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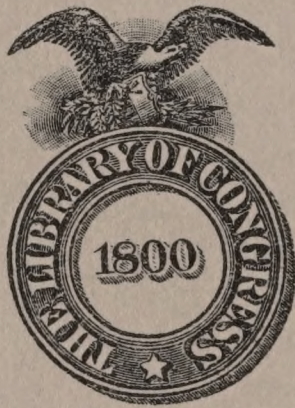
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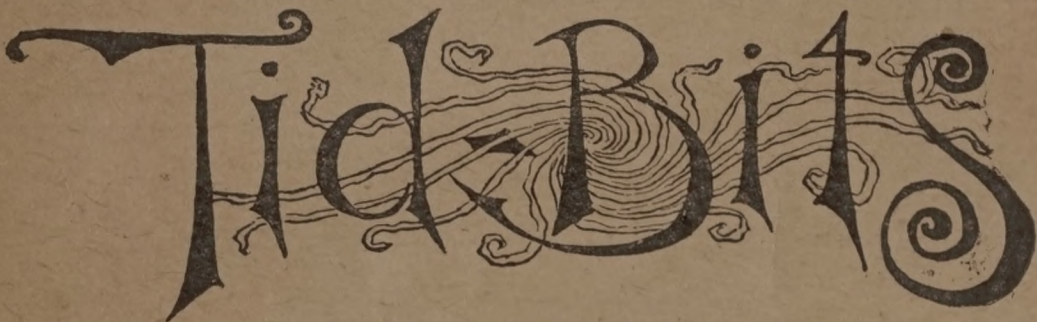
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# A LIFE'S SECRET

BY

*E. E. Ellen Price*  
MRS. HENRY WOOD

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "LADY GRACE," ETC., ETC.

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# A LIFE'S SECRET.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD.

## CHAPTER I.

A LITTLE way removed from the bustle of Ketterford, a town of note, situated in the heart of England, stands a white house, with a green lawn, surrounded by flowers and shrubs, intervening between it and the high-road. A private residence, and a handsome one; and yet, one of its lower rooms was fitted up as a counting-house, with desks and stools, and matting on the floor; and maps and drawings, plain and colored, upon its walls. Not finished and beautiful landscapes, such as issue from the hands of modern artists, or have descended to us from the great masters; but skeleton designs of buildings; of churches, bridges, terraces; plans to be worked out in actuality, not to be admired upon paper.

On a certain Easter Monday, several years ago, there sat at one of the desks a tall, gentlemanly young fellow, active and upright. He had large, deep-set gray eyes, earnest and truthful, a pale, clear, healthy complexion, and dark hair. So intent was he upon a book, over which he was bending, that he failed to hear his own name called out from the corridor, and the call was repeated.

“Austin Clay!”

That roused him.

An old lady in a lavender print dress, with a bunch of keys attached to its girdle, opened the door, and looked in. She wore spectacles, and an old-fashioned cap, white as snow. It was Mrs. Thornimett, the mistress of the house.

“So you *are* here! Sarah said she was sure Mr. Austin had not gone out,” she exclaimed, trotting up to the desk and looking over Austin Clay’s shoulder, to peer at

his book. "And now, what do you mean by it?—confining yourself in-doors this lovely day, over that good-for-nothing Hebrew stuff?"

A remarkably sweet smile rose to Austin's amused face; in fact, his countenance was one always pleasant to look upon.

"It is not Hebrew, Mrs. Thornimett. Hebrew and I are strangers. I am only indulging myself with a bit of old Homer."

"All useless, Austin. I don't care whether it is Greek or Hebrew, or Latin or French. To pore over those rubbishy dry books whenever you get the chance, does you no good. If you did not possess a constitution of iron, you would have been laid upon a sick-bed long ago."

Austin laughed outright. He knew Mrs. Thornimett's prejudice against what she called "learning." Never having been troubled with much herself, she—like the story told of the Dutch professor by George Primrose—"saw no good in it." She lifted her hand and closed the book.

"May I not spend my time as I like, upon a holiday?" remonstrated Austin, half vexed, half in good humor.

"No," said she, authoritatively: "not when the day is warm and bright, like this. We do not often get so fair an Easter. Don't you see that I have put off my winter clothing?"

"I saw that at breakfast."

"Oh, you did notice that, did you? Well, I never make the change till I think warm weather is really coming in. And so it ought to be: for Easter is late this year. Come, put that book up!"

Austin obeyed, a comical look of grievance upon his face.

"I declare you order me about just as you did when I came here first, a lad of fourteen. You'll never get another like me, Mrs. Thornimett. As if I had not enough out-door work every day in the week! And I don't know where on earth to go to! It's like turning a fellow out of house and home."

"You are going out for me, Austin. The master left a message for the Lowland farm, and you shall take it over, and stop the day with them. They will make as



much of you as they would of a king. When Mrs. Milton was here the other day she complained that you never went over now; she said she supposed you were growing above them."

"What nonsense," said Austin, laughing. "Well, I'll go there for you, at once, without grumbling. I like the Miltons."

"You can walk, or you can take the pony gig. Which-ever you like."

"I will walk. What is the message?"

"The master—— Austin," Mrs. Thornimett suddenly broke off, "don't you think the master has seemed very poorly of late?"

"N—o," replied Austin, speaking slowly, as if considering whether he did or not. "I have not noticed it particularly."

"That is just like the young! They never see anything. Well, I have, Austin; and I can tell you that I do not like his looks. Especially I did not like them when he rode forth this morning."

"All that I have observed is, that of late he seems to be disinclined for business. He is heavy; sleepy; as though it were a trouble to him to rouse himself; and he complains sometimes of headache. But, of course——"

"Of course, what?" asked Mrs. Thornimett. "Why do you hesitate?"

"I was going to say, that of course Mr. Thornimett is not as young as he was," continued Austin.

"He is sixty-six; and I am sixty-three. But you must be going. Talking of it will not mend it. And the best part of the day is passing."

"You have not given me the message."

"The message is this," said Mrs. Thornimett, lowering her voice to a confidential tone. "Tell Mr. Milton that Mr. Thornimett would not answer for that timber merchant about whom he asked us. The master fears he is a slippery customer; one whom he would trust as far as he could see, but no further. Just say it into Mr. Milton's private ear, you know. And Austin," added the old lady, following him to the door, as he went out, "do not make yourself ill with their Easter cheese-cakes."

“I will try not,” said Austin, laughing, and nodding back to Mrs. Thornimett as he crossed the lawn.

He took the road to his right hand, passed a large yard, some workshops, and sheds. They belonged to Mr. Thornimett; and the timber and other characteristic materials lying about, would have proclaimed their owner's trade without the aid of the lofty sign-board—“Richard Thornimett, Builder and Contractor.” His business was extensive for a country town.

Austin Clay was of good parentage, but at the age of fourteen had been left an orphan, with scarcely any means. He was taken from school by Mr. Thornimett, and apprenticed to himself. “Out of charity,” some people said. Yes, in so much as that no premium was received with him. His mother, Mrs. Clay, and Mrs. Thornimett had been distantly related. Mr. and Mrs. Thornimett had no children, and they took him; not to adopt him, as the phrase goes; not to leave him a fortune; simply to put him in the way to get his own living. They grew fond of him; he was an open-hearted, generous boy, and won upon their esteem. Certain indulgences, as to the going on with his school studies, were accorded him; not to interfere with his business hours, but at odds and ends of time. Drawing, mathematics, and languages were his favorite pursuits; but with the languages Mrs. Thornimett waged perpetual war. Where would be the good of them to him? she continually asked; and Austin, in his pleasant, laughing manner, would answer that they might help to make him into a gentleman. But Austin Clay, though perhaps he might know it not, was, in mind and manners, a gentleman born. He was one-and-twenty years of age now, and the busybodies of Ketterford decided that Mr. Thornimett would be some time making him his partner.

Past the workshops, Austin struck into the fields; so much more agreeable, on that fine day, than the dusty road. They brought him, when nearing the end of his journey, to a large common. A sort of waste common, usable by anybody; where gypsies encamped, and donkeys grazed, and children and geese were turned out. A broad path ran through it, for carts or other vehicles. To the left it was bordered in the distance by a row of cottages; to the right its extent was limited, and ter-

minated in some dangerous gravel pits; dangerous because they were not protected. Austin had reached nearly the middle of the common when he overtook Miss Gwinn, a very strange lady, popularly supposed to be "mad," and of whom he had once stood in considerable awe; at which he laughed now. She was a tall, bony woman, of remarkable strength, long past middle age, and it was well known that she had some source of secret and intense sorrow.

"You have taken a long walk this morning, Miss Gwinn," said Austin, courteously raising his hat as he came up with her.

She threw back her gray cloak with a quick, sharp movement, and turned upon him.

"Oh, it is you, Austin Clay? You startled me; my thoughts were far away: deep upon another. *He* could wear a fair outside, and accost one in a pleasant voice, like you."

"That is rather a doubtful compliment, Miss Gwinn," he returned, in his good-humored way. "I hope I am no darker inside than out. At any rate, I don't try to appear different from what I am."

"Did I accuse you of it? Boy, you had better go and throw yourself into one of those gravel pits, and die, than grow up to be deceitful," she vehemently cried. "Deceit has been the curse of my days. It has made me what I am; one whom the boys hoot after, and call——"

"No, no, not so bad as that," interrupted Austin. "You have been cross with them sometimes, and they are insolent, mischievous little ragamuffins. I am sure every thoughtful person respects you, feeling for your sorrow."

"Sorrow!" she wailed. "Ay. Sorrow beyond what falls to the ordinary lot of man. The blow fell upon *me*, though I was not an actor in it. When those about us do wrong, we suffer. We more than they. I may be revenged yet," she added, her expression changing to anger, "if I can only come across *him*."

"Across whom?" asked Austin.

"Who are you that you should ask me?" she passionately resumed. "I am five-and-fifty to-day—old enough

to be your mother, and you presume to put the question to *me*. Boys are coming to something."

"I beg your pardon; I but spoke, perhaps heedlessly, in answer to your remark. Indeed, I have no wish to pry into anybody's business. And as to 'secrets,' I have eschewed them since, a little chap in petticoats, I crept to my mother's room door to listen to one, and got soundly whipped for my pains."

"It is a secret that you will never know, or anybody else; so put its thoughts from you. Austin Clay," she added, laying her hand upon his arm, and bending forward to speak in a whisper, "it is fifteen years this very day since its horrors came out to me! And I have had to carry it about since, as best I could, in silence and in pain."

She turned round abruptly as she spoke, and continued her way along the broad path, while Austin Clay struck short off toward the gravel pits, which was his nearest road to the Lowland farm. Silent and abandoned were the pits that day, for everybody was keeping holiday.

"What a strange woman she is!" he thought.

It has been said that the gravel pits were not far from the path. Austin was close upon them, when the sound of a horse's footsteps caused him to turn. A stranger was riding fast down the common path, from the opposite side to the one he and Miss Gwinn had come. A slender man of some seven-and-thirty years, tall, so far as could be judged, with thin, prominent, aquiline features, and dark eyes. A fine face; one of those that impress the beholder at first sight, and, once seen, remain permanently on the memory.

"I wonder who he is?" thought Austin, fixing his eyes on the stranger. "He rides well."

Miss Gwinn had also fixed her eyes on the stranger; eyes that seemed to be starting from her head with the gaze. It would appear that she recognized him, and with no pleasurable emotion. She grew strangely excited. Her face turned of a ghastly whiteness, her hands closed involuntarily, and, after standing for a moment in perfect stillness, as if petrified to stone, she darted forward in his pathway, and seized the bridle of his horse.

"So! you have turned up at last! I knew—I knew

you were not dead!" she shrieked in a voice of wild raving. "I knew you would some time be brought face to face with me, to answer for your wickedness!"

Utterly surprised and perplexed, or seeming to be, at this summary attack, the gentleman could only stare at his assailant, and endeavor to get his bridle from her hand. But she held it with a firm grasp.

"Let go my horse," he said. "Are you mad?"

"*You* were mad," she retorted, passionately. "Mad in those old days; and you turned another to madness. Not three minutes ago I said to myself that the time would come when I should find you. Man! do you remember that it is this day fifteen years that the—the—crisis of the sickness came on? Do you know that never——"

"Do not betray your private affairs to me," he interrupted. "They are no concern of mine. I never saw you in my life. Take care! the horse will do you an injury."

"No! you never saw me, and you never saw somebody else!" she panted, in a tone that would have been mockingly sarcastic, but for its wild passion. "You did not change the current of my whole life! you did not turn another to madness! These equivocations are worthy of *you*."

"If you are not insane, you must be mistaking me for some other person," he replied, his tone none of the mildest. "I repeat that, to my knowledge, I never set eyes upon you in my life. Woman! have you no regard for your own safety? The horse will kill you! Don't you see that I cannot control him?"

"So much the better if he kills us both!" she shrieked, swaying up and down, to and fro, with the fierce motions of the angry horse. "You will only meet your deserts; and, for myself, I am tired of life."

"Let go!" cried the rider.

"Not until you have told me where you live, and where you may be found. I have searched for you in vain. I will have my revenge; I will force you to do justice. You——"

In her sad temper, her dogged obstinacy, she still held the bridle. The horse, a spirited animal, was as passionate as she was, and far stronger. He reared bolt up—

right, he kicked, he plunged; and finally shook off the obnoxious control, to dash furiously in the direction of the gravel pits. The lady fell to the ground.

It would be certain destruction to both man and horse. Austin Clay had watched the encounter in amazement, though he could not distinguish the words of the quarrel. In the humane impulse of the moment, disregarding the danger to himself, he darted in front of the horse, arrested him on the very brink of the pit, and threw him back on his haunches.

Snorting, panting, the white foam breaking from him, the animal, as if conscious of the doom he had escaped, now stood in trembling quiet, obedient to the control of his master. That master threw himself from his back, and turned to Austin.

“Young gentleman, you have saved my life!”

There was little doubt of that, and, in the satisfaction of the moment, Austin felt not the wrench he had given to his own shoulder.

“It would have been an awkward fall, sir. I am glad I happened to be here.”

“It would have been a *killing* fall,” replied the stranger, stepping to the brink and looking down. “And your being here must be owing to God’s wonderful providence.”

He lifted his hat as he spoke, and remained a minute or two silent and uncovered, his eyes closed. Austin, the same impulse of reverence extending to his spirit, lifted his.

“Did you see the strange manner in which that woman attacked me? She must be deranged.”

“She is very strange at times,” said Austin, “and flies into desperate passions.”

“Passions! it is madness, not passion. A woman like that ought to be shut up in Bedlam. Where would be the satisfaction to my wife and family if, through her, I had been lying at this moment at the bottom there, dead? I never saw her in my life before, never.”

“Is she hurt? she has fallen down there.”

“Hurt! Not she. She could call after me pretty fiercely when my horse shook her off. She possesses the rage and strength of a tiger. Good fellow! good Salem! did a mad-woman frighten and anger you?” added the

stranger, smoothing his horse. "And now, young sir," turning to Austin, "how shall I reward you?"

Austin broke into a smile.

"Not at all, thank you," he said. "One does not merit reward for such a thing as this. I should have deserved sending over after you had I not interposed. To do my best was a simple matter of duty, of obligation; but nothing to be rewarded for."

"Well, I may be able to repay it in some manner as you and I pass through life," said the stranger, mounting the now subdued horse. "Some neglect the opportunities thrown in their way of helping their fellow creatures; some embrace them, as you have just done; I believe that whichever we may give, neglect or help, will be returned to us in kind. Like a corn of wheat, which must spring up what it is sown; or a thistle, which must come up a thistle. Will you tell me your name? and something about yourself?"

"My name is Austin Clay. I can boast of no relatives, save very distant ones. And I am being brought up for a builder."

"Why, I am a builder myself," cried the stranger. "Shall you ever be coming to London?"

"I dare say I shall be, sir. I should like it."

"Then mind you pay me a visit the first thing," said he, taking a card from a case in his pocket, and handing it to Austin. "Come to me should you ever be in want of a berth; I might help you to one. Will you promise?"

"Yes, and thank you, sir."

"I fancy the thanks are due from the other side, Mr. Clay. Oblige me by not letting that Bess o' Bedlam obtain sight of my card. I might have her following me. That town, beyond, is Ketterford, is it not?"

"It is," replied Austin.

"Fare you well, then, I must hasten to catch the twelve o'clock train."

He rode away. Austin looked at the card. It was a private visiting-card, "Mr. Henry Hunter," with an address in the corner.

"He must be one of the great London building firm Hunter & Hunter," thought Austin. "First-class people. And now to see after Miss Gwinn."

She was rising up as he approached, rising slowly.

The fall had shaken her; though no material damage was done.

"I hope you are not hurt," said Austin, kindly.

"A ban light upon the horse," she fiercely cried. "At my age it does not do to be thrown on the ground violently. I thought my bones were broken; I could not rise; and he has escaped. Boy, what did he say to you of me, of my affairs?"

"Not anything. I do not believe he knows you in the least. He says he does not."

The crimson of passion had faded from Miss Gwinn's face, leaving it wan and white.

"How dare you say you believe it?"

"Because I do believe it," replied Austin, in defiance of logic. "He declared that he never saw you in his life, and I think he spoke the truth. I can judge when a man tells truth, and when he tells a lie. Mr. Thorni-mett often says he wishes he could read faces as I can read them."

Miss Gwinn gazed at him, contempt and pity blended in her countenance.

"Have you yet to learn that a bad man can assume the semblance of goodness?"

"Yes, I know that; and assume it so as to take in a saint," hastily spoke Austin. "You may be deceived in a bad man, but I do not think you can in a good one. Where a man possesses innate truth and honor, it shines out in his countenance, his voice, his manner; and there can be no mistake. When you are puzzled over a bad man, you say to yourself, 'He *may* be telling the truth, he *may* be genuine;' but with a good man you know it to be so. That is, if you possess the gift of reading countenances; which is one of the best gifts God gives us. I am sure there was truth in that stranger."

"Listen, Austin Clay. That man, truthful as you deem him, is the very incarnation of deceit. I know as much of him as one human being can well know of another. It was he who wrought the terrible wrong upon my house; it was he who broke up my happy home. I'll find him now. Others said he must be dead, but I said: 'No, he lives yet.' And you see he does. I'll find him."

Without another word, she turned away, and went



striding back in the direction of Ketterford, the same road which the stranger's horse had taken. Austin stood and looked after her, pondering over the strange events of the hour. Then he proceeded to the Lowland farm.

A pleasant day among pleasant friends, spent he, rich Easter cheese-cakes being the least of the seductions he did *not* withstand; and it was half-past ten at night before he found himself back at Mrs. Thornimett's. Conscious of the late hour—for they were early people—he was passing with a hasty step over the lawn, when Sarah, one of the two old maid-servants who had lived in the house for many years, and had scolded and ordered him about when a boy, to her heart's delight and for his own good, came running to meet him. She must have been at the door, watching for him.

“Where *have* you stayed? To think that you should be away this night, of all others, Mr. Austin! Have you heard what has happened to the master?”

“No. What?” exclaimed Austin, his fears taking alarm.

“He fell down in a fit, over at the village where he went; and they brought him home, a frightening us two and the missus a'most into fits ourselves. Oh, Master Austin!” she concluded, bursting into tears, “the doctors don't think he'll be alive by morning. Poor, dear old master!”

“May I go and see him, Sarah?” he whisperingly inquired, after a pause of consternation.

“Oh, you may go; the missis won't care, and nothing rouses *him*. It's a heavy blow; but it has its side of mercy; God never sends a blow but He sends mercy with it. *He was fit to be took*; he had lived for the next world while he was living in this. And them as do, Master Austin, never need shrink from sudden death.”

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## CHAPTER II.

It was awful to reflect upon the change death makes, even in the petty every-day affairs of life. On the Easter Monday, spoken of in the last chapter, Richard Thornimett, his men, his contracts, and his business in progress, were all part of the life, the work, the bustle

of the town of Ketterford. In a few weeks from that time, Richard Thornimett—who had not lived to see the morning light after his attack—was moldering in the churchyard; and the business, the workshops, the artisans, all save the dwelling-houses, which Mrs. Thornimett retained for herself, had passed into other hands. The name, Richard Thornimett, as one of the citizens of Ketterford, had ceased to be; all things were changed.

Mrs. Thornimett's friends and acquaintances had assembled to tender counsel, after the fashion of busy-bodies of the world. Some recommended her to continue the business; some, to give it up; some, to take in a gentleman as partner; some, to pay a handsome salary to an efficient manager. Mrs. Thornimett listened politely to all, without the least intention of acting upon anybody's opinion but her own. Her mind had been made up for the first. Mr. Thornimett had died well off, and everything was left to her—half of the money to be hers for life, and then go to different relations; the other half was bequeathed to her absolutely, and was at her own disposal. Rumors were rife in the town, that, when things came to be realized, she would have not less than twelve thousand pounds.

“Austin,” she said to young Clay, as they sat up together one evening, “I shall dispose of the business—everything as it stands, and the good-will.”

“Shall you?” he replied. “I would have done my best to carry it on for you, Mrs. Thornimett. The foreman is a man of experience, one we may trust.”

“I do not doubt you, Austin, and I do not doubt him. You have got your head on your shoulders the right way, and you would be faithful and true. So well do I think of your abilities, that were you in a position to pay down only half the purchase money, I would give you the refusal of the business, and I am certain success would attend you. But you are not, so that is out of the question.”

“Quite out of the question,” assented Austin. “If ever I get a business of my own, it must be by working for it. Have you quite resolved upon giving it up?”

“So far resolved that the negotiations are already half concluded,” replied Mrs. Thornimett. “What should I, lone woman, do with an extensive business? When poor

widows are left badly off, they are obliged to work; but I possess more money than I shall know how to spend. Why should I worry out my hours and days, trying to amass more? It would not be seemly. Rolt & Ransom wish to purchase it."

Austin lifted his head with a quick movement. He did not like Rolt & Ransom.

"The only difference we have in the matter is this: that I wish them to take you on, Austin, and they think they shall find no room for you. Were you a common workman, it would be another thing, they say."

"Do not allow that to be a difference any longer, Mrs. Thornimett," he cried, somewhat eagerly. "I should not care to be under Rolt & Ransom. If they offered me a place to-morrow, and *carte blanche* as to pay, I do not think I could bring myself to take it."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Thornimett, in surprise.

"Well, they are no favorites of mine. I know nothing against them, except that they are hard men—grinders; but somehow I have always felt a prejudice against that firm. We do have our likes and dislikes, you are well aware. Young Rolt is prominent in the business, too, and I am sure there's no love lost between him and me; we should be at daggers drawn. No, I should not serve Rolt & Ransom. If they succeed to your business, I think I shall go to London, and try my fortune there."

Mrs. Thornimett pushed back her widow's cap, to which her head had never yet been able to get reconciled—something like Austin with regard to Rolt & Ransom. "London would not be a good place for you, Austin. It is full of pitfalls for young men."

"So are other places," said Austin, laughingly, "if young men choose to step into them. I shall make my way, Mrs. Thornimett, never fear. I am thorough master of my business in all its branches, higher and lower, as you know, and I am not afraid of putting my own shoulder to the wheel, if there's necessity for it. As to pitfalls—if I do stumble in the dark into any, I'll manage to scramble out again; but I will take good care not to get into them willfully. Had you continued the business, of course I would have remained with you; otherwise, I should like to go to London."

"You can be better trusted, both as to capabilities and

steadiness, than some could at your age," deliberated Mrs. Thornimett. "But they are wrong notions that you young men pick up with regard to London. I believe there's not one of you but thinks its streets are sprinkled with diamonds."

"I don't," said Austin. "And while God gives me hands and brains to work with, I would rather earn my diamonds, than stoop to pick them up in idleness."

Mrs. Thornimett paused. Then, settling her spectacles firmer on her eyes, turned them full on Austin, and spoke abruptly:

"Were you disappointed when you heard the poor master's will read?"

Austin, in return, turned his eyes upon her, and opened them to their utmost width, in his surprise.

"Disappointed! No! Why should I be?"

"Did it never occur to you to think, or to expect, that he might leave you something?"

"Never?" earnestly replied Austin. "The thought never so much as crossed my mind. Mr. Thornimett had near relatives of his own, and so have you. Who am I, that I should think to step in before them?"

"I wish people would mind their own business," exclaimed the old lady, in a vexed tone. "I was gravely assured, Austin, that 'young Clay' felt grievously ill-used by the will! I did not believe it."

"Whoever said it," Austin observed, "it is utterly untrue, Mrs. Thornimett. I never expected Mr. Thornimett to leave me anything, therefore I could not have been disappointed at the will."

"The poor master knew I should not forget you, Austin; that is, if you continue to be deserving. Some time or other, when my old bones are laid beside him, you may be the better for a trifle from me. Only a trifle, mind; we must be just before we are generous."

"Indeed, you are very kind," was Austin Clay's reply; "but I should not wish you to enrich me at the expense of others, who have greater claims." And he fully meant what he said. "I have not the least fear of making my own way up the world's ladder. Do you happen to know anything of the London firm, Hunter & Hunter?"

"Only by reputation," said Mrs. Thornimett.

"I shall apply to them, if I go to London. They will interest themselves for me, perhaps."

"You'd be sure to do well if you could get in there. But why should they help you more than any other firm would?"

"There's nothing like trying," replied Austin, too conscious of the evasive character of his reply. He was candid himself; but he feared to speak of the circumstances under which he had met Mr. Henry Hunter, lest Miss Gwinn should find out it was to him he had gone, and so track Mr. Henry Hunter home. Austin deemed that it was no business of his to help her find Mr. Hunter, whether he was or was not the *bete noire* of whom she had spoken.

That she did not know him *by name*, Austin found reason to believe. Just before he left Ketterford, after Rolt & Ransom completed their purchase, and had entered into possession, incorporating their own business as builders with that of the late Mr. Thornimett, Austin and Mrs. Thornimett encountered Miss Gwinn in the street. The conversation turned upon Austin's leaving for London, and Mrs. Thornimett incidentally mentioned that he meant, first of all, to try Hunter & Hunter.

"Hunter & Hunter!" echoed Miss Gwinn. "Who are they? Try them for what?"

"Hunter & Brothers, some call them," said Mrs. Thornimett. "It is a large building firm."

"Oh!" apathetically returned Miss Gwinn. The subject, the name, evidently bore for her no interest whatever. Therefore Austin judged that, whether or not she was acquainted with Mr. Henry Hunter's person, she could not be acquainted with his name.

\* \* \* \* \*

A heavy train, drawn by two engines, was dashing toward London. Whitsuntide had come, and the public took advantage of the holiday, and the trains were crammed. Austin Clay took advantage of it also; it was a saving to his pocket, the fares having been lowered; and he rather liked a cram. What he did not like, though, was the being stuffed into a first-class carriage, with its warm mats and its cushions. The day was intensely hot, and he would have preferred one open

on all sides. They were filled, however, before he came. He had left Ketterford, and was on his road to London to seek his fortune—as old stories used to say.

Seated in the same compartment as himself was a lady with a little girl. The former appeared to be in very delicate health; she remarked more than once, that she would not have traveled on so crowded a day, had she given it proper thought. The little girl was chiefly remarkable for making herself troublesome to Austin; at least, her mamma perpetually reproached her with doing so. She was a lovely child, with delicately-carved features, slightly aquiline, but inexpressibly sweet and charming. A bright color illumined her cheeks, her eyes were large, and dark, and soft, and her curls were flowing. He judged her to be perhaps eleven years old; but she was one of those natural, unsophisticated children who appear much younger than they are. The race have pretty nearly gone out of the world now; I hope they will come into it again.

“Florence, how *can* you be so tiresome? Pushing yourself before the gentleman against that dangerous door, which might fly open. I am sure he must be tired of holding you.”

Florence turned her bright eyes—sensible, honest eyes, bright though they were—and her pretty hot cheeks upon the gentleman.

“Are you tired, sir?”

Austin smiled.

“It would take rather more than this to tire me,” he said. “Pray, allow her to look out,” he added, to the lady opposite to whom he sat; “I will take every care of her.”

“Have you any little girls of your own?” questioned the young damsel.

Austin laughed outright.

“No.”

“Nor any sisters?”

“Nor any sisters. I have scarcely any relatives in the world. I am not so fortunate as you.”

“I have a great many relatives, but no brothers or sisters. I had a sister once, and she died when she was three years old. Was it not three, mamma?”

“And how old are you?” inquired Austin.

"Oh, pray do not ask," interposed the lady. "She is so thoroughly childish, I am ashamed anybody should know her age. And yet she does not want sense."

"I was twelve last birthday," cried the young lady, in defiance of all conventionalism. "My cousin Mary is only eleven, but she is a great deal bigger than I."

"Yes," observed the lady, in a tone of positive resentment; "Mary is quite a woman already in ideas and manners; you are a child, and a very backward one."

"Let her be a child, ma'am, while she may," impulsively spoke Austin; "childhood does not last too long, and it never comes again. Little girls are women nowadays; I think it is perfectly delightful to meet with one like this."

As they neared the final terminus, the young lady was peremptorily ordered to "keep her head in," or perhaps she might lose it.

"Oh, dear! if I must, I must. But I wanted to look out for papa; he is sure to be waiting for us with the carriage."

The train glided up to its destination; and the bright, quick eyes were roving amidst the crowd standing on the platform. They rested upon a gentleman.

"There's Uncle Henry! there's Uncle Henry! But I don't see papa. Where's papa?" she called out as the gentleman saw them and approached.

"Papa's not come; he has sent me instead, Miss Florence." And, to Austin Clay's inexpressible surprise, he recognized Mr. Henry Hunter.

"There's nothing the matter? James is not ill?" exclaimed the lady, bending forward.

"No, no; nothing of that. Being a leisure day with us, we thought we would quietly go over some estimates together. James had not finished the calculations, and did not care to be disturbed at them."

Mr. Henry Hunter was assisting her to alight as he spoke, having already lifted down Florence. A maid, with a couple of carpet-bags, appeared presently amidst the bustle, and Austin saw them approach a private carriage. He had not pushed himself forward. He did not intend to do so then, deeming it not the most fitting moment to challenge the notice of Mr. Henry Hunter; but that gentleman's eye happened to fall upon him.

Not at first for recognition. Mr. Hunter felt sure it was a face he had seen recently, was one he ought to know, but his memory was puzzled. Florence followed his gaze.

“That gentleman came up in the same carriage with us, Uncle Henry. They put him first-class, because there was no room where he wanted to go. I like him so much.”

Austin came forward as he saw the intent look; and recollection flashed over the mind of Henry Hunter. He took both the young man's hands in his, and grasped them.

“You like him, do you, Miss Florence?” cried he, in a half joking, half fervent tone. “I can tell you what, young lady, but for this gentleman, you would no longer have possessed an Uncle Henry to plague; he would have been dead and forgotten.”

A word or two of explanation followed from Austin, touching what brought him to London, and his intention to ask advice of Mr. Henry Hunter. That gentleman replied that he would give it willingly, and at once, for he had leisure on his hands that day, and he could not answer for it that he would have another. He gave Austin the address of his office.

“When shall I come, sir?” asked Austin.

“Now, if you can. A cab will bring you. I shall not be there later in the day.”

So Austin, leaving his portmanteau, all the luggage he had at present brought with him, in charge at the station, proceeded in a cab to the address named, Mr. Henry Hunter having driven off in the carriage.

The offices, yards, buildings, sheds, and other places pertaining to the business of Hunter & Hunter, were situated in what may be considered a desirable part of the metropolis. They encroached neither upon the excessive bustle of the city, nor upon the aristocratic exclusiveness of the gay west end, but occupied a position midway between the two. Sufficiently open was the district in their immediate neighborhood, healthy, handsome, and near some fine squares; but a very, very little way removed, you come upon swarming courts and close dwellings, and squallor, and misery, and all the bad features of what we are pleased to call Arab life. There are



many such districts in London, where wealth and ease contrast with starvation and improvidence, *all but* within view of each other, the one gratifying the eye; the other causing it pain.

The yard was of a great extent. Austin had thought Mr. Thornimett's a very fair one for size; but he could laugh at that, now that he saw the Messrs. Hunters'. It was inclosed by a wall, and by light iron gates. Within the gates on the left-hand side were the offices, where the in-door business was transacted. A wealthy, important, and highly considered firm was that of the Messrs. Hunter. Their father had made the business what it was, and had bequeathed it to them jointly at his death. James, whose wife and only child you have seen arriving by the train, after a week's visit to the country, was the elder brother, and was usually styled Mr. Hunter; the younger was known as Mr. Henry Hunter; and he had a large family. Each occupied a handsome house in a contiguous square.

Mr. Henry Hunter came up just as Austin did, and they entered the offices. In a private room, handsomely carpeted, stood two gentlemen. The one, had he not been so stout, would have borne a great likeness to Mr. Henry Hunter. In early life the likeness between the brothers had been remarkable; the same dark hair and eyes, the well-formed aquiline features, the same active, tall, light figure; but, of late years, James had grown fat, and the resemblance was in part lost. The other gentleman was Dr. Bevary, a spare man of middle height, the brother of Mrs. James Hunter. Mr. Henry Hunter introduced Austin Clay, speaking of the service rendered him, and broadly saying, as he had done to Florence, that but for him he should not have been alive.

"Here you go, Henry," cried Dr. Bevary. "That's one of your exaggerations, that is. You were always given to the marvelous, you know. Not alive!"

Mr. Henry Hunter turned to Austin. "Tell the truth, Mr. Clay. Should I, or not?" And Austin smiled, and said he believed *not*.

"I cannot understand it," exclaimed Dr. Bevary, after some explanation had been given by Mr. Henry Hunter.

“It is incredible to suppose a strange woman would attack you in that manner, unless she was mad.”

“Mad or not mad, she did it,” returned Mr. Henry Hunter. “I was riding Salem—you know I took him with me, in that week’s excursion I made at Easter—and the woman set upon me like a tigress, clutching hold of Salem, who won’t stand such jokes. In his fury, he got loose from her, dashing he neither knew nor cared whither, and this fine fellow saved us on the very brink of the yawning pit—risking the chance of getting killed himself, for, had the horse not been arrested, I don’t see how he could have helped being knocked over with us.”

Mr. Hunter turned a warm, grateful look on Austin.

“How was it you never spoke of this, Henry?” he inquired of his brother.

“There’s another curious phase of the affair,” laughed Mr. Henry Hunter. “I have had a dislike to speak of it, even to think of it. I cannot tell you why; certainly not on account of the escaped danger. And it was over; so, what signified talking of it.”

“Why did she attack you?” cried Dr. Bevary.

“She evidently, if there was reason in her at all, mistook me for somebody else. All sorts of diabolical things she was beginning to accuse me of; that of having evaded her for some great number of years, among the rest. I stopped her; telling her I had no mind to be the depository of other people’s secrets.”

“She solemnly protested to me after you rode away, sir, that you *were* the man who had wrought the ill upon her,” interposed Austin. “I told her I felt certain she was mistaken; and so drew down her anger upon me.”

“Of what nature was the ill complained of?” asked Dr. Bevary.

“I cannot tell,” said Austin. “I seemed to gather from her words that the ill was upon her family, or upon some portion of her family, more than upon her. I remember she made use of the expression, that it had broken up her happy home.”

“And you did not know her?” exclaimed the doctor, looking at Mr. Henry Hunter.

“Know her?” returned Mr. Henry; “I never set eyes on her in all my life, until that day. I never was in the

place before, or in its neighborhood. If I ever did work her wrong, or ill, I must have done it in my sleep; and with miles of distance intervening. Who is she? What is her name?"

"Her name is Gwinn, sir, and they come, it is said, from Wales. Her brother, many years ago, was articled to a lawyer in Ketterford, and in course of time he succeeded to the business. After this, a long while, I believe, a lady arrived one morning and took up her abode with him. It was discovered to be his sister, and the people in Ketterford say she is mad. Sometimes she——"

"What did you say the name was!" interrupted Dr. Bevary, with startling emphasis. "Gwinn? and from Wales?"

"Yes."

Dr. Bevary paused, as if in deep thought. "What is her Christian name?" he presently inquired.

"It is a somewhat uncommon one," replied Austin. "Agatha."

The doctor nodded his head, as if expecting the answer.

"A tall, spare, angular woman, of great strength," he remarked.

"Why, what do you know of her?" exclaimed Mr. Henry Hunter to the doctor, in a surprised tone.

"Not a great deal. We medical men come across all sorts of persons occasionally," was the doctor's reply. And it was given in a concise, laconic manner, as if he did not care to be questioned further. Mr. Henry Hunter pursued the subject.

"If you know her, Bevary, perhaps you can tell whether she is mad or sane."

"She is sane. But she is one who can allow, perhaps, anger to master her at moments; I have seen it do so. Do you say her brother is a lawyer?" he continued to Austin Clay.

"Yes, he is. And not one of the first water, as to reputation—a grasping, pettifogging practitioner, who will take up any dirty case that may be brought to him. And in that, I fancy, he is a contrast to his sister; for, with all her strange ways, I should not judge her to be

dishonorable. It is said he speculates, and that he is not over particular whose money he gets to do it with."

"I wonder that she never told me about this brother," dreamily exclaimed the doctor, in an inward tone, as if forgetting that he spoke aloud.

"Where did you meet with her? When did you know her?" interposed Mr. Henry Hunter.

"Are you sure that *you* know nothing about her?" was the doctor's rejoinder, turning a searching glance upon Mr. Henry Hunter.

"Come, Bevary, what have you got in your head? I do *not* know her. I never met with her till she saw and accosted me. Are you acquainted with her history?"

"With a dark page in it."

"What is the page?"

Dr. Bevary shook his head.

"In the course of a physician's practice he becomes cognizant of many odds and ends of romance, dark or fair; things which he must hold sacred, and may not give utterance to."

Mr. Henry Hunter looked vexed.

"Perhaps you can understand the reason for her attacking me."

"I could understand it, but for your persistent assertion of her being a stranger to you. If it is so, I can only believe that she mistook you for another."

"If it is so," repeated Mr. Henry Hunter. "I am not in the habit of asserting an untruth, Bevary."

"Nor, on the other hand, is Miss Gwinn one to be deceived. She is keen as a razor. But, here am I, gossiping my morning away, when a host of patients are waiting for me. We poor doctors never get a holiday, like you more favored mortals."

He laughed as he went out, nodding a friendly farewell to Austin. Mr. Henry Hunter stepped out after him. Then Mr. Hunter, who had not taken part in the discussion, but had stood looking from the window while they carried it on, wheeled round to Austin and spoke in a low, earnest tone.

"What is this tale—this mystery—that my brother and the doctor seem to be picking up?"

"Sir, I know no more than you have heard me say. I witnessed her attack on Mr. Henry Hunter."

“I should like to know further about it; about her. Will you——”

His voice died away, for at that moment Mr. Henry Hunter returned.

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### CHAPTER III.

TURNING to the right after quitting the business premises of the Messrs. Hunter, you came to an open, handsome part, where the square in which those gentlemen dwelt was situated, with other desirable squares, crescents and houses. But, if you turned to the left instead of to the right, you very speedily found yourself in the midst of a dense locality not so agreeable to the eye or to the senses.

And yet, some parts of this were not much to be complained of, unless you instituted a comparison between them and those open places; but in this world all things are estimated by comparison. Take Daffodil's Delight, for example. “Daffodil's Delight!” cries the puzzled reader, uncertain whether it may be a live animal or something to eat, “what's that?” Daffodil's Delight was nothing more than a tolerably long street, or lane, or double row of houses—wide enough for a street, dirty enough for a lane, the buildings irregular, not always contiguous, small gardens before some, and a few trees scattered here and there. When the locality was mostly fields, and the buildings on them scanty, a person of the name of Daffodil ran up a few tenements. He found that they let well, and he ran up more, and more, and more, until there was a long, long line of them and he growing rich. He called the place Daffodil's Delight—which we may suppose expressed his own complacent satisfaction at his success—and Daffodil's Delight it had continued, down to the present day. The houses were of various sizes, and of fancy appearance; some large, some small; some rising up like a narrow tower, some but a story high; some were all windows, some seemed to have none; some you could only gain by ascending steps; to others you pitched down as into a cellar; some lay back, with gardens before their doors, while others projected pretty nearly on to the street gutter. Nothing in the way of houses could be more irregular; and, what Mr.

Daffodil's motives could have been in erecting such, cannot be conjectured—unless he formed an idea that he would make a venture to suit various tastes and diverse pockets.

Nearly at the beginning of this locality, in its best part, there stood a house detached, white—one of only six rooms, but superior in appearance, and well kept; indeed it looked more like a gentleman's cottage residence than a working man's. Veranda blinds were outside the windows, and green wire fancy stands held geraniums and other plants on the stone copings, against their lower panes, obviating the necessity for inside blinds. In this house lived Peter Quale. He had begun life carrying hods of mortar for masons, and covering up bricks with straw—a half-starved urchin, his feet as naked as his head, and his body pretty nearly the same. But he was steady, industrious, and persevering—just one of those men that *work on* for decent position, and acquire it. From two shillings a week to four, from four to six, from six to twelve—such had been Peter Quale's beginnings. At twelve shillings he remained for some time stationary, and then his advance was rapid. Now he was one of the superior artisans of the Messrs. Hunter's yard; was, in fact, in a post of trust, and his wages had grown in proportion. Daffodil's Delight said that Quale's earnings could not be less than £150 per annum. A steady, sensible, honest, but somewhat obstinate man, well-read and intelligent; for Peter, while he advanced his circumstances, had not neglected his mind. He had cultivated that far more than he had his speech or his manner; a homely tone and grammar, better known to Daffodil's Delight than to polite ears, Peter favored still.

