my result. It is perfectly scientific."

"I know that," said Edward.

"Then what is it? I shall not insult you by imagining for a moment that you want to keep your patient to yourself."

"No, please, father."

"I do not." The Professor pulled his tie "straight" that was a habit of his, when vexed. The more vexed he was, the "straighter," right or left, he pulled it.

"Only, father, I cannot, I dare not, experiment on James Graye."

"Pray what have you been doing till now?"

"This was kill or cure, father. It isn't quite the same if you'll forgive my saying so."

"Cure? Cure?"

"I was quite certain," said Edward earnestly, "that James Graye would have less pain, if he lived."

"And I am quite certain that, if you inject my serum in the brain direct, he will be another man."

"I daren't do it, father."

The Professor rose, trembling. "For the second

time, then," he said bitterly, "nay, for the third—the third—my own son places himself in the middle of my path and turns me from the goal."

"Father!" cried Edward.

"I will remind you," continued the Professor remorselessly, "how I wasted a couple of years in our miserable babble-shop—but no, why should I thus humiliate myself? Let me pass!"

Edward seized his father's hand and drew him back, imploring.

"Father, I can't do it! I can't! Let me at least tell you why. I have passed my word of honour to Kenneth not to experiment in any way on the brain!"

"Passed your word of honour?" repeated the Professor, dully.

"Yes. It is a question with him of—what shall I call it?—Religion. He asked whether I thought the soul was in the brain, and of course I said: yes, as far as we know. And he made me promise most solemnly, before the operation, that I would not touch the brain."

"This is nonsense!" cried the Professor. "Why, your whole operation 'touches'—practically manipulates the brain."

"But it leaves it as before, only better placed. I can't help it, father. I have given my word of honour."

"He is a fool, then," cried the angry Professor.

"It is his idea. I fear I must, in all honesty, say I understand what he means."

"If you have pledged your word of honour, though I cannot comprehend your doing it," remarked the broken-hearted Professor, "there is no more to be said." And, without another look at his son, he passed out.

Edward felt more than ever that he treated his poor father ill.

CHAPTER XIX.

In a few days—the official reception having passed off successfully—the Baron and Baroness returned home. They took Laura with them: the banns were to be put up in Leyden, and the marriage would take place there as soon as Edward could leave or move James Graye. Thomasine remained to keep her brother company as guest of Miss MacClachlin. Kenneth Graye showed the two ladies the sights of Paris, and it was astonishing how interested the good-natured Scotch spinster became in art treasures she had never thought of inquiring about till now. She could not have distinguished a Velasquez from a Rembrandt before, or after, her art-course with Graye. He spoke feelingly of the poverty of the greatest masters. "Then why did they paint?" said Maria.

"Heaven knows!" replied Kenneth. And Thomasine thought that was a most beautiful reply.

To the girl this change from long copyings of *Balaam* to slow wanderings through the Louvre with a sympathetic guide was astonishing and amazing, not so much that she realised the dulness of the former, but rather the delight of the other thing. Miss MacClachlin was

persistently kind to Thomasine. She tried also to dissuade her from the governess plan and to attach her to her own Mutton Mission. "I assure you," she said, "a French butcher-boy is a thousand times more interesting any day than an English schoolroom-miss." Thomasine had German classes and English classes among the *Chevaliers de Bétail.* They were delighted with her. Maria MacClachlin showed not—nay, nor did she feel—an atom of jealousy, when thirty roughs, to her three, demanded to be taught by *la jolie Hollandaise. "Elle est aussi belle que les vaches de son pays,"* said Jean. *"Sa taille est mieux,"* said Pierre. "On the long run," Thomasine confided to Kenneth, "I would rather have girls. But I wouldn't hurt Miss MacClachlin's feelings for the world." "Nor would I," replied Kenneth, but, somehow, without doing that, he stopped the classes. Miss MacClachlin said he was the most reasonable man she had ever met. Thomasine was lifted out of the classroom and dropped into the dispensary, and there, most unmistakably, she fell on her feet. "I don't know what I shall do without her," cried Maria. "She has actually cured Mimi of the scab." Mimi was a pet lamb of Maria's, presented to her by her butchers, in the same manner as the one they had—rather at her instigation, it must here be admitted—bestowed upon James Graye.