In the afternoon of Whit-Monday, the day spoken of above, Peter sat in the parlor of his house, a pipe in his mouth, and a book in his hands. He looked about midway between forty and fifty, had a round, bald head, surmounted just now by a paper cap, a fair complexion, gray whiskers, and a well-marked forehead, especially where lie the perceptive faculties. His eyes were deeply sunk in his head, and he was by nature a silent man. In the kitchen behind, "washing up" after dinner, was his helpmate, Mrs. Quale. Although so well to do, and having generally a lodger, she kept no servant—"Wouldn't

be bothered with 'em," she said—but did her own work; a person coming in once a week to clean.

A rattling commotion in the street caused Peter Quale to look up from his book. A large pleasure-van had come rumbling down it, and was drawing up at the next door to his.

"Nancy!" called out he to his wife.

"Well?" came forth, in a brisk, bustling voice, from the depths of the kitchen.

"The Shucks, and that lot, be actually going off now!"

The news appeared to excite the curiosity of Mrs. Quale, and she came hastily in; a dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked little woman, with black curls and a neat white cap, well dressed in a plum-colored striped gown of some thin woolen material, a black apron, and a coarse apron pinned over that. She was an inveterate busybody, knew every incident that took place in Daffodil's Delight, and possessed a free and easy tongue, but was a kindly woman withal, and very popular. She put her head outside the window, above the geraniums, to reconnoiter.

"Oh, they be going, sure enough! Well, they are fools! That's just like Slippery Sam! By to-morrow they won't have a threepenny piece to bless themselves with. But, if they must have went they might have started earlier in the day. There's the Whites! And why!—there's the Dunns! The van won't hold 'em all. As for the Dunns, they'll have to pinch for a month after it. She has got on a dandy new bonnet with pink ribbons. Aren't some folks idiots, Peter?"

Peter rejoined with a sort of a grunt, that it wasn't no business of his, and applied himself again to his pipe and book. Mrs. Quale made everybody's business hers, especially their failings and shortcomings; and she unpinned the coarse apron, flung it aside, and flew off to the next house.

It was inhabited by two families, the Shucks and the Baxendales. Samuel Shuck, usually called Slippery Sam, was an idle, oily-tongued chap, always slipping from work—hence the nickname—and spending at the "Bricklayer's Arms" what ought to have been spent upon his wife and children. John Baxendale was a quiet, reserved man, living respectably with his wife and daughter, but not saving. It was singular how improvi-

dent most of them were. Daffodil's Delight was chiefly inhabited by the workmen of the Messrs. Hunter; they seemed to love to congregate there as in a nest. Some of the houses were crowded with them, a family on a floor—even in a room: others rented a house to themselves, and lived in comfort.

Assembled inside Sam Shuck's front room, which was a kitchen and not a parlor, and to which the house door opened, were as many people as it could hold, all in their holiday attire. Abel White, his wife and family; Jim Dunn, ditto; Patrick Ryan and the childer (Pat's wife was dead); and John Baxendale and his daughter, besides others; the whole host of little Shucks, and half a dozen outside stragglers. Mrs. Quale might well wonder how all the lot could be stuffed into the pleasure-van. She darted into their midst.

"You never mean to say you be a going off, like simpletons, at this time o' day?" quoth she.

"Yes, we be," answered Sam Shuck, a lanky, serpent sort of a man in frame, with a prominent black eye, a turned-up nose, and, as has been said, an oily tongue. "What have you got to say again it, Mrs. Quale? come!"

"Say!" said that lady, undauntedly, but in a tone of reason, rather than rebuke, "I say you may just as well fling your money into the gutter, as to go off to Epping at three o'clock in the afternoon. Why didn't you start in the morning? If I hired a pleasure-van, I'd have my money's worth out of it."

"It's just this here," said Sam. "It was ordered to be here as St. Paul's great bell was a-striking break o' day, but the wheels wasn't greased; and they have been all this while a-greasing 'em with the best fresh butter at eighteen pence a pound, had up from Devonshire on purpose."

"You hold your tongue, Sam," reprimanded Mrs. Quale. "You have been a-greasing your throat pretty strong, I see, with a extra pot or two; you'll be in for it as usual before the day's out. How is it you are going now?" she added, turning to the women.

"It's just the worst managed thing as I ever had to do with," volubly spoke up Jim Dunn's wife, Hannah. "And it's all the fault o' the men, as everything as goes wrong always is. There was a quarrel yesterday over it,



and nothing was settled, and this morning when we met, they began a jawing again. Some would go, and some wouldn't; some 'ud have a van to the Forest, and some 'ud take a omnibus ride up to the Zoological Gardens, see the beasts, and finish up at the play; some 'ud sit at home, and smoke and drink, and wouldn't go nowhere; and most of the men got off to the Bricklayers' Arms and stuck there; and afore the difference was settled in favor of the van and the Forest, twelve o'clock struck, and then there was dinner to be had, and us to put ourselves to rights, and the van to be seen after. And there it is, now three o'clock's gone."

"It'll be just a ride out and a ride in," cried Mrs. Quale; "for you won't have much time to stop. Money must be plentiful with you, afooling it away like that. I thought some of you had better sense."

"We spoke against it, father and I," said quiet Mary Baxendale, in Mrs. Quale's ear; "but as we had given our word to join it and share in the expense, we didn't like to go from it again. Mother doesn't feel strong to-day, so she's stopping at home."

"It does seem stupid to start at this late hour," spoke up a comely woman, mild in speech, Robert Darby's wife. "Better to have put it off till to-morrow, and taken another day's holiday, as I told my master. But when it was decided to go, we didn't say nay, for I couldn't bear to disappoint the children."

The children were already being lifted into the van. Sundry baskets and bundles, containing provisions for tea, and stone bottles of porter for the men, were being lifted in also. Then the general company got in, Daffodil's Delight, those not bound on the expedition, assembling to witness the ceremony, and Peter casting an eye at it from his parlor. After much packing, and stowing, and laughing, and jesting, and the gentlemen declaring the ladies must sit upon their laps three deep, the van and its four horses moved off, and went lumbering down Daffodil's Delight.

Mrs. Quale, after watching the last of it, was turning into her own gate, when she heard a tapping at the window of the tenement on the *other* side of her house. Upon looking round, it was thrown open, and a portly matron, dressed almost well enough for a lady, put out

her head. She was the wife of George Stevens, a very well-to-do workman, and most respectable man.

“Are they going off to the Forest at this hour, that lot?”

“Ay,” returned Mrs. Quale; “was ever such nonsense known? I’d have made a day of it, if I had went. They’ll get home at midnight, I expect, fit to stand on their heads. Some of the men have had almost as much as is good for ’em, now.”

“I say,” continued Mrs. Stevens, “George says, will you and your master come in for an hour or two this evening, and eat a bit of supper with us? We shall have a nice dish o’ beefsteaks and onions, or some relishing thing of that sort, and the Cheeks are coming.”

“Thank ye,” said Mrs. Quale. “I’ll ask Peter. But don’t go and get anything hot, now.”

“I must,” was the answer. “We had a shoulder of lamb yesterday, and we finished it up to-day for dinner, with a salad; so there’s nothing cold in the house, and I’m forced to get a bit of something. I say, don’t make it late; come at six. George—he’s off somewhere, but he’ll be in.”

Mrs. Quale nodded acquiescence, and went in-doors. Her husband was reading and smoking still.

“I’d have put it off till ten at night, and went then!” ironically cried she, in allusion to the departed pleasure-party. “A bickering and contending they have been over it, Hannah Dunn says; couldn’t come to an agreement what they’d do, or what they wouldn’t do! Did you ever see such a load? Them poor horses’ll have enough of it, if the others don’t. I say! the Stevenses want us to go in there to supper to-night. Beefsteaks and onions.”

Peter’s head was bent attentively over a map in his book, and it continued so bent for a minute or two. Then he raised it. “Who’s to be there?”

“The Cheeks,” she said. “I’ll make haste and put the kettle on, and we’ll have our tea as soon as it boils! She says don’t go in later than six.”

Pinning on the coarse apron, Mrs. Quale passed into the kitchen to her work. From the above slight sketch, it may be gathered that Daffodil’s Delight was, take it for all in all, in tolerably comfortable circumstances. But

for the wasteful mode of living generally pervading it; the improvidence both of husbands and wives; the spending where they need not have spent, and in things they would have been better without—it would have been in *very* comfortable circumstances; for, as is well known, no class of operatives earn better wages than those connected with the building trade.

“Is this Peter Quale’s?”

The question proceeded from a stranger, who had entered the house passage, and thence the parlor, after knocking at its door. Peter raised his eyes, and beheld a tall, young, very gentlemanlike man; one of courteous manners, for he lifted his hat as he spoke, though Peter was only a workman and had a paper cap on his head.

“I am Peter Quale,” said Peter, without moving.

Perhaps you may have already guessed that it was Austin Clay. He stepped forward with a frank smile. “I am sent here,” he said, “by the Messieurs Hunter. They desired me to inquire for Peter Quale.”

Peter was not wont to put himself out of the way for strangers: had a duke royal vouchsafed him a visit, I question if Peter would have been more than barely civil; but he knew his place with respect to his employers, and what was due to them—none better; and he rose up at their name, and took off his paper cap, and laid his pipe inside the fender, and spoke a word of apology to the gentleman before him.

“Pray do not mention it: do not disturb yourself,” said Austin, kindly. “My name is Clay. I have just entered into an engagement with the Messieurs Hunter, and am now in search of lodgings as conveniently near their yard as may be. Mr. Henry Hunter said he thought you had rooms which might suit me: hence my intrusion.”

“Well, sir, I don’t know,” returned Peter rather dubiously. He was one of those who are apt to grow bewildered with any sudden proposition; requiring time, as may be said, to take it in, before he could digest it. “You are from the country, sir, maybe?”

“I am from the country. I arrived in London but an hour ago, and my portmanteau is yet at the station. I wish to settle where I shall lodge, before I go to get it. Have you rooms to let?”

“Here, Nancy, come in!” cried Peter to his wife. “The rooms are in readiness to be shown, aren’t they?”

Mrs. Quale required no second call. Hearing a strange voice, and gifted in a remarkable degree with what we are taught to look upon as her sex’s failing—curiosity—she had already discarded again the apron, and made her appearance in time to receive the question.

“Ready and waiting,” answered she. “And two better rooms, for their size, you won’t find, sir, search London through,” she said, volubly, turning to Austin. “They are on the first floor—a nice sitting-room, and a bed chamber behind it. The furniture—all good, and clean, and handsome; for, when we was buying of it, we didn’t spare a few pounds, knowing such would keep good to the end. Please step up and take a look at ‘em.”

Austin acquiesced, motioning to her to lead the way. She dropped a courtesy as she passed him, as if in apology for taking it. He followed, and Peter brought up the rear, a dim notion penetrating Peter’s brain that it was due from him to attend one sent by the Messrs. Hunter.

Two good rooms, as she had said, small, but well fitted up. “You’d be sure to be comfortable, sir,” cried Mrs. Quale to Austin; for if *I* can’t make lodgers comfortable, I don’t know who can. Our last gentleman came to us three years ago, and left but a month since. He was a barrister’s clerk, but he didn’t get well paid, and he lodged in this part for cheapness.”

“The rooms would suit me, so far as I can judge,” said Austin, looking round; “suit me very well indeed, if we can agree upon terms. My pocket is but a shallow one at present,” he laughed.

“I would make *them* easy enough for any gentleman sent by the masters,” struck in Peter. “Did you say your name was Clay, sir?”

“Clay,” assented Austin.

Mrs. Quale wheeled round at this, and took a free, full view of the gentleman from head to foot. “Clay? Clay?” she repeated to herself. “And there *is* a likeness if ever I saw one! Sir,” she hastily inquired, “do you come from the neighborhood of Ketterford?”

“I come from Ketterford itself,” replied he.

“Ah, but you were not born right in the town. I

think you must be Austin Clay, sir—the orphan son of Mr. Clay and his wife—Miss Austin that used to be. They lived at the Nash farm. Sir, I have had you on my lap scores of times when you were a little one.”

“Why—who are you?” exclaimed Austin.

“You can’t have forgot old Mr. Austin, the great uncle, sir? though you were only seven years old when he died. I was cook to the old gentleman. Many a fruit puff have I made for you, Master Austin; many a currant cake; how things come round in this world. Do take our rooms, sir—it will seem like serving my old master over again.”

“I will take them willingly, and be glad to fall into such good hands. You will not require references now?”

Mrs. Quale laughed. Peter grunted resentfully. References from any one sent by Messrs. Hunter! “I would say eight shillings a week, sir,” said Peter, looking at his wife. “Pay as you like; monthly, or quarterly, or any way.”

“That’s less than I expected,” said Austin, in his candor. “Mr. Henry Hunter thought they would be about ten shillings.”

Peter was candid also. “There’s the neighborhood to be took into consideration, sir, which is not a good one, and we can only let according to it. In some parts—not far off, neither—you’d pay eighteen or twenty shillings for such rooms as these; but in Daffodil’s Delight it’s different. The last gentleman paid us nine. If eight will suit you, sir, it will suit us.”

So the bargain was struck; and Austin Clay went back to the station for his luggage, while Mrs. Quale, busy as a bee, ran to tell her neighbor, Mrs. Stevens, that she could not be one of the beefsteak-and-onion eaters that night, though Peter might, for she should have her hands full with their new lodger. “The nicest, handsomest young fellow,” she wound up with, “one it’ll be a pleasure to wait on.”

“Take care what you be at, if he’s a stranger,” cried cautious Mrs. Stevens. “There’s no trusting those country folks; they run away sometimes. It looks odd, don’t it, to come after lodgings one minute, and enter upon ’em the next?”

“Very odd,” laughed Mrs. Quale. “Why, it was Mr.

Henry Hunter sent him round, and he has got a post in their house. What he's to be there, who knows? but above us work people, we may depend on't. And as to himself, I knew him as a baby. It was in his mother's family I lived before ever I married Peter Quale. He's as like his mother as two peas, and a handsome woman was Mrs. Clay. Good-bye: I'm going to get the sheets on to his bed now."

Mrs. Quale, however, found that she was, after all, able to "assist" at the supper; for, when Austin came back, it was only to dress himself and go out. He had been invited to dine at Mr. Henry Hunter's.

It so happened that business was remarkably brisk with the Hunters last spring. They could scarcely get hands enough. And when Austin explained the cause which had brought him to town, and frankly proffered the question—could they recommend him to any employment? they were too glad to offer it themselves. He produced his credentials of capacity and character, and was engaged forthwith. At present his duties were to be partly in the counting-house, partly in overlooking the men; and the salary offered was twenty-five pounds per quarter.

"I can rise above that in time, I suppose," said Austin, smiling, "if I give satisfaction?"

Mr. Hunter smiled, too. "Ay, you can rise above that, if you choose. But when you get on, you'll be doing, I expect, as most of the rest do."

"What is that, sir?"

"Leaving us, to set up for yourself. Numbers have done so as soon as they have become valuable. I do not speak of the men, but of those who have been with us in a higher capacity. A few of the men, though, have done the same; some have risen into influence."

"How can they do that without capital?" inquired Austin. "It must take money, and a good deal of it, to set up for themselves."

"Not so much as you may think. They begin in a small way—take piece-work, and work early and late, often fourteen and fifteen hours a day, husbanding their earnings, and getting a capital together by slow, but sure degrees. Many of our most important firms have so

risen, and owe their present positions to sheer hard work, patience and energy."

"It was the way in which Mr. Thornimett rose," observed Austin. "He was once a journeyman at fourteen shillings a week. He got together money by working over-hours."

"Ay, there's nothing like it for the industrious man," said Mr. Hunter.

At six, Austin was at Mr. Henry Hunter's. Mrs. Henry Hunter, a very pretty and very talkative woman, welcomed him with both hands, and told her children to do the same, for it was "the gentleman who had saved papa." There was no ceremony; he was received quite *en famille*; no other guest was present, and three or four of the children dined at the table. He appeared to find favor with them all. He talked on business matters with Mr. Henry Hunter; on lighter topics with his wife; he pointed out some errors in Mary Hunter's drawings, which she somewhat ostentatiously exhibited to him, and showed her how to rectify them; entered into the school-life of the two boys, from their classics to their scrapes; and nursed a pretty little lady of five, who insisted on appropriating his knee—bearing himself throughout all with the modest reticence—the refinement of the innate gentleman. Mrs. Henry Hunter was charmed with him.

"How do you think you shall like your quarters?" she asked. "Mr. Hunter told me he recommended you to Peter Quale's."

"Very much. Mrs. Quale, it appears, is an old friend of mine."

"An old friend! Of yours!"

"She claims me as one, and says she has nursed me many a time when I was a child. I had quite forgotten her and all about her, though I now do remember her name. She was formerly a servant in my mother's family, near Ketterford."

Thus Austin Clay had succeeded without difficulty in obtaining employment, and was, moreover, received on a footing of equality in the house of Mr. Henry Hunter. We shall see how he gets on.

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## CHAPTER IV.

WERE there space, it might be well to trace Austin Clay's progress step by step—his advancements and his drawbacks—his smooth-sailing and his difficulties; for, that he was not free from difficulties and drawbacks you may be very sure. I do not know who is. If you have thought he was to be represented as perfection, you were much mistaken: he got into scrapes—or pitfalls, as Mrs. Thornimett had termed it—not many; he had better sense than that. And he managed to get out of them without moral damage, for he was high-principled in every sense of the word. But there is not time to trace this; and it would be anticipating, besides.

Austin Clay sat one day in a small room of the office, making corrections in a certain plan, which had been roughly sketched. It was a hot day for the beginning of autumn, some three or four months having elapsed since his installation at the Messrs. Hunters. The office boy entered.

“Please, sir, here's a lady outside asking if she can see young Mr. Clay.”

“A lady!” repeated Austin, in some wonder as to what lady could be wanting him; for his acquaintance in that way was limited to Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Henry Hunter. “Does she wear widow's weeds?” he hastily resumed, an idea flashing over him that Mrs. Thornimett might have come up to town.

“Weeds? I dunnow,” replied the boy, probably at a loss to know what “weeds” might mean. “She have got a white veil on.”

“Oh,” said Austin, “Well, ask her to come in. But I don't know any lady that can want me.”

The lady came in—a very tall one. She wore a dark silk dress, a shepherd's plaid shawl, a straw bonnet, and a white veil. Austin rose to receive her.

“You are doubtless surprised to see me, Austin Clay. But as I was coming to London on business—I always do at this season of the year—I got your address from Mrs. Thornimett, having a question to put to you.”

Without ceremony, without invitation, she set herself down on a chair. More by her voice than her features—



for she kept her veil before her face—did Austin recognize her. It was Miss Gwinn. He recognized her with dismay. Mr. Henry Hunter was about the premises, liable to come in at any moment, and then might occur a repetition of that violent scene to which he had been a witness. “What shall I do with her?” thought Austin.

“Will you shut the door?” she said, in a peremptory, short tone, for the boy had left it open.

“I beg your pardon, Miss Gwinn,” interrupted Austin, perplexity giving him courage. “Though very glad to see you myself, I am at the present hour so busy that it is next to impossible for me to give you my attention. If you will name any place I can wait upon you after business hours, this or any other evening, I shall be happy to meet you.”

Miss Gwinn ranged her eyes round the room, looking possibly for confirmation of his words. “You are not so busy as to be unable to spare a minute. You were but looking over a plan.”

“It is a plan that is being waited for.” Which was true. “And you must forgive me for reminding you—I do it in all courtesy—that my time and this room do not belong to me, but to my employers.”

“Boy! what is your motive for seeking to get rid of me?” she asked, abruptly. “That you have one, I can see.”

Austin was upon thorns. He had not taken a seat. He stood, pencil in hand, hoping it would induce her to move. At that moment footsteps were heard, and the office door was pushed wide open.

It was Mr. Hunter. He stopped on the threshold, seeing a lady. He supposed it might be somebody for Mr. Clay; her features, shaded by the veil, were indistinct, and to him she appeared to be a stranger. Miss Gwinn looked fully at him, and bent her head, as a slight mark of courtesy. He responded by lifting his hat, and went out again.

“One of the principals, I suppose?” she remarked to Austin.

“Yes,” he replied, thanking good luck that it was not Mr. Henry; “I believe he wants me, Miss Gwinn.”

“I am not going to keep you from him. The question

I wish to put to you will be answered in a sentence. Austin Clay, have you, since——”

“Allow me one single instant first, then,” interrupted Austin, resigning himself to his fate, “just to speak a word of explanation to Mr. Hunter.”

He stepped out of the room and closed the door behind him. Standing at the outer door, close by, open to the yard, was Mr. Hunter. Austin, in his haste and earnestness, grasped his arm.

“Find Mr. Henry, sir,” he whispered; “wherever he may be, let him keep there—out of sight—until she—this person—has gone. It is Miss Gwinn.”

“Who?—what do you say?” cried Mr. Hunter, staring at Austin.

“It is that Miss Gwinn. The woman who set upon Mr. Henry in that strange manner. She——”

Miss Gwinn opened the door at that juncture, and looked out upon them. Mr. Hunter walked briskly away in search of his brother. Austin turned back again.

She closed the door when he was inside the room, keeping her hand upon it. She did not sit down, but stood facing Austin, whom she held before her with the other hand.

“Have you, since you came to London, seen aught of my enemy? that man whom you saved from his death in the gravel pits? Boy! answer me truthfully, as you would answer your Maker.”

Now, independent of the solemn enjoiner conveyed in the last sentence, Austin would have revolted from answering a deliberate falsehood to a deliberate question. He remained silent, scarcely seeing what his course ought to be. She read the hesitation aright.

“No need of your affirmative,” she said. “I see you have met him; where is he to be found?”

There was only one course for him now; and he took it, in all straightforward openness.

“It is true I have seen that gentleman, Miss Gwinn, but I can tell you nothing about him.”

She looked fixedly at him. “That you cannot, or that you will not—which?”

“That I will not. Forgive the seeming incivility of the avowal, but I consider that I ought not to comply with your request—that I should be doing wrong.”

“Explain. What do you mean by wrong?”

“In the first place, I believe you were mistaken with regard to the gentleman; I do not think he was the one for whom you took him. In the second place, even if he be the one, I cannot make it my business to bring you into contact with him, and so give rise—as it probably would—to further violence.”

There was a pause. She threw up her veil and looked fixedly at him, struggling for composure, her lips compressed, her face working.

“You know who he is, and where he lives,” she jerked forth.

“I acknowledge that.”

“How dare you take part against me?” she cried, in agitation, “Would you become a worker of wickedness as he is?”

“I do not take part against you, Miss Gwinn,” he replied, wishing some friendly balloon would come and whirl her away out of danger; for Mr. Hunter might not find his brother to give the warning. “I do not take his part more than I take yours, only in so far that I decline to tell you who and where he is. Had he the same ill-feeling towards you, and wished to know where you might be found, I would not tell him.”

“Austin Clay, you *shall* tell me.”

He drew himself up to his full height, speaking in all the quiet consciousness of power. “Never of my own free will; and I think, Miss Gwinn, there are no means by which you can compel me.”

“Perhaps the law might?” She spoke dreamily, not in answer to him, but in commune with herself, as if debating the question. “Fare you well for the present, young sir, but I have not done with you.”

To his intense satisfaction she turned out of the office. Austin attended her to the outer gate. She strode straight on, not deigning to cast a glance to the busy yard, with its sheds, its timber, its implements of work, and its artisans, all scattered about it.

“Believe me,” he said, holding out his hand as a peace offering, “I am not willingly discourteous. I wish I could see my way clear to help you.”

She did not take the hand; she walked away without another word or look, and Austin went back again. Mr.

Hunter advanced to meet him from the upper end of the yard, and went with him into the office.

“What was all that, Clay? I scarcely understood.”

“I dare say not, sir, for I had no time to be explanatory. It seems she—Miss Gwinn—has come to town on business. She procured my address from Mrs. Thornimett, and came here to ask me if I had seen anything of her enemy—meaning Mr. Henry Hunter. I feared lest he should be coming in; I could only beg of you to find Mr. Henry, and warn him not. That is all, sir.”

Mr. Hunter stood with his back to Austin, softly whistling—his habit when in deep thought. “What can be her motive for wanting to find him?” he presently said.

“She speaks of revenge. Of course I do not know for what; I cannot give a guess. There is no doubt she is mistaken in the person, when she accuses Mr. Henry Hunter.”

“Well,” returned Mr. Hunter, “I said nothing to my brother, for I did not understand what there was to say. It will be better not to tell him now; the woman is gone, and the subject does not appear to be a pleasant one. Do you hear?”

“Very well, sir.”

“I think I understood, when the affair was spoken of some time ago, that she does not know him as Mr. Hunter?”

“Of course she does not,” said Austin. “She would have been here after him before now if she did. She came this morning to see me, not suspecting she might meet him.”

“Ah! Better keep the visit close,” cried Mr. Hunter, as he walked away.

Now, it occurred to Austin that it would be better to do just the opposite thing. *He* should have told Mr. Henry Hunter, and left that gentleman to seek out Miss Gwinn, or not, as he might choose. A sudden meeting between them in the office, in the hearing of the yard, and with the lady in excitement, was not desirable; but, that Mr. Henry Hunter should clear himself, now that she was following him up, and convince her it was not he who was the suspected party, was, Austin thought, needful. However, he could only obey Mr. Hunter's orders.

Austin resumed his occupation. His head and fingers were busy over the plan, when he saw a gig drive into the yard. It contained the great engineer, Sir Michael Wilson. Mr. Henry Hunter came down the yard to meet him; they shook hands and entered the private room together. In a few minutes Mr. Henry came to Austin.

“Are you particularly engaged, Clay?”

“Only with this plan, sir. It is wanted as soon as I can get it done.”

“You can leave it for a quarter of an hour. I want you to go round to Dr. Bevary. I was to have been at his house now—half-past eleven—to go out with him to see a sick friend. Tell him that Sir Michael has come, therefore it is impossible for me to keep my engagement with him. I am very sorry, tell Bevary: these things always happen crossly. Go right into his consulting-room, Clay; never mind patients; or else he will be chafing at my delay, and grumble the ceiling off.”

Austin laughed. Dr. Bevary occupied a good house in the main street, to the left of the yard, to gain which you had to pass the turning to Daffodil's Delight. Had Mr. Bevary lived on the right of the yard, his practice might have been more exclusive; but doctors cannot always choose their localities, circumstances more frequently doing that for them. He had a large connection, and was often pressed for time.

Down went Austin. “The doctor's engaged, sir,” was the answer of the servant. And, indeed, the handsome carriage of a patient was then standing before the door.

“I'll wait,” he said, and was turning, *sans ceremonie*, into the little box of a study on the left of the hall.

“Not there, sir,” interposed the man hastily, and showed him into a drawing-room on the right, Dr. Bevary and his patient being in the dining-room at the back; or, as the doctor generally called it, his consulting-room, for it was there he saw his patients.

Ten minutes of impatience to Austin. What could any lady mean by keeping him so long, in his own house? Then they came forth. The lady, a very red and portly one, rather old, was pushed into the carriage by the help of her footman, Austin watching the process from the window. The carriage then drove off.

The doctor did not come in. Austin concluded the servant must have forgotten to tell him he was there. He crossed the hall to the little study, the doctor's favorite sanctum, knocked and entered.

"I am not to care for patients," called out he gayly, believing the doctor was alone; "Mr. Henry Hunter says so." But, to his surprise, a patient was sitting there; at least, a lady, sitting nose and knees together, with Dr. Bevary, and talking hurriedly and earnestly, as if they had the whole weight of the nation's affairs on their shoulders.

"So it's you, is it, Austin Clay!" cried the lady, *Miss Gwinn*. "I was acquainting Dr. Bevary with your refusal to give me that man's address, asking his advice whether the law could compel you. Have you come after me, to say you have thought better of it?"

Austin was decidedly taken to. How far was Dr. Bevary cognizant of the circumstances? He glanced at him.

"Was your visit to this lady, Mr. Clay?"

"No, sir, it was to you. Sir Michael Wilson has come down on business, and Mr. Henry Hunter will not be able to keep his appointment with you; he desired me to say that he was sorry, but that it was no fault of his."

Dr. Bevary nodded. "Another time will——"

A sharp cry. A cry of passion, of rage, almost of terror. It came from *Miss Gwinn*; and the doctor, breaking off his sentence, turned to her in amazement.

It was well he did so; it was well he caught her hands. Another moment, and she would have dashed them through the window, and perhaps herself also. Driving by, in the gig, were Sir Michael Wilson and Mr. Henry Hunter. It was at the latter she gazed, at him she pointed.

"Do you see him? Do you see him?" she panted to the doctor. "That's the man, not the one driving; the other—the one sitting this way. Oh, Dr. Bevary, will you believe me now? I told you I met him at Ketterford; and there he is again. Let me go!"

She was strong almost as a wild animal, wrestling with the doctor to get from him. He made a motion to Austin to keep the door fast. He got her into an arm-chair at last, and stood before her, holding her hands, keeping

silence at first, then speaking calmly, soothingly, like he would to a child.

“My dear lady, what will become of you if you give way to these fits of violence? But for me, I really believe you would have been through the window. A pretty affair of spikes that would be! I should have had you laid up in my house for a month, covered over with sticking-plaster.”

“If you had not stopped me,” she passionately said, “I might have caught that gig.”

“Caught that gig! A gig going at the rate of ten miles an hour, if it was going one! By the time you had got down the steps of my door, it would have been out of sight. How people can drive at that random rate in London streets, I can't tell.”

“How can I find him?” she uttered, in a tone of anguished wailing. “Will you not help me, Dr. Bevary? Did you note him?”

“So far as to see that there were two persons in the gig, and that they were men, not women. Do you feel sure it was the man you speak of? It is so easy to be mistaken in a person who is being whirled along swiftly.”

“Mistaken!” she returned, in a strangely significant tone. “Dr. Bevary, I swear it was he. I have not kept him in my heart for years, to mistake him now. Austin Clay,” she fiercely added, turning round upon Austin, “you speak; speak the truth from your soul. Was it, or was it not, the man whom I met at Ketterford?”

“I believe it was,” was Austin's answer. “Nevertheless, Miss Gwinn, I do not believe him to be the enemy you spoke of—the one who worked you ill. He denies it just as solemnly as you assert it; and I am sure he is a truthful man.”

“And that I am a liar?”

“No. That you believe what you assert is only too apparent. I think it is a case, on your side, of mistaken identity.”

Happening to raise his eyes, Austin caught those of Dr. Bevary fixed upon him with a keen, troubled, earnest gaze. It asked, as plainly as gaze could ask, “Do you believe so? or is the falsehood on *his* side?”

“Will you disclose to Dr. Bevary the name of that man, if you will not to me?”

Again the gentlemen's eyes met, and this time a warning look of caution glanced forth from Dr. Bevary's. "I must decline to speak of him in any way, Miss Gwinn," said Austin. "You had my reasons before. Dr. Bevary, I have given you the message I was charged with, and must wish you both good-day."

Austin walked back, full of thought, his faith somewhat wavering. "It is very strange," he reflected. "Could a woman, could any one be so positive as she is, unless thoroughly sure? What is the mystery, I wonder? That it was no sentimental affair between them, or rubbish of that sort, is patent by the difference in their ages; she looks pretty nearly old enough to be his mother. Mr. Henry Hunter's is a remarkable face—one that would alter little in a score of years."

The bell was ringing twelve as he approached the yard, and the workmen were pouring out of it, on their way home to dinner. Plentiful tables awaited them; little care was on their minds; flourishing was every branch of the building trade then. Peter Quale came up to Austin.

"Sam Shuck have just been up here, a-eating humble pie, and praying to be took on again. But the masters be both absent; and Mr. Wells, he said he didn't choose, in a thing like this, to act on his own responsibility, for he heard Mr. Hunter say Shuck shouldn't again be employed."

"I would not take him on," replied Austin, "if it rested with me. An idle, skulking, deceitful vagabond, drunk and incapable for a fortnight, and striving to spread discontent among the men. But it is not my affair, Quale; Mr. Mills is manager."

The yard, between twelve and one, was pretty nearly deserted. The gentleman spoken of as Mr. Mills, and Austin, usually remained; the principals would sometimes be there, and an odd man or two. The timekeeper lived in the yard. Austin rather liked that hour; it was quiet. He was applying to his plan with a zest, when another interruption came, in the shape of Dr. Bevary. Austin began to think he might as well put the drawing away altogether.

"Anybody in the offices, Mr. Clay, except you?" asked the doctor.



“Not in-doors. Mills is about somewhere.”

Down sat the doctor, and fixed his keen eyes upon Austin. “What took place here this morning with Miss Gwinn?”

“No harm, sir,” replied Austin, briefly explaining. “As good luck had it, Mr. Henry kept away. Mr. Hunter came in and saw her; but that was all.”

“What is your opinion?” abruptly asked the doctor. “Come, give it freely. You have your share of judgment, and of discretion too, or I should not ask it. Is she mistaken, or is Henry Hunter false?”

Austin did not immediately reply. Dr. Bevary mistook the cause of his silence.

“Don’t hesitate, Clay. You know I am trustworthy; and it is not I who would stir to harm a Hunter. If I seek to come to the bottom of this affair, it is that I may do what I can to avert damage, and turn the fruits of wrong-doing from their channel.”

“Why, what do you suspect, sir?” returned Austin in surprise.

“If only the half of what I begin to suspect be true, better for us that—that——”

Austin looked at him. He, the stoical physician, was growing agitated.

“Better that the earth would open and swallow some of us up in it. Clay, you need not hesitate.”

“If I hesitated, Dr. Bevary, it was that I really am at a loss what answer to give. When Mr. Henry Hunter denies that he knows the woman, or that he ever has known her, he appears to me to speak open truth. On the other hand, these recognitions of Miss Gwinn’s, and her persistency, are, to say the least of them, suspicious and singular. Until within an hour I had full trust in Mr. Henry Hunter; now, I do not know what to think.”

“He does not seem”—Dr. Bevary appeared to be speaking to himself, and his head was bent—“like one who carries about him some dark secret.”

“Mr. Henry Hunter? None less. Never a man whose outside gave indications of a clearer conscience. But, Dr. Bevary, if her enemy be Mr. Henry Hunter, how is it she does not know him by name?”

“Ay, there’s another point. She evidently attaches no importance to the name of Hunter.”

“What was the name of—of the enemy she talks of?” asked Austin. “We must call him ‘enemy,’ for want of a better name. Do you know it, doctor?”

“No. Can’t get it out of her. Never could get it out of her. I asked her again to-day, but she evaded the question.”

“Mr. Hunter thought it would be better to keep her visit this morning a secret from his brother, as they had not met. I, on the contrary, should have told him of it.”

“No,” hastily interposed Dr. Bevary, putting up his hand with an alarmed warning gesture. “The only chance is to keep her and Henry Hunter apart.”

“I wonder,” mused Austin, “what brings her to town?”

The doctor threw his penetrating gaze into Austin’s. “Have you no idea what it is?”

“None, sir. She seemed to intimate that she came every year.”

“Good. Don’t try to form any, my young friend. It would not be a pleasant secret, even for you to hold!”

He rose as he spoke, nodded, and went out, leaving Austin Clay in a state of puzzled bewilderment. It was not lessened when, an hour later, Austin encountered Dr. Bevary’s close carriage driving rapidly along the street, the doctor inside it, and Miss Gwinn seated beside him.

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## CHAPTER V.

“OH, Mary, I cannot get up; I cannot go. I shall never rise from my bed again.”

The tears of Mary Baxendale fell fast at the words; her mother had been ailing for eight or nine months—had been very ill for two or three. Mr. Rice, the apothecary, who was the general attendant in Daffodil’s Delight—a place of which, and its residents, we shall have something to say before long—had given her medicine, and told her to eat well and get up her strength. But somehow the strength and the appetite did not come, and, now that she was worse, she bethought herself of doing what she ought to have done at first—consult Dr. Bevary.

From half-past eight to ten, three mornings a week, Dr. Bevary gave advice gratis. Mrs. Baxendale fixed with Mary a certain Thursday morning on which she would go to him, but, on attempting to rise, she found her weakness too great. It really was so. To get up and dress was all but an impossibility.

“What is to be done?” sobbed Mary.

“Couldn’t you wait upon him, child, and describe my symptoms?” urged Mrs. Baxendale, after weighing over the dilemma in her mind. “It might do as well. Perhaps he can write for me. Tell him, with my duty, I am not equal to it.”

Mary did not like the expedition, though she prepared instantly to obey it. Mrs. Baxendale was a superior woman for her station in life, and had brought up her daughter to be implicitly dutiful. Mary would have gone into a sea of fire to benefit her mother; but it seemed a formidable task, the going to explain ailments to this great physician, familiar and pleasant man though he was, and would nod good-humoredly to Mary if he met her in the street.

She proceeded to Dr. Bevary’s, waited her turn to go in, and then timidly told her tale.

“Ah! a return of the old weakness that she had years ago,” remarked the doctor. “I told her she must be careful. Too ill to get up? Why did she not come to me before.”

“I suppose, sir, she did not much like to trouble you,” responded Mary. “She has been hoping from week to week that Mr. Rice would do her good.”

“I can’t do her good unless I see her,” cried the doctor. “I might prescribe just the wrong thing, you know.”

Mary choked down her tears. “I am afraid, then, she must die, sir. She said this morning she thought she should never get up from her bed again.”

“I’ll step round some time to-day, and see,” said Dr. Bevary. “But, now, don’t you go chattering that to the whole parish. I should have every sick soul in it expecting me, as a right, to call and visit them. He laughed pleasantly at Mary as he spoke, and she departed with a glad heart.

Not home yet. As she reached Daffodil’s Delight, she

did not turn into it, but continued her way to the house of Mrs. Hunter. Mary Baxendale took in plain sewing, and had some in hand at present from that lady. She inquired for Dobson. Dobson was Mrs. Hunter's own maid, and a very consequential one.

"Not able to get Miss Hunter's night-dresses home on Saturday!" grumbled Dobson. "But you must, Mary Baxendale. You promised."

"I should not have promised had I known that my mother would have got worse," said Mary. "A sick person requires a deal of waiting on, and there's only me. I'll do what I can to get them home next week, if that will do."

"I don't know that it will do," snapped Dobson. "Miss Florence may be wanting them. A promise is a promise, Mary Baxendale."

"Yes, it will do, Mary," cried Florence Hunter, darting forward from some forbidden nook, whence she had heard the colloquy.

A fair sight was that child to look upon, with her white muslin dress, her blue ribbons, her flowing hair, and her sweet countenance, radiant as a summer's morning.

"Mamma is not down-stairs yet, or I would ask her; but I know I do not want them. Never you mind them, and never mind Dobson, either, but nurse your mother."

Dobson drew the young lady back, asking her if such behavior was not enough to "scandalize the square;" and Mary Baxendale returned home.

Dr. Bevary paid his visit to Mrs. Baxendale about mid-day. His practiced eye saw with certainty what others were only beginning to suspect—that death had marked her. There would be mourning in the house ere another month should come. The doctor said nothing then of the danger: time enough for that. He wrote a prescription, gave some general directions, said he would call again, and told Mrs. Baxendale she would be better out of bed than in it.

Accordingly, after his departure, she got up and went into the front room, which they made their sitting-room. But the exertion caused her to faint; she was certainly much worse than usual that day. John Baxendale was terribly concerned, and did not go back to his work after

dinner. When the bustle was over, and she seemed pretty comfortable again, one of the young Shucks came upstairs to announce that Mrs. Hunter's maid was asking for Mary, and little Miss Hunter was there, too, and said might she come up and see Mrs. Baxendale?

Both were requested to walk up. Dobson had brought a gracious message from her mistress (not graciously delivered though) that the sewing might wait till it was quite convenient to do it, and Florence produced a jar, which she had insisted upon carrying herself, and had thereby split her gray kid gloves, it being too large for her hands.

"It is black currant jelly, Mrs. Baxendale," she said, with the prettiest, kindest air, as she freely sat herself down by the sick woman's side. "I asked mamma to let me bring some, for I remember when I was ill I only liked black currant jelly. Mamma is so sorry to hear you are worse, and she will come to see you soon."

"Bless your little heart, Miss Florence! The same dear child as ever; thinking of other people, and not of yourself."

"I have not got anything to think of for myself of that sort," laughed Florence. "Everything I want is got ready for me. I wish you did not look so ill, I wish you would have my Uncle Bevary to see you. He cures everybody."

"He has been kind enough to come around to-day, miss," spoke up John Baxendale, "and he'll come again, he says. I hope he'll be able to do the missis good. As you be a bit better," he added to his wife, "I think I'll go back to my work."

"Ay, do, John. There's no cause for you to stay at home. It was some sort of weakness, I suppose, that came over me."

Florence turned to the window to watch his departure, ever restless, as a healthy child is apt to be. "There's Uncle Henry!" she called out.

Mr. Henry Hunter was walking rapidly down Daffodil's Delight. He encountered John Baxendale as he went out of his gate.

"Not back to work yet, Baxendale?"

"The missis has been taken worse, sir," was the man's reply. "She fainted dead off just now, and I declare I

didn't know what to think 'about her. She's all right again, and I am going round."

At that moment there was a tapping at the window panes, and a pretty little head nodding and laughing, "Uncle Henry! How do you do, Uncle Henry?"

Mr. Henry Hunter nodded in reply, and pursued his way, unconscious that the lynx eye of Miss Gwinn was following him, like a hawk watching its prey.

It happened that she had penetrated Daffodil's Delight, hoping to catch Austin Clay at his dinner, which she supposed he might be taking about that hour. She held his address at Peter Quale's from Mrs. Thornimett. Her object was to make further efforts to get from him what he knew of the man she sought to find. Scarcely had she turned into Daffodil's Delight, when she saw Mr. Henry Hunter at a distance. Away she tore after him, and gained upon him considerably. She reached the house of John Baxendale just as he, Baxendale, was re-entering it; for he had forgotten something he must take with him to the yard. Turning her head upon Baxendale for a minute as she passed, Miss Gwinn lost sight of Mr. Henry Hunter.

How had he disappeared? Into the ground? or into a house? or down any obscure passage that might be a short cut between Daffodil's Delight and some other Delight? or into that cab that was now whirling onward at such a rate? That he was no longer visible was certain; and Miss Gwinn waxed exceeding wroth. She came to the conclusion that he had seen her, and hid himself in a cab, though she had not heard it stop.

But she had seen him spoken to from the window of that house where the workman had just gone in, and she determined to make inquiries there. In the Shucks' kitchen there were only three or four young children, and she found her way up-stairs.

John Baxendale was on his knees, hunting among some tools at the bottom of a closet; Mary was meekly exhibiting the progress of the nightgowns to Dobson, who sat in state, sour enough to turn milk into curd; the invalid was lying pale, in her chair; while the young lady appeared to be assisting at the tool-hunting, on her knees, chattering as fast as her tongue could go. All looked up

at the apparition of the stranger, who stood there gazing in upon them.

"Can you tell me where a gentleman of the name of Lewis lives?" she began, in an indirect diplomatic sort of way, for she deemed it well to discard violence for tact. In the humor she was in yesterday, she would have said: "Tell me the name of that man I saw now pass your gate."

John Baxendale rose.

"Lewis, ma'am? I don't know anybody of the name."

A pause.

"It is very unfortunate," she mildly resumed. "I am in search of the gentleman, and have lost his address. I believe he belongs to this neighborhood. Indeed, I was almost sure I saw him talking to you just now at the gate—though my sight is none of the clearest from a distance. The same gentleman to whom the young lady nodded."

"That was my uncle Henry," called out the child.

"Who?" cried she, sharply.

"It was Mr. Henry Hunter, ma'am, that was," spoke up Baxendale.

"Mr. Henry Hunter!" she repeated, in doubt, as she knit her brow. "That gentleman is Mr. Lewis."

"No, that he is not," said John Baxendale. "I ought to know, ma'am; I have worked for him some years."

Here the mischief might have ended; but that busy little tongue—ah! what work they make—began clapping again.

"Perhaps you mean my papa. Papa's name is Lewis—James Lewis Hunter. But he is never called Mr. Lewis; he is brother to my uncle Henry."

A wild flush of crimson flashed over Miss Gwinn's sallow face. Something within her seemed to whisper that her search was over.

"It is possible I mistook the one for the other in the distance," she observed, all her new diplomacy in full play. "Are they alike in person?" she continued to John Baxendale.

"Not so much alike now, ma'am. In years gone by they were the very model of one another; but Mr. Hunter has grown fat, and it has altered him. Mr. Henry looks just like what Mr. Hunter used to look."

“And who are you, did you say?” she asked of Florence, with wild emphasis. “Mr. Lewis Hunter’s daughter?”

“Of course I am,” said Miss Florence.

“And—you have a mother?”

“Of course I have,” repeated the child.

A pause: the lady looked at John Baxendale.

“Then Mr. Lewis Hunter is married!”

“To be sure he is,” said John. “Ever so many years ago. Miss Florence is twelve.”

“Thank you,” said Miss Gwinn, abruptly. And as she descended the stairs, she laughed inwardly. “What a mistake to make! If that one had lost his life in the gravel pits, he would have died an innocent man.”

Away to the yard now, as fast as her legs could carry her. In turning in, she ran against Austin Clay.

“I want to speak with Mr. Hunter,” she imperiously said. “Mr. Lewis Hunter—not the one I saw in the gig.”

“Mr. Hunter is out, Miss Gwinn,” was Austin’s reply. “We do not expect him back at the yard to-day; he will not be home in time.”

“Boy! you are deceiving me!”

“Indeed I am not,” he returned. “Why should I deceive you? Mr. Hunter is not in the habit of being denied to people. You might have spoken to him yesterday when you saw him, had it pleased you to do so.”

“I never saw him yesterday.”

“Yes, you did, Miss Gwinn. That gentleman who came into the office and bowed to you, was Mr. Hunter.”

She stared Austin full in the face, as if unable to believe what he said.

“*That* Mr. Hunter?—Mr. Lewis Hunter?”

“It was.”

“Mercy, *how* he is altered!” And, throwing up her arms with a strange, wild gesture, she turned and strode out of the yard again.

The house of Mr. Hunter was one of the best in the square. Ascending to it by a flight of steps, and passing through a pillared portico, you found yourself in a handsome hall, paved in imitation of mosaic. Two spacious sitting-rooms were on the left, the front one was used as a dining-room, the other opened to a conservatory. On



the right of the hall, a broad flight of stairs led to the apartments above, one of which was a fine drawing-room, fitted up with costly elegance.

On the evening of the day spoken of above, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter were seated in the dining-room; Florence was there likewise, but not seated; it may be questioned if she ever did sit except when compelled. Dinner was over, but they frequently made this their evening sitting-room. The drawing-room up-stairs was grand, the room behind was dull; this was cheerful, and looked out on the square. Especially cheerful it looked on this evening, for a fire had been lighted in the grate, and it cast a warm glow around in the fading twilight.

Austin Clay had called. He was shown in, and invited to a seat by the fire, near Mrs. Hunter. He had come in obedience to orders from Mr. Hunter, issued to him when he, Mr. Hunter, had been going out that morning. His journey had been connected with certain buildings then in process, and he thought he might have directions to give with respect to the following morning's early work.

A few minutes given by Austin and his master to business matters, and then Austin turned to Mrs. Hunter. Unusually delicate she looked as she half sat, half lay back in her chair, the fire-light playing on her features. Florence had dragged forth a stool, and was sitting on it in a queer sort of fashion, one leg under her, at Austin's feet. He was a great favorite of hers, and she made no secret of the liking.

"You are not looking well this evening, ma'am," he observed, in a gentle tone, to Mrs. Hunter.

"I am not feeling well. I scarcely ever do feel well; never strong. I sometimes think, Mr. Clay, what a mercy it is that we are not permitted to foresee the future. If we could, some of us might be tempted to—to—" she hesitated, and then went on in a lower tone—"to pray that God might take us in youth."

"The longer we live the more we become impressed with the wonderful wisdom in the ordering of all things," replied Austin. "My years have not been many, comparatively speaking; but I see it always, and I shall see it more and more."

"The confirmed invalid, the man of care and sorrow,

the incessant battle for existence with those reduced to extreme poverty—had they seen their future, as in a mirror, how could they have borne to enter upon it? And yet, I have heard people exclaim, ‘How I wish I could foresee my destiny, and what is to happen to me!’”

“But the cares and ills of the world do not come near you, Mrs. Hunter,” spoke Austin, after a pause of thought. Mrs. Hunter smiled.

“From the cares and crosses of the world, as we generally estimate cares and crosses, I am free. God has spared them to me. He does not overwhelm us with ills; if one ill is particularly our portion, we are generally spared from another. Mine lies in my want of health; I am rarely free from pain and suffering.”

“What should we do if *all* the ills came to us, mamma?” cried Florence, who had been still, and was listening.

“My dear, if all the ills came to us, God would show us a way to bear them. You know what He has promised; and His promises cannot fail.”

“Clay,” cried Mr. Hunter, resuming his seat, for he had been in another part of the room, “did any one in particular call and want me to-day?”

“No, sir. Several people came, but Mr. Henry saw them. That—lady—who was there yesterday, came again. She asked for you.”

A pause. Then Mr. Hunter spoke up sharply.

“For my brother, you mean. She must have wanted him.”

“She certainly asked for you, sir. For Mr. Lewis Hunter.”

Those little ears pricked themselves up; and their owner unceremoniously wheeled herself round on her stool, holding on by Austin’s knee, as she faced her father.

“There was a lady came up to John Baxendale’s to-day, when I and Dobson were there, and she asked for Mr. Lewis Hunter. At least—it was the funniest thing, papa!—she saw Uncle Henry talking to John Baxendale, and she came up and said he was Mr. Lewis, and asked where he lived. John Baxendale said it was Mr. Henry Hunter, and she said no, it was not Mr. Henry Hunter, it was Mr. Lewis. So then we found out that she had

mistaken him for you, and that it was you she wanted. Who was she, papa?"

"She—she—her business was with Henry," spoke Mr. Hunter, in so confused, so startled a sort of tone, not as if answering the child, more as if defending himself to any one who might be around, that Austin looked up involuntarily. His face had grown lowering and angry, and he moved his position so that his wife's gaze should not fall upon it. Austin's did, though.

At that moment there was heard a knock and ring at the house door, announcing a visitor. Florence, much addicted to acting upon natural impulse, and thereby getting into constant hot water with her governess, who assured her nothing could be more unbecoming a young lady, quitted her stool and flew to the window. By dint of flattening her nose, and crushing her curls against a corner of one of its panes, she contrived to obtain a partial view of the visitor.

"Oh, dear! I hoped it was Uncle Bevary. Mamma's always better when he comes, to tell her she is not so ill as she thinks. Papa, I do believe it is that same lady who came to John Baxendale's. She is as tall as a house."

What possessed Mr. Hunter? He started up; he sprung half way across the room, hesitated there, and glided back again. Glided stealthily as it were; and stealthily touching Austin Clay, motioned him to follow him. His hands were trembling, and the dark frown, full of embarrassment, was still upon his features. Mrs. Hunter noticed nothing unusual; the apartment was shaded in twilight, and she sat with her head turned to the fire.

"Go to that woman, Clay!" came forth in a whisper from Mr. Hunter's compressed lips, as he drew Austin outside the room. "I cannot see her; I will not see her. *You go.*"

"What am I to say?" questioned Austin, feeling surprised and bewildered.

"Anything—anything. Only keep her from me."

He turned back into the room as he spoke, and closed the door softly, for Miss Gwinn was already in the hall. The servant had said his master was at home, and was conducting her to him. Austin thought he heard Mr.

Hunter slip the bolt of the dining-room as he walked forward to receive Miss Gwinn.

“Not there, Mark!” Austin spoke hastily to the servant, arresting the man’s footsteps. “Miss Gwinn,” he courteously added, presenting himself before her, “Mr. Hunter is unable to see you this evening.”

“Who gave you authority to interfere, Austin Clay?” was the response, not in a raving, angry tone, but in one of cold, concentrated determination. “I demand an interview with Lewis Hunter. That he is at home I know, for I saw him through the window, in the reflection of the firelight, as I stood on the steps; and here I will remain until I obtain speech of him, be it till to-morrow morning, be it till days to come. Do you note my words, meddling boy? I *demand* the interview; I do not crave it; he best knows by what right.”

She sat herself down on one of the hall chairs. Austin, almost at a loss what to do, and seeing no means of getting rid of her save by forcible expulsion, knocked gently at the room door again. Mr. Hunter threw it cautiously open to admit him; then slipped the bolt, entwined his arm within Austin’s, and drew him to the window.

“She has taken a seat in the hall, sir,” he whispered, “and says she will remain there till she sees you, even should it be till the morning. I am sure she means it, and that stop there she will. She says she demands the interview, of right.”

“No,” said Mr. Hunter, “she possesses no *right*. But—perhaps I had better see her, and get it over; otherwise she will make a disturbance. Tell Mark to show her into the drawing-room, Clay; and you stop here and talk to Mrs. Hunter.”

“What is the matter, that you are whispering? Does any one want you?” interrupted Mrs. Hunter. And her husband turned round, glib words upon his tongue.

“I am telling Clay that people have no right to come to my private house on business matters; however, as the person is here, I must see her, I suppose. Do not let us be interrupted, Louisa.”

“But what does she want?—it was a lady, Florence said. Who is she?” reiterated Mrs. Hunter.

“It is a matter of business of Henry’s. She ought to have gone to him.”

Mr. Hunter looked at his wife and at Austin as he spoke. The latter was leaving the room to do his bidding.

A full hour did the interview last. The voices seemed occasionally to be raised in anger, so that the sound penetrated to their ears down-stairs, from the room overhead. Mrs. Hunter grew impatient; the tea waited on the table, and she wanted it. At length they were heard to descend, and to cross the hall.

"He is showing her out himself!" exclaimed Mrs. Hunter. "Will you tell him we are waiting tea, Mr. Clay?"

Austin stepped in the hall and started when he caught sight of the face of Mr. Hunter. He was turning back from closing the door on Miss Gwinn, and the bright rays of the hall lamp fell full upon it. It was of ghastly whiteness; its expression as one living aspect of terror, of dread. He staggered, rather than walked, to a chair, and sunk into it. Austin hastened to him.

"Oh, sir, what is it? You are ill!"

The strong man, the proud master, calm hitherto in his native self respect, was for the moment overcome. He leaned his forehead upon Austin's arm, hiding his pallor.

"I have had a stab, Clay. Bear with me in silence, lad, for a minute. I have had a cruel stab."

Austin did not really know whether to take the words literally.

"A stab!" he hesitatingly repeated.

"Ay. Here," touching his heart. "I wish I was dead, Clay. I wish I had died years ago, or that she had. Why was she permitted to live to work me this awful wrong?" he dreamily wailed. "An awful wrong to me and mine! And it is that woman who has done it all."

He arose and appeared to be looking for his hat.

"Mrs. Hunter is waiting tea, sir," said the amazed Austin.

"Tea!" repeated Mr. Hunter, as if his brain were bewildered; "I cannot go in again to-night; I cannot see them. Make some excuse for me, Clay—anything. Why did that woman work me this crying wrong?"

He took his hat, opened the hall door, and shut it

after him with a bang, leaving Austin in wondering consternation.

Later in the evening, as Austin was going home, he passed a piece of clear ground, to be let for building purposes, at the end of the square. There, in its darkest corner, far back from the road, paced a man as if in some mental agony, his hat carried in his hand, and his head bared to the winds. Austin peered through the night with his quick sight, and recognized Mr. Hunter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

DAFFODIL'S DELIGHT was in a state of commotion. It has been often remarked that there exists more real sympathy between the working-classes, one for the other, than amongst those of a higher grade; and circumstances seem to bear it out. From one end of Daffodil's Delight to the other there ran just now a deep feeling of sorrow, of pity, of commiseration. Men made inquiries of each other as they passed in the street; women congregated at their doors to talk, concern on their faces, a question on their lips, "How is she? What does the doctor say?"

Yes; the excitement had its rise in once cause alone—the increased illness of Mrs. Baxendale. The physician had pronounced his fiat (little need to speak it, though, for the fact was only too apparent to all who used their eyes), and the news had gone forth to Daffodil's Delight—Mrs. Baxendale was past recovery; was, in fact, dying!

The concern, universal as it was, showed itself in various ways. Visits and neighborly calls were so incessant, that the Shucks openly rebelled at the "trampling up and down" through their "living-room," by which route the Baxendale apartments could alone be gained. The neighbors came to help, to nurse; to shake up the beds and pillows; to prepare condiments over the fire; to condole and to gossip—with tears in their eyes and lamentations in their tones, and ominous shakes of the head, and uplifted hands; but still to gossip—*that* lies in human female nature. They brought offerings of savory delicacies, or things that, in their ideas, stood for delicacies—dainties likely to tempt the sick. Mrs. Cheek made a pint jug of what she called "butter beer," a miscellaneous compound of scalding-hot porter, gin, eggs, sugar,

and spice. Mrs. Baxendale sipped a little; but it did not agree with her palate, and she declined it for the future, with "thanks, all the same," and Mrs. Cheek and a crony or two disposed of it themselves with great satisfaction. All this served to prove two things—that good feeling ran high in Daffodil's Delight, and that means did not run low.

Of all the visitors, the most effectual assistant was Mrs. Quale. She gossiped, it is true, or it had not been Mrs. Quale; but she gave efficient help; and the invalid was always glad too to see her come in, which could not be said with regard to all. Daffodil's Delight was not wrong in the judgment it passed upon Mary—that she was a "poor creature." True: poor as to being clever in a domestic point of view, or in attending upon the sick. In mind, in cultivation, in refinement, in gentleness, Mary Baxendale beat Daffodil's Delight hollow; she was also a beautiful seamstress; but in energy and capability Mary was sadly wanting. She was timid always—painfully timid in the sickroom; anxious to do for her mother all that was requisite, but scarcely knowing how to set about it. Mrs. Quale remedied this; she did the really efficient part; Mary gave love and gentleness; and, between the two, Mrs. Baxendale was thankful and happy.

John Baxendale, not a demonstrative man, was full of concern and grief. His had been a very happy home, free from domestic storms and clouds; and to lose his wife was anything but a cheering prospect. His wages were good, and they had wanted for nothing, not even for peace. To such, when trouble comes, it seems hard to bear—it almost seems as if it came as a *wrong*.

"Just hold your tongue, John Baxendale," cried Mrs. Quale one day, upon hearing him express something to this effect. "Because you never had no crosses, is it any reason that you never shall? No. Crosses are sure to come to us all sometimes in our lives, in one shape or other."

"But it's a hard thing for it to come in this shape," retorted Baxendale, pointing to the bed. "I'm not repining or rebelling against what it pleases God to do; but I can't *see* the end of it. Look at some of the other wives in Daffodil's Delight; shrieking, raving trollops, turning their homes into a bear-garden with their tem-

pers, and driving their husbands almost mad. If some of them were taken they'd never be missed; just the contrary."

"John," interposed Mrs. Baxendale, in her quiet voice, "when I am gone up there"—pointing with her finger to the blue October sky—"it may make you think more of the time when you must come; may help you to work on a little for it, better than you have done."

Mary lifted her wan face, glowing now with the excitement of the thought. "Father, *that* may be the end. I think that God does send troubles in mercy, not in anger."

"Think?" ejaculated Mrs. Quale, tossing back her head with a manner less reverent than her words. "Before you shall have come to my age, girl, it's to be hoped you'll *know* He does. Isn't it time for the medicine?"

She poured it out, raised the invalid from her pillow, and administered it. John Baxendale looked on. "How long is it since Dr. Bevary was here?" he asked.

"Let's see!" responded Mrs. Quale, who liked to have most of the talking to herself, wherever she might be; "this is Friday; Tuesday, wasn't it, Mary? Yes, he was here on Tuesday."

"But why does he not come oftener?" cried John in a tone of resentment. "When one is ill as she is—in danger of dying—is it right that a doctor should never come a-near for three or four days?"

"Oh, John! a great physician like Dr. Bevary!" remonstrated his wife. "It is very good of him to come at all. And for nothing, too! he as good as said to Mary he didn't mean to charge."

"I can pay him; I'm capable of paying him, I hope," spoke John Baxendale. "Who said I wanted my wife to be doctored out of charity?"

"It's not just that, father, I think," said Mary. "He comes more in a friendly way."

"Friendly or not, it isn't come to pass yet, that I can't pay a doctor," said John Baxendale. And, taking up his hat, he went out.

Bending his steps to Dr. Bevary's, there he was civil and humble enough, for John Baxendale was courteous by nature. The doctor was at home, and saw him.



“Listen, my good man,” said Dr. Bevary, when he had caught somewhat of his errand. “If, by going round often, I could do any good to your wife, I should go; twice a day, three times a day—by night, too, if necessary. But I cannot do her good; had she a doctor over her bed constantly, he could render no service. I step round now and then, because I see that it is a satisfaction to her, and to those about her; not for anything I can do. I told you a week ago the end was not far off, and that she would meet it calmly; she will be in no further pain; no worse than she is now.”

“I am able to pay you, sir.”

“That is not the question. If you paid me a guinea every time I came round, I should visit her no more frequently than I do.”

“And, if you please, sir, I’d rather pay you,” continued the man. “I’m sure I don’t grudge it; and it goes against the grain to have it said John Baxendale’s wife is attended out of charity. We English workmen, sir, are independent, and are proud of being so.”

“Very good,” said Dr. Bevary. “I should be sorry to see the day come when English workmen lost their independence. As to ‘charity,’ we will talk a bit about that. Look here, Baxendale,” the doctor added, laying his hand upon his shoulder, “you and I can speak reasonably together, as man to man. We both have to work for our living—you with the hands, and I chiefly with the head—so, in that, we are equal. I go twice a week to see your wife; I have told you why it is useless to go oftener. When patients come to me, they pay me a guinea, and I see them twice for it, which is equivalent to half a guinea a visit; but, when I go to patients at their own houses, my fee is a guinea each time. Now, would it seem to you a neighborly act that I should take two guineas weekly from your wages—quite as much, or more, than you gain. What does my going round cost me? A few minutes’ time, a touch of your wife’s pulse; sometimes a few words written on a piece of paper furnished by Mary; a gossip with Mrs. Quale, touching the doings of Daffodil’s Delight, and a groan at those thriftless Shucks, in their pig-sty of a room. That is the plain statement of facts; and I should like to know what there is in it that need put your English spirit up.

Charity! We might call it by that name, John Baxendale, if I were the guinea each time out of pocket, through medicines or other things furnished to you."

John Baxendale smiled; but he looked only three parts convinced.

"Tush, man!" said the doctor; "I may be asking you to do me some friendly service one of these days, and then, you know, we shall be quits. Ah, John! folks don't get to heaven by being hard upon their neighbors; take you note of that."

John Baxendale half put out his hand, and the doctor shook it.

"I think I understand now, sir, and I thank you heartily for what you have said. I only wish you could do some good to the wife."

"I wish I could, Baxendale," he called out, throwing a merry glance at the man as he was moving away. "I sha'n't bring an action against you in the county court for these unpaid fees, Baxendale, for it wouldn't stand. I never was called in to see your wife; I went of my own accord, and have so continued to go, and shall so continue. Good-day."

John Baxendale was descending the steps of the house door, when he encountered Mrs. Hunter. She stopped him to inquire after his wife.

"Getting weaker daily, ma'am, thank you. The doctor has just told me again that there is no hope."

"I am truly sorry to hear it," said Mrs. Hunter. "I will call in and see her. I did intend to call before, but something or other has caused me to put it off."

John Baxendale touched his hat, and departed. Mrs. Hunter went in to her brother.

"Oh, is it you, Louisa?" he exclaimed. "A visit from you is somewhat a rarity. Are you feeling worse?"

"Rather better, I think, than usual. I have just met John Baxendale," continued Mrs. Hunter, sitting down and untying her bonnet strings; "he says there is no hope of his wife. Poor woman! I wish it had been different; many a worse woman could have been better spared."

"Ah," said the doctor, drawing his mouth aside, "if folks were taken according to our notions of whom might

be best spared what a world this might be! Where's Florence?"

"I did not bring her out with me, Robert. I came round to say a word to you about James," resumed Mrs. Hunter, her voice insensibly lowering itself to a tone of confidence. "Something is the matter with him; and I cannot imagine what."

"Been eating too many cucumbers again, no doubt," cried the doctor; "he will go in at that cross-grained vegetable, let it be in season or out."

"Eating!" returned Mrs. Hunter; "I wish he did eat. For at least a fortnight—more, I think—he has not eaten enough to support a bird. That he is ill, is evident to all—must be evident; but when I ask him what is the matter, he persists in it that he is quite well; that I am fanciful; is annoyed, in short, that I should allude to it. Has he been here to consult you?"

"No," replied Dr. Bevary; "this is the first I have heard of it. How does he seem? What are his symptoms?"

"It appears to me," said Mrs. Hunter, almost in a whisper, "that the malady is more on the mind. There is no palpable disorder. He is restless, nervous, agitated; so restless at night, that he has now taken to sleep in a room apart from mine—not to disturb me, he says. I fear—I fear he may have been attacked with some dangerous inward malady, which he is concealing. His father, you know, died of——"

"Nonsense, Louisa! you are indeed becoming fanciful," interrupted the doctor. "Old Mr. Hunter died of an unusual disorder, I admit; but, if the symptoms of such appeared in either James or Henry, they would come galloping to me in hot haste, asking if my skill could suggest a preventive. It is no 'inward malady,' depend upon it. He has been smoking too much; or eating too much cucumber. When did you first notice him to be ill?"

"It is, I say, about a fortnight since. One evening there came a stranger to our house, a lady, and she *would* see him. He did not want to see her; he sent young Clay to her, who happened to be with us; but she insisted upon seeing James. They were closeted together a long

while, before she left; and then James went out—on business, Mr. Clay said.”

“Well?” cried Dr. Bevary. “What has the lady to do with it?”

“I am not sure that she has anything to do with it. James said she had come on Henry’s business, not his. Florence told an incomprehensible story about the lady’s having gone into Baxendale’s that afternoon, after seeing her Uncle Henry in the street and mistaking him for James. A Miss—what was the name?—Gwinn, I think.”

Dr. Bevary, who happened to have a small glass vial in his hand, let it fall to the ground; whether by inadvertence, or that the words startled him, he best knew.

“Well?” was all he repeated, after he had gathered the pieces in his hand.

I waited up till twelve o’clock, and James never came in. I heard him let himself in afterward with his latch-key, and come up into the dressing-room; I called out to know where he had been, it is so unusual for him to stay out, and he said, ‘Only on a little business,’ and that I was to go to sleep, for he had some writing to do. But, Robert, instead of writing, he was pacing the house all night, out of one room into another; and in the morning—oh, I wish you could have seen him—he looked wild, wan, haggard, as one does who has got up out of a long illness; and I am positive he had been weeping. From that time I have noticed the change I tell you of; he seems like one going into his grave. But whether the illness is upon the body or mind, I know not.”

Dr. Bevary appeared intent upon putting together the pieces of his vial, making them fit into each other.

“It will all come right, Louisa; don’t fret yourself; something must have gone cross in his business. I’ll call in at the office and see him, and recommend some boluses.”

“Do not say that I have spoken to you; he seems to have quite a nervous dread of its being observed that anything is wrong with him; has spoken sharply, not in anger, but in anguish, when I have pressed the question. You can see what you think of him, and tell me afterward.”

The answer was only a nod; and Mrs. Hunter went

out. Dr. Bevary remained in a brown study. His servant came in with an account that patient after patient was waiting for him, but the doctor replied by a repelling gesture, and the man did not again dare intrude. Perplexity and pain sat upon his brow; and, when at last he did rouse himself, he raised aloft his hands, and gave utterance to words that sounded very like a prayer.

“Pray Heaven it may not be so! It would kill Louisa.”

The pale, delicate face of Mrs. Hunter was at that moment bending over the invalid in her bed. In her soft, gray silk dress and light shawl, her simple straw bonnet with its white ribbons, she looked just the right sort of visitor for a sick-chamber; and her voice was sweet, and her manner gentle.

“No, ma'am, don't speak of hope to me,” murmured Mrs. Baxendale. “I know that there is none left, and I am quite reconciled to die. I have been an ailing body for years, dear lady; and it is wonderful how those that are so get to look upon death with satisfaction, rather than with dread.”

“I have long been ailing, too,” softly replied Mrs. Hunter. “I am rarely free from pain, and I know that I shall never be healthy and strong again. But still—I do fear it would give me pain to die, were the fiat to come forth.”

“Never fear, dear lady,” cried the invalid, her eyes brightening. “Before the fiat does come, be assured that God will have reconciled you to it. Ah, ma'am, what matters it, after all? It is a journey we *must* take; and, if we are prepared, it is but the setting off a little sooner or a little later to our heavenly home. I got Mary to read me the burial service on Sunday; I was always fond of it, but I am past reading now. In one part thanks are given to God for that He has been pleased to deliver the dead out of the miseries of this sinful world. Ma'am, if He did not remove us to a better and a happier, would the living be directed to give thanks for our departure? That little bit of Scripture might alone teach us not to be afraid of death.”

“A spirit ripe for Heaven,” thought Mrs. Hunter, when she took her leave.

It was Mrs. Quale who piloted her through the room

of the Shucks. Of all the scenes of disorder and discomfort, about the worst reigned here. Sam had been—you must excuse the inelegance of the phrase, but it was much in vogue in Daffodil's Delight—"on the loose" again for a couple of days. He sat sprawling across the hearth, a pipe in his mouth and a pot of porter at his feet. The wife was crying with her hair down; the children were quarreling in tatters; the dirt in the place, as Mrs. Quale expressed it, stood on end, and Mrs. Hunter wondered how folks could bear to live so.

"Now, Sam Shuck, don't you see who is standing in your presence?" sharply cried Mrs. Quale.

Sam, his back to the staircase door, had really not seen. He threw his pipe into the grate, started up, and pulled his hair to Mrs. Hunter in a very humble fashion. In his hurry he turned over a small child, and the contents of the pewter pot a-top of it. The child roared; the wife took it up and shook its clothes in Sam's face, restraining her tongue till the lady should be gone; and Mrs. Hunter stepped into the garden out of the *melee*—glad to get there; Sam following her in a spirit of politeness.

"How is it you are not at work to-day, Shuck?" she asked.

"I am going to-morrow; I shall go for certain, ma'am."

"You know, Shuck, I never do interfere with Mr. Hunter's men," said Mrs. Hunter. "I consider that intelligent workmen, as you are, ought to be above any advice that I could offer. But I cannot help saying how sad it is that you should waste your time. Were you not discharged a little while ago, and taken on again under a specific promise, made by you to Mr. Henry Hunter, that you would be diligent in future?"

"I am diligent," grumbled Sam. "But law, ma'am, a chap must take holiday now and then. 'Taint in human nature to be always having the shoulder to the wheel."

"Well, be cautious," said Mrs. Hunter. "If you offend again, and get discharged, I know they will not be so ready to take you back. Remember your little children, and be steady for their sakes."

Sam went in-doors to his pipe, to his wife's tongue, and

to dispatch a child to get the pewter pot replenished. Mrs. Hunter stood listening to Mrs. Quale at her gate, who was astonishing her with the shortcomings of the Shucks, and prophesying that their destiny would be the workhouse, when Austin Clay came forth from his apartments, to return to the yard.

Mrs. Hunter walked by his side; Mrs. Baxendale, Sam Shuck, and Daffodil's Delight generally, forming themes of converse. Austin raised his hat to her when they came to the gates of the yard.

"No, I am not about to part; I am going in with you," said Mrs. Hunter. "I want to speak just a word to my husband, if he is at liberty. Will you find him for me?"

"He has been in his private room all the morning, and is probably there still," said Austin.

He led the way down the passage, and knocked at the door, Mrs. Hunter following him. There was no answer; and believing, in consequence, that it was empty, he opened it.

Two gentleman stood within it near a table, paper and pens and ink before them, and what looked like a check-book. They must have been deeply absorbed not to have heard the knock. One was Mr. Hunter; the other—Austin recognized him—Gwinn, the lawyer, of Ketterford. "I will not sign it!" Mr. Hunter was exclaiming, with passionate vehemence. "Five thousand pounds! it would cripple me for life."

"Then you know the alternative. I go this moment and——"

"Mrs. Hunter wishes to speak to you, sir," interposed Austin, drowning the words and speaking loudly. The gentleman turned sharply round; and when Mr. Hunter caught sight of his wife, the red passion of his face turned to a livid pallor.

Lawyer Gwinn nodded familiarly to Austin.

"How are you, Clay? Getting on, I hope. *Who* is this person, may I ask?"

"This lady is Mrs. Hunter," haughtily replied Austin, after a pause, surprised that Mr. Hunter did not take up the words—the offensive manner in which they were spoken—the insulting look that accompanied them. But Mr. Hunter did not appear in a state to take any-

thing up then. He had backed to the wall, his ashy face leaning against it, and the cold drops of perspiration coursing down.

Gwinn bent his body to the ground. "I beg the lady's pardon. I had no idea she was Mrs. Hunter." But so ultra courteous were the tones, so slow the bow, that Austin Clay's cheeks burnt at the covert irony.

"James, you are ill," said Mrs. Hunter, advancing in her quiet, lady-like manner, but taking no notice whatever of the stranger. "Can I get anything for you? Shall we send for Dr. Bevary?"

"It is but a spasm; it is going off. You will oblige me by leaving us," he whispered to her. "I am very busy."

"You seem too ill for business," she rejoined. "Can you not put it off? Rest might be of service to you."

"No, madam, the business cannot be put off," spoke up Lawyer Gwinn. And down he sat in a chair, with a determined air of quiet power; something like his sister had sat herself down, a fortnight before, in Mr. Hunter's hall.

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## CHAPTER VII.

MRS. HUNTER quitted the private room with Austin Clay, leaving her husband and the stranger in it. Her face wore a puzzled, vexed look, as she turned it upon Austin.

"Who was that person?" she asked. "His manner to me appeared to be strangely insolent."

An instinct, for which Austin perhaps could not have accounted had he tried, caused him to suppress the fact that it was the brother of the Miss Gwinn who had raised a commotion at Mr. Hunter's house. He answered evasively, that he had not seen the person at the office previously.

"Does Mr. Hunter appear to you to be ill?" she abruptly asked.

"He looked so, I think."

"Not now; I am not alluding to the present moment," she rejoined. "Have you noticed that he does not seem well?"

"Yes," replied Austin; "this week or two past."



There was a brief pause. "Mr. Clay," she resumed, in a quiet, kind voice, "my health, as you are aware, is not good, and any sort of uneasiness tries me much. I am going to ask you a confidential question. I would not put it to many, and the asking it of you proves that my esteem for you is great. That Mr. Hunter is ill, there is no doubt; but, whether mentally or bodily, I am unable to discover. To me he observes a most unusual reticence, his object probably being to spare me pain; but I can battle better with a known evil than an unknown one. Tell me, if you can, whether any vexation has arisen in business matters?"

"Not that I am aware of," promptly replied Austin. "I feel sure that nothing is amiss in that quarter."

"Then it is as I suspected; and he must be suffering from some illness that he is concealing."

She wished Austin good-morning, and he proceeded to the room he usually occupied when engaged in-doors. Presently he heard Mr. Hunter and his visitor come forth, and saw the latter pass the window. Mr. Hunter came into the room.

"Is Mrs. Hunter gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know what she wanted?"

"I do not think it was anything particular. She said she should like to say a word to you if you were disengaged."

Mr. Hunter did not speak again immediately. Austin was making out certain estimates, and his master looked over his shoulder. Not to look; his mind was evidently preoccupied. "Did Mrs. Hunter inquire who it was that was with me?" he presently said.

"She inquired, sir. I did not say—I merely said I had not seen the person here before."

"You knew?" in a quick, sharp tone.

"Oh, yes."

"Then why did you not tell her? What was your motive for concealing it?"

The inquiry was uttered in a tone that could not be construed as proceeding from any emotion but that of fear. A flush came into Austin's ingenuous face.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I never wish to be otherwise than open. But, as you had previously desired me not

to speak of the lady who came to your house that night, I did not know but the same wish might apply to the visit of to-day."

"True, true," murmured Mr. Hunter; "I do *not* wish this visit of the man spoken of. Never mention his name, especially to Mrs. Hunter. I suppose he did not impose upon me," added he, with a poor attempt at a forced smile; "it *was* Gwinn, of Ketterford, was it not?"

"Certainly," said Austin, feeling surprised. "Did you not know him previously, sir?"

"Never; and I wish I had not known him now."

"If—if—will you forgive my saying, sir, that, should you have any transaction with him touching money matters, it is necessary to be wary; more than one has come to rue the getting into the clutches of Lawyer Gwinn."

A deep, heavy sigh burst from Mr. Hunter; he had turned from Austin. The latter spoke again in his ardent sympathy.

"Sir, is there any way in which I can serve you—*any* way? You have only to command me."

"No, no, Clay. I fell into that man's clutches—as you have aptly termed it—years ago: and the penalty must be paid. There is no help for it."

"Not knowing him, sir?"

"Not knowing him. And not knowing that I owed it; as I certainly did not, until a week or two back. I no more suspected that—that I was indebted there, than that I was indebted to you."

He had again grown strangely confused and agitated, and the dew was rising on his livid face. He made a hollow attempt to laugh it off.

"This comes of the freaks of young men. Austin Clay, I will give you a piece of advice. Never put your hand to a bill. You may think it an innocent bit of paper, which can cost you at most but the sum that is marked upon it; but it may come back to you in after years, and you must purchase it with thousands. Have nothing to do with bills, in any way; they will be a thorn in your side."

"So it is a money affair!" thought Austin. "I might have known it was nothing else, where Gwinn was concerned. "Here's Dr. Bevary coming in, sir," he added aloud.

The physician was inside the room ere the words had left Austin's mouth.

"Rather a keen-looking customer, that, whom I met at your gate," began the doctor. "Who was it?"

"Keen-looking customer?" repeated Mr. Hunter.

"A fellow dressed in black, with a cross look in his eyes, with a white neckerchief, an ill-favored looking fellow, whoever he is."

"How should I know about him," replied Mr. Hunter, carelessly. But Austin Clay felt that Mr. Hunter *did* know; that the description could only apply to Gwinn, of Ketterford. Dr. Bevary entwined his arm within his brother-in-law's, and led him from the room.

"James, do you want doctoring?"

"No, I don't. What do you mean?"

"If you don't, you belie your looks; that's all. Can you honestly affirm to me that you are in robust health?"

"I am in good health. There is nothing the matter with me."

"Then there is something else in the wind. What's the trouble?"

A flush rose to the face of Mr. Hunter.

"I am in no trouble that you can relieve; I am quite well. I repeat that I do not understand your meaning."

The doctor gazed at him keenly, and his tone changed to one of solemn earnestness.

"James, I suspect that you *are* in trouble. Now, I do not wish to pry into it unnecessarily; but I would remind you that, 'in the multitude of counselors there is safety.' If you will confide it to me, I will do what I can to help you out of it—*whatever it may be*—to advise with you as to what is best to be done. I am your wife's brother; could you have a truer friend?"

"You are very kind, Bevary. I am in no danger. When I am, I will let you know."

The tone—one of playful mockery—grated on the ear of Dr. Bevary.

"Is it assumed to hide what he dare not betray?" thought he. "Well, a willful man must have his way."

Austin sat up late that night, reading one of the quarterly reviews; he let the time slip by till the clock struck twelve. Mr. and Mrs. Quale, with whom he had taken boarding, had been in bed some time; when nothing was

wanted for Mr. Clay, Mrs. Quale was rigid in retiring at ten. Early to bed, and early to rise, was a maxim she was fond of, both in precept and practice. The striking of the church clock aroused him; he closed the book and left it on the table, pulled aside the crimson curtain, and opened the window to look out at the night, before going into his chamber.

A still, balmy night. The stars shone in the heavens, and Daffodil's Delight, for aught that could be heard or seen just then, seemed almost as peaceful as they. Austin leaned from the window; his thoughts ran not upon the stars or upon the peaceful scene around, but upon the curious trouble which had overshadowed Mr. Hunter.

"Five thousand pounds!" His ears had caught distinctly the ominous sum. "Could he have fallen into Lawyer Gwinn's 'clutches' to *that* extent?"

There was much in it that Austin could not fathom. Mr. Hunter had hinted at "bills;" Miss Gwinn had spoken of the "breaking up of her happy home;" two calamities apparently distinct and apart. And how was it that they were in ignorance of his name, his existence, his——

A startling interruption came to Austin's thoughts. Mrs. Shuck's door was pulled hastily open, and one, panting with excitement, uttering faint sobbing cries, came running down their garden into Peter Quale's. It was Mary Baxendale, and she knocked sharply at the door with nervous quickness.

"What is it, Mary?" asked Austin.

She had not seen him; but, of course, the words caused her to look up.

"Oh, sir," the tears streaming from her eyes as she spoke, "would you please call Mrs. Quale, and ask her to step in. Mother's on the wing."

"I'll call her. Mary!"—for she was speeding back again—"can I get any other help for you? If I can be of use, come back and tell me."