Maria's "Œuvre" often hung heavy on her hands, and she sighed for the repose—not for the luxury—of

Rowangowan. (The name of this beautiful home, by-the-bye, is pronounced "Roon," but no British reader will require to be informed of that fact.) The maid, Hortense, was more especially a trial. To dispense with her was impossible, for she formed the sole link between the delicately-nurtured Presbyterian lady and the crowd of French hooligans, whose language and ways of thinking became instant abracadabra without this indigenous help. In fact, Hortense was Miss MacClachlin's crib. *"Quel toupet!"* said the butchers, and Hortense explained to her mistress what this meant. "They are remarking on my personal appearance," she said smiling. "It pleases them." "Indeed!" retorted Miss MacClachlin with uncordial surprise. She saw many of the maid's disqualifications, but she would not have included beauty amongst them. Canny creature as she was, she never quite fathomed—small shame to her—Hortense's genius for superfluous lies. Yet the only time when the Frenchwoman very nearly got the sack, was when she tried to "get religion." "You may break all the commandments, and you do, in my service, except the third," said Miss MacClachlin. "If Mademoiselle," replied the heathen demurely, "would give me a written list of her orders, I should know what number she meant." Maria heaved a sigh. She had long ago discovered that her butcher-boys thought all her illuminated Bible-texts were remarks (and promises) of her own, unless

she put *"Jésus dit"* above them. Things were so different in her native village, where the drunkenest drunkard of them all could repeat his Shorter Catechism backwards. "More like Holland," said Thomasine.

Not even on that terrible occasion when Hortense (too liberally treated by a trio of the *chevaliers* to absinthe) gave out, instead of the hymn, the latest catch from the Boulevards, and the whole audience roared it before anyone could stop them, not even on that occasion did Miss MacClachlin's pluck desert her. She waited till the uproar was over; then she rose—quiet, well-dressed, substantial and handsome as ever. "Sit down," she said sternly to the rollicking maid.

"Et maintenong," she spake, raising her voice. "I have shown you how the world sings. Now listen to me." She had a very pure soprano; she sang amid breathless silence—in the reeking gas-lit hall—the French version of a sweet home-memory:

"Paix! dans ce monde où souffle la tempête!"

The words died down in lingering gentleness and purity: "Peace, perfect peace!"

"Et maintenong," said Miss MacClachlin, "what sort of a song would you like to have sung over your grave?"

Hortense told everybody afterwards that she had acted according to instructions, and Maria, who was sure

the woman would do so, winked at the convenient and congenial lie.

Hortense's adventure with Xavier, though avowedly amusing, must be left unrecorded, for we cannot stray too far in pursuit of so secondary a figure in this chronicle as Hortense. Miss MacClachlin had certainly a right to be angry at the time, but, after all, as she herself very sensibly remarked, if you advertise for an Anomaly, you mustn't be annoyed when you get her. As a matter of fact, Hortense *was* dismissed shortly after the absinthe business, and a nice sweet English widow of a Chantilly groom secured in her place, but the *booshays* made such fun of the new-comer, that Hortense had to be triumphantly reinstated. The widow's knowledge (certified) of *argot* proved confined to the racecourse, while Hortense's extended, like her experience, over every form of Paris slum. "The woman," said poor Miss MacClachlin, "is a very encyclopædia of vice. But I *have* to turn the pages." She cried a little once, and talked about pitch, broken-hearted. Kenneth quoted Una, and explained his quotation. "But it is all very well," said Maria. "Innocence may pass unharmed through a forest of wild beasts, but not through the streets of a Christian city." With sudden want of logic he reproached her for exposing Thomasine to possible insult. "No, no, they're not half as bad as you think!" replied Maria in swift defence of her boys.

"She will have to endure very different treatment, if she goes as governess into some rich manufacturer's house."

"She can't. She mayn't. She shan't," he said vehemently.

"You're in love with her: why don't you ask her to marry you?" replied Miss MacClachlin, with beautiful simplicity.

He made no reply, till he said, in the dullest of tones: "You are pitiless."

"On the contrary, I am surely the most generous and pitiful of rivals. You must just allow me that, poor old thing that I am, and then we will say no more about it."

"You know I have no right to marry!"

"Bosh! So I told you once before, under circumstances which left no doubt as to my sincerity. If all of us talked like you, the race would long ago have been extinct."

"And a good thing too," said Kenneth.

"That also is bosh, and you know it. It is absolutely correct from our human point of view, so the human point of view must be wrong."

He laughed. "I should like to hear Mademoiselle Lisse's opinion. You won't annoy her—will you, please?"

"I will not. I have no appreciation for that sort of humour. But I can give you her opinion if you like."

"What do you mean?"

"Her opinion would be 'yes.'"

"That I ought not to marry!"

"Oh most modest of men,—if modesty in a man were ever sincere—that you oughtn't to marry—another than Thomasine Lisse."