Sam Shuck came out of his house as Austin spoke, and went flying up Daffodil's Delight. He had gone for Dr. Bevary. The doctor had desired to be called, should there be any sudden change. Of course, he did not mean the change of *death*. He could be of no use in that; but how could they discriminate?

Mrs. Quale was dressed and in the sick chamber with all speed. Dr. Bevary was not long. Neither did he remain long; ten minutes, at the most, and he was out again. Austin was then leaning over Peter Quale's gate. He had been in no urgent mood for bed before, and this little excitement, though it did not immediately concern him, afforded him an excuse for not going to it.

"How is she, sir?"

"Is it you?" responded Dr. Bevary. "She is gone. Gone to a world where for her there is neither sickness nor pain. I thought it would be sudden at the last."

"Poor thing!" ejaculated Austin.

"Poor thing? Ay, that's what we are all apt to say of the departed. But there's little cause when the spirit is meet for heaven. Clay—to go from a solemn subject to one that—that may, however, prove not less solemn in the end—you heard me mention a stranger I met at the gates of the yard to-day, and Mr. Hunter would not take my question. Was it Gwinn, of Ketterford?"

The doctor had spoken in a changed, low tone, laying his hand, in his earnestness, on Austin's shoulder. Austin paused. He did not know whether he ought to answer.

"You need not hesitate," said the doctor, divining his scruples. "I can understand that Mr. Hunter may have forbidden you to mention it, and that you would be faithful to him. Don't speak; your very hesitation has proved it to me. Good-night, my young friend; we would both serve him if we only knew how."

Austin watched him away, and then went in-doors, for Daffodil's Delight began to be astir, and to collect itself around him, Sam Shuck having spread the news touching Mrs. Baxendale. Daffodil's Delight thought nothing of leaving its bed, and issuing forth in shawls and pantaloons upon any rising emergency.

It was a part of Austin Clay's duty to sort the letters at Hunter & Hunter's, upon their arrival by the general post. On the morning following the above, he perceived among them two letters bearing the Ketterford post-mark. The one was addressed to himself, the other to "Mr. Lewis Hunter," and the handwriting of both was the same. Austin, disposing of the other letters as usual,

placing those for Messrs. Hunter in their room, against they should arrive, and dealing out any others there might be for the hands employed in the firm, according to their address, proceeded to open his own.

To the very end of it Austin read; and then, and not till then, he began to suspect that it could not be meant for him. No name whatever was mentioned in the letter; it began abruptly, and it ended abruptly; not so much as "Sir" or "Dear Sir," was it complimented with, and it was simply signed "A. G." He read it a second time, and then its awful meaning flashed upon him, and a red flush rose to his brow and settled there, as if it were burnt into it. He had become possessed of a dangerous secret.

There was no doubt that the letter was written by Miss Gwinn to Mr. Hunter. By some extraordinary mischance she had misdirected it. Possibly the letter now lying on Mr. Hunter's desk might be for Austin. Though, what could she be writing about to him?

He sat down; he was quite overcome with the revelation; it was, indeed, of a terrible nature, and he would have given much not to have become cognizant of it. "Bills!"—"Money!" So that had been Mr. Hunter's excuse for the mystery! No wonder he sought to turn suspicion into any channel but the real one.

Austin was pouring over the letter like one in a nightmare, when Mr. Hunter interrupted him. He crushed it into his pocket with all the aspect of a guilty man; any one might have taken him in his confusion so to be. Not for himself was he confused, but he feared lest Mr. Hunter should discover the letter. Although certainly written for him, Austin did not care to hand it to him, for it would never do to let Mr. Hunter know that he possessed the secret. Mr. Hunter came in, holding out the other letter from Ketterford.

"This letter is for you, Mr. Clay. It has been addressed to me by mistake, I conclude."

Austin took it and glanced his eyes over it. It contained a few abrupt lines, and a smaller note, sealed, was inside it.

"My brother is in London, Austin Clay. I have reason to think he will be calling on the Messrs. Hunter.

Will you watch for him and give him the inclosed note? Had he told me where he should put up in town, I should have had no occasion to trouble you.

A. GWINN."

Austin did not lift his eyes to Mr. Hunter's in his usual candid, open manner. He could not bear to look him in the face; he feared lest his master might read in his the dreadful truth.

"What am I to do, sir?" he asked. "Watch for Gwinn, and give him the note?"

"Do this with them," said Mr. Hunter. And, striking a wax match, he held both Austin's note and the sealed one over the flame till they were consumed. "You could not fulfill the request if you wished, for the man went back to Ketterford last night."

He said no more. He went away again, and Austin lighted another match and burnt the crushed letter in his pocket, thankful, so far, that it had escaped Mr. Hunter.

Trouble came. Ere many days had elapsed there was dissension in the house of Hunter & Hunter. Thoroughly united and cordial the brothers had always been; but now a cause of dispute arose, and it seemed that it could not be arranged. Mr. Hunter had drawn out five thousand pounds from the bank, and refused to state for what, except that it was for a "private purpose." The business had been a gradually increasing one, and nearly all the money possessed by both was invested in it; so much as was not actually out, lay in the bank in their joint names, "Hunter & Hunter." Each possessed a small private account, but nothing like sufficient to meet a check for five thousand pounds. Words ran high between them, their sound penetrating to the ears outside their private room.

Mr. Hunter, his face pale, his lips compressed, his tone kept mostly subdued, sat at his desk, his eyes falling on a ledger he was not occupied with, and his hand partially shading his face. Mr. Henry, more excited, giving way more freely to his anger, paced the room, occasionally stopping before the desk and before his brother.

"It is the most unaccountable thing in the world," he reiterated, "that you should refuse to say what it has

been applied to. Draw out, surreptitiously, a formidable sum like that, and not account for it! It is monstrous.”

“Henry, I have told you all I can tell you,” replied Hunter, concealing his countenance more than ever. “An old debt was brought up against me, and I was forced to satisfy it.”

Mr. Henry Hunter curled his lip. “A debt to that amount! Were you mad?”

“I did not—know—I—had—contracted it,” stammered Mr. Hunter, very nearly losing his self-possession. “At least I thought it had been paid. Youth’s errors do come home to us sometimes in later life.”

“Not to the tune of five thousand pounds,” retorted Mr. Henry Hunter. “It will cripple the business; you know it will. It is next door to ruin.”

“I could not help myself. Had I refused to pay it——”

“Well?” for Mr. Hunter had stopped in embarrassment.

“I should have been compelled to do so. There. Talking of it will not mend it.”

Mr. Henry Hunter took a few turns, and then wheeled round sharply. “Perhaps there are other claims for ‘youth’s follies’ to come behind it?”

The words seemed to arouse Mr. Hunter; not to anger—to what looked very like fear—almost to an admission that it might be so. “Were any such further claims to come, I would not satisfy it,” he cried, wiping his face. “No, I would not; I would go into exile first.”

“We must part,” said Mr. Henry Hunter, after another pause. “There is no alternative. I cannot risk the beggaring of my wife and children.”

“If it must be so, it must,” was all the reply given.

“Tell me the truth, James,” urged Mr. Henry, in a more conciliatory tone. “I don’t want to part. Tell me all, and let me be the judge. Surely, man! it can’t be anything so very dreadful. You didn’t set fire to your neighbor’s house, I suppose?”

“I never thought the claim could come upon me. That is all I can tell you.”

“Then we part,” decisively returned Mr. Henry Hunter.

“Yes, it may be better. If I am to be ruined, it is of



no use to drag you down into it. Only, Henry, let the cause be kept from the world."

"I should be clever to betray the cause, seeing that you leave me in ignorance of what it may be."

"I mean—let no shadow of the truth get abroad. The business is large enough for two firms, and we have agreed to carry it on apart. Let that be the plea."

"You take it coolly, James."

A strange expression—a *wrung* expression—passed over the face of James Hunter.

"I cannot help myself, Henry. The five thousand pounds are gone, and, of course, it is right that I should bear the loss alone—or any other loss that it may bring in its train."

"But why not impart to me the facts?"

"No. It could not possibly do good; and it might make matters infinitely worse. One advantage our separation will have; there is a good deal of money owing to us from different quarters, and this will call it in."

"Or I don't see how you would carry it on for your part," said Mr. Henry, "minus your five thousand pounds."

"Will you grant me a favor, Henry?"

"That depends upon what it may be."

"Let the real cause be equally a secret from your wife, as from the world. I should not ask it without an urgent reason."

"Don't you mean to tell Louisa?"

"No. Will you give me the promise?"

"Very well. If it be of the consequence you seem to intimate. I cannot fathom you, James."

"Let us apply ourselves now to the ways and means of the dissolution. That, at any rate, may be amicable."

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It fell upon the world like a thunderbolt—that is, the world connected with Hunter & Hunter. *They* separate? so flourishing a firm as that! The world at first refused to believe it; but the world soon found it was true.

Mr. Hunter retained the yard where the business was at present carried on. Mr. Henry Hunter found other premises to suit him, not far off; a little more to the west. Considerably surprised were Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Henry; but the same plausible excuse was given

to them; and they remained in ignorance of the true cause.

“Will you remain with me?” pointedly asked Mr. Hunter of Austin Clay. “I particularly wish it.”

Austin smiled.

“As you and Mr. Henry may decide, sir. It is not for me to choose.”

“We could both do with you, I believe. I had better talk it over with him.”

“That will be the best plan, sir.”

“What do you part for?” abruptly inquired Dr. Bevary, one day, of the two brothers.

Mr. Henry raised his eyebrows. Mr. Hunter spoke volubly.

“The business is getting too large. It will be better divided.”

“Moonshine!” cried the doctor, quietly. “When a concern gets unwieldy, a man takes a partner on to help him on with it: *you* are separating. There’s many a firm larger than yours. Do you remember the proverb of the bundle of sticks?”

But neither Dr. Bevary nor anybody else got a better reason than that for the measure. The dissolution of partnership took place, it was duly gazetted, and the old firm became two. Austin remained with Mr. Hunter, as he was the only living being who gave a guess, or who could give a guess, at the real cause of separation—the drawing out of that five thousand pounds.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

FOR several years after the separation of Hunter & Hunter, things went on smoothly; at least, there was no event sufficiently marked that we need linger to trace it. Each had a flourishing business, though Mr. Hunter had some difficulty in staving off embarrassment in the financial department, a fact which was well known to Austin Clay, who was now confidential manager—head of all, under Mr. Hunter.

He, Austin Clay, was getting toward thirty years of age. He enjoyed a handsome salary, and was putting by money yearly. He still remained at Peter Quale’s, though his position would have warranted a style of liv-

ing far superior. Not that it could have brought him more respect; of that, he enjoyed a full share, both from master and men. Clever, energetic, firm, and friendly, he was thoroughly fitted for his post—he was liked and esteemed. But for him, Mr. Hunter's business might not have been what it was, and Mr. Hunter knew it. *He* was a broken-spirited man, little capable now of devoting energy to anything. The years, I say, had gone on, many of them, bringing us down to the present times.

A hot evening in Daffodil's Delight; and Daffodil's Delight was making it a busy one. Uninterrupted prosperity is sometimes nearly allied to danger; or, rather, danger may grow out of it. Prosperity begets independence, and independence often begets assumption—very often a selfish, wrong view of surrounding things. If any workman had enjoyed of late years (it may be said) unlimited prosperity, they were those connected with the building trade. Therefore, being so flourishing, it struck some of their body, who in a degree gave laws to the rest, that the best thing they could do was to make it more flourishing still. They began to agitate for an increase of wages, which was to be accomplished by reducing the hours of labor, proposing to work nine hours per day instead of ten. They said nothing about relinquishing the wages of the extra hour; they would be paid for ten hours and work nine. The proposition was first put by the men of a leading metropolitan firm to their principals, and, failing to obtain it, they threatened to strike. This it was that was just now agitating Daffodil's Delight.

In the front room of one of the houses which abutted nearly on the gutter, and to which you must ascend by steps, there might be read in the window, inscribed on a piece of paper, the following notice:

“The Misses Dunn's, Milliner and Dressmakers. Ladies' own materials made up.”

The composition of the *affiche* was that of the two Miss Duns jointly, who prided themselves upon being elegant scholars. A twelvemonth's apprenticeship had initiated them into the mysteries of dressmaking; millinery had come to them, as Mark Tapley would say, spontaneous, or by dint of practice. They had set up for themselves in

their father's house, and could boast of a fair share of the patronage of Daffodil's Delight. Showy damsels were they, with good-humored, turned up noses, and light hair; much given to gadding and gossiping, and fonder of dressing themselves than of getting home the dresses of their customers.

On the above evening, they sat in their room, an upper one, stitching away. A gown was in progress for Mrs. Quale, who often boasted that she could do any work in the world, save make her own gowns. It had been in progress for two weeks, and that lady had at length come up in a temper, as Miss Jemima Dunn expressed it, and had demanded it to be returned, done or undone. They, with much deprecation, protested it should be home the first thing in the morning, and went to work. Four or five visitors, girls of their own age, were performing the part of lookers-on, and much laughter prevailed.

"I say," cried out Martha White—a pleasant-looking girl, who had perched herself aloft on the edge of a piece of furniture, which was a low chest of drawers by day, and turned into a bed at night. "Mary Baxendale was crying yesterday, because of the strike; saying it would be bad for all of us, if it came. Ain't she a soft?"

"Baxendale's again it, too," exclaimed Miss Ryan, Pat's eldest hope; "father says he don't think he'll go in for it at all."

"Mary Baxendale's just one of them timid things as is afraid of their own shadders," cried Mary Ann Dunn. "If she saw a bull a-coming at the other end of the street, she'd turn tail and run. Jemimer, whatever are you at? The sleeves is to be in plaits, not gathers."

"She do look ill, though, does Mary Baxendale," said Jemima, after some attention to the sleeve in hand. "It's my belief she'll never live to see Christmas; she's going the way her mother went. Won't it be prime, when the men get ten hours' pay for nine hours' work? I shall think about getting married then."

"You must find somebody to have you first," quoth Grace Darby. "You have not got a sweetheart yet."

Miss Jemima tossed her head.

"I needn't to wait long for that. The chaps be as plentiful as sprats in winter; all you have got to do is to pick and choose. I say, me and Mary Ann had the fin-

est spree last night! We went to the new concert-room, and wore our new spotted muslins. We paid a shilling a-piece, and the singing and the chandeliers was lovely. Us and the Cheeks went together. It wasn't over till half-past eleven, and mother began screeching at us for stopping out so late. 'As if we could part with the young ladies afore, Mrs. Dunn!' cried Dick Cheek, who had beaved us home. And she said no more, for father he came in then, from the Bricklayer's Arms, and he had took a drop too much; so mother she left us to begin upon him. Wasn't it prime?"

"What's that?" interrupted Mrs. Dunn, darting into the room, with her sharp tongue and her dirty fine cap. "What's that as was so prime, miss?"

"We are a-talking of the strike," responded Jemima, with a covert wink to the rest. "Martha White and Judy Ryan says the Baxendales won't go in for it."

"Not go in for it?" raved Mrs. Dunn. "What idiots, then! Ain't nine hours a day enough for the men to be at work? I can tell the Baxendales what—when we have got the nine hours all straight and sure, we shall next demand eight. 'Tain't free-born Englishers as is going to be put upon. It'll be glorious times, girls, wont it? We shall get a taste o' fowls and salmon, may be, for dinner then!"

"And a crinoline apiece," said Judy Ryan.

"My father says he does not think the masters will come to if the men do strike," said Grace Darby.

"Of course they won't—till they are forced," returned Mrs. Dunn, in a spirit of satire. "But that's just what they're a-going to be. Don't you be a fool, Grace Darby!"

"Mother!" shrieked out a young voice from below, amidst choking sobs. "Jacky's a-taking the treacle! He's a-swallowing of it down with all his fingers, and he won't leave me none! Mother-er-er-er!"

"Jacky," raved out Mrs. Dunn, in return, "if you don't let that treacle alone this minute, I'll come down and give you the sweetest basting as ever you tasted."

Lotty Cheek rushed in.

"What d'ye think?" cried she, breathlessly. "There's a-going to be a meeting of the men to-night in the big room of the 'Bricklayer's Arms.' They are a-filing in now. I think it must be about the strike."

“D’yé suppose it would be about anything else?” retorted Mrs. Dunn. “I’d like to be one of ’em! I’d hold out for the day’s work of eight hours, instead of nine, I would. So ’ud they, if they was men.”

Mrs. Dunn’s speech was concluded to an empty room. All the girls had flown down, and into the street, leaving the parts of Mrs. Quale’s gown in closer contact with the dusty floor than was altogether to their benefit.

The agitation in the trade had hitherto been chiefly smoldering in an under-current, but it was rising now to the surface. The meeting of this evening had been hastily arranged in the day; it was quite an informal sort of affair, and confined to the operatives of Mr. Hunter.

Not in a workman’s jacket, but in a brown coat dangling to his heels, with a slit down the back and ventilating holes for the elbows, first entered he who had been chiefly instrumental in calling the meeting. It was Mr. Samuel Shuck; better known, you may remember, as Slippery Sam. Somehow, Sam and prosperity could not contrive to pull together in the same boat. He was one of those who like to live on the fat of the land, but are too lazy to work for their share of it. Slippery Sam considered it a crying, personal wrong, that there was not some benevolent bank, or philanthropic public kitchen, to supply folks with plenty of good things *gratis*.

“Well,” began Sam, when the company had assembled, and were furnished with pipes and pewter pots, “you have heard that that firm won’t accept the reduction in the hours of labor, so the men have determined on a strike. Now, I have got a question to put to you. Is there most power in one man, or in a few dozens of men?”

Some laughed, and said, “In the dozens.”

“Very good,” glibly went on Sam, whose tongue was smoother than oil. “Then, the measure I wish to urge upon you is, make common cause with those men; we are not all obliged to strike at the same time; it will be better not; but by degrees. Let every firm in London strike, each at its appointed time,” he continued, raising his voice to vehemence. “We must stand up for ourselves; for our rights; for our wives and children. By

making common cause together, we shall bowl out the masters, and bring them to terms."

An aged man, Abel White's father, usually called old White, who was past work, and had a seat at his son's chimney-corner, leaned forward and spoke, his voice tremulous but distinct.

"Samuel Shuck, did you ever know strikes to do any good, either to the men or the masters? Friends," he added, casting his venerable head around, "I am in my eightieth year; and I picked up some experience while them eighty years was passing. Strikes have ruined some masters, in means; but they have ruined men wholesale, in means, and body, and in soul."

"Hold, there!" cried Sam Shuck, who had not brooked the interruption patiently; "just tell us, old White, before you go on, whether coercion answers for British workmen?"

"It does not," replied the old man, lifting his quiet voice to firmness. "But perhaps you will tell me in your turn, Sam Shuck, whether it's likely to answer for masters?"

"It *has* answered for them," returned Sam, in a tone of irony. "I *have* heard of back strikes, where the masters were coerced and coerced, till the men got all they stood out for."

"And so brought down ruin on their own heads," returned the old man, shaking his. "Did you ever hear of a lock-out, Shuck?"

"Ay, ay," interposed quiet, respectable Robert Darby. "Did you ever hear of that, Slippery Sam?"

Slippery Sam growled:

"Let the masters lock out if they dare! Let 'em. The men would hold out to the death."

"And death it will be with some of us, if the strike comes, and lasts. I came down here to-night, on my son's arm, just for your good, my friends, not for mine. At your age I thought as some of you do; but I have learnt experience now. It can't last long, any way; and it's little matter to me whether famine from a strike be my end, or——"

"Famine!" derisively retorted Slippery Sam.

"Yes, famine," was the quiet answer. "Strikes never yet brought nothing but misery in the end. Let me urge

upon you all not to be led away. My voice is but a feeble one; but I think the Lord is sometimes pleased to show out things clearly to the aged, almost as with a gift of prophecy; and I could only come and beseech you to keep upon the straightforward path. Don't have anything to do with a strike; keep it away from you at arms-length, as you would keep away the evil one."

"What's the good of listening to him?" cried Slippery Sam in anger. "He is in his dotage."

"Will you listen to me then?" spoke up Peter Quale. "I am not in mine. I didn't intend to come here, as may be guessed; but when I found so many of you listening to Slippery Sam, and bending your steps in this way, I thought it time to change my mind, and come out and tell you what *I* thought of strikes."

"*You!*" rudely replied Slippery Sam. "A fellow like you, always in full work, with the biggest wages, is sure not to favor strikes. You can't be much better off than you are."

"That admission of yours is worth something, Slippery Sam, if there's any here have got the sense to see it," nodded Peter Quale. "Good workmen on full wages, *don't* favor strikes. I have rose up to what I am by sticking to my work patiently, and getting on step by step. It's open to every living man to get on as I have done, if he have got skill and pluck to work. But if I had done as you do, Sam, and gone in for labor one day and for play two, and for drinking, and strikes, and rebellion, because money, which I was too lazy to work for, didn't drop from the skies into my hands, then I should just have been where you be."

"Is it right to keep a man grinding and sweating his life out for ten hours a day?" retorted Sam. "The masters would be as well off if we worked nine, and the surplus men would find employment."

"It isn't much of your life that you sweat out of you, Sam Shuck. And, as to the masters being as well off, you had better ask them about that. Perhaps they'd tell you that, to pay ten hours' wages for nine hours' work, would be the hour's wages dead loss to their pockets."

"Are you rascal enough to go in for the masters?" de-



manded Sam, in a fiery heat. "Who'd do that but a traitor?"

"I go in for myself, Sam," equably responded Peter Quale. "I know on which side my bread's buttered. No skillful workman, possessed of thought and judgment, ever went blindfolded into a strike. At least, not many such."

Up rose Robert Darby.

"I'd just say a word, if I can get my meaning out, but I'm not cute with the tongue. It seems to me that it would be a great boon if we could obtain the granting of the nine hours' movement; and perhaps in the end it would not affect the masters, for they'd get it out of the public. I'd agitate on this in a peaceful way, in the shape of reason and argument, but I'd not like, as Peter Quale says, to plunge blindfolded into a strike."

"I look at it in this light, Darby," said Peter Quale, "and it seems to me it's the only light as'll answer to look at it in. Things in this world is estimated by comparison. There ain't nothing large nor small *in itself*. I may say, this chair's big; well, so it is if you match it by that there bit of a stool in the chimney corner; but it's precious small if you put it by the side of an omnibus, or of one of the sheds in our yard. Now if you compare our wages with those of workmen in most other trades they are large; look at a farm laborer, poor fellow, with his ten shillings (more or less) a week, hardly keeping body and soul together; look at what a man earns in the malting districts in the country; fifteen shillings and his beer is reckoned good wages. Look at a policeman, with his pound a week; look at a postman; look at——"

"Look at ourselves," intemperately interrupted Jim Dunn. "What's other folks to us? We work hard, and we ought to be paid accordingly."

"So I think we are," said Peter Quale. "Thirty-three shillings is *not* bad wages, and it's only a delusion to say it is. Neither is ten hours a day a unfair or oppressive time to work. I'd be as glad as anybody to have the hour took off, if it could be done pleasantly; but I am not going to put myself out of work and into trouble to stand out for it. It's a thing that I am convinced

the masters never will give; and if Trollope's men strike for it, they'll do it against their own interests——”

Hisses and murmurs of disapprobation from various parts of the room interrupted Peter Quale.

“You'd better wait and understand, afore you begin to hiss,” phlegmatically recommended Peter Quale, when the noise had subsided. “I say it will be against their interests to strike, because I'm sure, if they stop on strike for twelve months, they'll be no nearer getting their end. I may be wrong, but that's my opinion. There's always two sides to a question—our own, and the opposite one: and the great fault in everybody is, that they look only at their own side, and it causes them to see things in a partial view. I have looked as fair as I can at our own side, trying to put away my bias *for it*; and I have put myself in thought on the master's side, saying to myself, what would *I* do, were I one of them. Thus I have tried to judge between them and us, and the conclusion I have drawn is, that they won't give in.”

“The masters have been brought to grant demands more unreasonable than this,” rejoined Sam Shuck. “If you know anything about back strikes, you must know that, Quale.”

“And that's one of the reasons why I argue they won't grant this,” said Peter. “If they go on granting and granting, they may get asking themselves where the demands'll stop.”

“In 1833,” spoke up old White again, “I was working in Manchester, and belonged to the Trades' Union; a powerful Union as ever was formed. In our strength, we thought we should like a thing or two altered, and we made a formal demand upon the master builders, requiring them to discontinue the erection of buildings on sub-contracts. The masters fell in with it. You'll understand, friends,” he broke off to say, “that, looking at things now, and looking at 'em then, is just as if I saw 'em in two opposite aspects. Next, we gave out a set of various rules for the masters, and required them to abide by such—about the making of the wages equal; the number of apprentices they should take; the machinery they should or should not use; and other things. Well, the masters gave us that also, and it put us all cock-a-hoop, and we went on to dictate to 'em more and more. If

they—the masters—broke any of our rules, we levied fines on 'em, and made 'em pay up; we ordered 'em before us at our meetings, found fault with 'em, commanded 'em to obey us, to take on such men as we pointed out, and to turn off others; in short, forced 'em to do as we chose. People might have thought that we was the masters, and they the operatives. Pretty well that, wasn't it?"

The room nodded acquiescence. Slippery Sam snapped his fingers in delight.

"The worst was, it did not last," resumed the old man. "Like too many other folks, emboldened with success, we wasn't content to let well alone, but went on a bit too far. The masters took up their own defense at last; and the wonder to me now, looking back, is, that they didn't do it before. They formed themselves into a union, and passed a resolve to employ no man unless he signed a pledge not to belong to a trades' union. Then we all turned out. Six months the strike was on, and the buildings was at a standstill, and us out of work."

"Were wages bad at that time?" inquired Robert Darby.

"No. The good workmen among us had been earning in the summer thirty-five shillings a week; and the bricklayers had just had a raise of three shillings. We were just fools; that's my opinion of it now. Awful misery we were reduced to; every stick and stone we had went to the pawn shop! our wives were skin and bone, our children was in rags; and some of us just laid our heads down on the stones, and awoke with God—clammed to death."

"What was the trade in other places about, that it didn't help you?" indignantly demanded Sam Shuck.

"They did help us. Money to the tune of eighteen thousand pounds came to us; but we was a large body—many mouths to feed, and the strike was prolonged. We had to come to at last, for the masters wouldn't; and we voted our combination a nuisance, and went humbly to 'em, like dogs with their tails between their legs, and craved to be took on again upon their own terms. But we couldn't get took back; not all of us; the masters had learnt a lesson, and had got machinery to work, and had collected workmen from other parts, so that we was not

wanted. And that's all the good the strike brought to us. I came away on the tramp with my family, and got work in London after a deal of struggle and privation; and I took a oath never, God helping me, to belong willingly to a strike again."

"Do you see where the fault lay in that case?—the blame?—the whole gist of the evil?"

The question came from a gentleman who had entered the room as old White was speaking. The men would have risen to salute him, but he signed to them to cause no interruption—a tall, noble man, with a serene, self-reliant countenance.

"It lay with the masters," he resumed, nobody replying to him. "Had those Manchester masters resisted the first demand of their men, a demand made in the insolence of power, not in need—and allowed them fully to understand that they were, and would be, masters, we should, I believe, have heard less of strikes since than we have done. I never think of those Manchester masters but my blood boils. When a principal suffers himself to be dictated to by his men, he is no longer a master, or worthy of the name."

"Had you been one of them, and not complied, you might have come to ruin, sir," said Robert Darby. "There's a deal to be said on both sides."

"Ruin!" was the answer. "I never would have conceded an inch, had I known that I must end my days in the workhouse through not doing it."

"Of course, sir, you'd stand up for the masters, being hand and glove with 'em, and likely to be a master yourself," grumbled Sam Shuck.

"I should stand up for whichever side I deemed in the right, whether it was the masters' or the men's," was the emphatic answer. "Is it well—is it in accordance with the fitness of things, that a master should be under the control of his men? Come! I ask it of your common sense."

"No." It was readily acknowledged.

"Those Manchester masters and those Manchester operatives were upon a par as regards shame and blame; and I make no doubt that both equally deemed themselves to have been so when they found their senses.

The masters came to theirs: the men were brought to theirs."

"You speak strongly, sir."

"Because I feel strongly. When I become a master, I shall, if I know anything of myself, have my men's interests at heart; but none of them shall ever presume to dictate to me in the smallest particular. I would never brook it. If a master cannot exercise his own authority in firm self-reliance, let him give up business."

"Have masters a right to oppress us, sir?—to grind us down?—to work us into our coffins?" cried Sam Shuck.

The gentleman raised his eyebrows, and a half smile crossed his lips.

"Since when have you been oppressed, and ground down into your coffins?"

Some of the men laughed—at Sam's oily tongue.

"If you *are*—if you have any complaint of that sort to make, let me hear it now, and I will convey it to Mr. Hunter. He is ever ready, you know, to—— What did you say, Shuck? The nine hours' concession is all you want? If you can get the masters to give you ten hours' pay for nine hours' work, so much the better for you. I would not; but it is no affair of mine. To be paid what you honestly earn, be it five pounds per week or be it one, is only justice; but to be paid for what you don't earn is the opposite thing. I think, too, that the equalization of wages is a mistaken system, quite wrong in principle; one which can bring only discontent in the long run. I conclude that you have met here to discuss this agitation at the Messrs. Trollope's?"

"Trollopes' men are a-going to strike," said Slippery Sam.

"Oh, they are, are they?" returned the gentleman, some mockery in his tone. "I hope they may find it to their benefit. I don't know what the Messrs. Trollope may do in the matter; but I know what I should."

"You'd hold out to the last against the men?"

"I should; to the last and the last, were it for ten years to come. Force a measure upon *me!* coerce *me!*" he reiterated, drawing his fine form to its full height, while the red flush mantled in his cheeks. "No, my men, I am not made of that yielding stuff; I think I have more of the bull-dog in me than the cowardly cur. Let me be

fully persuaded that my judgment is right, and no body of men on earth should force me to act against it."

The speaker was Austin Clay.

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## CHAPTER IX.

AUSTIN CLAY beckoned out Peter Quale. He, Austin, had not gone to the meeting to interrupt it, or to take part in it; but, hearing from Mrs. Quale that Peter was at the "Bricklayer's Arms"—a rare occurrence—for Peter was not one who favored public-houses—he had gone thither in search of him, and so found himself in the midst of the meeting; his business with Peter related to certain orders he required to give for the early morning.

"What are those men about to rush into, Quale?" he demanded, when his own matter was over.

"Ah, what, indeed!" returned the man. "If they do get led into a strike, they'll repent it, some of them."

"You are not one of the malcontents, then?"

"I!" retorted Peter, utter scorn in his tone. "No, sir. There's a proverb which I learnt years ago from an old book as was lent me, and I've not forgotten it, sir—'Let well alone.' But you must not think all the men you saw sitting there be discontented agitators, Mr. Clay. It's only Shuck and a few of that stamp. The rest be as steady and cautious as I am."

"If they don't get led away," was the reply of Austin Clay, and his voice betrayed a dubious tone. "Slippery Sam, in spite of his loose qualifications, is a ringleader more persuasive than true."

Austin was not wrong. Rid of Peter Quale, who was a worse enemy of Sam's schemes than ever old White, Sam had it nearly his own way. He poured his eloquent words into the men's ears; and Sam really did possess eloquence—of a rough and rude sort—but that tells well with the class around him; he brought forth argument upon argument, fallacious as they were plausible; he told the men it depended upon *them* whether the boon they were standing out for should be accorded them, not upon the masters. Not that Sam called it a boon; he spoke of it as a *right*. Let them only be firm and true to themselves, and the masters must give in; there was no help for it, they would have no other resource. Sam finally concluded

by demanding, with fierce looks all round, whether they were men, or whether they were slaves, and the men answered, with a cheer and a shout, that Britons never should be slaves; and the meeting broke up in excitement and glorious spirits, and went home reeling, some with the anticipation of the fine time that was dawning for them, others with having consumed a little too much half-and-half.

Slippery Sam reeled away to his home. A dozen or so attended him, listening to his oratory, which was continued still; though not exactly to the gratification of Daffodil's Delight, who were hushing their unruly babies to sleep, or striving to get to sleep themselves. Much Sam cared who he disturbed! he went along, flinging his arms and his words at random—inflammatory words, carrying poisoned shafts that told. If somebody came down upon you and upon me, telling us that, with a little exertion on our part, we should inevitably drop into a thousand a year, and showing plausible cause for the same, should we turn a deaf ear? The men shook hands individually with Slippery Sam, and left him propped against his own door; for Sam, with all deference be it spoken, was a little overcome himself—with the talking, of course.

Sam's better half greeted him with a shrill tongue; she and Mrs. Dunn might be paired in that respect; and Sam's children, some in the bed in the corner, some sitting up, greeted him with a shrill cry also, clamoring for a very commonplace article indeed—"some *bread!*"

Sam's family seemed to increase out of spite; for the less there appeared to be to welcome them with, the surer and faster they arrived. Thirteen Sam could number now; but several of the elder ones were out in the world "doing for themselves"—getting on, or starving, as it might happen.

"You old sot! you have been at that drinking-can again," were Mrs. Sam's words of salutation; and I wish I could soften them down to refinement for polite ears; but if you are to have the truth, you must take them as they were spoken.

"Drinking-can!" echoed Sam, who was in too high glee to lose his temper; "never mind the drinking-can, missis; my fortune's made. I drewed together that meet-

ing, as I telled ye I should," he added, discarding his scholarly eloquence for the familiar home phraseology, "and they come to it, every man jack on 'em, save thin-skinned Baxendale, up-stairs. Never was such a full meeting knowed in Daffodil's Delight."

"Who cares for the meeting?" irascibly demanded Mrs. Sam. "What we wants is some'at to fill our insides with. Don't come bothering home here about a meeting, when the children be a-starving. If you'd work more and talk less, it 'ud become you better."

"I got the ear of the meeting," said Sam, braving the reproof with a provoking wink. "A despicable set our men is at Hunter's, a humdrumming on like slaves forever, taking their paltry wages and making no stir. But I've put the brand among 'em at last, and sent 'em home all on fire, to dream of short work and good pay. Quale, he come, and put in his spoke again' it; and that wretched old skeleton of a White, what's been cheating the grave this ten year, he come, and put in his; and Mr. Austin Clay, he must thrust his nose among us, and talk treason to the men; but I think I have circumvented the lot. If I haven't my name's not Sam Shuck."

"If you, and your circumventions, and your tongue, was all at the bottom of the Thames, 'twouldn't be no loss, for all the good they does above it," sobbed Mrs. Shuck, whose anger generally ended in tears. "Here's me and the children a clamming for want o' bread, and you can waste your time over a idle, good-for-nothing meeting. Ain't you ashamed, not to work as other men do?"

"Bread!" loftily returned Sam, with the air of a king, "'t isn't bread I shall soon be furnishing for you and the children; it's mutton chops. My fortain's made, I say."

"Yah!" retorted Mrs. Sam. "It have been made forty times in the last ten year, to listen to you. What good has ever come of the boast? I'd shut my mouth if I couldn't talk sense."

Sam nodded his head oracularly, and entered upon an explanation. But for the fact of his being a little "overcome"—whatever may have been its cause—he would have been more guarded. "I've had overtures," he said, bending forward his head and lowering his voice, "and them overtures, which I accepted, will be the



making of you and me. Work!" he exclaimed, throwing his arms gracefully from him with a repelling gesture; "I've done with work now; I'm superior to it; I'm exalted far above that lowering sort of toil. The leaders among the London Trade Union have recognized eloquence, ma'am, let me tell you; and they've made me one of their picked body—appointed me agitator to the firm of Hunter. 'You get the meeting together and prime 'em with the best of your eloquence, and excite 'em to recognize and agitate for their own rights, and you shall have your appointment, and a good round weekly salary.' Well, Mrs. S., I did it; I got the men together, and I *have* primed 'em, and some of 'em's bursting to go off; and all I've got to do from henceforth is to keep 'em up to the mark, by means of that tongue which you are so fond of disparaging, and to live like a gentleman. There's a trifling installment on the first week's money."

Sam threw a sovereign on the table. Mrs. Shuck, with a grunt of disparagement still, darted forward to seize upon it through her tears. The children, uttering a wild shriek of wonder, delight, and disbelief, born of incipient famine, darted forward to seize it, too. Sam burst into an agony of laughter, threw himself back to indulge it, and not being just then over steady on his pins, lost his equilibrium, and toppled over the fender into the ashes.

Leaving Mrs. Shuck to pick him up, or to leave him there—which latter negative course was the one she would probably take—let us return to Austin Clay.

When he quitted the meeting, early in the evening, with Peter Quale, the two proceeded home together. Mrs. Quale came running out of her house as they were about to enter it.

"I was coming in search of you, sir," she said to Austin Clay. "This has just been brought, and the man made me sign my name to a paper."

Austin took what she held out to him—a telegraphic dispatch. He opened it; read it; then, in the prompt, decisive manner usual with him, requested Mrs. Quale to put up a change of things in his portmanteau, which he would return for, and walked away with a rapid step.

"Whatever news is it that he has had?" cried Mrs.

Quale, as she stood with her husband, looking after him. "Where can he have been summoned to?"

"'Taint no business of ours," retorted Peter; "if it had been, he'd have enlightened us. Did you ever hear of that offer that's always pending? Five hundred a year to anybody as'll undertake to mind his own business, and leave other folks alone."

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In the soft twilight of the summer evening, in the room of their house that opened to the conservatory, sat Florence Hunter—no longer the impulsive, charming and somewhat troublesome child, but the young and lovely woman. Of middle height, and graceful form, her face was one of great sweetness; the earnest, truthful spirit, the pure innocence, which had made its charm in youth, made it now; to look on Florence Hunter was to love her.

She appeared to be in deep thought, her cheek resting on her hand, and her eyes fixed on vacancy. Some movement in the house aroused her, and she arose, shook her head, as if she would shake care away, and bent over a rare plant in the room's large opening, lightly touching the leaves.

"I fear that mamma is right, and I am wrong, pretty plant!" she murmured. "I fear that you will die. Is it that this London, with its heavy atmosphere——"

The knock of a visitor at the hall door resounded through the house. Did Florence *know* the knock, that her voice should falter, and the soft pink in her cheeks should deepen to a glowing crimson! The room door opened, and a servant announced Mr. Clay.

In that early railway journey, when they first met, Florence had taken a predilection for Austin Clay. "I like him so much!" had been her gratuitous announcement to her uncle Henry. The liking had ripened into an attachment, firm and lasting—a child's attachment—but Florence grew into a woman, and it could not remain such.

It has been said that in nine cases out of ten, love springs of social companionship. Let an attractive man and woman, heart whole, be thrown much together, and the almost inevitable result is love. Whether it be suitable or unsuitable, it will come, bringing too often grief

and perplexity in its train. "How very imprudent!" people exclaim, when some inexpedient affair of the sort, terribly inexpedient in the eyes of parents and guardians, is brought to light; "why did they fall in love with each other?" Why, indeed! we may echo, and no excuse whatever can be urged in mitigation of the dilemma, save that they fell into it imperceptibly, unconsciously; that before they were awake to the danger, the power to avoid it was over. An esteemed friend, stopping temporarily in a seaport town, walked off the pier one evening, and dropped into the black mud of the harbor: no light fall. The pier had an unprotected angle, which had no business to be unprotected, and he, deceived by the dusk, and unacquainted with the place, actually walked right off it, and went plump in. "However could you do such a stupid thing?" everybody said to him afterward. "Do!" returned he; "do you suppose I did it for the purpose? Before I knew anything of the danger, I was in the mud."

Why did Austin Clay learn to love Florence Hunter?—why did she learn to love him? Neither could have told. [Certainly not in obedience to premeditated *will*, love generally comes in opposition to that.] Thrown much together, the passion had mutually arisen; they fell into it unconsciously, in spite of themselves, like our friend did into the mud. Was it quite prudent of Mr. Hunter to sanction, nay, to court, the frequent presence at his house of Austin Clay? Did he overlook the obvious fact that he was one who possessed attractions, both of mind and person, which might render him dangerous to the peace of woman, and that Florence was now a woman grown? Or did Mr. Hunter deem that the social barrier which, he might assume, there existed between his daughter and his dependent, would effectually prevent all approach to danger? Mr. Hunter must account, himself, for the negligence; no one else can do it. It was certain that he did have Austin very much to his house, but it was equally certain that he never cast a thought to the possibility that his daughter might be learning to love him.

The strange secret, whatever it may have been, attaching to Mr. Hunter, had shattered his health to that extent that, for days together, he would be unequal to go

abroad to attend to business. Then Austin, who acted as principal in the absence of Mr. Hunter, would arrive at the house, when the next day was over, to report progress, and take orders for the next day; or, rather, consult with him what the orders should be, for in energy, in capability, Austin was now the master spirit, and Mr. Hunter bent to it. That over, he passed the rest of the evening in the society of Florence, conversing with her freely, confidentially; literature, art, the news of the day; on topics of home interest, listening to her music, listening to her low voice as she sang her songs, guiding her pencil. There they were; he, with his eloquent intellect, his fascinating powers, his noble form; she, with her sweet attractions, her gentle loveliness. What could be the result? But, as is almost invariably the case, the last person to give a suspicion to it was he who positively looked on, and might have seen all—Mr. Hunter. Life, in the presence of the other, had become sweet to each as a summer's dream—a dream that had stolen over them ere their conscience awoke to it.

Very conscious of it were they as he entered this evening. Austin took her hand in greeting; a hand always tremulous now in his. She bent again over the plant she was tending, her eyelids and her damask cheeks drooping.

“You are alone, Florence!”

“Just now. Mamma is very poorly this evening and keeps her room. Papa was here a few minutes ago.”

He raised her hand, and stood looking at her, as she played with the petals of the flower. Not a word had Austin spoken of his love; not a word was he sure that he might speak. If he partly divined that it might be acceptable to her, he did not believe it would be to Mr. Hunter.

“The plant looks sickly,” he observed.

“Yes. It is one that thrives in cold and wind. It comes from Scotland. Mamma feared this close London atmosphere would not suit it; but I said it looked so hardy, it would be sure to do well. Rather than it should die, I would send it back to its bleak home.”

“In tears, Florence! for the sake of a plant!”

“Not for that,” she answered, twinkling the moisture from her eyelashes, as she raised them to his with a

brave smile. "I was thinking of mamma; she appears to be fading rapidly, like the plant."

"She may grow stronger when the heat of summer shall have passed."

Florence slightly shook her head, as if she could not share in the suggested hope.

"Mamma herself does not seem to think she shall, Austin. She has dropped ominous words more than once, latterly. This afternoon I showed her the plant, that it was drooping. 'Ah, my dear,' she remarked, 'it is like me—on the wane.' And I think my uncle Bevary's opinion has become unfavorable."

It was a matter on which Austin could not urge hope, though he might suggest it, for he believed that Mrs. Hunter was fading rapidly. He changed the subject.

"I hope Mr. Hunter will come in, Florence. I am come to ask for leave of absence."

"Papa is not out, he is sitting with mamma. That is another reason why I fear danger for her. I think papa sees it; he is so solicitous for her comfort, so anxious to be with her, as if he would guard her from surprise or agitating topics. He will not suffer a visitor to enter at hazard; he will not let a note be given her, until he has first seen it."

"But he has long been thus anxious."

"I know. But still, latterly—— However, I must hope against hope," broke off Florence. "I think I do; hope is certainly a very strong ingredient in my nature, for I cannot realize the parting with my dear mother. Did you say you have come for leave of absence? Where is it that you wish to go?"

"I have had a telegraphic dispatch from Ketterford," he replied, taking it from his pocket. "My good old friend, Mrs. Thornimett, is dying, and I must hasten thither with all speed."

"Oh!" uttered Florence, almost reproachfully. "And you are wasting the time with me!"

"Not so. The first train that goes does not start for an hour yet, and I can get to Paddington in half one. The news has grieved me much. The last time I was at Ketterford—you may remember it—Mrs. Thornimett was so very well, exhibiting no symptoms whatever of decay."

“I remember it,” answered Florence. “It is two years ago. You stayed a whole fortnight with her.”

“And had a battle with her to get away then,” said Austin, smiling with the reminiscence, or with Florence’s word “whole”—a suggestive word, spoken in that sense. “She wished me to remain longer. I wonder what illness can have stricken her? it must have been sudden.”

“What is the relationship between you?”

“A distant one. She and my mother were second cousins. If I——”

Austin was stopped by the entrance of Mr. Hunter—so changed, so bent and bowed, since you, reader, last saw him. The stout, upright figure had grown thin and stooping, the fine dark hair was gray, the once calm, self-reliant face was worn and haggard. Nor was that all; there was a constant *restlessness* in his manner, and in the turn of his eyes, giving a spectator the idea that he lived in a state of ever-present perpetual fear.

Austin put the telegraphic message in his hand.

“It is an inconvenient time, I know, sir, for me to be away, busy as we are, and with this agitation rising among the men, but I cannot help myself. I will return as soon as it is possible.”

Mr. Hunter did not hear the words. His eyes had fallen on the word “Ketterford,” in the dispatch, and that seemed to scare away his senses. His hands shook as he held the paper, and for a few moments he appeared incapable of collected thought, of understanding anything. Austin explained again.

“Oh, yes, yes, yes, it is only—it is Mrs. Thornimett who is ill and wants you—I comprehend now.” He spoke in an incoherent manner, and with a sigh of the most intense relief. “I—I saw the word ‘dying,’ and it startled me,” he proceeded, as if anxious to account for his agitation. “You can go, Austin; you must go. Remain a few days there—a week if you find it necessary.”

“Thank you, sir. I will say farewell now, then.”

He shook hands with Mr. Hunter, turned to Florence and took hers.

“Remember me to Mrs. Hunter,” he said in a low tone, which, in spite of himself, betrayed his own tender-

ness, "and tell her I hope to find her better on my return."

A few paces from the house Austin encountered Dr. Bevary.

"Is she much worse?" he exclaimed to Austin, in a hasty tone.

"Is who much worse, doctor?"

"Mrs. Hunter. I have just had a message from her."

"Not very much, I fancy. Florence said her mamma was poorly this evening. I am off to Ketterford, doctor, for a few days."

"To Ketterford!" replied Dr. Bevary, with an emphasis that showed the news had startled him. "What are you going there for? For—for Mr. Hunter?"

"For myself," said Austin. "A good old friend is ill—dying, the message says—and has telegraphed for me."

The physician looked at him searchingly.

"Do you speak of Miss Gwinn?"

"I should not call her a friend," replied Austin. "I allude to Mrs. Thornimett."

"A pleasant journey to you, then. And, Clay! Steer clear of those Gwinns; they would bring you no good."

It was in the dawn of the early morning that Austin entered Ketterford. He did not let the grass grow under his feet between the railway terminus and Mrs. Thornimett's; though he was somewhat dubious about disturbing the house. If she was really "dying," it might be well that he should do so; if only suffering from a severe illness, it might not be expected of him; and the wording of the message had been ambiguous, leaving it an open question. As he drew within view of the house, however, it exhibited signs of bustle; lights not yet put out in the dawn, might be discerned through some of the curtained windows, and a woman, having much the appearance of a nurse, was coming out at the door, halting on the threshold a moment to hold converse with one within.

"Can you tell how Mrs. Thornimett is?" inquired Austin, addressing himself to her.

The woman shook her head.

"She is gone, sir. Not more than an hour ago."

Sarah, the old servant whom you have seen before at Mrs. Thornimett's, came forward, weeping.

"Oh, Mr. Austin! oh, sir, why could you not get here sooner?"

"How could I, Sarah?" was his reply. "I received the message only last evening, and came off by the first train that started."

"I'd have took a engine to myself, and rode upon its chimbley, but what I'd got here in time," retorted Sarah. "Twice in the very last half hour of her life she asked after you. 'Isn't Austin come?' 'Isn't he yet come?' Poor, dear, old mistress!"

"Why was I not sent for before?" he asked.

"Because we never thought it was turning serious," sobbed Sarah. "She caught cold some days ago, and it flew to her throat, or her chest, I hardly know which. The doctor was called in; and it's my belief *he* didn't know; the doctors nowadays hain't worth half what they'd used to be, and they call things by fine names that nobody can understand. However it may have been, nobody saw any danger, neither him nor us. But, at midday yesterday, there was a change, and the doctor said he'd like further advice to be brought in. And it was had; but they could not do her any good; and she, poor dear mistress, was the first to say that she was dying. 'Send for Austin,' she said to me; and one of the gentlemen he went to the wire telegraph place, and wrote the message. Will you see her, sir?"

Austin nodded acquiescence, and the servant led the way to the death-chamber. It had been put straight, so to remain until all that was left of its many years' occupant should be removed. She lay on the bed in placid stillness; her eyes closed, her pale face calm, a smile upon it, so sweet as almost to speak of Heaven. Austin leaned over her, losing himself in solemn thoughts. Whither had the spirit flown? to what bright unknown world? Had it found the company of sister spirits? had it seen, face to face, its loving Saviour? Oh! what mattered how the fleeting years of this life had fretted themselves away! how worse than unimportant did they seem by the side of death! A little, more or less, of care; a lot where shade or sunshine shall have predominated; a few friends gained or lost; struggle, toil, hope—all must



merge in the last rest. It was over; earth, with its troubles and its petty cares, with its race after fortune and its "goods stored up for many years:" as completely over for Mary Thornimett, as though it had never been. In the bright realms whither her spirit had hastened——

"I told Mrs. Dubbs to knock up the undertaker, and desire him to come here at once and take the measure for the coffin."

Sarah's interruption recalled Austin to the world. It is impossible, even in a death-chamber, to run away from the ordinary duties of daily life!

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## CHAPTER X.

"You will stay for the funeral, Mr. Clay?"

"It is my intention to do so."

"Good. Being interested in the will, it may be agreeable to you to hear it read."

"Am I interested?" inquired Austin, in some surprise.

"Why, of course you are," replied Mr. Knapley, the legal gentleman with whom Austin was speaking, and who had the conduct of Mrs. Thornimett's affairs. "Did you never know that you were a considerable legatee?"

"I did not," said Austin. "Some years ago—it was at the death of Mr. Thornimett—Mrs. Thornimett hinted to me that I might be better some time for a trifle from her: but she has never alluded to it since; and I have not counted upon it."

"Then I can tell you—though it is revealing secrets beforehand—that you are the better to the tune of two thousand pounds."

"Two thousand pounds!" uttered Austin, in sheer amazement. "How ever came she to leave me so much as that?"

"Do you quarrel with it, young sir?"

"No, indeed; I am deeply grateful. But I am surprised, nevertheless."

"She was a clever, clear-sighted woman, was Mrs. Thornimett," observed Mr. Knapley. "I'll tell you about it—how it is you come to have so much. When I was taking directions for Mr. Thornimett's will—more

than ten years back now—a discussion arose between him and his wife as to the propriety of leaving a sum of money to Austin Clay. A thousand pounds was the amount named. Mr. Thornimett was for leaving you in his wife's hands, to let her bequeath it to you at her death; Mrs. Thornimett wished it should be left to you then, in the will I was about to make, that you might inherit it on the demise of Mr. Thornimett; he took his own course, and did *not* leave it, as you are aware."

"I did not expect him to leave me anything," interrupted Austin.

"My young friend, if you break in with these remarks I shall not get to the end of my story. After her husband's burial, Mrs. Thornimett spoke to me. 'I particularly wished the thousand pounds left now to Austin Clay,' she said, 'and I shall appropriate it to him at once.' 'Appropriate it in what manner?' I asked her. 'I should like to put it out to interest, that it may be accumulating for him,' she replied, 'so that at my death he may receive both principal and interest.' 'Then, if you live as long as it is to be hoped you will, Mrs. Thornimett, you may be bequeathing him two thousand pounds instead of one,' I observed to her. 'Mr. Knapley,' was her answer, 'if I chose to bequeath him three, it is my own money that I do it with, and I am responsible to no one.' She had taken my remark to be one of remonstrance, you see, in which spirit it was not made; had Mrs. Thornimett chosen to leave you the whole of her money she had been welcome to do it for me. 'Can you help me to a safe investment for him?' she resumed, and I promised to look about for it. The long and the short of it is, that I found both a safe and a profitable investment, and the one thousand pounds *has* swollen itself into two—as you will hear when the will is read."

"I am truly obliged for her kindness, and for the trouble you have taken," exclaimed Austin, with a glowing color. "I never thought to get rich all at once," he added.

"You only be prudent and take care of it," said Mr. Knapley; "be as wise in its use as I and Mrs. Thornimett have been. It is the best advice I can give you."

"It is good advice, I know, and I thank you for it," warmly responded Austin.

“Ay. I can tell you that less than two thousand pounds has laid the foundation of many a great fortune.”

Austin fell into a reverie. He did not much care about “great fortunes” in the abstract; he made the very best use of the good talent given him by God, to work for his living, to achieve a position, to attain a competency for his old age; but for money, in itself, he had no great love. He was not ambitious to die “worth a million;” he had the rare good sense to know that excess of means cannot bring excess of happiness. The richest man on earth cannot eat two dinners a day, or wear two coats at a time, or sit two thoroughbred horses at once, or sleep on two beds. What does he do with his riches. They must be a source of continual trouble to him. Riches cannot take a man to Heaven, or help him on his road thither.

Austin Clay's ambition lay in becoming a powerful man of business; such men as were the Messrs. Hunter. He would like to have men under him, of whom he should be the master; not to control them with an iron hand, to grind them to the dust, to hold them at a haughty distance, as if they were of one species of humanity and he of another. No; he would hold intact their relative positions of master and servant—none more strictly than he; but he would be their considerate friend, their firm advocate, regardful ever of their interests as he was of his own. He would like to have a capital sufficient for all necessary operations, that he might fulfill every obligation justly and honorably; so far money would be welcome to Austin. Very welcome did the two thousand pounds sound in his ears, for they might be the stepping-stone to this. Not to the “great fortune” talked of by Mr. Knapley; he did not care for that. They might also be a stepping-stone to something else—the very thought of which caused his face to glow and his veins to tingle—the winning of Florence Hunter. That he would win her, Austin's mind was firmly set upon.

On the day previous to the funeral, Austin, in walking through the streets of Ketterford, found himself suddenly seized by the shoulder. A window had been thrown open, and a fair arm (to speak with the gallantry due to the sex in general, rather than that one arm in particular)

was pushed out and laid upon him. His captor was Miss Gwinn.

"Come in," she briefly said.

Austin would have been better pleased to avoid her, but as she had thus summarily caught him, there was no help for it; for to enter into a battle of contention with *her* might be productive of neither honor nor profit. He entered her sitting-room, and she motioned him to a chair.

"So you did not intend to call upon me during your stay in Ketterford, Austin Clay?"

"The melancholy occasion on which I am here precludes much visiting," was his reply. "And my sojourn will be a short one."

"Don't be a hypocrite, boy, and use those unmeaning words. 'Melancholy occasion!' What did you care for Mrs. Thornimett, that her death should make you 'melancholy?'"

"Mrs. Thornimett was my dear and valued friend," he returned, with emotion. "There are few living whom I would not rather have spared. I shall never cease to regret the not having arrived in time to see her before she died."

"What has Dr. Bevary told you of me and my affairs?" she rejoined, passing abruptly to another subject.

"Not anything," replied Austin. He did not lift his eyes, and a scarlet flush dyed his brow as he spoke; nevertheless, it was the strict truth. Miss Gwinn noted the signs of consciousness.

"You can equivocate, I see."

"Pardon me. I have not equivocated to you. Dr. Bevary has disclosed nothing; he has never spoken to me of your affairs. Why should he, Miss Gwinn?"

"Your face told a different tale."

"It did not tell an untruth, at any rate," he said, with some hauteur.

"Do you never see Dr. Bevary?"

"I see him sometimes."

"At the house of Mr. Hunter, I presume. How is *she*?"

Again the flush, whatever may have called it up, crimsoned Austin Clay's brow.

"I do not know of whom you speak," he coldly said.

“Of Mrs. Hunter.”

“She is in ill health.”

“Ill to be in danger of her life? I hear so.”

“It may be. I cannot say.”

“Do you know, Austin Clay, that I have a long, long account to settle with you?” she resumed after a pause. “Years and years have elapsed since, and I have never called upon you for it. Why should I?” she added, relapsing into a dreamy mood, and speaking to herself rather than to Austin; “the mischief was done, and could not be recalled. I sent up a note to you once at the Messrs. Hunter’s inclosing one for my brother, who was in town, and asking you to give it him. Why did you not?”

Austin threw back his recollection: though, indeed he retained only too vivid a remembrance of all that had taken place that morning.

“I could not give it him, Miss Gwinn. When your letter reached me your brother had already been at the office of the Messrs. Hunter, and was then on his road back to Ketterford. The inclosure was burnt unopened.”

“Ay,” she passionately uttered, throwing her arms upward in mental pain, as Austin had seen her do in days gone by, and holding commune with herself, regardless of his presence, “such has been my faith through life. Thwarted, thwarted on all sides. For years and years I had lived but in the hope of finding him; the hope of it kept life in me; and when the time came, and I did find him, and was entering upon my revenge, then this brother of mine, who has been the second bane of my existence, stepped in and reaped the benefit. It was my fault. Why, in my exultation, did I tell him the man was found? Did I not know enough of his avarice, his deeds, to have made sure that he would turn it to his own account? Why,” she continued, battling with her hands at some invisible adversary, “was I born with this strong principle of justice within me? Why, because he stepped in with his false claims and drew gold—a fortune—of the man, did I deem it a reason for dropping *my* revenge?—for letting it rest in abeyance? In abeyance it is still; and its unsatisfied claims are wearing out my heart and my life——”

“Miss Gwinn,” interrupted Austin, “I fancy you for-

get that I am present. Your family affairs have nothing to do with me. I wish you good-day."

"True. They have nothing to do with you. I know not why I spoke before you, save that your sight angers me."

"Why so?" Austin could not forbear asking.

"Because you live on terms of friendship with that man. You are as his right hand in business; you are a welcome guest at his house; you regard and respect the house's mistress. Boy! but that she has not willfully injured me, but that she is the sister of Dr. Bevary, I should——"

"I cannot listen to any discussion involving the name of Hunter," spoke Austin, in a repellent, resolute tone, though the color had not left his cheeks. "Allow me to wish you good-day."

An interruption came in the person of Lawyer Gwinn. He entered the room without his coat, a pen behind each ear, and a dirty straw hat on his head. It was probably his office attire in warm weather.

"I thought I heard a strange voice; how do you do, Mr. Clay?" he exclaimed, with much suavity.

Austin bowed and said something to the effect that he was on the point of departing, and retreated to the door, bowing his final farewell to Miss Gwinn. Mr. Gwinn followed.

"Ketterford will have to congratulate you, Mr. Clay," he said; "I understand you inherit a very handsome sum from Mrs. Thornimett."

"Indeed," frigidly replied Austin. "Mrs. Thornimett's will is not yet read. But Ketterford always knows everybody's business better than its own."

"Look you, my dear Mr. Clay," cried the lawyer, holding him by the button-hole. "Should you require a most superior investment for your money—one that will turn you in cent. per cent. and no risk—I can help you to one. Should your inheritance be of the value of a thousand pounds, and you would like to double it—as all men of course do—just intrust it to me; I have the very thing now open."

Austin shook himself free—rather too much in the manner that he might have shaken himself from a serpent.

“Whether my inheritance may be of the value of one thousand pounds or of ten thousand, Mr. Gwinn, I shall not require your services in the disposal of it. Good-morning.”

The lawyer looked after him as he strode away. “So you carry it with a high hand to me, do you, my brave gentleman! with your vain person, and your fine clothes, and your imperious manner! Take you care! I hold your master under my thumb; I may next hold you!”

“The vile cockatrice!” ejaculated Austin to himself, walking all the faster to leave the lawyer’s house behind him. “She is bad enough, with her hankering after revenge, and her fits of passion; but she is an angel of light compared to him. Heaven help Mr. Hunter! It would have been sufficient to have had *her* to fight, but to have *him*! Ay, Heaven help him! Poor thing! there are times when I pity her! Incomprehensible as the story is to me, I can feel compassion: for it was a heavy wrong done her, looking at it in the best light. She is not at all bad; but for the wrong, and for her evil temper, she might have been all good. There is something noble in the hint I gathered now from her lips, if it be true, that she suffered her own revenge to drop into abeyance, because her brother had pursued Mr. Hunter to drain money from him; she would not go upon him in both ways. Yes, it was noble and generous.”

The funeral of Mrs. Thornimett took place. She was laid beside her husband, there to repose peacefully till the last trump shall sound. On the return of the mourners to the house, the will was read, and Austin found himself the undoubted possessor of two thousand pounds. Several little treasures, in the shape of books, drawings, and home knickknacks, were also left to him. He saw after the packing of these, and the day following the funeral returned to London.

It was evening when he arrived; and he proceeded without delay to the house of Mr. Hunter—ostensibly to report himself, really to obtain a sight of Florence, for which his tired heart was yearning. The drawing-room was lighted up, by which he judged that they had friends with them. Mr. Hunter met him in the hall; never did a visitor’s knock sound at his door but Mr. Hunter in his nerv-

ous restlessness strove to watch who it might be that entered. Seeing Austin, his face acquired a shade of brightness, and he came forward with an outstretched hand.

“But you have visitors,” Austin said, when greetings were over, and Mr. Hunter was drawing him toward the stairs. He wore deep mourning, but was not in evening dress.

“As if anybody will care for the cut of your coat!” cried Mr. Hunter. “There’s Mrs. Hunter wrapped up in a woolen shawl.”

The room was gay with light and dress, with many voices and with music. Florence was seated at the piano playing, and singing in a glee with others. Austin, silently greeting those whom he knew as he passed, made his way to Mrs. Hunter. She was wrapped in a warm shawl, as her husband had said; but she appeared better than usual.

“I am so glad to see you looking well,” Austin whispered, deep feeling in his tone.

“And I am glad to see you here again,” she smiled in reply, as she held his hand. “We have missed you, Austin. Yes, I feel better; but it is only a temporary improvement. So you have lost poor Mrs. Thornimett. She died before you could reach her.”

“She did,” replied Austin, with a grave face. “I wish we could get transported to places, in case of necessity, as quickly as the telegraph brings us news that we are wanted. A senseless and idle wish, you will say; but it would have served me in this case. She asked after me twice in her last half hour.”

“Austin,” breathed Mrs. Hunter, “was it a happy death-bed? Was she ready to go?”

“Quite, quite,” he answered, a look of enthusiasm illumining his face. “She had been ready long.”

“Then we may praise God that she is taken. Oh, Austin, what a happy thing it must be to die! But you are young and hopeful; you cannot understand that, yet.”

So, Mrs. Hunter had learned that great truth! Some years before, she had not so spoken to the wife of John Baxendale, when *she* was waiting to be taken. It had



come to her ere her time of trial—as the dying woman had told her it would.

The singing ceased, and in the movement which it occasioned in the room, Austin left Mrs. Hunter's side, and stood within the embrasure of the window, half hidden by the curtains. The air was pleasant on that warm summer night, and Florence, resigning her place at the instrument to some other lady, stole to the window to inhale its freshness. There she saw Austin. She had not heard him enter the room—did not know, in fact, that he was back from Ketterford.

“Oh!” she uttered, in the sudden revulsion of feeling that the sight brought to her, “is it you?”

He quietly took her hands in his, and looked down at her. Had it been to save her life, she could not have helped betraying emotion. Her face grew hot, her hands trembled, her heart beat wildly.

“Are you glad to see me, Florence?” he softly whispered.

She colored even to tears. Glad! The time might come when she should be able to tell him so; but that time was not yet.

“Mrs. Hunter is glad of my return,” he continued, in the same low tone, sweeter to her ear than all earthly music. “She says I have been missed. Is it so, Florence?”

“And what have you been doing?” she asked, not knowing in the least what she said in her confusion, as she left his question unanswered, and drew her hands away from him.

“I have not been doing much, save the seeing a dear old friend laid in the earth. You know that Mrs. Thornimett is dead. She died before I got there.”

“Papa told us that. He heard from you two or three times, I think. How you must regret it! But why did they not send for you in time?”

“It was only the last day that danger was apprehended,” replied Austin. “She grew worse suddenly. You cannot think, Florence, how strangely this gayety”—he half turned to the room—“contrasts with the scenes I have left; the holy calm of her death-chamber, the laying of her in the grave.”

“An unwelcome contrast, I am sure it must be.”

"It jars on the mind. All scenes essentially of the world, let them be ever so necessary or useful, must do so, when contrasted with the solemn scenes of life's close. But how soon we forget those solemn scenes, and live for the world again!"

"Austin," she gently whispered, "I do not like to talk of death. It reminds me of the dread that is ever oppressing me."

"She looks so much better as to surprise me," was his answer, unconscious that it betrayed his undoubted cognizance of the "dread" she spoke of.

"If it would but last!" sighed Florence. "To prolong mamma's life, I think I would sacrifice mine."

"No, you would not, Florence—in mercy to her. If called upon to lose her you would grow reconciled to it; to do so is in the order of nature. *She could not spare you.*"

Florence believed that she never could grow reconciled to it; she often wondered *how* she could bear it, if called upon. But there rose up before her now, as she spoke with Austin, one cheering promise: "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be."

"What should you say if I tell you I have come into a fortune?" resumed Austin, in a lighter tone.

"I should say—— But is it true?" broke off Florence.

"Not true, as you and Mr. Hunter would count fortunes," smiled Austin; "but true, as poor I have looked upon them. Mrs. Thornimett has behaved to me most kindly, most generously; she has bequeathed to me two thousand pounds."

"I am delighted to hear it," said Florence, her glad eyes sparkling. "Never call yourself poor again."

"I cannot call myself rich, as Mr. and Mrs. Hunter compute riches. But, Florence, it may be a stepping-stone to become so."

"A stepping-stone to become what?" demanded Dr. Bevary, breaking in upon the conference.

"Rich," laughed Austin, turning to the doctor. "I am telling Florence that I have come into some money since I went away."

Mr. Hunter and others were gathering around them, and the conversation became general,

“What is that, Clay?” asked Mr. Hunter. “You have come into a fortune, do you say?”

“I said, *not* into a fortune, sir, as those accustomed to fortune would estimate it. But it may prove a stepping-stone to fortune and to—to other desirable things.”

“Do not speak so vaguely,” cried the doctor in his quaint fashion. “Define the ‘desirable things.’”

“I am not sure that they have taken a sufficiently tangible shape to be defined as yet,” returned Austin, in the same tone. “You might laugh at them for day-dreams.”

Unwittingly his eyes rested for a moment upon Florence. Did she deem the day-dreams might refer to her, that her eyelids should droop and her cheeks turn scarlet?

Dr. Bevary noticed both the look and the signs; Mr. Hunter saw neither.

“Day-dreams would be enchanting as an eastern fairy-tale, only that they never get realized,” interposed one of the fair guests, with a pretty simper, directed to Austin Clay and his attractions.

“I will realize mine,” he uttered, “Heaven helping me!”

“A better stepping-stone that, to rely upon, than the money you have come into,” said Dr. Bevary.

“True, doctor,” replied Austin. “But may not the money have come from the same source? Heaven, you know, vouchsafes to work with humble instruments.”

They quitted the house together, Austin and Dr. Bevary. The doctor walked arm-in-arm with him as far as Daffodil's Delight, when he wished him good-night, and continued his way home. Austin turned toward Peter Quale's.

But, what could be the matter? Had Daffodil's Delight miscalculated the time, believing it to be day instead of night? Women leaned out of their windows in nightcaps; children crept out of their beds and came forth to tumble into the gutter naked, as some of them literally were; men crowded the doorway of the Bricklayers' Arms, stood about with pipes and pint pots; young girls were dancing polkas in the street, singing to the measure; all were in a state of rampant excitement. Austin laid hold of the first person who appeared sober

enough to listen to him. It happened to be a woman, Mrs. Dunn.

“What is this?” he exclaimed. “Have you all come into a fortune?” the recent conversation at Mr. Hunter’s probably helping him to the remark.

“Better nor that,” shrieked Mrs. Dunn; and, as if the question had aroused within her the excitement which had for a moment been stilled, she jiggled a jig to the tune of the dancing girls. “Better nor *that*, a thousand times! We have circumvented the masters and got our ends, and now we shall just have all we want—roast goose and apple-pudding for dinner, and plenty of beer to wash it down with.”

“But what is it that you have got?” persisted Austin, who was completely at sea.

“Got! why, we have got the STRIKE,” she replied, in joyful excitement. “Trollope’s men struck to-day. Where have you been, not to have heerd on it?”

At that moment a fresh crowd came jostling down Daffodil’s Delight, and Austin was parted from the lady. Indeed, she rushed up to the crowd to follow in their wake. Many other ladies were following in their wake—half Daffodil’s Delight, if one might judge by numbers. Shouting, singing, exulting, dancing; it seemed as if they had, for the nonce, gone mad. Sam Shuck, in his long-tailed coat, ornamented with its holes and its slits, was leading the van, his voice hoarse, his face red, his legs and arms executing a war-dance of exultation. He it was who had gotten up the excitement, and was keeping it up, shouting fiercely. “Glory be to us builders! Hurrah for the work of this day! Rule Brittanniar! Brittuns never shall be slaves! The strike has begun, friends!—H—o—o—o—o—o—r—rah! three cheers for the strike!”

Yes. The strike had begun.

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## CHAPTER XI.

THE men of an influential metropolitan building firm had struck, because their employers had declined to accede to certain demands, and Daffodil’s Delight was, as you have seen, in the seventh heaven of congratulation, particularly the female part of it, anticipating roast goose

for dinner, and a crinoline apiece. The men said they struck for a diminution in the hours of labor; the masters told them they struck for an increase of wages. Seeing that the non-contents wanted the hours reduced and *not* the pay, it appears to me that you may call it which you like.

The Messrs. Hunter's men—with whom we have to do, for it was they who chiefly filled Daffodil's Delight, though continuing their work as usual, were in a most unsettled state; as was the case in the trade generally. The under-current of discontent was growing higher. It might have died away peacefully enough, but that certain spirits made it their business to fan it into a flame.

One evening, a few days further on, Sam Shuck posted himself in an angle formed by the wall at the top of Daffodil's Delight. It was the hour for the men to quit work; and, as they severally passed him on their road home, Sam's arm was thrust forward, and a folded bit of paper put into their hands—a mysterious sort of missive, apparently; for, on opening the paper, it was found to contain only these words, in the long, sprawling hand of Sam himself: "Barn at the back of Jim Dunn's. Seven o'clock."

Behind the house tenanted by the Dunns were premises occupied until recently by a cow-keeper. They comprised, amidst other accommodations, a large barn or shed. Being at present empty, and to let, Sam thought he could not do better than take French leave to make use of it.

The men hurried over their tea or supper (some took one on leaving work for the night, some the other, some a mixture of both, and some neither), that they might attend to the invitation of Sam. Peter Quale was seated over a substantial dish of batter pudding, a bit of neck of mutton baked in the midst of it, when he was interrupted by the entrance of John Baxendale, who had stepped in from his own rooms next door.

"Be you a-going to this meeting, Quale!" he asked, as he took a seat.

"I don't know anything about it," returned Peter. "I saw Slippery Sam a giving out papers, so I guessed there was something in the wind. He took care to pass over me; I expect I'm the greatest eyesore Sam has got just

now. Have a bit?" added Peter, unceremoniously, pointing to the dish before him with his knife.

"No, thank ye: I have just had tea at home. That's the paper"—laying it open on the table-cloth. "Sam Shuck is just now cock-a-hoop with this strike."

"He is no more cock-a-hoop than the rest of Daffodil's Delight is," stuck in Mrs. Quale, who had finished her own meal, and was at leisure to talk. "The men and women is all a-going mad together, I think, and Slippery Sam's leading 'em. Suppose you all do strike—which is what they're hankering after—what good'll it bring?"

"That's just it," replied Baxendale. "One can't see one's way clear. The agitation might do us some good, but it might do us a deal of harm. Quale, I'll go to the meeting, if you will."

"If I go, it will be to give 'em a piece of my mind," retorted Peter.

"Well, it's only right that different sides should be heard. Sam'll have it all his own way, else."

"He'll manage to get that, by the appearance things wears," said Mrs. Quale, wrathfully. "How you men can submit to be led by such a fellow as him, just because his tongue's capable of persuading you that black's white, is a marvel to me. Talk of women being soft! let the men talk of themselves. Hold up a finger to 'em, and they'll go after it: like the Swiss cows Peter read of the other day, a flocking docilely in a line after their leader, behind each other's tails."

"I wish I knew what was right," said Baxendale. "Or which course would turn out best for us."

The barn filled. Sam Shuck, perched upon Mrs. Dunn's washing-tub turned upside-down, which had been rolled in for the occasion, greeted each group as it arrived with a gracious nod. Sam appeared to be progressing in the benefits he had boasted to his wife he was to derive, inasmuch as that the dilapidated clothes had been discarded for better ones; and he stood on the tub's end in all the glory of a black coat, a crimson necktie with lace ends, and peg-top pantaloons; the only attire (as a ready-made outfitting shop had assured him) which a gentleman could wear. Sam's eye grew less complaisant

when it rested on Peter Quale, who was coming in with John Baxendale.

"This is a pleasure we didn't expect," said he.

"Maybe not," returned Peter Quale, dryly. "The barn's open to all."

"Of course it is," glibly said Sam, putting a good face upon the matter. "All fair and above board, is our motto; which is more than them native enemies of ours, the masters, can say; they hold their meetings in secret, with closed doors."

"Not in secret—do they?" asked Robert Darby. "I have not heard of that."

"They meet in their own homes, and they shut out strangers," replied Sam. "I'd like to know what you call that but meeting in secret?"

"I should not call it secret; I should call it private. We might do the same. Our homes are ours, and we can shut out who we please."

"Of course we *might*," contended Sam. "But we like better to be open; and if a few of us assemble together to consult on the present aspect of affairs, we do it so that the masters, if they choose, may come and hear us. Things are not equalized in this world. Let us attempt secret meetings, and see how soon we should be locked up by the law, and accused of hatching treason, and sedition, and all the rest of it. That sharp-eyed *Times* newspaper would be the first to set on us. There's one law for the masters, and another for the men."

"Is that Slippery Sam?" ejaculated a new-comer, at this juncture. "Where *did* you get that fine new tog-gery, Shuck?"

The irreverent interruption was spoken in simple surprise; no insidious meaning prompting it. Sam Shuck had appeared in ragged attire so long, that the change could not fail to be remarkable. Sam loftily turned a deaf ear to the remark, and continued:

"I am sure most of you can't fail to see that things have come to a crisis with our trade. And the moment that brought it was when that great building firm refused the reasonable demands of their men, and the consequence was a strike. Friends, I have been just *riled* ever since. I have watched you go to work day after day like tame cats, the same as if nothing had happened; and I have

said to myself: 'Have those men of Hunters' got souls within them, or have they got none?'

"I don't suppose we have parted from our souls," struck in a voice.

"You have parted with the feelings of them, at any rate," rejoined Sam, beginning to dance, but remembering in time that his *terra firma* was only a creaky tub. "What's that you ask me? Have you parted with them? Why, by not following up the strike. If you had possessed a grain of the independence of free men you'd have struck your colors before now: and other firms in the trade would have struck afterward. It's the only way that will bring the masters to reason; the only way by which we can hope to obtain our rights."

"You see, there's no knowing what would be the end of a strike, Shuck," argued John Baxendale.

"There's no knowing what may be in the inside of a pie till you cut it open," returned Jim Dunn. "But 'tain't many as 'ud shrink from putting in the knife to see."

The room laughed, and greeted Jim Dunn with applause.

"I put it to you all," resumed Sam, who took his share of laughter with the rest, "whether there's sense, or not, in what I say. Are we likely to get our grievances redressed by the masters, unless we force it? Never; not if we prayed our hearts out."

"Never," and "never," murmured sundry voices.

"What *are* our grievances?" demanded Peter Quale, putting the question in a matter-of-fact tone, as if he really asked for information.

"Listen!" ejaculated Sam. "He asks what our grievances are? They are many and great. Are we not kept to work like beasts of burden, ten hours a day? Does that leave us time for the recreation of our wearied bodies, for the improvement of our minds, for the education of our children, for the social home intercourse in the bosoms of our families? By docking the day's labor to nine hours—or to eight, which we shall get, may be, after awhile—it would leave us the extra hour, and be a blessing."

Sam carried the admiring room with him. That hard, disbelieving Peter Quale interrupted the cheering.



“A blessing, or the contrary, as it might turn out,” cried he. “It’s easy to talk of education and self-improvement, but how many is there as would use the accorded hour in that way?”

“Another grievance is our wages,” resumed Sam, drowning the words. “We call ourselves men and Englishmen, and yet we lie down contented with five-and-sixpence a day. Do you know what our trade gets in Australia? Oh, you do, some of you, then I’ll tell those that don’t. From twelve to fifteen shillings a day; and even more than that. *Twelve shillings!* and that’s the minimum rate of pay,” slowly repeated Sam, lifting up his arm and one peg-top, to give emphasis to the words.

A murmur of envy at the coveted rate of pay in Australia shook the room to the center.

“But the price of provisions and other necessaries is enormous in that quarter,” debated Abel White. “So it may come to the same in the end—be about as broad as long; I have heard what is sometimes given for shoes there; but I’m afraid to say, it was so much. The wages, out there, can’t be any guide for us.

“No, they can’t,” said Peter Quale. “Australia is one place, and this is another. Where’s the use of bringing up that?”

“Oh, of course not,” sarcastically uttered Sam. “Anything that tends to show we are put upon, and how we might be made more comfortable, it’s of no use bringing up. The long and the short of it is this: we want to be regarded as MEN; to have our voices considered, and our complaints attended to; to be put altogether upon a better footing. Little enough is it we ask at present; only for a modicum of ease in our day’s hard labor, just the thin end of the wedge inserted to raise the weight. That’s all we are agitating for. It depends upon us whether we get it or not; display manly courage and join in the strike, and it is ours to-morrow.”

The response did not come so quickly as Sam deemed it ought. He went on in a persuasive, ringing tone:

“Consider the wives of your bosoms; consider your little children; consider yourselves. Were you born into the world to be slaves—blackamoors ground into the dust with toil? Never.”

"Never," uproariously echoed three parts of the room.

"The motto of a true man is, or ought to be, 'do as little as you can, and get as much for it,'" danced Sam, in his enthusiasm, thereby nearly losing his perch on the tub. "With an hour's work less a day, and the afternoon holiday on the Saturday, we shall——"

"What's the good of a afternoon Saturday holiday? We don't want that, Sam Shuck."

This ignominious interruption to the proceedings came from a lady. Buzzing round the entrance door and thrusting in their heads at a square hole, which might originally have been intended for a window, were a dozen or two of the gentler sex. This irregularity had not been unobserved by the chairman, who faced them; the chairman's audience, densely packed, had their backs that way. It was not an orthodox adjunct to a trade meeting, that was certain, and the chairman would have probably ordered the ladies away, had he deemed there was a chance of his getting obeyed; but too many of them had the reputation of being the gray mares. So he winked at the irregularity, and added one or two flourishes of oratory for their especial ears. The interruption came from Mrs. Cheek, Timothy Cheek's wife.

"What's the good of a afternoon Saturday holiday? We don't want that, Sam Shuck! Just when we be up to our eyes in muck and cleaning, our places routed out till you can't see the color of the boards, for brooms and pails, and soap and water, and the chairs and things is all topsy-turvy, one upon another, so as the children have to be sent out to grub in the gutter, for there ain't no place for 'em in-doors, do you think we want the men poking their noses in? No; and they'd better not try it on; we should wish 'em at Jericho, and perhaps send 'em there. Women have got tempers given to 'em as well as you."

"And tongues, too," rejoined Sam, unmindful of the dignity of his office.

"It is to be hoped they have," reported Mrs. Cheek, not inclined to be put down; and her sentiments appeared to be warmly joined in by the ladies generally. "Don't you men agitate for the Saturday's half-holiday. What 'ud you do with it! just sot it away at the publics."

Some confusion ensued; and the gentler sex were peremptorily ordered to mind their own business, and "make themselves scarce." When the commotion had subsided, a very respectable man took up the discourse--George Stevens.

"The gist of the whole question is this," he said: "Will agitation do us good, or will it do us harm? We look upon ourselves as representing one interest; the masters consider they represent another. If it comes to open warfare between the two, the strongest would win."

"In other words, whichever side's funds held out the longest," said Robert Darby. "That is as I look upon it."

"Just so," returned Stevens. "I cannot say, seeing no further than we can see at present, that a strike would be advisable."

"Stevens, do you want to better yourself or not?" asked Sam Shuck.

"I'd be glad enough to better myself, if I saw my way clear to do it," was the reply. "But I don't."

"We don't want no strikes," struck in a shock-headed, hard-working man. "What is it we want to strike for? We have got plenty of work and full wages. A strike won't fill our pockets. Them may wote for strikes that like 'em: I'll keep to my work."

Partial applause.

"It is as I said," cried Sam. "There's poor, mean-spirited creatures among you, as won't risk the loss of a day's pay for the common good, or put out a hand to help the less fortunate. I'd rather be buried alive, five feet under the earth, than I'd show out so selfish."

"What is the interest of one of us, is the interest of all," returned Stevens. "And a strike, if we went into it, would either benefit us all, or make us all suffer. It is sheer nonsense to attempt to make out that one man's interests are different from another's; our interests are the same. I'd vote for striking to-morrow, if I were sure we would come out of it with whole skins, and get what we struck for; but I must see that a bit clearer first."

"How can we get it, unless we try for it?" demanded Sam. "If the masters find we are all determined, they'll give in to us. I appeal to you all"—raising his hands

over the room—"whether the masters can do without us?"

"That has got to be seen," said Peter Quale, significantly. "One thing is obvious: we could not do without them."

"Nor they without us—nor they without us," struck in several voices.