"You have more aptitude for that sort of humour than you give yourself credit for."

"Don't be rude, Kenneth Graye, and thereby prove how much you are in earnest. You are in love with her, and she is in love with you, and of course she can become a governess if you like!" Miss MacClachlin slapped down her jewelled hands on her grey satin knees. "And the sooner the better," she said.

"Good night," said Kenneth. "You don't mind my going home, do you? Please tell Mademoiselle Lisse that I am very sorry I've not been able to get those tickets for the Private View to-morrow."

"So much the better," replied Miss MacClachlin with great decision. "It isn't fair for a man who can't marry —bosh!—to pay attentions to a girl at all!"

With this final bitter pill in his throat, half choking him, Kenneth journeyed all the long distance from Belleville to Auteuil. He was dead-tired and hoped to get to his bed, but he found Edward waiting for him.

"Five minutes' talk!" said Edward.

"All right. Is it important?"

"Yes."

"Wait a second while I get my pipe. Fire away!"

"I have had letters from Holland. All the necessary papers have been got together. They want to fix the date of the marriage."

"Quite so."

"They propose this day month."

"I congratulate you."

"Thanks. Now about the difficulties."

"You mean my nephew? It remains an understood thing that we join you at your country home in Holland and that he places himself entirely under your care."

"Yes," said Edward thoughtfully.

"There is the difficulty of the wedding journey."

"There will be no wedding journey; my wife and I will marry at Bardwyk and stay there, or come back here. Laura has no wish to travel as a bride."

"But in any case you will want your honeymoon to yourself. There can be no difficulty about that. My nephew has sufficiently recovered."

"I want to talk to you about your nephew. I shall be leaving for Leyden very soon. I want to talk to you before I go."

"Yes."

"He has sufficiently recovered from the operation, but he isn't regaining strength."

"Well, no—he has had an awful time. And he isn't able to tell us about it."

"I hardly know how to say what I want to say—must say. I ask myself how you will take it. His has been a most miserable life, Graye."

"It has, but it's going to be more bearable now, isn't it? Look here, what don't you feel up to telling me?" Kenneth laid down his pipe. "Speak out, man! Good Heavens, Lisse, what's this? You don't mean to say you're anxious about him?"

"I am very anxious about him. But not for anything I could do or leave undone. It hardly matters at this moment whether I stay with him or not. It *doesn't* matter, or I'd stay, of course. The operation has been successful, but the patient is losing strength."

"He'll pick up."

"I don't know. His vital energy is slowly sinking. And that, after this long lapse of time, is certainly a very discouraging symptom."

"Why, *you* mustn't lose courage now, Lisse!"

"My dear fellow, just now I said, 'I don't know,' but it's no use beating about the bush. I've tried everything that can be tried."

"You think he is in a bad way?"

"I think he is in a very bad way."

"Do you want to tell me that he can't get better?"

"So the others think, Graye. I can see that he is very ill."

"But you don't think he has no chance?"

"I don't want to think it. I should like to say, 'Where there is life there is hope.' But the others declare that I am sanguine, unwilling to admit the truth, as I naturally would be. I fear they are right. At any rate, Ducrot insists upon my telling you how the matter stands, before I leave. Or else he would have told you himself. He says I am running away."

"It's as bad as that," said Kenneth, meditatively.

"It is what the French call a *dépérissement,* a slow but certain decline. I cannot deny, Graye, that he is developing symptoms of what we call leukaemia."

"And that is incurable?" asked Kenneth.

"It is."

Kenneth took a few pulls at his pipe. Then he said: "Thanks for telling me." He held out his hand. "You haven't deserved this, Lisse." In the passage, as Edward was getting on his coat: "Any?—do you think?—any time?" began Kenneth.

"No doctor in the world could say," replied Edward. "These things go in rushes and crawls."

"You are sure nothing can be done?"

"Quite sure, or I should not move from here. So are all the others who are watching the case."

"Charcot?"

"He agrees with Ducrot."

"And we must wait like this? Weeks?"

"Possibly months. Or, again, I should not leave you for a day. But, after all, you have far greater doctors here than I. The greatest can do nothing for leukaemia. I shall return with my wife in a few days. We could take your nephew to Bardwyk. The change of air would only be beneficial—while it is feasible."

"Beneficial?"

"It might postpone," said Edward softly.

"Ah! You have not told your sister?"

"Certainly not. No one before you!"

"Oblige me, then, by keeping the secret still." The bedroom door slipped from Kenneth's usually steady hand; it slammed.

END OF VOL. I.

PRINTING OFFICE OF THE PUBLISHER.