"Then why shilly-shally about the question of a strike?" asked Sam, in a glib tone of reason. "If a universal strike were on, the masters would pretty soon make terms that would end it. Why, a six months' strike would drive half of them into the *Gazette*."

"But it might drive us into the workhouse at the same time," interrupted John Baxendale."

"Let me finish," went on Sam; "it's not polite to take up a man in the middle of a sentence. I say that a six-months' strike would send many of the masters to the bankruptcy court. There has been a question debated among us"—Sam lowered his voice—"whether it would not be policy to let things go on quietly, as they are, till next spring——"

"A question among who?" interposed Peter Quale, regardless of the reproof just administered to John Baxendale.

"Never you mind who," returned Sam, with a wink; "among those that are hard at work for your interest. With their contracts for the season signed, and their works in full progress, say about next May, then would be the time for a strike to tell upon the masters. However, it has been thought better not to delay it; the future's but an uncertainty; the present is ours, and so must the strike be. *Have you wives?*" he pathetically continued; "*have you children? have you spirits of your own?* Then you will all with one accord go in for the strike."

"But what are our wives and children to do while the strike is on?" asked Robert Darby. "You say yourself it might last six months, Shuck. Who would support them?"

"Who?" rejoined Sam, with an indignant air, as if the question was a superfluous one. "Why the Trades' Union, of course. *That's* all settled. The Union is prepared to take care of all who are out on a strike, stand-

ing up, like Britons, for their privileges, and keep 'em like fighting-cocks. Hoorar for that blessed boon, the Trades' Unions!"

"Hurrar for the Trades' Unions!" was shouted in chorus. "Keep us like fighting-cocks, will they? Hoorar!"

"A murrain light upon the Trades' Unions!" burst forth a dissenting voice. "They are the greatest pests as ever was allowed in a free country."

The opposition caused no little commotion. Standing by the door, having pushed his way through the surrounding women, who had *not* made themselves "scarce," was a man in a flannel jacket, with a cap in his hand, and his head white with mortar. He was looking as excited as he spoke.

"This is not regular," spoke Sam Shuck, with authority. "You have no business here; you don't belong to us."

"Regular or irregular, I'll speak my mind," was the answer. "I have been at work for Jones the builder, down yonder. I have done my work steady and proper, and I have had my pay. A man comes up to me yesterday and says, 'You must join the Trades' Union.' 'No,' says I, 'I shan't. I don't want nothing of the Trades' Union, and the Union don't want nothing of me.' So they goes to my master. 'If you keep on employing this man, your other men will strike,' they says to him, and he, being in a small way, got intimidated, and sent me off to-day. And here I am, throwed out of work, and I have got a sick wife and nine young children to keep. Is that justice? or is it tyranny? Talk about emancipating the slaves! let us emancipate ourselves at home."

"Why don't you join the Union?" cried Sam. "All do, who are good and true."

"All good men and true *don't*," returned the man. "Many of the best workmen among us won't have anything to do with Unions; and you know it. But if I would, I can't. To join it, I must pay five shillings, and I have not got them to pay. With such a family as mine you may guess that every shilling is forestalled afore it comes in. I kept myself to myself, doing my work in quiet; and interfering with nobody. Why should they interfere with me?"

“If you have been in full work, five shillings is not much to pay to the Union,” sneered Sam.

“If I had my pockets filled with five-shilling pieces, I would not pay one to it,” fearlessly retorted the man. “Is it right that a free-born Englishman should give in to such a system of intimidation? No; I never will. You talk of the masters being tyrants; it’s you who are the tyrants, one to another. What is one workman better than his fellow, that he should lay down laws and say, you shall do this, and you shall do that, or you sha’n’t be allowed to work? I can tell you what”—turning his eyes on the room—“the ‘Trades’ Unions have been called a protection to the workingman; but, if you don’t take care, they’ll grow into a curse. When Sam Shuck, and other good-for-naughts like him, what never did a full week’s work for their families yet, are paid in gold and silver to spread incendiarism among you, it’s time you looked to yourselves.”

He turned away as he spoke; and Sam, in a dance of furious passion, danced off his tub. The interlude had not tended to increase the feeling of the men in Sam’s favor—that is, in the cause he advocated. Indiscriminate talking ensued; diverse opinions were disputed; and the men dispersed as they came, nothing having been resolved upon. A few set their faces resolutely against the proposed strike; a few were red-hot for it; but the majority were undecided, and liable to be swayed either way.

“It will come,” nodded Sam Shuck, as he went home to a supper of pork chops and gin-and-water.

But Sam was destined to be—as he would have expressed it—circumvented. It cannot be supposed that this unsatisfactory state of things was unnoticed by the masters; and they took their measures accordingly. Forming themselves into an association, they discussed the measures best to be adopted, and determined upon a lockout; that is, to close their yards until the firm whose workmen had struck should resume work; they also resolved to employ only those men who would sign an agreement, or memorandum, affirming that they were not connected with any society which interfered with the arrangements of the master whose service they entered, or with the hours of labor, and acknowledging the rights

both of masters and men to enter into any trade arrangements on which they might mutually agree. This paper of agreement was not relished by the men at all; they styled it the "odious document." Neither was the lockout relished; it was of course equivalent in one sense, to a strike; only that the initiative had come from the masters' side, and not from theirs. It commenced early in August. Some of the masters closed their works without a word of explanation to their men; in one sense it was not needed, for they knew of the measure beforehand. Mr. Hunter chose to assemble them together, and state what he was about to do. Somewhat of his old energy appeared to have been restored to him for the moment, as he stood before them and spoke—Austin Clay by his side.

"You have brought it upon yourselves," he said, in answer to a remark from one who boldly, but respectfully asked, whether it was fair to resort to a lock-out, and so punish all alike, contents and non-contents. "I will meet the question upon your own grounds. When the Messrs. Trollope's men struck because their demands, to work nine hours a day, were not acceded to, was it not in contemplation that you should join them—that the strike should be universal? Come, answer me candidly?"

The men, true and honest, did not deny it.

"And possibly by this time you might have struck," said Mr. Hunter. "How much more 'fair' would that have been toward us than this locking-out is toward you? Do you think that you alone are to meet and pass your laws, and say you will coerce the masters, and that the masters will not pass laws in return? Nonsense, my men!"

A pause.

"When have the masters attempted to interfere with your privileges, either by saying that your day's toil shall consist of longer hours, or by diminishing your wages, and threatening to turn you off if you do not comply? Never. Masters have rights as well as men; but some of you, of late, have appeared to ignore the fact. Let me ask you another question: Were you well treated under me, or were you not? Have I shown myself solicitous for your interests, for your welfare? Have I ever oppressed you, ever put upon you?"

No, Mr. Hunter had never sought to oppress them: they acknowledged it freely. He had ever been a good master.

“My men, let me give you my opinion. While condemning your conduct, your semblance of discontent—it has been semblance, rather than reality—I have been sorry for you, for it is not with you that the chief blame lies. You have suffered evil persuaders to get to your ears, and have been led away by their pernicious counsels. The root of the evil lies there. I wish you could bring your own good sense to bear upon these points, and to see with your own eyes. If so, there will be nothing to prevent our resuming together amicable relations; and for my own part, I care not how soon the time shall come. The works are for the present closed.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

DAFFODIL'S DELIGHT was in all the glory of the lock-out. The men having nothing to do, improved their time by enjoying themselves; they stood about the street or lounged at their doors, smoking short pipes and quaffing draughts of beer. Let money run ever so short, you will generally see that the beer and the pipes can be found. As yet, the evils of being out of work were not felt; for weekly pay, sufficient for support, was supplied them by the Union Committee. The men were in high spirits—in that sort of mood implied by the words “Never say die,” which was often in their mouths. They expressed themselves determined to hold out; and this determination was continually fostered by the agents of the Union, of whom Sam Shuck was a chief. Many of the more temperate, who had not particularly urged the strike, were warm supporters now of the general opinion, for they regarded the lockout as an unwarrantable piece of tyranny on the part of the masters. As to the ladies, they were over-warm partisans, generally speaking; they made the excitement, the unsettled state of Daffodil's Delight, an excuse for their own idleness (they are only too ready to do so), and collected in groups round the men, or squatted themselves on door-steps, proclaiming their opinion of existing things, and boasting that they'd hold out for their rights till death.



Seated in a chair at the bottom of her garden, just within the gate, was Mary Baxendale. Not that she was there to join the gossip of the women, or had any intention of joining in it; she was simply sitting there for air.

Mary Baxendale was fading. Never very strong, she had, for the last year or two, been gradually declining, and, with the excessive heat of the past summer, her remaining strength appeared to have gone out. Her occupation, that of a seamstress, had not tended to keep her in health; she had a great deal of work offered her, her skill being superior, and she had sat at it early and late. Mary was very good, very conscientious, and she was anxious to contribute a full share to the home support. Her father had married again, had now two young children, and it almost appeared to Mary as if she were an interloper in the paternal home. Not that the new Mrs. Baxendale made her feel this; she was a bustling, hearty woman, fond of show and spending, and of setting off her babies; but she was kind to Mary.

The capability of exertion appeared to be past, and Mary's days were chiefly spent in a quiescent state of rest, frequently sitting out-of-doors. This day—it was now the beginning of September—was an unusually bright one, and she drew her invalid shawl round her, and leaned back in her seat, looking out on the lively scene, at the men and women congregated in the road, and inhaling the fresh air, at least, as fresh as it could be got in *Daffodil's Delight*.

“How do you feel to-day, Mary?”

The questioner was Mrs. Quale. She had come out of her house in her bonnet and shawl, bent on some errand, and stopped to accost Mary.

“I am pretty well to-day; that is, I should be, if it were not for the weakness.”

“Weakness, ay!” cried Mrs. Quale, in a snapping sort of tone. “And what have you had this morning to fortify you against the weakness?”

A faint blush rose to Mary's thin face. The subject was a sore one in the mind of Mrs. Quale, and that lady was not one to spare such with her tongue. The fact was, that at the present moment, and for some time past, Mary's condition and appetite had required unusual nour-

ishment; but, since the lock-out, this had not been procurable by John Baxendale. Sufficient food the household had as yet, but it was of a plain, coarse sort, not suitable for Mary; and Mrs. Quale, bitter enough against the existing condition of things before, touching the men and their masters, was not, by this, rendered less so. Poor Mary, in her patient meekness, would have subsided into her grave with famine, rather than complain of what she saw no help for.

“Did you have an egg at eleven o'clock?”

“Not this morning. I did not feel greatly to care for it.”

“Rubbish!” responded Mrs. Quale. “I may say I don't care for the moon, because I know I can't get it.”

“But I really did not feel to have any appetite just then,” repeated Mary.

“And if you had a appetite, I suppose you couldn't have been any the nearer satisfying it! You let your stomach get empty, and after a bit the craving goes off and sickness comes on, and then you say you have no appetite. But there! 'taint your fault; where's the use of my——”

“Why, Mary, girl, what's the matter?”

The interruption to Mrs. Quale proceeded from Dr. Bevary. He was passing the gate with Miss Hunter. They stopped at sight of Mary. Mrs. Quale took up the discourse.

“She don't look over-flourishing, do she, sir?—do she, Miss Florence? She have been as bad as this—oh, for a fortnight now.”

“Why did you not send my uncle word, Mary?” spoke Florence, impulsive in the cause of good as she had been when a child. “I am sure he would have come to see you.”

“You are very kind, miss, and Dr. Bevary, also,” said Mary. “I could not think of troubling him with my poor ailments, especially as I feel it would be useless. I don't think anybody can do me good on this side of the grave, sir.”

“Tush, tush!” interposed Dr. Bevary.

“That's what many sick people say; but they get well in spite of it. Let us see you a bit closer.”

He went inside the gate, and casually examined her;

felt her pulse, her chest, her skin; looked at her fixedly, especially at the inside of her eyelids. "How do you feel?" he asked standing before her, when it was over. "What are your symptoms?"

"I am just sinking, sir, as it seems to me; sinking out of life, without much ailment to tell of. I have a great deal of fever at night, and a dry cough. It is not so much consumption as——"

"Who told you it was consumption?" interrupted Dr. Bevary.

"The women about here call it so, sir. My step-mother does; but I should say it was more of a waste."

"Your step-mother is fond of talking of what she can know nothing," remarked Dr. Bevary. "Neither can the women. Have you much appetite?"

"Yes, and that's the evil of it," struck in Mrs. Quale, determined to lose no opportunity of propounding her view of the case. "A pretty time this is for folks to have appetites, when there's not a copper being earned. I wish all strikes and lockouts was put down by law, I do. Nothing comes out of 'em but empty cubbarts."

"Your cupboard need not be any the emptier for a lockout," said Dr. Bevary, who sometimes, when conversing with the women of Daffodil's Delight, would fall familiarly into their mode of speech."

"No, thank goodness; we have been providenter than that, sir," returned Mrs. Quale. "A pity but what others could say the same. You might take a walk through Daffodil's Delight, sir, from one end of it to the other, and not find half a dozen cubbarts with plenty in 'em just now. Serve 'em right! they should put by for a rainy day."

"Ah!" returned Dr. Bevary, "rainy days come to most of us as we go through life, in one shape or other. It is well to provide for them."

"And it's well to keep out of 'em, where it's practicable," wrathfully remarked Mrs. Quale. "There no more need have been this disturbance between masters and men, than there need be one between you and me, sir, this moment, afore you walk away. They be just idiots, are the men; and the women be worse, and I am tired of telling 'em so. Look at 'em," added Mrs. Quale, directing the doctor's attention to the female ornaments of

Daffodil's Delight. "Look at their gowns, in jags, and their dirty caps! they make the men's being out of work an excuse for their idleness, and they just stick themselves out there all day, a-crowing and a-gossiping."

"Crowing!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Crowing; every female one of 'em, like a cock upon its dunghill," responded Mrs. Quale. "There isn't one as can see an inch beyond her own nose. If the lock-out lasts, and starvation comes, let 'em see how they'll crow then—it'll be on t'other side of their mouths, I fancy!"

"Money is dealt out to them by the Trades' Union, sufficient to live," observed Dr. Bevary.

"Sufficient not to starve," returned Mrs. Quale. "What is it, sir, to them as have enjoyed their thirty-five shillings a-week, and could hardly make that do, some of 'em. Look at the Baxendales. There's Mary, wanting more than she does in health; ay, and craving for it. A good bit of meat once or twice in the day, an egg now and then, a cup of cocoa and milk, or good tea—not wishy-washy stuff, bought in by the ounce—how is she to get it all? The allowance dealt out to John Baxendale keeps 'em in bread and cheese; I don't think it does in much else."

They were interrupted by John Baxendale himself. He came out of his house, touching his hat to the doctor and to Florence. The latter had been leaning over Mary, inquiring softly into her ailments, and the complaint of Mrs. Quale, touching the short-comings of Mary's comforts, had not reached her ears.

"I am sorry, sir, you should see her so poorly," said Baxendale, alluding to his daughter. "She'll get better, I hope."

"I must try what a little of my skill will do toward it," replied the doctor. "If she had sent me word she was ill, I would have come before."

"Thank ye, sir. I don't know as I should have been backward in asking you to come round and take a look at her; but a man don't like to ask favors when he has got no money in his pocket; it makes him feel little, and look little. Things are not in a satisfactory state with us all just now."

"They are not indeed."

"I never thought the masters would go to the extreme

of a lockout," resumed Baxendale. "It was a harsh measure."

"On the face of it it does seem so," responded Dr. Bevary. "But what else could they have done? Have kept open their shops, that those out of work might have been supported from the wages they paid their men, and probably have found those men also striking at last? If you and others had wanted to escape a lockout, Baxendale, you should have been cautious not to lend yourselves to the agitation that was smoldering."

"Sir, I know there's a good deal to be said on both sides," was the reply. "I never was for the agitation or the strike; I set my face nearly dead against it. The worst is, we all have to suffer for it alike."

"Ay, that is the worst of things in this world," responded the doctor. "When people do wrong the consequences are rarely confined to themselves, but are spread over the innocent. Come, Florence. I will see you again later, Mary."

Mrs. Quale had already departed on her errand. John Baxendale turned to his daughter. "He was always a kind man, Mary. I hope he'll be able to do you good."

"I don't feel that he will, father," was the low answer. But Baxendale did not hear it; he was going out at the gate to join a knot of neighbors who were gathered together at a distance.

"Will Mary Baxendale soon get well, do you think, uncle?" demanded Florence.

"No, my dear, I do not think she will."

There was something in the doctor's tone that startled Florence.

"Uncle Bevary! you do not fear she will die?"

"I do fear it, Florence; and that she will not be long first."

"Oh!" Then after she had gone a few paces further, Florence withdrew her arm from his. "I must go back and stay with her a little while, uncle. I had no idea of this."

"Mind you don't repeat it to her in your chatter," called out the doctor; and Florence shook her head by way of answer.

"I am in no hurry to go home, Mary; I thought I

would return and stay a little longer with you," was her greeting. "You must feel it dull, sitting here alone."

"Dull! oh, no, Miss Florence; I like sitting by myself and thinking."

Florence smiled.

"What do you think about?"

"Oh, miss, I quite lose myself in thinking. I think of my Saviour, and I think of the blessed life after this life—a place of rest, of love, of peace; I can hardly believe that I shall soon be there."

Florence paused.

"You do not seem to fear death, Mary. You speak rather as if you wished it."

"I do not fear it, Miss Florence. Ever since mother went, I have been, like, preparing for it. Besides, only think how much sorrow and trouble there is in this world."

"It is very strange," murmured Florence. "Mamma, too, believes she is near death, and she expresses no reluctance, no fear; I do not think she feels any."

"Miss Florence, it is only another proof of God's mercies; mother used to say so. Those whom the Saviour loves he gradually weans from this world, causing them to see death as it really is—a blessing, instead of a terror, if their hearts are right; so that when the time comes, they are glad to die. There's a gentleman waiting to speak to you, miss."

Florence lifted her head hastily, and encountered the smile and the outstretched hand of Austin Clay. But that Mary Baxendale was unsuspecting, she might have gathered something from the vivid blush that overspread her cheeks.

"I thought it was you, Florence. I caught sight of a young lady from my sitting-room window; but you kept your head down before Mary."

"I am sorry to see Mary looking so ill. My uncle was here just now, but he has gone. I suppose you were deep in your books?" she said, with a smile, her face regaining its less radiant hue. "This lockout must be a fine time for you."

"So fine that I wish it were over," he answered. "I am sick of it already, Florence. A fortnight's idleness will tire out a man worse than a month's work."

“Is there any more chance of its coming to an end, sir?” anxiously inquired Mary Baxendale.

“I do not see it,” gravely replied Austin. “The men appear to be too blind to come to any reasonable terms.”

“Oh, sir, don’t cast more blame to them than you can help!” she rejoined in a tone of intense pain. “They are led away by the Trades’ Unions; they are indeed. If once they enroll under them, they must obey their behests.”

“Well, Mary, it comes to what I say—that they are blinded. They should have better sense than to be led away.”

“You speak as a master, sir.”

“Probably I do; but I have brought my common sense to bear upon the question, both on the side of the masters and of the men; and I believe that this time the men are wrong. If they labored under any real grievance, it would have been different; but they did not. Their wages were good, work was plentiful——”

At this moment Mrs. Baxendale threw up the first-floor window, and called out:

“I say, Mary, I wish you’d just come in and sit by the little ones a bit, while I go down to the back kitchen and rinse out the clothes.”

Mary rose, taking up her pillow in her hand, wished good-day to Florence, and went in-doors. Austin held open the gate for Florence to pass out. She stood a moment speaking to him after he had closed it, when some one came up and laid his hand upon Austin’s arm.

It was Lawyer Gwinn, of Ketterford. He had turned into Daffodil’s Delight, and walked straight up to Austin at a quick pace, apparently in some anger or excitement.

“Young Clay, where is your master to-day?”

Neither the salutation nor the manner of the man pleased Austin; his appearance, there and then, especially displeased him. His answer was spoken in haughty coldness—not in policy—and in a cooler moment Austin would have remembered that.

“Am I Mr. Hunter’s keeper—if it be of him you speak—that you should seek to pry into his movements through me?”

A strangely bitter smile of conscious power parted the

man's lips. "So you take part with him, do you, sir? It may be better, both for you and him, that you bring me face to face with him. They have denied me to him at his house; their master is out of town, they say; but I know it to be a lie; I know that the message was sent out to me by Hunter himself. I had a great mind to force——"

Florence, who was deadly white, interrupted, her voice haughty as Austin's had been.

"You labor under a mistake, sir. Papa is out of town. He went this morning."

Mr. Gwinn wheeled round to her; neither her tone nor Austin's was calculated to abate his anger.

"You are his daughter, then!" he uttered, with the same insolent stare, the same displayed irony he had once used to her mother. "The young lady whom people envy as Miss Hunter! What if I tell you a secret—that you have no——"

"Be still," shouted Austin. "Are you a man or a demon? Miss Hunter, allow me," he cried, grasping the hand of Florence, and drawing her peremptorily toward Peter Quale's door, which he threw open. "Go up-stairs, Florence, to my room; wait there until I come to you. I must be alone with this man."

Florence looked at him in amazement, as he pushed her into the passage. He was evidently in the deepest agitation; every vestige of color had forsaken his face, and his manner was authoritative as any father's could have been. She bowed to its power unconsciously, not a thought of resistance crossing her mind, and went straight up-stairs to his sitting-room—although it was not precisely orthodox for a young lady so to do. Not a soul, save herself, appeared to be in the house.

A short colloquy and an angry one, and then Mr. Gwinn was returning the way he came, and Austin was springing up the stairs, five at a time.

"Will you forgive me, Florence? I could not do otherwise."

What with the suddenness of the proceedings, their strangeness, and her own doubts and emotion, Florence burst into tears. Austin—lost his head. In the agitation of the moment he suffered his long-controlled feel-



ings to get the better of him, and spoke words that he had long successfully repressed within him.

“My darling!” he whispered, taking her hands, “I wish I could have shielded you from it! Florence, you know—you must long have known—that my dearest object in life is you—your happiness, your welfare. I had not intended to say this so soon; it has been forced from me; you must pardon me for saying it here and now.”

She gently disengaged herself: and he allowed it. Her wet eyelashes fell on her blushing cheeks like a damask rose glistening with the morning dew. “But this mystery?—it does seem one,” she exclaimed. “Is not that man Gwinn, of Ketterford?”

“Yes.”

“Brother to the lady who seemed to cause so much emotion to papa. Ah! I was but a child at the time, but I noticed it. Austin, I think there must be some dreadful secret. What is it? He comes to our house at periods, and is closeted with papa, and papa is more miserable than ever after it.”

“Whether there is, or is not, it is not for us to inquire into it. I hastened you in,” he quickly went on, not caring to be more explanatory, and compelled to speak with evasion. “I know the man of old, and his language is sometimes coarse, not fitted for a young lady’s ears; so I sent you in. Florence,” he whispered, his tone changing to one of the deepest tenderness. “I shall win you if I can. I have your leave?”

She made no answer; only ran down the stairs. Austin laughed as he followed her. Mrs. Quale was coming in then, and met them at the door. She looked astonished.

“See what it is to go gadding out?” cried Austin to her. “When young ladies pay you the honor of a morning visit, they might find an empty house, but for my stay-at-home propensities.”

Mrs. Quale turned her eyes from one to the other of them, in doubt how much was joke.

“The truth is,” said Austin, vouchsafing an explanation, “there was a rude man in the road, talking nonsense, so I sent Miss Hunter in-doors, and stopped to deal with him.”

“I am sure I am sorry, Miss Florence!” cried unsuspecting Mrs. Quale. But, bless you! we often have rude

men in this quarter; they get hold of a drop too much, and when the wine's in the wit's out, you know, miss."

Austin piloted her home through Daffodil's Delight, walking by her side; possibly lest any more "rude men" should molest her.

In the dusk of that evening he was sitting alone with Mrs. Hunter. Mr. Hunter had not returned; for, that he had gone out of town for the day was perfect truth. Florence had escaped as Austin came in.

"It has been my hope for years," he was earnestly saying, as he held Mrs. Hunter's hands, in giving the explanation. "Dear Mrs. Hunter, do you think he will give her to me?"

"But, Austin——"

"Not yet; I do not ask for her yet, not until I have made a fitting home for her," he impulsively continued, anticipating what may have been the possible objection of Mrs. Hunter. "With the two thousand pounds left to me by Mrs. Thornimett, and a little more added to it, which I have myself saved, I believe I shall be able to make my way."

"Austin, you will make your way," she replied, in a tone of the utmost confidence and kindness. "I have heard Mr. Hunter himself anticipate a successful career for you. Even when you were, comparatively speaking, penniless, Mr. Hunter would say that talent and energy such as yours could not fail to find its proper outlet. Now that you have inherited the money, your success is certain. But—I fear that you cannot win Florence."

The words fell on his heart like an ice-bolt. He had reckoned upon Mrs. Hunter's countenance, though he had not been sure of her husband's. "What do you object to in me?" he inquired in a tone of pain.

"Austin, I do not object. I have long seen that your coming here so much—and it was Mr. Hunter's pleasure to have you—was likely to lead to an attachment between you and Florence. Had I objected to you, I should have pointed out to Mr. Hunter the impolicy of your coming. I like *you*: there is no one in the world to whom I would so readily intrust the happiness of Florence. Other mothers might look to a higher alliance for her; but, Austin, when we get near the grave we judge with a

judgment not of this world. Worldly distinctions lose their charm."

"Then, where is the doubt?" he asked.

"I once—it is not long ago—hinted at this to Mr. Hunter," she replied. "He would not hear me out; he would not suffer me to conclude. It was an utter impossibility that you could ever marry Florence, he said; neither was it likely that either of you would wish it."

"But we do wish it; the love has already arisen," he exclaimed, in agitation. "Dear Mrs. Hunter——"

"Hush, Austin! calm yourself. Mr. Hunter must have some private objection: and I never inquire into his motives. You must try and forget her."

A commotion in the hall. Austin went out to ascertain its cause. There stood Gwinn, of Ketterford, insisting upon seeing Mr. Hunter.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

A GLOOMY winter's evening. No that, reckoning by seasons, it could be called winter yet; but it was getting on for it, and the night was dark and sloppy, and blowing and rainy. The wind was blowing down Daffodil's Delight, sending the fierce rain before it in showers, and the pools gleamed in the reflected light of the gas-lamps, as wayfarers splashed through them and stirred up their muddy waters.

The luxurious and comfortable in position—those at ease in the world, who could issue their orders to the attentive trades-people at their morning's leisure—had no necessity to be abroad on that inclement Saturday night. Not so at Daffodil's Delight; there was not much chance (taking it collectively) of a dinner for the morrow, at the best; but, unless they went abroad, there was none.

Down the street, to one particular corner shop, which had three gilt-colored balls hanging outside it, went the stream—chiefly females; not together, they mostly walked in units and some of them, at least, in a covert sort of manner, keeping in the shade of dead walls and of dark houses, as if not caring to be seen. Among the latter stole one who appeared more especially tenacious of being recognized. She was a young woman, comely once, but pale and hollow-eyed now, her bones too

sharp for her skin. She was well-wrapped up against the weather, her cloth cloak warm, a fur round her neck, and india-rubber shoes. Choosing her time to approach the shop when the coast should be tolerably clear, she glanced cautiously in at the window and door, and entered.

Laying upon the counter a small parcel which she carried folded in a handkerchief, she displayed a card-board box to the sight of the shop's master, who came forward to attend to her. It contained a really handsome set of corals fashioned like those worn in the days when our mothers were young; a necklace of six rows of small beads, with a gold snap made to imitate a rose, a large coral head set in it; a pair of gold ear-rings, with long-pendant coral drops, and a large and handsome gold brooch, set likewise with corals.

"What, is it *you*, Miss Baxendale!" he exclaimed, his tone expressive of some surprise.

"It is indeed, Mr. Cox," replied Mary. "We all have to bend to these hard times. It's share and share alike in them. Will you please to look at these jewels?"

She tenderly drew aside the cotton which was over the trinkets—tender and reverently, almost as if a miniature live baby were lying there. Very precious were they to Mary. They were dear to her from associations: and she always believed them to be of great value.

The pawnbroker glanced at them slightly, carelessly lifting one of the ear-rings in his hand to feel its weight. The brooch he honored with a closer inspection.

"What do you want upon them?" he asked.

"Nay," said Mary, "it is not for me to name the sum. What will you lend?"

"You are not accustomed to our business, or you would know that we like borrowers to mention their own ideas; and we give it if we can," he rejoined with ready words.

"What do you ask?"

"If you would let me have four pounds upon them," began Mary, hesitatingly; but he snapped up the words.

"Four pounds! Why, Miss Baxendale, you can't know what you are saying. The fashion of these coral things is over, and done with. They are worth next to nothing."

Mary's heart beat quicker.

“They are genuine, sir, if you’ll please to look. The gold is real gold, and the coral is the best coral; my poor mother has told me so many a time. Her godmother was a lady, well-to-do in the world, and the things were a present from her.”

“If they were not genuine, I’d not lend as many pence upon them,” said the man. “With a little alteration the brooch might be made tolerably modern; otherwise their value would be no more than old gold. In selling them, I——”

“It will not come to that, Mr. Cox,” interrupted Mary. “Please God spares me a little while—and since the hot weather went out, I feel a bit stronger—I shall soon redeem them.”

Mr. Cox looked at her thin face; he listened to her short breath; and he drew his own conclusions. There was a line of pity on his hard face, for he had long respected Mary Baxendale.

“By the way, that strike seems to be going on; there doesn’t promise much for a speedy end of it,” quoth he. “I never was so overdone with pledges.”

“My work does not depend upon that,” said Mary. “Let me get up a little strength and I shall have as much work as I can do. And I am paid well, Mr. Cox; I have a private connection. I am not like the poor seamstresses who make shirts for fourpence a piece.”

Mr. Cox made no immediate reply to this, and there was a pause. The open box lay before him. He took up the necklace and examined its clasp.

“I will lend you a sovereign upon them.”

She lifted her face pitiably, and the tears glistened in her eyes.

“It would be of no use to me,” she whispered. “I want the money for a particular purpose, otherwise I should never have brought here these gifts of my mother’s. She gave them to me the day I was eighteen, and I have religiously kept them from desecration.”

Poor Mary! From desecration!

“I have heard her say what they cost; but I forget now. I know it was over ten pounds. It is a set, you see.”

“But the day for this fashion has gone by. To ask

four pounds upon them was preposterous; and you would know it to be so, were you acquainted with the trade."

"Will you lend me two pounds, then?"

The tone was tremblingly eager, the face beseeching—a wan face, telling of the coming grave. Possibly the thought struck the pawnbroker, and awoke some humanity within him.

"I shall lose by it, I know, if it comes to a sale. I'd not do it for anybody else, Miss Baxendale."

He proceeded to write out the ticket, his thoughts running upon whether—if it did come to sale—he could not make three pounds by the brooch alone. As he was handing her the money, somebody rushed in, close to the spot occupied by Mary, and dashed down a large-sized paper parcel on the counter. She wore a black lace bonnet which had once been white, frayed, and altogether the worse for wear, independent of its dirt. It was tilted on the back of her head, displaying a mass of hair in front, half gray, half black, and exceedingly in disorder; together with a red face. It was Mrs. Dunn.

"My patience me! if it's not Mary Baxendale! I thought you was too much of the lady to put your nose inside a popshop. Don't it go again' the grain?" she ironically added, for she did not appear to be in the sweetest of tempers.

"It does indeed, Mrs. Dunn," was the girl's meek answer, as she took her money and departed.

"Now, then, old Cox, just attend to me," began Mrs. Dunn. "I have brought something as you don't get offered every day."

Mr. Cox, accustomed to the scant ceremony bestowed upon him by some of the ladies of Daffodil's Delight, took the speech with indifference, and gave his attention to the parcel, from which Mrs. Dunn was rapidly taking off the twine.

"What's this?—silk?" cried he, as a roll of dress-silk, brown, cross-barred with gold, came forth to view.

"Yes, it is silk; and there's fourteen yards of it; and I want thirty shillings upon it," volubly replied Mrs. Dunn.

He took the silk between his fingers, feeling its substance in his professionally indifferent and disparaging manner.

“Where did you get it from?” he asked.

“Where did I get it from?” retorted Mrs. Dunn.

“What’s that to you? D’ye think I stole it?”

“How do I know?” returned he.

“You insolent fellow! Is it only to-day as you have knowed me, Tom Cox? My name’s Hannah Dunn; and I don’t want you to testify to my honesty; I can hold up my head in Daffodil’s Delight just as well as you can—perhaps a little better. Concern yourself with your own business. I want thirty shillings upon that.”

“It isn’t worth thirty shillings in the shop, new,” was the rejoinder.

“What?” shrieked Mrs. Dunn. “It cost three-and-fourpence halfpenny a yard, every yard of it, and there’s fourteen of ’em, I tell you.”

“I don’t care if it cost six and-fourpence halfpenny; it’s not worth more than I say. I’ll lend you ten shillings upon it, and I should lose then.”

“Where do you expect to go when you die?” demanded Mrs. Dunn, in a tone that might be heard half the length of Daffodil’s Delight. “I wouldn’t tell such lies for the paltry sake of grinding folks down; no, not if you made me a duchess to-morrow for it.”

“Here, take the silk off. I have not got time to bother; it’s Saturday night.”

He swept the parcel, silk, paper, and string toward her, and was turning away. She leaned over the counter and seized upon him.

“You want a opposition in the place, that’s what you want, Master Cox! You have been cock o’ the walk over Daffodil’s Delight so long that you think you can treat folks as if they were dirt. You be overdone with business, that’s what you be; you’re a-making gold as fast as they makes it in Australiar; we shall have you a-setting up your tandem next. What’ll you give me upon that silk?”

“I’ll give you ten shillings; I have said so. You may take it or not, it’s at your own option.”

More contending; but the pawnbroker was firm, and Mrs. Dunn was forced to accept the offer, or else take away her silk.

“How long is this strike going to last?” he asked, as

he made out the duplicate. The words excited the irascibility of Mrs. Dunn.

“Strike!” she uttered, in a flaming passion. “Who dares to call it a strike? It’s not a strike; it’s a lock-out.”

“Lockout, then. The two things come to the same, don’t they? Is there a chance of its coming to an end?”

“No, they don’t come to the same,” shrieked Mrs. Dunn. “A strike’s what it is—a strike; a act of noble independence which the British workman may be proud on. A lockout is a nasty, mean, overbearing tyranny on the part of the masters. I hope the men’ll hold out forever, I do! I hope the masters ’ll be drove, every soul of ’em, into the dust and dregs of the bankruptcy court; I hope their sticks and stones ’ll be sold up, down to their children’s cradles——”

“There, that’s enough,” interposed the pawnbroker, as he handed her what he had to give. “You’ll be collecting a crowd round the door, if you go on like that. Here’s somebody else waiting for your place.”

It was Mrs. Cheek, an especial friend of the lady now being dismissed. Mrs. Cheek was carefully carrying a basket which contained various chimney ornaments—pretty enough in their places, but not of much value. The pawnbroker, after some haggling, not so intemperately carried on as the bargain just concluded, advanced six shillings on them.

“I had wanted twelve,” she said; “and I can’t do with less.”

“I am willing to lend it,” returned he, “if you bring goods according.”

“I have stripped the place of a’most all the light things as can be spared,” said Mrs. Cheek. “One doesn’t care to begin upon the heavy furniture and the necessaries.”

“Is there no chance of the present state of affairs coming to an end?” inquired Mr. Cox, putting the same question to which he had not got an answer from Mrs. Dunn. “The men can go back to work if they like; the master’s yards are open again.”

“Open!” returned Mrs. Cheek, in a guttural tone, as she threw back her head in disdain; “they have been open some time, if you call *that* opening ’em. If a man



likes to go as a sneaking coward, and work upon the terms offered now, knuckling down to the masters, and putting his hand to their beastly old odious document, severing himself from the Union, he can do it. It ain't many of our men as you'll find do that dirty work. If my husband was to attempt it, I'd be ready to skin him alive."

"But the men have gone back in some parts of the metropolis."

"Men, do you call 'em? A few may; one black sheep out of a flock. They ain't men, they are half-castes. Let them look to theirselves," concluded Mrs. Cheek, significantly, as she quitted the shop.

At the butcher's stall, a few paces further, she came up to Mrs. Dunn, who was standing in the glare of the blazing torch-light, in the incessant noise of the "Buy, buy, buy! what'll you buy?" Not less than a dozen more women were congregating there, elbowing each other, as they turned over the scraps of meat set out for sale in small heaps—sixpence the lot, a shilling the lot, according to quality and quantity. In the prosperous time when their husbands were in full work, these ladies had scornfully disdained such heaps on a Saturday night; they were wont to buy a good joint for the Sunday's dinner.

One of the women nudged another in her vicinity, directing her attention to the inside of the shop.

"Just twig Mother Shuck; she's a being served, I hope!"

"Mother Shuck," Slippery Sam's better half, was making her purchases, in the agreeable confidence of possessing money to pay for them—liver and bacon for the present evening's supper, and a breast of veal, to be served with savory herbs, for the morrow's dinner. In the old times, while the throng of women now outside had been able to make the same or similar purchases, *she* had hovered without, like a hungry hyena, hanging over the cheap portions with covetous eyes and fingers, as many another poor wife had done whose husband could not or would not work. Times were changed.

"I can't afford nothing hardly, I can't," grumbled Mrs. Cheek. "What's the good of six shillings for a Saturday night, when everything's wanted, from the rent down to a potato? The young 'uns have got their bare

feet upon the boards, as may be said, for their shoes be without toes and heels; and who is to get 'em others? I wish that Cox was a bit juster. He's a-getting rich upon our spoils. Six shilling for that lot as I took him in!"

"I wish he was smothered!" struck in Mrs. Dunn. "He took and asked me if I'd stole the silk. It was that lovely silk, you know, as I was fool enough to go and choose, the week of the strike, on the strength of a good time a-coming. We have had something else to do since, instead of making up silk gownds."

"The good time ain't come yet," said Mrs. Cheek, shortly. "I wish the old 'uns was back again, if we could get 'em without stooping to the masters."

"It was at the shop where Mary Ann and Jemimar deals, when they has to get in things for their customers' work," resumed Mrs. Dunn, continuing the subject of the silk. "I shouldn't have had credit at any other place. Fourteen yards I bought of it, and three-and-fourpence halfpenny I gave for every yard of it; I did, I protest to you, Elizar Cheek: and that swindling old screw had the conscience to offer me ten shillings."

"Is the silk paid for?"

"Paid for!" wrathfully repeated Mrs. Dunn; "has it been a time to pay for silk gownds when our husbands be under a lockout? Of course it's not paid for, and the shop's a-beginning to bother for it; but they'll be none nearer getting it. I say, master, what'll you weigh in these fag ends of mutton and beef at—the two together?"

It will be readily understood, from the above conversation and signs, that several weeks had elapsed since the commencement of the lockout. The roast goose and the boiled salmon had not come yet. The masters' shops were open—open to any one who would go to work in them, provided they renounced all connection with the Trades' Unions. Daffodil's Delight would not have this at any price, and they held out. The worst aspect in the affair—I mean for the interests of the men—was, that strange workmen were assembling from different parts of the country, accepting the work which they refused. Of course this feature in the dispute was most bitter to the men; they lavished their abuse upon the masters for employing strange hands, and they would have been glad

to lavish something worse than abuse upon the hands themselves. One of the masters compared them to the fable of the dog in the manger: they would not take the work, and they would not let (by their good will) anybody else take it; incessant agitation was maintained. The workmen were in a sufficiently excited state, as it was: and to help on that which need not have been helped, the agents of the Trades' Union kept the ball rolling—an incendiary ball, urging obstinacy and spreading discontent. But this history has not so much to do with the political phases of the unhappy dispute as with its social effects.

As Mary Baxendale was returning home from the pawnbroker's, she passed Mrs. Darby, who was standing at her own door, looking at the weather. "Mary, girl," was the salutation, "this is not a night for you to be abroad."

"I was obliged to go," was the reply. "How are the children?"

"Come in and see them," said Mrs. Darby.

She led the way into a back room, which at the first glance seemed to be covered with mattresses and children. A large family had Robert Darby—indeed, it was a complaint prevalent in Daffodil's Delight. They were of various ages; these, lying on the mattresses, six of them, were from four to twelve years. The elder ones were not at home. The room had a close, unhealthy smell, which struck especially on the senses of Mary, rendered sensitive from illness.

"What have you got them all in this room for?" she exclaimed, in the impulse of the moment.

"I have given up the rooms above," was Mrs. Darby's reply.

"But—when the children were ill—was it a time to give up rooms?" debated Mary.

"No," replied Mrs. Darby, who spoke as if she were heart-broken, in a sad, subdued tone, the very reverse of Mesdames Dunn and Cheek. "But how could we keep on the top rooms when we had not got the rent? I spoke to the landlord, and he is letting the back rent stand a bit, not to sell us up; and I gave up to him the two top rooms: and we all sleep in here together."

“I wish the men would go back to work,” said Mary, with a sigh.

“Mary, my heart’s just failing within me,” wailed Mrs. Darby. “Here’s winter coming on, and all of them out of work. If it were not for my daughter, who is in service, and brings us her wages as she gets them, I believe we should just have starved. I *must* get medicine for the children, though we go without bread.”

“It is not medicine they want: it is nourishment,” said Mary.

“It is both. Nourishment would have done when they were first ailing, but now that it has turned to low fever they must have medicine, or it will grow into typhus. It’s bark they have to take, and it costs——”

“Mother! mother!” struck up a plaintive voice, that of the eldest of the children lying there, “I want more of that nice drink!”

“I have not got it, Willy. You know that you had it all. Mrs. Quale brought me round a pot of black currant jelly,” she explained to Mary, “and I poured boiling water on it to make drink. Their little parched throats did so relish it, poor things.”

Mary knelt on the floor, and put her hand on the child’s moist brow. He was a pretty boy; fair and delicate, with light curls falling round his face. A gentle, thoughtful boy he had ever been, but less healthy than some.

“You are thirsty, Willy?”

He opened his heavy eyelids, and the large, round blue eyes glistened with fever, as they were lifted to see who spoke. “How do you do, Mary?” he meekly said. “Yes, I am so thirsty. Mother says perhaps she should have a sixpence to-night to buy a pot of jelly like Mrs. Quale’s.”

Mrs. Darby colored slightly; she thought Mary must reflect on the extravagance implied. Sixpence for jelly, when they were wanting money for a loaf!

“I did say it to him,” she whispered, as she was quitting the room with Mary. “I thought I might spare a sixpence out of what Darby got from the society. But I can’t; I can’t. There’s so many things we cannot do without, unless we just give up, and lie down and don’t even try at keeping body and soul together. Rent, and coals, and candles, and soap; and we must eat something.

Darby, too, of course he wants a trifle for beer and tobacco. Mary, I say I am just faint-hearted. If the poor boy should die, it'll be upon my heart forever that the drink he craved for in his last illness couldn't be got for him."

"Does he crave for it?"

"Nothing was ever like it. All day long it has been his sad, pitiful cry, 'Have you got the jelly yet, mother? Oh, mother, if I could but have the drink!'"

As Mary went through the front room, Robert Darby was in it then. His chin rested on his hands, his elbows were on the table; altogether he looked very down-hearted.

"I have been up to see Willy," she cried.

"Ah, poor little chap!" It was all he said; but the tone implied more.

"Things seem to be getting very low with us all. I wish there could be a change," continued Mary.

"How can there be, while the masters and the Unions are at loggerheads?" he asked. "Us men be between the two, and between the two we come to the ground. It's like sitting on two stools at once."

Mary proceeded to the shop where the jelly was sold, an oilman's, bought a sixpenny pot, and took it back to Mrs. Darby's, handing it in at the door.

"Why did you do it, Mary? You can't afford it."

"Yes I can. Give it to Willy, with my love."

"He will only be out of the world of care, if God does take him," she sighed, as she bent her steps homeward. "It would be a happy release for the half of us here. Oh, father!" she continued aloud, encountering John Baxendale at their own gate, "I wish this sad state of things could be ended. There's the poor little Darbys worse instead of better. They are all lying in one room, down with fever."

"God help us if fever should come!" was the reply of John Baxendale.

"It is not catching fever yet. They have given up their top chambers, and are all sleeping in that back room. Poor Willy craved for a bit of jelly, and Mrs. Darby could not get it him."

"Better crave for that than for worse things," roughly returned John Baxendale. "I am just a-walking about

here, because I can't bear to stop in-doors. I *can't* pay the rent, and the things must go."

"No, father, they need not. He said that if you would get up two pounds toward it, he would give time for the rest. If——"

"Two pounds!" ejaculated John Baxendale; "where am I to get two pounds from? Borrow of them that have been provident, and so are better off, in this distress, than me? No, that I never will."

Mary opened her hand and displayed two sovereigns held in its palm. They sparkled in the gaslight. "They are my own, father. Take them."

A sudden revulsion of feeling came over Baxendale—like one who has passed from despair to hope. "Child," he gently said, "did an angel send them?" And Mary, worn with weakness, with long-continued insufficient food, and with the distress around her, burst into tears, and, bending her head upon his arm, sobbed aloud.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

THE Shucks had got an evening party. Two or three friends had dropped in that Saturday night—idlers, like Sam himself—and were invited to supper. Mrs. Shuck was just about to fry the liver and bacon—you saw her purchasing it—with the accompaniment of a good peck of onions; Sam and his friends were staying their appetites with pipes and porter; and when Mary Baxendale and her father entered—Mary having waited outside till her emotion was passed and her eyes were dry—they could scarcely find their way across the kitchen, what with the clouds from the pipes, and the smoke from the frying-pan. There was a great deal of laughter going on. Prosperity had not yet caused the Shucks to change their residence for a better one; perhaps that was to come.

"You are merry to-night," observed Mary, by way of being sociable.

"It's merrier inside nor out, a-wading through the puddles and the sharp rain," replied Mrs. Shuck, without turning round from her employment. "It's some'at new to see you go out such a night as this, Mary

Baxendale! Don't you talk about folks wanting sense again."

"I don't know that I ever do talk of it," was the smiling reply of Mary.

Mrs. Baxendale was hushing a baby as they entered their room. She looked very cross. The best-tempered will do so, under the long-continued embarrassment of empty purses and empty stomachs.

"Who has been spreading it up and down the place as *we* are in trouble about the rent?" she abruptly demanded, in no pleasant voice. "That girl of Ryan's was here just now—Judy. She knew it, it seems, and she didn't forget to speak of it. Mary, what a simpleton you are, to be out in this rain!"

"Never mind who speaks of the rent, Mrs. Baxendale, so long as it can be paid," said Mary, sitting down in the first chair to get her breath up, after mounting the stairs. "Father is going to manage it, so that we sha'n't have any trouble at present. It is all right."

"How ever have you contrived it?" demanded Mrs. Baxendale of her husband, in a changed tone.

"Mary has contrived it—not I. She has just put two pound into my hand. Where did you get it, child?"

"It does not signify your knowing that, father."

"If I don't know it, I sha'n't use the money," he answered. "Where was it had from, Mary?"

"It was not borrowed, in your sense of the word, father. I have only done what you and Mrs. Baxendale have been doing lately. I pledged that set of coral ornaments of my mother's. Have you forgotten them?"

"Why, yes, I had forgot 'em," cried he. "Coral ornaments! I declare they had as much slipped my memory as if she had never possessed them."

"Cox would only lend me two pound upon them. Father, I hope I shall some time get them redeemed."

John Baxendale made no reply. He turned to pace the small room, evidently in deep thought. Mary, her poor short breath gathered again, took off her wet cloak and bonnet. Presently Mrs. Baxendale put the leaf upon the table, and some cold potatoes. "Couldn't you have brought in a sausage or two for yourself, Mary, or a red herring?" she said. "You had got a shilling in your pocket."

"I can eat a potato," said Mary. "It don't much matter about me."

"It matters about us all, I think," cried Mrs. Baxendale. "What a delicious smell of onions!" she added in a parenthesis. "Them Shucks have got the luck of it just now. Us and the children, and you, are three parts starved—I know that, Mary. *We* may weather it; it's to be hoped we shall; but it will just kill you."

"No, it sha'n't," said John Baxendale, stopping short in his promenade, and turning to them with a strangely stern decision marked upon his countenance. "This night das decided me, and I'll go and do it."

"Go and do what?" exclaimed his wife.

"I'll go to WORK, please God, Monday morning comes," he said with emphasis. "The thought has been hovering in my mind this week past."

"It's just the thing you ought to have done weeks ago," observed Mrs. Baxendale.

"You never said it."

"Not I. It's best to let men come to their senses of their own accord. You mostly work by the rules of contrary, you men; if I had advised your going to work next Monday morning, you'd just have stopped away."

Passing over this conjugal compliment in silence, John Baxendale descended the stairs. He possessed a large share of the open honesty of the genuine English workman. He disdained to do things in a corner. It would not suit him to return to work the coming Monday morning, on what might be called "the sly;" he preferred to act openly, and to declare it to the Trades' Union previously, in the person of their paid agent, Sam Shuck. This he would do at once.

The first installment of the supper was just served; which was accomplished by means of a tin-dish placed on the table, and the contents of the frying-pan being turned unceremoniously into it. Sam and the company deemed that liver and bacon were best served hot and hot, so they sat themselves to eat, while Mrs. Shuck continued to fry.

"I have got just a word to say, Shuck. I shan't disturb you," began John Baxendale. But Shuck interrupted him.

"It's of no use, Baxendale, your remonstrating about



the short allowance. Think of the many mouths there is to feed. It's hard times, we all know, thanks to the masters; but our duty, ay, and our pride, too, must lie in putting up with them, like men."

"It's not very hard times with you, at any rate," said John Baxendale, sniffing involuntarily the savory odor, and watching the tempting morsels consumed. "My business here is not to remonstrate at anything, but to inform you that I shall resume work on Monday."

The announcement took Sam by surprise. He dropped the knife with which he was cutting the liver, held upon his bread—for the repast was not served fashionably, with a full compliment of plates and dishes—and stared at Baxendale. "What!" he uttered.

"I have had enough of it. I shall go back on Monday morning."

"Are you a fool, Baxendale? or a knave?"

"Sometimes I think I must be a fool," was the reply, given without irritation. "Leastways, I have wondered, lately, whether I am or not: when there has been full work and full wages to be had for the asking, and I have not asked, but have let my wife and children and Mary go down to starvation point."

"You have been holding out for principle," remonstrated Sam.

"I know. And principle is a very good thing, when you are sure it's the right principle; but flesh and blood can't stand out forever."

"After standing out as long as this, I'd try and stand out a bit longer," ironically cried Sam. "You *must*, Baxendale, you can't turn traitor now."

"You say, 'a bit longer,' Sam Shuck. It has been 'a bit longer,' and 'a bit longer,' for some time past; but the bit doesn't come to any ending. There's no more chance of the master's coming to, than there was at first, but a great deal less. The getting of these men from the country will render them independent of us. What is to become of us then?"

"Rubbish!" said Sam Shuck. "The masters must come to: they can't stand against the Unions. Because a sprinkling of poor country workmen have thrust in their noses, and the masters are keeping open their

works on the show of it, is that a reason why we should knuckle down? They are doing it to frighten us."

"Look here," said Baxendale. "I have got two women and two children on my hands, and one of the women next door to the grave; I am threatened—you know it, Sam Shuck—with a lodging for them in the street next week, because I have not been able to pay the rent; I have parted, by selling and pledging, with nearly all there is to part with, of my household goods. Can I kneel down and ask God to consider my condition, and provide for me and mine? No; I can't. If God was pleased to answer us in words, like we speak to him, would he not say, 'There is work and to spare: you have only got to do it!'"

"Well, that's grand," put in one of Sam's guests. "As if folks asked God about such things as this!"

"Since my late wife died I have thought about it more than I used to," said Baxendale, simply, "and I have learned that there's no good to be done in anything where God is not asked. Well, Sam, you'll tell the Union?"

"No, I sha'n't. You won't go to work."

"You'll see. I shall be glad to go. I haven't had a proper meal this——"

"You'll think better of it between now and Monday morning," interrupted Sam, drowning his words. "I'll have a talk with you to-morrow. Have a bit of supper, Baxendale?"

"No, thank ye. I didn't come in to eat your victuals," he added, moving to the door.

"We have got plenty," said Mrs. Shuck, turning round from the frying-pan. "Here, eat it up-stairs, if you won't stop, Baxendale."

She took out a slice of liver and of bacon, and handed them to him on a saucer. What a temptation it was to the man, sick with hunger! However, he was about to refuse, when he thought of Mary.

"Thank ye, Mrs. Shuck. I'll take it, then, if you can spare it. It will be a treat to Mary."

Like the appearance of water in the arid desert to the parched and exhausted traveler, was the sight of that saucer of meat to Mary. Terribly did she often crave for it. John Baxendale positively refused to touch any;

so Mary divided it into two portions, giving one to Mrs. Baxendale. The woman's good-nature—her sense of Mary's condition—would have led her to refuse it; but she was not made up of self-denial, and she felt faint and sinking. John Baxendale cut a thick slice of bread, rubbed it over the remains of gravy in the saucer, and ate that. "Please God, this shall have an end," he mentally repeated. "I think I *have* been a fool."

Mr. Hunter's yard was open like other yards; but as yet he had but few men at work in it; in fact, so little was doing that it was almost equivalent to a stand-still. Mr. Henry Hunter was better off; a man of energy, determined to stand no nonsense, as he himself expressed it, he had gone down to country places, and engaged many hands.

On the Monday following the above Saturday night, Austin Clay proceeded in the evening to Mr. Hunter's house. Mr. Hunter was suffering from illness, and had not been to the yard that day. Florence was alone when he entered, evidently in distress, though she strove to hide it from him, to turn it off with gay, light words. But he noted the signs too well.

"What is your grief, Florence?" he asked, bending over her and speaking in the sweetest tone of sympathy.

It caused her tears to burst forth afresh. Austin, exercising no control over his feelings, and possibly not caring to exercise it, drew her to him and said kindly: "Let me share it, Florence."

"It is nothing more than usual. Oh, Austin, I try to bear up bravely, and I do bear up; but, indeed, this is an unhappy house. Mamma is sinking fast; I am sure she is; I see it daily. While papa——"

Sobs impeded her utterance. Austin turned away; he did not like that she should enter with him upon any subject connected with Mr. Hunter. Florence looked at him.

"Austin, *what* is it that is overshadowing papa?" she breathed, in a tone of dread. "I am sure that some misfortune overhangs the house."

"I wish I could take you out of it!" was the impulsive and not very relevant answer.

"I can bear it, whatever it may be; but my heart aches

for him. See how ill he is! and yet he has no ailment of body, only of mind. Night after night he paces his room, never sleeping."

"Florence, how do you know that?" Austin gravely inquired.

"Because I listen to it."

"You should not do so. Whatever may be the nature of—of Mr. Hunter's trouble, it is not well for you to seek to fathom it."

"I cannot *help* listening to him. How is it possible? His room is near mine, and when his footsteps are sounding in it, in the midnight silence, hour after hour, my ears grow sensitively quick. I say that, loving him, I cannot help it. Sometimes I think that if I only knew the cause, the nature of his sorrow, I might soothe it—perhaps help to remove it. Austin, will you not tell it me?"

"Florence, you can have no grounds for assuming that I am cognizant of it."

"I feel very sure that you are. Can you suppose that I should otherwise speak of it to you?"

"I say that you can have no grounds for the supposition. By what do you so judge?"

"By signs," she answered. "I can read it in your countenance. I was pretty sure of it before that day when you sent me hastily into your rooms, lest I should hear what the man Gwinn was about to say; but I have been fully sure since. What he would have said related to it; and in some way, the man, I feel sure, is connected with the ill. Besides, you have been on confidential terms with papa for years."

"On business matters only; not on private ones. My dearest, I must request you to let this subject cease, now and always. I know nothing of its nature from your father; and if my own thoughts have in any way strayed toward it, it is not fitting that I should give utterance to them."

"Tell me one thing: could I be of any service, in any way?"

"Hush, Florence," he uttered, as if the words had struck upon some painful chord. "The only service you can render is, by taking no notice of it, even to yourself. In time——"

“Is it you, Austin? I heard voices here, and wondered who had come in.”

“How are you, dear Mrs. Hunter?” he said, advancing to her as she entered. “Better this evening?”

“Not better,” was Mrs. Hunter’s answer, as she retained Austin’s hand, and drew him on the sofa beside her. “There will be no ‘better’ for me in this world. Austin, I wish I could have gone from it under happier circumstances. Florence, I hear your papa calling.”

“If *you* are not happy in the prospect of the future, who can be?” murmured Austin, as Florence left the room.

“I spoke not of myself. I know in whom I have believed. I am going to my merciful Saviour; and for those who can feel that assurance with them, there is, indeed, happiness. My concern is for Mr. Hunter. Austin, I would give every minute of my remaining days to know what terrible grief it is that has been so long upon him.”

Austin was silent. Had Mrs. Hunter and Florence entered into a compact to annoy him, he wondered.

“It has been like a dark shade upon our house for years. Florence and I have kept silence upon it, to him and to each other; to him we dared not speak, to each other we would not. Latterly it has seemed so much worse that I was forced to whisper of it to her; I could not keep it in; the silence was killing me. We both agree that you are in his confidence, and——”

“I am not, indeed, Mrs. Hunter,” he broke forth, glad to be able to say it. “That I have observed the signs you speak of in Mr. Hunter, his embarrassment, his grief——”

“Say his fear, Austin.”

“His fear. That I have noticed this it would be vain to deny. But, Mrs. Hunter, I assure you he has never given me his confidence upon the subject. Quite the contrary; he has particularly shunned it with me.”

“I was mistaken, then,” she said, with a sigh. “Austin, how is business going on; how will it go on?”

Very grave turned Austin’s face now. This was an open evil—one to be openly met and grappled with; and what his countenance gained in seriousness it lost in an-

noyance. "I really do not see how it will go on," was his reply, "unless we can get to work soon. I want to speak to Mr. Hunter. Can I see him?"

"He will be in directly. He has not been down to-day yet. But I suppose you will wish to see him in private; I know he and you like to be alone when you talk upon business matters."

At present it was expedient that Mrs. Hunter, at any rate, should not be present, if she was to be spared annoyance, for Mr. Hunter's affairs were growing ominous. This was chiefly owing to the stoppage, through the strike, of works in process, and partly to the effect of a diminished capital. Austin as yet did not know all the apprehension, for Mr. Hunter contrived to keep some of it from him. That the diminishing of the capital was owing to Gwinn, of Ketterford, Austin did know; at least, his surmises amounted to certainty. When a hundred pounds, or perhaps two hundred pounds, mysteriously went out, and Austin was not made acquainted where, he drew his own conclusions.

"Are the men not learning the error of their course, yet?" Mrs. Hunter resumed.

"They seem further off learning it than ever. One of them, indeed, came back to-day; Baxendale."

"I felt sure he would be amongst the first to do so. He is a sensible man, a reflecting man; how he came to hold out at all, is to me a matter of surprise."

"He told me this morning, when he came and asked to be taken on again, that he wished he never had held out," said Austin. "Mary is none the better for it."

"Mary was here to day, remarked Mrs. Hunter. "She came to say that she was better, and could do some work if I had any. I fear it is a deceitful improvement. She is terribly thin and wan. No; this state of things must have been bad for her. She looks as if she were half-famished."

"She only looks what she is," said Austin.

"Oh, Austin! I should have been so thankful to help her to strengthening food during this scarcity," Mrs. Hunter exclaimed, the tears in her eyes. "But I have not dared. You know what Mr. Hunter's opinion is—that the men have brought it upon themselves, and that to help their families only in the least degree, would be en-

couraging them to hold out, and would tend to prolong the contest. He positively forbade me helping any of them; and I could only obey. I have kept in-doors as much as possible, that I might avoid the sight of the distress which I must not relieve. But I ordered Mary a good meal here this morning; Mr. Hunter did not object to that. Here he is."

Mr. Hunter entered, leaning upon Florence. He looked like an old man, rather than one of middle age.

"Baxendale is back, sir," Austin observed, after a few words had passed.

"Come to his senses at last, has he?" cried Mr. Hunter; "has he signed the declaration?"

"Of course he has. The men have to do that, you know, sir, before they can get work; he says he wishes he had come back at first."

"So do a good many others in their hearts," answered Mr. Hunter, significantly; "but they can't pluck up the courage to acknowledge it."

"The men are most bitter against him—urged on, no doubt, by the Union. They——"

"Against Baxendale?"

"Against Baxendale. He came to speak to me before breakfast; I gave him the declaration to read and sign, and sent him to work at once. In the course of the morning it had got wind: though Baxendale told me he had given Sam Shuck notice of his intention on Saturday night. At dinner time when Baxendale was quitting the yard there were—I should say a couple of hundred men assembled there——"

"The Daffodil's Delight people?" interrupted Mr. Hunter.

"Yes. Our late men, chiefly—and a sprinkling of Mr. Henry's. They were waiting there for Baxendale, and the moment he appeared, the yells, the hisses, the groans were dreadful. I suspected what it was, and rushed out; and, but for my doing so, I believe they would have set upon him."

"Mark you, Clay! I will protect my workmen to the very limit of the law. Let the malcontents lay but a finger upon any one of them, and they shall assuredly be punished to the uttermost," reiterated Mr. Hunter, bringing down his hand forcibly. "What did you do?"

“I spoke to them just as you have now spoken,” said Austin. “Their threatenings to the man were terrible. I dared them to lay a finger upon him; I assured them that the language they were using was punishable. Had the police been in the way—but the more you want them, the less they are to be seen—I should have handed a few into custody.”

“Who were the ringleaders?”

“I can scarcely tell. Ryan, the Irishman, was busy, and so was Jim Dunn; Cheek also, backed by his wife.”

“Oh, you had women also!”

“In plenty,” said Austin. “One of them—I think it was Cooper’s wife—roared out a challenge to fight *Mrs.* Baxendale, if her husband, Cooper, as she expressed it, was too much of a woman to fight *him*. There will be bloodshed, I fear, sir, before the thing is over.”

“If there is, let them who cause it look to themselves,” said Mr. Hunter. “How did it end?”

“I cleared a passage for Baxendale, and they yelled and hooted him home. ‘I suppose they’d like to take my life,’ he said to me; ‘but I think I am only doing right in returning to work. I could not let my family and Mary quite starve.’ This afternoon all was quiet; Quale said he heard the men were holding a meeting.”

Florence was sitting with her hands clasped, her color rising. “If they set upon Baxendale, and—and injure him!” she breathed.

“Then the law would see what it could do toward getting some of them punished,” sternly spoke Mr. Hunter.

“Oh, James!” uttered his wife, her pale cheeks flushing, as the words grated on her ears. “Could nothing be done to prevent it? Prevention is better than cure, Austin. Will you not give notice to the police, and tell them to be on the alert?”

“I have done it,” he answered.

“Papa,” said Florence, “have you heard that Robert Darby’s children are ill? likely to die? They are suffering dreadfully from want. Mary Baxendale said so when she was here this morning.”

“I know nothing about Robert Darby or his children,” was the stern reply of Mr. Hunter. “If a man sees his



children starving before him, and will not work to feed them, he deserves to lose them. Florence, I see what you mean—you would like to ask me to permit you to send them relief. *I will not.*”

Do not deem Mr. Hunter an inhuman man. He was far from that. Had the men been out of work through misfortune, he would have been the first to forward them succor: many and many a time had he done it in case of sickness. He and the other masters judged that to help the men or their families in any way would but tend to prolong the dispute, and there was certainly reason in their argument—if the men wished to feed their children, why did they not work for them?

“Sir,” whispered Austin, when he was going, and Mr. Hunter went with him into the hall, “that bill of Lamb’s came back to us to-day, noted.”

“No!”

“It did, indeed, sir. I had to take it up.”

Mr. Hunter lifted his hands. “This wretched state of things! It will bring on ruin, it will bring on ruin. I heard one of the masters curse the men the other day in his perplexity and anger; there are times when I am tempted to follow his example. Ruin! for my wife and for Florence.”

“Mr. Hunter,” exclaimed Austin, greatly agitated, and speaking in the moment’s impulse, “why will you not let me hope for her? I will make her a happy home——”

“Be silent!” sternly interrupted Mr. Hunter. “I have told you that Florence can never be yours. If you cannot put away this unthankful subject, at once and forever, I must forbid you the house.”

“Good-night, sir,” returned Austin. And he went away, sighing heavily.

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## CHAPTER XV.

How do the poor manage to pull through illness? Through distress, through hunger, through cold, through nakedness, above all, through the fetid, unwholesome atmosphere in which too many of them are obliged to live, they struggle on from sickness back to health.

Look at the children of Robert Darby. The low fever

which attacked them had in some inexplicable way been subdued, without its going on to the dreaded typhus. If typhus appeared at that untoward time in Daffodil's Delight, why, then, no earthly power could have helped them.

Little pale pinched forms, but with the disease gone, there sat the children. Colder weather had come, and they had gathered round the bit of fire; fire it scarcely could be called, for it was only a few decaying embers. All sat on the floor, save Willy; he was in a chair, leaning his head back on a pillow. The boy had probably never been fitted by constitution for a prolonged life, though he might have lasted some years more, under favorable surroundings; as it was, fever and privation had done their work with him, and the little spirit was nearly worn out.

Mrs. Darby had taken him round to Mr. Rice. "He does not want me, he wants a good nourishment, and plenty of it," was the apothecary's veto. And Mrs. Darby took him home again.

"Mother, the fire's nearly out."

"I can't help it, Willy. There's no more coal, and nothing to buy it with."

"Take something, mother."

You may, or may not, as you are acquainted or not with the habits of the poor, be aware that this sentence referred to the pawnbroker; spoken out fully it would have been, "Take something and pledge it, mother." In cases of long-continued, general distress, the children of a family know just as much about its ways and means as the heads do.

Mrs. Darby cast her eyes round the kitchen. There was nothing to take, nothing that would raise them help to speak of. As she stood over Willy, parting the hair with her gentle finger upon his little pale brow, her tears dropped upon his face. The pillow on which his head leaned? Ay, she had thought of that with longing; but how would his poor little head do without it? The last things put in pledge had been Darby's tools.

The latch of the door opened, and Grace entered. She appeared to be in some deep distress. Flinging herself on a chair, she clasped hold of her mother, sobbing wildly, clinging to her as if for protection. "Oh,

mother, they have accused me of theft; the police have been had to me!" were the confused words that broke from her lips.

Grace had taken service in a baker's family, where there was an excessively cross mistress. She was a well-conducted, honest girl, and since the distress had commenced at home had brought her wages straight to her mother, whenever they were paid her. For the last week or two, the girl had brought something more. On the days when she believed she could get a minute to run home in the evening, she had put by her allowance of meat at dinner—they lived well at the baker's—and made it upon bread and potatoes. Had Grace for a moment suspected there was anything wrong or dishonest in this, she would not have done it; she deemed the meat was hers, and she took it to Willy. On this day, two good slices of mutton were cut for her; she put them by, eat her potatoes and bread, and after dinner, upon being sent on an errand past Daffodil's Delight, was taking them out with her.

The mistress pounced upon her. She abused her; she reproached her of theft, she called her husband to join in the accusation, and finally a policeman was brought in from the street, probably more to frighten the girl than to give her in charge. It did frighten her in no measured degree. She protested, as well as she could do it for her sobs, that she had no dishonest thought; that she had believed the meat to be hers to eat it, or not, as she pleased, and that she was going to take it to her little brother, who was dying. The policeman decided that it was not a case for charge at the police court, and the baker's wife ended the matter by turning her out. All this, with sobs and moans, she by degrees explained now.

Robert Darby, who had entered during the scene, lifted his hand, more in sorrow than in anger, upon Grace's shoulder, in his stern honesty. "Daughter, I'd far rather we all dropped down here upon the floor and died out with starvation, than that you should have brought home what was not yours to bring."

"There's no need for *you* to scold her, Robert," spoke Mrs. Darby, with more temper than she, in her meekness, often betrayed; and her conscience told her that she

had purposely kept these little episodes from her husband. "It is the bits of meat she has fed him with twice or thrice a week that has just kept life in him; that's my firm belief."

"She shouldn't have done it; it was not hers to bring," returned Robert Darby.

"What else has he had to feed him?" proceeded the wife. "What do any of us have? *You* are getting nothing."

The tone was a reproachful one. With her starving children before her, and one of them dying, the poor mother's wrung heart could but speak out.

"I know I'm getting nothing," was his answer. "Is it my fault? I wish I could get something. I'd work my fingers to the bone to keep my children."

"Robert, let me speak to you," she said, in an imploring tone, the tears gushing from her eyes. "I have sat here this week and asked myself, every hour of it, what we shall do. Our things to make money on are gone; the pittance we get allowed by the society does not keep body and soul together; and this state of things gets worse and will get worse. What is to become of us? What are we to do?"

Robert Darby leaned, in his old jacket—one considerably the worse for wear—against the kitchen wall, his countenance gloomy, his attitude bespeaking misery; he knew not what they were to do, therefore he did not attempt to say. Grace had laid down her inflamed face upon the edge of Willy's pillow and was sobbing silently.

"You have just said that you would work your fingers to the bone to keep your children," resumed Mrs. Darby to her husband.

"I'd work for them till the flesh dropped off me. I'd ask no better than to do it," he vehemently said; "but where am I to get work to do now?"

"Baxendale has got it," she rejoined, in a low tone.

Grace started from her leaning posture. "Oh, father, do as Baxendale has done! don't let the children quite starve. If you had been in work, this dreadful thing would not have happened: it will be a slur upon me for life."

"So I would, girl, but for the Trades' Union."

"Father, the Trades' Unions seem to bring you no

good, but harm. Don't trust them any longer; trust the masters now."

Never was there a better meaning man than Robert Darby; but he was too easily swayed by others. Latterly it had appeared to him that the 'Trades' Unions did bring him harm, and his faith in them was shaken. "They'd cast me off, you see," he observed to his wife, in an irresolute tone.

"What if they did? The masters would take you on. Stand right with the masters——"

Mrs. Darby was interrupted by a shriek from Grace. Little Willy, whom nobody had been giving attention to, was lying back with a white face, senseless. Whether from the weakness of his condition, or from the unusual excitement of the scene going on around him, certain it was that the child had fainted.

There was some little bustle in bringing him to, and Mrs. Darby sat down, the boy upon her lap. "What ailed you, deary?" said Robert, bending down to him.

"I don't know, father. Nothing."

Mrs. Darby pulled her husband's ear close to her lips. "When the boy's dead, you'll wish you had cared for him more than for the Trades' Unions, and worked for him."

The words told upon the man. Perhaps for the first time he had fully realized to his imagination the moment when he should see his boy lying dead before him. "I will work," he exclaimed. "Willy, boy, father'll go and get work, and soon bring you home something good to eat, as he used to."

Willy's hot lips parted with a pleasant smile of response; his blue eyes glistened brightly. Robert Darby bent his rough, unshaven face, and took a kiss from the child's smooth one.

"Yes, my boy; father *will* work."

He went out, bending his way toward Slippery Sam's—who, by the way, had latterly exacted the title of "Mr. Shuck." There was a code of honor—as they regarded it—amidst these operatives of the Hunters, to do nothing underhanded, without first speaking to the Union's man, Sam Shuck; as was mentioned in the case of Baxendale.

It happened that Mr. Shuck was standing in the strip of garden before his house, carrying on a wordy war over

the palings with Mrs. Quale, when Darby came up. Peter Quale had, of course, been locked out with the rest, but, from the first hour that Mr. Hunter's yard was open, Peter returned to work. He did not belong to the Trades' Unions; never had, and never would; therefore, he was a free man. He was left to do as he liked in peace; somehow, the Union did not care to interfere with Peter Quale. Peter pursued his own course quietly—going to his work and returning from it, saying little to the malcontents of Daffodil's Delight. Not so Mrs. Quale; she exercised her tongue upon them whenever she got the chance.

“Now, Robert Darby! how are them children of your'n?” began she. “Starved out yet?”

“Next door to it,” was Darby's answer.

“And whose is the fault?” she went on. “If I had children, and my husband wouldn't work to keep 'em out of their graves, through getting some nasty mistaken crotchet in his head, and holding out when the work was a-going begging, I'd go before a magistrate and see if I couldn't have the law of him.”

“You'd do a good many things if you wore the breeches. But you don't,” sneered Sam.

“You be wearing whole breeches now, which you get out of the blood and marrow of the poor misguided men,” retorted Mrs. Quale. “They won't last out whole forever, Slippery Sam.”

“They'll last out as long as I want 'em to, I dare say,” said Sam. “Have you come up for anything particular, Darby?”

“I have come to talk a bit, Shuck. There seems to be no chance of this state of things coming to an end.”

“No, that there doesn't. You men are preventing that.”

“Us men!” exclaimed Robert Darby in surprise. “What do you mean?”

“I don't mean you; I don't mean the sturdy, honest ones who hold out for their rights like men; I mean the other lot. If every operative in the kingdom had held out, to a man, the masters would have given in long ago—they must have done it; and you would all be back, working in triumph the nine hours per day. I spoke of

those rats who sneak in, and take the work, to the detriment of the honest man."

"At any rate, the rats are getting the best of it just now," said Robert Darby.

"That they are," said Mrs. Quale, exultingly, who would not lose an opportunity of putting in her word. "It isn't *their* children that are dropping into their winding-sheets through want of food."

"If I had my way, I'd hang every man who in this crisis is putting his hand to a stroke of work," exclaimed Sam Shuck. "Traitors! to turn and work for masters after they had resorted to a lockout! It was that lockout that floored us."

"Of course it was," assented Mrs. Quale, with complaisance. "If the Union only had money coming in from the men, they'd hold out forever. But the general lockout stopped that."

"Well, Shuck, as things seem to be getting worse instead of better, and prospects look altogether so gloomy, I shall go back to work myself," resumed Darby.

"Chut," said Shuck.

"Will you tell me what I *am* to do? I'd rather turn a thousand miles the other way than I'd put my foot indoors and see things as they are there. If a man can clam himself, he can't watch those belonging to him clam. Every farthing of allowance I had from the society last week, was——"

"You had your share," interrupted Sam. "Think of the thousands there is to divide it among! The subscriptions have come in very well as yet, but they be falling off now."

"And think of the society's expenses," interposed Mrs. Quale, with suavity. "The scores of gentlemen, like Mr. Sam Shuck, as there is to pay, and keep on the fat of the land."

"You be smothered!" growled Sam. "Ryan," called out he to a man who was lounging up, "here's Darby saying he thinks he shall go to work."

"Oh, but that would be rich, by the powers!" laughed Ryan. "Darby, man, you'd never desert the society! It couldn't spare you."

"I want to do for the best," said Darby; "and it seems to me that to hold out is for the worst. Shuck, just an-

swer me a question or two, as from man to man. If the masters fill their yards with other operatives, what is to become of us?"

"They can't fill their yards with other operatives," returned Shuck. "Where's the use of talking nonsense?"

"But they can; they are doing it."

"They are not. They have got just a sprinkling of men for show—not many. Where are they to get them from?"

"Do you know what I heard? That Mr. Henry Hunter has been over to Belgium, and one or two of the other masters have also been, and——"

"Be shot to the Belgium workmen!" interrupted Ryan. "What English master 'ud employ them half-starved frogs!"

"I heard that Mr. Henry Hunter was quite thunderstruck at their skill," continued Darby, paying no attention to the interruption. "Their tools are bad: they are not to be called tools, compared to ours; but they turn out finished work. Their decorative work is beautiful. Mr. Henry put the question to them, whether they would like to come to England and earn five-and-sixpence per day, instead of three shillings, as they do there, and they jumped at it. He told them that perhaps he might be sending for them."

"Where did you hear that fine tale?" asked Slippery Sam.

"It's going about among us. I dare say you have heard it also, Shuck. Mr. Henry was away somewhere for nine or ten days."

"Let 'em come, them Belgicks," sneered Ryan. "Maybe they'd go back with their heads off. It couldn't take much to split the skull of them French beggars. How dare the masters think of taking on for-ringers, and leaving us to starve?"

"But the preventing of it lies with us," said Darby. "If we go back to work, there'll be no room for them."

"Darby," rejoined Shuck, in a persuasive tone; "let us just reason the matter. The bone of contention is the letting us work nine hours a day instead of ten; well, why should they not accord it? Isn't there men, outsiders, willing to work a full day's work, but can't get it? This extra hour, thrown up by us, would give em-



ployment to them. Would the masters be any the worse off?"

"They say they'd be the hour's wages out of pocket."

"Flam!" ejaculated Sam. "It would come out of the public's pocket, not out of the masters'. They would add so much the more on to their contracts, and nobody would be the worse. It's just a surly feeling of obstinacy that's upon 'em; it's nothing else. They'll come to it in the end, if you men will only let them. Hold out, hold out, Darby! If you are to give in to them now, where has been the use of this struggle? Haven't you waited for it, and starved for it, and hoped for it?"

"Very true," replied Darby, feeling in a perplexing state of indecision.

"Don't give in, man, at the eleventh hour. A little longer, and the victory will be ours. You see, it is not the bare fact of your going back that does the mischief; it's the example it sets. But for that scoundrel Baxendale's turning tail, you would not have thought about it."

"I don't know that," said Darby.

"One bad sheep will spoil a flock," continued Sam, puffing away at a cigar which he was smoking. He would have enjoyed a pipe a great deal more; but gentlemen smoked cigars, and Sam wanted to look as much like a gentleman as he could; it had been suggested to him that it would add to his power over the operatives. "Why, Darby, we have got it all in our own hands, if you men could but be brought to see it; it's as plain as the nose before you. Us builders, taking us in all our branches, might be the most united and prosperous body of men in the world. Only let us pull together, and have consideration for our fellows, and put away selfishness. Binding ourselves, all of us, to work but nine hours—perhaps but eight, after a bit, we should——"

"It is a good thing you have not got much of an audience here, Sam Shuck! That doctrine of yours is false and pernicious—in antagonism to the laws of God and man."

The interruption proceeded from Dr. Bevary. He had come into the garden unperceived by Sam, who was lounging on the side palings, his back to the gate. The doctor had come to pay a visit to Mary Baxendale.

Sam started up. "What did you say, sir?"

“What did I say?” repeated Dr. Bevary. “I think it should be, what did you say? You would dare to circumscribe the means God has given to man—to set a limit to his talents and his labor! You would say, ‘So far shall you work, and no farther!’ Who are you, and all such as you, that you should assume such power, and set yourselves up between God and your fellow-men?”

“Hear, hear!” interrupted Mrs. Quale, putting her head out at her window, for she had gone indoors.

“I have been a hard worker for years,” continued Dr. Bevary. “Mentally and practically I have toiled—toiled, Sam Shuck—to improve and make use of the talents intrusted to me. My days are spent in alleviating, so far as may be, the sufferings of my fellow-creatures; when I go to rest, I often lie awake half the night, pondering abstruse questions of medical science, considering over new theories. What man living has God endowed with power to come and say to me, ‘You shall not do this; you shall only work half your hours; you shall only earn a limited amount of fees?’ Answer me.”

“It is not a parallel case, sir, with ours,” returned Sam.

“It is a parallel case,” said Dr. Bevary. “There’s your friend next door, Peter Quale; by diligence he has made himself into a finished artisan; by dint of industry, in working over hours, he has amassed a competence that will keep him out of the workhouse in his old age. What reason or principle of justice can there be in your saying, ‘He shall not do this; he shall receive no more than I do, or than Ryan there does? Because Ryan is an inferior workman, and I love idleness and drink better than work, Quale and others shall not work to have an advantage over us; we will all share and fare alike.’ Out upon you, Slippery Sam, for promulgating doctrines so false! you must be the incarnation of selfishness or you could not do it. They can never obtain sway in free and enlightened England. As well become Mormons at once, and throw all labor into one lot.”

The doctor stepped into Shuck’s house on his way to Mary, leaving Sam on the gravel. Sam put his arm within Darby’s, and led him down the street, out of the doctor’s way, when he should come forth, and set him-

self to undo what the doctor's words had done, and to breathe persuasive arguments into Darby's ear.

Darby went home. It had grown dusk then, for Sam had treated him to a glass at the "Bricklayer's Arms," where sundry other friends were taking their glasses. There appeared to be a commotion in his house as he entered; his wife, Grace, and the young ones were withdrawing from standing round Willy.

"He has had another fainting fit," said Mrs. Darby to her husband. "And now—I declare illness is the strangest thing!—he says he is hungry."

The child put out his hot hand. "Father!"

Robert Darby advanced and took it.

"Be you better, dear? What ails you this evening?"

"Father," whispered the child, hopefully, "have you got the work?"

"When do you begin, Robert? To-morrow?"

Darby's eyes fell, and his face clouded. "I can't ask for it," he answered. "The society won't let me."

A great cry. A cry from the mother, from Grace, from the poor little child. Hope had lighted up once more within them. "You shall soon have food; father's going to work again, darlings," the mother had said to the hungry little ones, and now the hopes were dashed. The disappointment was bitter.

"Is he to *die* of hunger?" exclaimed Mrs. Darby in bitterness, pointing to Willy. "You said you would work for him."

"So I would, if they'd let me. I'd work the life out of me, but what I'd get a crust for ye all; but the Trades' Union won't have it," panted Darby. "What am I to do?"

"Work without the Trades' Union, father," interposed Grace. "Baxendale has done it."

"They are threatening Baxendale awfully. But it is not that I'd care for. The society would put a mark upon me. I should be a banned man; and when this struggle's over, they say, I should be let get work by neither masters nor men. My tools be in pledge, too."

Mrs. Darby threw her apron over her eyes and burst into tears; Grace was already crying, and the boy had his imploring little hands held up. "Robert, they be

your own children! I never thought you'd see them starve."

Another minute, and the man would have cried with them. He went out-of-doors, perhaps to sob his emotion away. Two or three steps down the street he encountered John Baxendale. The latter slipped five shillings into his hand.

"Tut, man; don't be squeamish. Take it for the children. You'd do as much for mine, if you had got it and I hadn't. Mary and I have been talking about you; she heard you having an argument with that snake, Shuck."

"They be starving, Baxendale, or I wouldn't take it," returned the man, the tears running down his pinched face. "I'll pay you back with the first work I get. I say, have a care of yourself; they are going on again you at a fine rate."

Come what would, Darby determined to furnish a home meal with this relief, which seemed like a help from Heaven. He bought two pounds of beef sausages, ready cooked, for their frying pan was in pledge; a pound of cheese, some tea, some sugar, two loaves of bread, and a lemon to make drink for Willy. Turning home with these various treasures, he became aware that a bustle had arisen in the street; men and women were pressing down toward one particular spot. Tongues were busy; but he could not at first obtain an insight into the cause of the stir.

"An obnoxious man had been set upon in a lonely corner, under cover of the night's darkness, and pitched into—beaten to death," was at length explained.

Away flew Darby, a horrible suspicion at his heart. Pushing his way amidst the crowd collected round the spot, as only a resolute man can do, he stood face to face with the sight. One, trampled on and beaten, lay in the dust, his face covered with blood. "Is it Baxendale?" shouted Darby, for he was unable to recognize him.

"It's Baxendale, as sure as a trivet. Who else should it be? He have caught it at last."

But there were pitying faces around. Humanity revolted at the sight; and quiet, inoffensive John Baxendale had ever been liked in Daffodil's Delight. Robert Darby,

his voice rising to a shriek with emotion, held out his armful of provisions.

“Look here! I wanted to work, but the Union won't let me. My wife and children be a-starving at home, one of them dying: I came out, for I couldn't bear to stop indoors in the misery. Then I met a friend—it seemed to me more like an angel—and he gave me money to feed my children—made me take it; he said if I had money and he not, I'd do as much for him. See what I bought with it; I was carrying it home for my poor children, when this cry arose. Friends, the one to give it me was Baxendale, and you have murdered him.”

Another great cry, even as Darby concluded, arose to break the deep stillness. No stillness is so deep as that caused by emotion.

“He is not dead!” shouted the crowd. “See! he is stirring. What devils was it as pitched into him?”

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## CHAPTER XVI.

THE winter was coming in intensely hard. Frost and snow lay early upon the ground. Was that affliction in store—a bitter winter—to be added to the already fearful distress existing in this dense metropolis?

Distress of a different nature existed in the house of Mr. Hunter. It was a house of sorrow; for its mistress lay dying. The spark of life had long been flickering, and now its time to go out had come.

Haggard, worn, pale, stood Mr. Hunter in his drawing-room. He was conversing with his brother Henry. Their topic was business; in spite of existing domestic woes, men of business cannot long forget their daily occupation.

“Of course I shall weather it,” Mr. Henry was saying, in answer to a question. “It will be a fearful loss with so much money and buildings standing still. Did it last very much longer, I hardly know that I could. And you, James?”

Mr. Hunter evaded the question. Since the time, years back, when they had dissolved partnership, he had shunned all allusion to his own prosperity or non-prosperity, with his brother. Possibly he feared it might

lead to that other subject—the mysterious paying away of the five thousand pounds.

“For my part, I do not feel so sure of the strike’s being near its end,” he remarked.

“I have positive information that the eligibility of withdrawing the strike at the Messrs. Trollope’s has been mooted by the central committee of the Union,” said Mr. Henry. “If nothing else has brought the men to their senses, this weather will do it. It will end as nearly all strikes have ended—in their resuming work upon our terms.”

“But what an incalculable amount of suffering they have brought upon themselves!” exclaimed Mr. Hunter. “I do not see what is to become of them, either, in future: how are they all to find work again? We shall not turn off the stranger men who have worked for us in this emergency, to make room for them.”

“No, indeed,” replied Mr. Henry. “And those strangers amount to half my complement of hands. Do you recollect a chap of the name of Moody?”

“Of course I do. I met him the other day, looking like a walking skeleton. I asked him whether he was not tired of the strike. He said *he* had been tired of it long ago; but the Union would not let him be.”

“He hung himself yesterday.”

Mr. Hunter replied only by a gesture.

“And left a written paper behind him, cursing the ‘strike and the Trades’ Unions, which had brought ruin upon him and his family.’ I saw the paper. A decent, quiet man he was, but timorous, and easily led away.”

“Is he dead?”

“He had been dead two hours when he was found. He hung himself in that shed at the back of Dunn’s house, where the men held a meeting or two in the commencement of the strike. I wonder how many more this wretched state of affairs will send, or has sent, out of the world!”

“Hundreds, directly or indirectly. The children are dying off quickly, as the registrar-general’s returns show. A period of prolonged distress always tells upon the children. And upon us, also, I think,” Mr. Hunter added, with a sigh.

“Upon us in a degree,” Mr. Henry assented, somewhat carelessly. He was a man of substance; and upon such, the ill effects fell lightly. “When the masters act in combination, as we have done, it is not the men who can do us permanent harm. They must give in before great harm has had time to come. James, I saw that man this morning; your *bete noire*, as I call him.”

Mr. Hunter changed countenance. He could not be ignorant that his brother alluded to Gwinn, of Ketterford. It happened that Mr. Henry Hunter had been cognizant of one or two of the unpleasant visits forced by the man upon his brother, during the last few years. But Mr. Henry had avoided questions; he had the tact to perceive that they would be deemed unpleasant.

“I met him near your yard. Perhaps he was going in there.”

The knock of a visitor was heard at the front door as Mr. Henry spoke, and Mr. Hunter started like one struck by a pistol-shot. The mention of Gwinn's name at that moment evidently led his thoughts to the supposition that he might be the visitor; he backed away from the door, unconscious what he did in his fear and tremor, his lips blanching to a deadly whiteness. “I cannot see him! I cannot see him!” Mr. Henry moved up and took his hand.

“James, there has been estrangement between us on this point for years. As I asked you once before, I now ask you again; confide in me and let me help you. Whatever the dreadful secret may be, you shall find me your true brother.”

“Hush!” breathed Mr. Hunter, moving his brother off in his scared alarm. “Dreadful secret! who says it? There is no dreadful secret. Oh, Henry! hush! hush!”

Not the dreadful man, but Austin Clay was the one who entered. Mr. Hunter sat down, breathing heavily, the blood coming back to his face; he nearly fainted in the revulsion of feeling brought by the relief. Broken in spirit, shattered in health, the slightest thing was now sufficient to agitate him.

“You are ill, sir!” exclaimed Austin, advancing with concern.

“No—no—I am not ill. A momentary spasm, which I am subject to.”

Mr. Henry moved to the door. "I will come in again later, James, to see how Louisa is."

"Who has been to the office to-day?" Mr. Hunter inquired of Austin, as his brother went out.

"Let me see. Lyall came, and Thompson——"

"Not men on business, not men on business," he interrupted, with feverish eagerness—"strangers."

Austin Clay turned his face away as he answered: "Gwinn of Ketterford. He came twice. No other strangers have called, I think."

Whether his brother's suggestion, that he should be enlightened as to the "dreadful secret" had rendered Mr. Hunter suspicious that others might surmise that there was a secret, certain it is that he looked up sharply as Austin spoke, keenly regarding his countenance, noting the sound of his voice.

"What did he want?"

"He wanted you, sir. I said you were not to be seen. I let him suppose that you were too ill to be seen. Bailey, who was in the counting-house at the time, gave him the gratuitous information that Mrs. Hunter was in danger." Why this answer should have increased Mr. Hunter's suspicions he best knew. He rose from his seat, grasped Austin's arm, and spoke with menace.

"You have been prying into my affairs. You sought out those people—the Gwinns—when you last went to Ketterford. You——"

Austin withdrew from the grasp and stood before his master, calm and upright. "Mr. Hunter!"

"Was it not so?"

"No, sir. I thought you had known me better. I should be the last to 'pry' into anything that you might wish to keep secret."

"Austin, I am not myself to-day. I am not myself; I know not what I say. This grief, induced by the state of Mrs. Hunter, unmans me."

"How is she, sir, by this time?"

"Calm and collected, but sinking fast. You must go up and see her. She said she would like to bid you farewell."

Through the warm corridors, so well protected from the bitter cold reigning without, Austin was conducted to the room of Mrs. Hunter. Florence, her eyes swollen



from weeping, quitted it as he entered. She lay in bed, her pale face raised upon pillows; save for that pale face and the labored breathing, you would not have suspected the closing scene to be so near. She raised her feeble hand and made prisoner of Austin's; the tears gathered in his eyes as he looked down upon her.

"Not for me, my dear," she whispered, as she noted the signs of sorrow. "Weep rather for those who are left to battle yet with this sad world."

Austin swallowed down the lump that was rising in his throat. "Do you feel no better?" he gently inquired.

"I feel very well, save for the weakness. Austin, I shall be glad to go. I have only one regret—the leaving Florence. My husband will not be long after me; I read it in his face."

"Dear Mrs. Hunter, will you allow me to say a word to you on the subject of Florence? I have wished to do it before we finally part."

"Say what you will."

"Should time and perseverance on my part subdue the prejudices of Mr. Hunter, and I succeed in winning Florence, will you not say that you bless our union?"

Mrs. Hunter paused. "Are we quite alone?" she asked.

Austin glanced round to the closed door. "Quite," he answered

"Then, Austin, I will say more; my hearty consent and blessing be upon you both, if you can, indeed, subdue the objection of Mr. Hunter. Not otherwise: you understand that."

"Without her father's consent, I am sure that Florence would not have me. Have you any idea in what that objection lies?"

"I have not. Mr. Hunter is not a man who will submit to be questioned, even by me. But, Austin, I cannot help thinking that this objection to you may fade away—for, that he likes and esteems you greatly, I know. Should that time come, then tell him that I loved you—that I wished Florence to become your wife—that I prayed God to bless the union. And tell Florence."

"Will you not tell her yourself?"

Mrs. Hunter made a feeble gesture of denial. "It would seem like an encouragement to dispute the decision

of her father. Austin, will you say farewell, and send my husband to me. I am growing faint."

He clasped her attenuated hands in both his; he bent down and kissed her forehead. Mrs. Hunter held him to her. "Cherish and love her always, should she become yours," was the feeble whisper. "And come to me, both of you, in eternity."

A moment or two in the corridor to compose himself, and Austin met Mr. Hunter on the stairs, and gave him the message. "How is Baxendale?" Mr. Hunter said; "I forgot to inquire."

"A trifle better. Not yet out of danger."

"You take care to give him the allowance weekly?"

"Of course I do, sir. It is due to-night, and I am going to take it to him."

"Will he ever be fit for work again?"

"I hope so."

Austin departed, and Mr. Hunter entered his wife's chamber. Florence, who was also entering, Mrs. Hunter feebly waved away.

"I would be a moment alone with your father, my child. James," Mrs. Hunter said to her husband, as Florence retired—but her voice was now so reduced that he had to bend his ear to catch the sounds—"there has been estrangement between us on one point for many years; and it seems—I know not why—to be haunting my death-bed. Will you not in this my last hour tell me its cause?"

"It would not give you peace, Louisa. It concerns myself alone."

"Whatever the secret may be, it has been wearing your life out: I ought to know it."

Mr. Hunter bent lower. "My dear wife, it would not bring you peace, I say. I contracted a debt in my thoughtless youth," he whispered, in answer to the yearning glance thrown up to him, "and I have had to pay it off—one sum after another, one after another, till it has nearly drained me. It will soon be at an end now."

"It is nearly paid?"

"Ay. All but."

"But why not have told me this? It would have saved me many a troubled hour. Suspense when fancy is at work, is hard to bear. And you, James, why

should simple debt have worked so terrible a fear upon you?"

"I did not know that I could stave it off; looking back, I wonder that I did do it. I could have borne ruin for myself: I could not for you."

"Oh, James!" she fondly said, "should I have been less brave? While you and Florence were spared to me, ruin might have done its worst."

Mr. Hunter turned his face away; strangely wrung and haggard it looked just then.

"What a mercy that it is over!"

"All but, I said," he interrupted. And the words seemed to burst from him in an uncontrollable impulse, in spite of himself.

"It is the only thing that has marred our life's peace, James. In the blessed life to come there will be nothing to mar it. We shall be at rest forever. Perfect peace! perfect happiness! May all we have loved be there! I can see——"

The words had been spoken disjointedly, in the faintest whisper, and, with the last, died away. She laid her head upon her husband's arm, and seemed as if she would sleep. He did not disturb her; he remained buried in his own thoughts.

A short while, and Florence was heard at the door. Dr. Bevary was there.

"You can come in," called out Mr. Hunter.

They approached the bed. Florence saw a change in her mother's face, and uttered an exclamation of alarm. The physician's practiced eye detected what had happened: he made a sign to the nurse, who had followed him in, and the woman went forth to carry the news to the household. Mr. Hunter alone was calm. "Thank God!" was his strange ejaculation.

"Oh, papa! papa! it is death!" sobbed Florence, in her distress. "Do you not see that it is death?"

"Thank God also, Florence," solemnly said Dr. Bevary. "She is better off."

Florence sobbed wildly. The words sounded to her ears needlessly cruel—out of place. Mr. Hunter bent his face on that of the dead, with a long, fervent kiss. "My wronged wife!" he mentally uttered. Dr. Bevary followed him as he left the room.

“James Hunter, it had been a mercy if God had taken her years ago.”

Mr. Hunter lifted his hands as if beating off the words, and his face turned white. “Be still! be still: what can *you* know?”

“I know as much as you,” said Dr. Bevary, in a tone which, low though it was, seemed to penetrate to the very marrow of the unhappy man. “The knowledge has disturbed my peace by day, and my rest by night. What, then, must it have done by yours?”

James Hunter, his hands held up still, to shade his face, and his head down, slunk away. “It was the fault of another,” he wailed, “and I have borne the punishment.”

“Ay,” said Dr. Bevary, “or you would have had my reproaches long ago. Hark! whose voice is that?”

It was one known only too well to Mr. Hunter. He cowered for a moment, as he had hitherto had terrible cause; the next, he raised his head and shook off the fear. “Thank God!” he repeated, as he had done in the death-room, “I can dare him now.”

The servants had been closing up the windows of the house, as is our custom when mourning for the dead, when Gwinn of Ketterford arrived at it. He saw what was being done, and drew his own conclusions; nevertheless, he desisted not from the visit he had come to pay.

“I wish to see Mr. Hunter,” he said, when the door was opened.

“I do not think you can see him now, sir,” was the reply of the servant. “My master is in great affliction.”

“Your mistress is dead, I suppose?”

“Just dead.”

“Well, I shall not detain Mr. Hunter many minutes. I must see him.”

The servant hesitated. But his master’s voice was heard calling to him. “You can admit that person, Richard.”

The man retreated into the hall, and opened the door of the front room. It was in darkness; so he turned and opened the door of the other, and showed the guest in. The soft perfume from the odoriferous plants in the con-

servatory was wafted to the senses of Gwinn, of Ketterford, as he entered.

“Why do you seek me here?” demanded Mr. Hunter when he appeared. “Is it a fitting time and place?”

“A court of law might perhaps be more fit,” insolently returned the lawyer. “Why did you not remit the money, according to promise, and so obviate the necessity of my coming?”

“Because I shall remit no more money. Not another farthing, or the value of one, shall you ever obtain of me. If I have submitted to your ruinous and swindling demands, you know why I have done it——”

“Stop!” interrupted Mr. Gwinn. “You have had your money’s worth—silence.”

Mr. Hunter was deeply agitated. “As the breath went out of my wife’s body, I thanked God that he had taken her—that she was removed from the wicked machinations of you and yours. But for the bitter wrong dealt out to me by your wicked sister Agatha, I should have mourned for her with regrets and tears. You have made my life a curse; I purchased your silence that you should not render hers one. The fear and the thralldom are alike over.”

Mr. Gwinn laughed significantly. “Your daughter lives.”

“She does. In saying that I will make her cognizant of this, rather than supply you with another sixpence, you may judge how firm is my determination.”

“It will be startling news for her.”

“It will; should it come to the telling. Better that she hear it, and make the best and the worst of it, than that I should reduce her to utter poverty—and your demands, supplied, would do that. The news will not kill her—as it might have killed her mother.”

Did Lawyer Gwinn feel baffled? “I will have money,” he exclaimed. “You have tried to stand out against it before now.”

“Man! do you know that I am on the brink of ruin?” uttered Mr. Hunter, in deep excitement, “and that it is you who have brought me to it? But for the money supplied to you, I could have weathered successfully this contest with my workmen, as my brother and others are weathering it. If you have any further claim against

me," he added, in a spirit of mocking bitterness, "bring it into my bankruptcy, for that is looming near."

"I will not stir from your house without a check for the money."

"This house is sanctified by the presence of the dead," reverently spoke Mr. Hunter. "To have any disturbance in it would be most unseemly. Do not force me to call in a policeman."

"As a policeman was once called in to you, in the years gone by," Lawyer Gwinn was beginning, with a sneer: but Mr. Hunter raised his voice and his hand.

"Be still! Coward as I have been, in one sense, in yielding to your terms, I have never been coward enough to permit *you* to allude, in my presence, to the past. I never will. Go from my house quietly, sir; and do not attempt to re-enter it."

Mr. Hunter broke from the man—for he made an effort to detain him—opened the door, and called to the servant, who came forward.

"Show this person to the door, Richard."

An instant's hesitation with himself, whether it should be compliance or resistance, and Gwinn of Ketterford went forth.

"Richard," said Mr. Hunter, as the servant closed the hall door.

"Sir!"

"Should that man ever come here again, do not admit him. And if he shows himself troublesome, call a policeman to your aid."

And then Mr. Hunter shut himself in the room, and burst into heavy tears, such as are rarely shed by man.

The chief injury to John Baxendale had lain in the ribs. Two or three of them were broken; the head also had been much bruised and cut. He had been taken into his own home, and there attended to; it was nearer than the hospital; though the latter would have been the better place. No clew could be obtained to his assailants.

Never would John Baxendale talk of the harshness of masters again—though, indeed, he had never much talked of it. The moment Mr. Hunter heard of the assault, he sent round his own surgeon, and also directed Austin to give Baxendale a sovereign weekly. And that was the same man whom you heard forbidding his wife and

daughter to forward aid to Darby's starving children. Yes; but Mr. Hunter denied the aid upon principle. Darby would not work. It pleased him far more to accord it to Baxendale than to deny it to Darby: the one course gladdened his heart, the other pained it. The surgeon who attended was a particular friend of Dr. Bevary's, and the doctor, in his quaint, easy manner, contrived to let Baxendale know that there would be no bill for him to pay.

It was late when Austin reached Baxendale's room that evening. "Oh, sir," uttered the invalid, straining his eyes on him from the sick-bed, before Austin had well entered, "is the news true?"

"It is," sadly replied Austin. "She died this afternoon."

"It is a good lady gone from among us. Does the master take on much?"

"I have not seen him since. Death came on rather suddenly at the last."

"Poor Mrs. Hunter!" wailed Baxendale. "Hers is not the only spirit that is this evening on the wing," he added after a pause. "That boy of Darby's is going. Mary"—looking on the bright sovereign put into his hands by Austin—"suppose you go down there and take them a couple of shillings? It's hard to have a cupboard quite empty when death's a visitor.

Mary hastened to obey. Austin wondered how Mr. Hunter would approve of any of his shillings finding their way to Darby's; but he said nothing against it. But for the strongly expressed sentiments of Mr. Hunter, Austin would have given away right and left to relieve the distresses around him; although, put him upon principle, and he agreed fully with Mr. Hunter.

Mary changed her sovereign, and took possession of a couple of shillings. It was a bitterly cold evening; but she was well wrapped up. Though not permanently better, Mary was stronger of late; in her simple faith, she believed God had mercifully spared her for a short while, that she might nurse her father. She knew just as did Dr. Bevary, that it would not be for long. As she went along she met Mrs. Quale.

"The child is gone," said the latter, hearing where Mary was going.

“Poor child! Is he really dead?”

Mrs. Quale nodded. Few things upset her equanimity. “And I am keeping my eyes open to look out for Darby,” she added. “His wife asked me if I would. She is afraid”—dropping her voice—“that he may do something rash.”

“Why?” breathed Mary, in a tone of horror, understanding the allusion.

“Why!” vehemently repeated Mrs. Quale; “why, because he reflects upon himself—that’s why. When he saw that the breath was really gone out of the poor little body—and that’s not five minutes ago—he broke out like one mad. Them quiet natures in ordinary be always the worst if they get upset; though it takes a good deal to do it. He cursed himself, saying that if he had been in work, and able to get proper food for the boy, it would not have happened; and he cursed the Trades’ Unions for misleading him, and bringing him to what he is. There’s many another cursing the Unions on this inclement night, or my name ain’t Nancy Quale.”

She turned with Mary, and they entered the home of the Darby’s. Grace, unable to get another situation, through the baker’s wife refusing her a character, looked worn and thin, as she stood trying to hush the youngest child, which was crying fretfully. Mrs. Darby sat in front of the small bit of fire, the dead boy on her knees, pressed to her still, just as Mrs. Quale had left her.

“He won’t hunger any more,” she said, lifting her face to Mary, the hot tears running from it.

Mary stooped and kissed the little cold face. “Don’t grieve,” she murmured. “It would be well for us all if we were as happy as he.”

“Go and speak to him,” whispered the mother to Mrs. Quale, pointing to a back door. “He has come in, and is gone out there.”

Leaning against the wall, in the cold moonlight, stood Robert Darby. Mrs. Quale was not very good at consolation; finding fault was more in her line. “Come, Darby, don’t take on so; it won’t do no good. Be a man.”

He seized hold of her, his shaking hands trembling.

“How is it that God *allows* these trades’ unions—allows them to thrive and brew mischief, and persuade us into ill—ill that brings death?”



“Don't be a fool, Robert Darby,” was the indignant rejoinder of Mrs. Quale. “Haven't you been taught in your catechism not to take that name in vain? You may as well say, why are bad men let live, and why does wickedness prosper? You are not obliged to join the trades' unions. If you and others kept aloof from them, they'd soon die away.”

“They have proved a curse to me and mine”—and the man's voice rose to a shriek, in his violent emotion. “But for them I should be at work long ago.”

“Then I'd go to work at once, if it was me, and put the curse from me that way,” concluded Mrs. Quale.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

DAFFODIL'S DELIGHT and its environs were in a state of bustle—of public excitement, as may be said. Daffodil's Delight never failed to seize hold upon any possible event, whether of a general public nature or of a private local nature, as an excuse for getting up a little steam. On that cold winter's day two funerals were appointed to take place: the one, that of Mrs. Hunter; the other, of little William Darby, and Daffodil's Delight, in spite of the black frost, turned out in crowds to see.

You could not have passed into the square when the large funeral came forth, so many had collected there. It was a funeral of mutes, and plumes, and horses, and carriages, and show; the nearer Mr. Hunter had grown to pecuniary embarrassment, the more jealous was he to guard all suspicion of it from the public. He followed as chief mourner: and in the wake of him, amongst many other mourners, were his brother Henry, Dr. Bevary and Austin Clay.

That took place in the morning. In the afternoon, the coffin of the boy, covered by something black—but it looked more like old cloth than velvet—was brought out of the house upon men's shoulders. Part of the family followed, and pretty nearly the whole of Daffodil's Delight brought up the rear.

When the child died, things were at so low an ebb with the Darbys, that sundry kind gossips suggested, and promulgated the suggestion for a fact, that the parish would have the honor of conducting the interment. Darby

would have sold himself first. He went to Mr. Hunter's yard on the morning subsequent to the death, the instant the gates were opened, and presented himself to the foreman as a candidate for work. That functionary would not treat with him.

"We have had so many of you old hands just coming on for a day or two, and then withdrawing again, through orders of the society, or through getting frightened at being threatened, that Mr. Clay said I was to take back no more shilly-shallyers."

"Try me!" feverishly cried Darby. "I will not go from it again."

"No," said the foreman. "You can speak to Mr. Clay."

"Darby," said Austin, when the man appeared before him, "will you pass your word to me to remain? Here men come, they sign the document, they have work assigned them; and in a day or so I hear that they have left again. It causes no end of confusion to us, for work to be taken up and laid down in that way."

"Take me on, and try me, sir! I'll stick to it as long as there's a stroke of work to do—unless they tread me to pieces as they did Baxendale. I never was cordial for the society, sir. I obeyed it, and yet a doubt was always upon me whether I might not be doing wrong, I am sure of it now. The society has worked harm to me and mine, and I will never belong to it again."

"Others have said as much, and have returned to it the next day," remarked Mr. Clay.

"Perhaps so, sir. They hadn't seen one of their children die that they'd have laid down their own lives to save—but that they had not *worked* to save. Take me on, sir! He can't be buried till I have earned the wherewithal to pay for it. I'll stand to my work from henceforth—over hours, if I can get it."

Austin wrote a word on a card, and desired Darby to carry it to the foreman. "You can go to work at once," he said.

"I'll take work, too, sir, if I can get it," exclaimed another man, who had come up in time to hear Austin's last words.

"What! is it you, Abel White?" exclaimed Austin, with a half laugh. "I thought you made a boast that if

the whole lot of hands came back to work you never would, except upon your own terms."

"So I did, sir. But when I find I have been in the wrong, I am not above owning it," was the man's reply, who looked in a far better physical condition than the pinched, half-starved Darby. "I could hold out longer, sir, without much inconvenience; leastways, with a deal less inconvenience than some of 'em could, for I and father belong to one or two provident clubs, and they have helped us weekly, and my wife and daughters don't do amiss at their umbrella work. But I have come over to father's views at last; and I have made my mind up, as he did, never, please God, to be a Union man again—unless the masters should turn round and make themselves into a body of tyrants; I don't know what I might do then. But there ain't much danger of that, as father says, in these go-a-head days. You'll give me work, sir?"

"Upon conditions," replied Austin, as he proceeded to talk to him.

But we have been leaving Willy Darby's funeral. There it is, moving slowly down Daffodil's Delight. Not over-slowly either; for there had been a delay in some of the arrangements, and the clergyman must have been waiting for half an hour. It was a week since Darby resumed work; a long while to keep the child, but the season was winter. Darby had paid part of the expense, and been trusted for the rest.

It arrived at the burial place; and the little body was buried, there to remain until the resurrection at the last day. As Darby stood over the grave, the regret for his child was nearly lost sight of in the far more bitter regret and remorse for having kept the dead starving for months, when work was to be had for the asking.

"Don't take on so," whispered a neighbor who knew his thoughts. "If you had gone back to work as soon as the yards were opened, you'd only have been set upon and half killed, like Baxendale."

"Then it would not, in that case, have been my fault if he had starved," returned Darby with compressed lips.

The shades of evening were on Daffodil's Delight when the attendants at the funeral returned, and Mr. Cox, the

pawnbroker, was busily transacting the business which the dusk hour always brought him. Even Daffodil's Delight, though they were common sufferers, and all, or nearly all, required to pay visits to Mr. Cox, imitated their betters in observing that peculiar reticence of manner which custom has thrown around these delicate negotiations.

The character of their offerings had changed. In the first instance they had chiefly consisted of ornaments, whether of the house or person, or of superfluous articles of attire and of furniture. Then had come necessaries; bedding and heavier things, and then trifles, irons, sauce-pans, frying-pans, gowns, coats, tools, anything. Anything by which a shilling could be obtained. And now had arrived the climax when there was nothing more to take—nothing, at least, that Mr. Cox would speculate upon.

There went banging into the shop Mrs. Dunn. Perhaps one of the most miserable households in Daffodil's Delight was hers, take it for all in all; but it had not subdued the manner or the temper of Mrs. Dunn; they were fiercer than ever. The non-realization of her fond hope of good cheer and silk dresses was looked upon as a private injury, and resented as such. See her as she turns into the shop; her head, a mass of torn black and entangled hair; her gown a black stuff once, dirty now, hanging in jags, and clinging round her with that peculiar cling which indicates that few, if any, petticoats are underneath; and her feet scuffling along in shoes tied around the instep with a white rag, to keep them on. As she was entering, she encountered a poor woman named Jones, the wife of a carpenter, as badly reduced as she was. Mrs. Jones held out a blanket, for her inspection, and spoke with the tears running down her cheeks.

“We have kept it till the last. We said we could not lie on the sack of straw this awful weather without it to cover us. But to-day we haven't got a crumb in the house or a ember in the grate, and Jones said, says he, ‘There ain't no help for it; you must pledge it.’”

“And Cox won't take it in?” responded Mrs. Dunn, in a ranting tone.

The woman shook her head, and the tears fell fast on

her thin cotton shawl as she walked away. "He says the moths has got into it."

"A pity but the moths had got into him! his eyes are sharper than they need be," shrieked Mrs. Dunn. "Here, Cox," dashing up to the counter and flinging on it a pair of boots, "I want three shillings on them."

Mr. Cox took up the offered pledge. A thin pair of woman's boots, black cloth with leather tips; new, they had probably cost five shillings, but they were now considerably the worse for wear.

"What is the use of bringing these old things?" remonstrated Mr. Cox. "They are worth nothing."

"Everything's worth nothing according to you," retorted Mrs. Dunn. "Come! I want three shillings on them."

"I wouldn't lend you eighteen pence. They'd not fetch it at auction."

Mrs. Dunn would have very much liked to fling the boots in his face; but, after some dispute, she condescended to ask what he would give.

"I'll lend a shilling, as you are a customer, to oblige you. But I don't care to take them in at all."

More dispute; and she brought her demand down to eighteen pence.

"Not a penny more than a shilling," was the firm reply. "I tell you they are not worth that to me."

The boots were at length left, and the shilling taken. Mrs. Dunn solaced herself with a pint of half-and-half in a beer-shop, and went home with the change.

Upon no home had the strike acted with worse effects than upon that of the Dunn's. Irregularity had prevailed in it at the best of times; quarreling and contention often; embarrassment, the result of bad management, frequently; upon such a home, distress, long continued, bitter distress was not likely to work for good. The father and a grown-up son were out of work; and the Misses Dunn were also thrown out of work. Their patronesses, almost without exception, consisted of the ladies of Daffodil's Delight, and, as you will readily conjecture, they had no funds just now to expend upon gowns and their making. Not only this: there was, from one party or another, a good bit of money owing to the Misses Dunn for past work, and this they could not

get. They might just as well have asked for the moon, as for money, owing or not owing, from the distressed wives of Daffodil's Delight. So, there they were: father, mother, sons, daughters, all debarred from earning money; while all, with the younger children in addition, had to be kept. It was wearying work, that forced idleness and that forced famine; and it worked badly, especially on the girls. Quarreling they were accustomed to; embarrassment they did not mind; irregularity in domestic affairs they had lived in all their lives; but they could not bear the distress that had now come upon them. Mrs. Quale had from the first recommended the two sisters to try for situations; but when was advice ever taken? They tossed their heads at the idea of going out to service, and giving up their liberty, and their idleness; they urged that it might prevent them getting together again their business when things should look up; and they asked—and there was a good deal in the plea—how they were to go out, with their clothes in pledge.

Mrs. Dunn went in. The room was stripped of all, save a few things, too old or too useless for Mr. Cox to take: and, save for a little fire, it presented a complete picture of poverty. The children lay upon the boards crying; not a loud cry, but a distressed moan. Very little indeed, even of bread, got those children; for James Dunn and his wife were too fond of beer to expend in much else the trifle allowed them by the Trades' Union. He, James Dunn, had come in since his wife left on her errand to the pawnbroker's, and sat, moody and cross, upon a bench. He, with many more workmen in a similar condition to himself, had been that day to one of the police courts, hoping to obtain pecuniary help from the magistrates. The pint of half-and-half upon an empty stomach had not tended to render Mrs. Dunn of a calmer temper. She addressed him snappishly.

“What, you have come in! Have you got any money?”

Mr. Dunn made no reply, unless a growl that sounded rather defiant constituted one. She returned to the charge.

“Have you got any money, I ask? or be you come home again with a empty pocket?”

“No, father hasn't got none: they didn't get any good

by going there," said Jemima Dunn, who appeared to be looking in all sorts of corners and places, as if in search of something. "Ted Cheek told me about it, and he was one of 'em. The magistrate said to the men that there was plenty of work open for them if they liked to do it; and his opinion was, that if they did not like to do it, they wanted punishment instead of assistance."

James Dunn broke out intemperately, with violent words. And then he relapsed into his gloomy mood again.

"I can't think what's gone with my boots," exclaimed Jemima.

"Mother took 'em out," responded Jacky.

The girl turned round; stood still for a moment as if taking in the sense of the words; then she attacked her mother, anger flashing from her eyes.

"If you have been and took 'em to the pawnshop, you shall fetch 'em back. How dare you interfere with my things? Aren't they my boots? Didn't I buy 'em with my own money?"

"If you don't hold your tongue, I'll box your ears," shrieked Mrs. Dunn, with a look and gesture as menacing as her tone. "Hold your tongue! hold your tongue, I say, miss!"

"I shan't hold my tongue," responded Jemima, struggling between anger and tears. "I will have my boots! I want to go out, I do! and how can I go barefoot?"

"Want to go out, do you?" raved Mrs. Dunn. "That you may go after your fine sister, Mary Ann? The boots be at Cox's and you may go there and get 'em. There!"

The words altogether were calculated to increase the ire of Jemima; and they did so in no measured degree. She and her mother went into a mutual contest of abuse, which would have come to blows but for the father's breaking out into a storm of rage, that almost seemed as if trouble had upset his brain.

Hunger, when it is long continued, will transform men and women into demons. In the house of the Dunns not only hunger, but misery of all sorts reigned; fear of a prison was now added, Dunn having been sued and convicted in the small debts' court. After his outburst of rage, Dunn sat down on the bench again with a powerful

threat, meant to enforce submission. Mrs. Dunn stood against the bare wooden shelves of the dresser, her hair on end, her face scarlet, her voice loud enough in its shrieking sobs to raise the roof, could noise have raised it.

It was interrupted by the entrance of Mary Ann Dunn. She had heard the noise in passing, and came flying in to ascertain its cause; not indeed that noise and quarrels were unusual occurrences at the paternal home. Mary Ann had been out a great deal of late, and this had given offense to her mother, who had made it an open grievance and reproached her husband for allowing it. In Mrs. Dunn's frame of mind she might have made the stopping in of Mary Ann an equal grievance.

"Now, miss! what do you want?" shrieked she before Mary Ann had time to speak.

"Is there anything the matter more than usual?" asked Mary Ann. "Father, what is it?"

Jacky set up a roar. Children are curious little creatures; and though the boy had heard, apparently unmoved, the news of his father's being in dread of arrest, he burst forth with grief now.

"Father's a-going to be took to prison!" he sobbed.

"To be took to prison!" uttered Mary Ann, aghast, and turning pale as she looked at her father for confirmation.

"It's true," said James Dunn, sullenly. "And I don't much care how soon I be there. Anything for a bit of peace and quiet—which I can't get at home."

Mary Ann Dunn burst into tears. To workmen and their families, who have lived in tolerable comfort and respectability, earning a good living, the sound of the word prison brings a sickening terror with it. She laid down a piece of gold close to his hand. It was a half-sovereign.

"Take it, father; take it. It's not much, but it may do you some good."

For answer, James Dunn took the money, and hurled it against the door, with a significantly bitter word of reproach to Mary Ann.

She caught it up, the tears streaming from her eyes. "Oh, father, how can you say such things?" she uttered. "The money was honestly given to me."



“It’s a lie,” said James Dunn. “Who’d be likely to give you money?”

“It was indeed given to me,” she reiterated, her voice choked with sobs. “No, mother, I cannot let you have it,” she broke off, for Mrs. Dunn’s hand was stealing itself surreptitiously toward the gold. “Father must have it, not you.”

Mrs. Dunn’s mood was not improved by the denial and disappointment. She broke out intemperately and unjustifiably, her voice risen to a shriek.

“Oh, of course not! I mustn’t touch her ill-gotten gains! Father, as won’t work, may; mother, as is starving, mayn’t. Look at her! the ill-conditioned, bad-turned-out girl! a-coming here with——”

“I’m not a bad-turned-out girl!” interrupted Mary Ann, her grief merging into anger. “How dare you say it, mother?”

“How dare I say it? And her coming home with her gold! It was you drove her on to it, it was!” added Mrs. Dunn, turning fiercely on her husband. “You and your idleness, and your empty pockets! When you have brought us all to the workhouse and the streets and the dung-hill, then you’ll turn round and try your ‘Trades’ Unions! As to you, miss——”

Mary Ann did not wait to hear what more was coming for her share. She flew out of the house.

Then Mrs. Dunn turned again to her husband. “Was he a man that he should bring ’em to this state of starvation, and then turn round upon ’em with blows? Wasn’t she his wife? wasn’t they his children? If *she* was a husband and father, she’d rather break stone, till her arms rotted off, but what she’d find ’em food! A lazy, idle, drunken object! There was the master’s yards open, and why didn’t he go to work? If a man cared for his own, he’d look to his interest, and set the ‘Trades’ Unions at defiance. Was he a-going to see ’em took off to the workhouse? When his young ones lay dead, and she was in the poorhouse, then he’d fold his hands and be content with his work. If the strike was to bring ’em all this misery, what business had he to join it? Couldn’t he have seen better? Let him go to work, if he was a man, and bring home a few coals, and a bit of bread, and a

blanket or two from Cox's, and her gowns and things, and Jemima's boots——”

Dunn, really a peaceably inclined man by nature, let it go on to this point. In the midst of Mrs. Dunn's reproaches, did she cast a recollection to the past? to her own eagerness, public and private, for the strike? How she had urged her husband on to join it, boasting of the good times it was to bring them? Reader, if you think this an overdrawn picture, go and lay it before the wives of many of the suffering workmen, and ask them whether or not it is true. Ay, and it is only part of the truth.

“I wish the strike had been buried five fathoms deep, I do!” uttered Dunn, with a catching up of the breath that told of the emotion he strove to hide. “It has been nothing but a curse to us, all along; and where is to be the ending?”

“Who brought home all this misery, but you?” said Mrs. Dunn again. “Have you done a day's work for weeks and months? No, you haven't. You have just rowed in the same boat with them nasty lazy Unionists, and let the work go a begging.”

“Who edged me on to join the Unionists? who reproached me with being no man, but a sneak, if I went to work and knuckled down to the masters?” spluttered Dunn, in his vexation. “It was you; you know it was you! You were fire hot for the strike: worse than ever the men were.”

“Can we starve?” choked Mrs. Dunn. “Can we drop down into our coffins with famine? Be our children to be drove——”

Another interruption. Who should come bursting in but Mrs. Cheek? She had a tongue also, upon occasions.

“What has ever been going on here this last half hour? One would think murder was being committed. There's a dozen listeners collected outside your shutters.”

“She's a casting it in my teeth now, for having joined the strike,” exclaimed Dunn, indicating his wife. “She! And she was the foremost to edge us all on.”

“Can one clam?” fiercely returned Mrs. Dunn. “Let him go to work.”

“Don't be a fool, Hannah Dunn,” said Mrs. Cheek.

"I'd stand up for my rights till I dropped; and so must the men. "It'll never do to bend to the will of the masters at last. There's enough men turning tail and going back, without the rest doing of it. I should like to see Cheek attempting it; I'd be on to him."

"Cheek don't want to; he have got no cause to," said Mrs. Dunn. "You get the living now, and find him in beer and 'bacca."

"I do; and I'm proud on it," was Mrs. Cheek's answer. "I goes washing, I goes charing; nothing comes amiss to me, and I manages to keep the wolf from the door. It isn't my husband that shall bend to the masters. He shall stand up with the Unionists for his rights, or he shall stand up against me."

She went out as she spoke, abruptly and quickly as she entered; for Mrs. Cheek had been bent on some hasty errand when arrested by the noise behind the shutters. Another minute and Mary Ann Dunn came in with Mrs. Quale. The latter pointed to the piece of gold, still in Mary Ann's hand, and spoke with short ceremony:

"It was me give it her. Now, Jim Dunn, what have you got to say again it?"

"What did you give it her for?" asked Jim Dunn in surprise, his tone slightly modified, while Mrs. Dunn opened her eyes pretty wide.

"I give it her because I chose to give it her. There. Mary Ann has been a good bit at my place of late—and who's to wonder at it, with the home she's got here? and at last I have persuaded her into taking a service, and I've found one for her, and she goes to it to-morrow, and I gave her that money to get a few of her clothes out of Cox's. There!"

"Is it true?" gasped Dunn.

"True!" echoed Mrs. Quale. "If you were only half as true, Jim Dunn, you'd do. Because you have turned out a idle man yourself, did you think your children was a-going to turn out bad on their own score? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Jim Dunn! And as to you, Hannah Dunn, you be worse than him. The girl's a better daughter than you deserve; and she's going to turn to with a will, and take her share of work."

Mary Ann, crying still, offered the money to her father. He pushed it back to her, speaking softly.

“No, girl, it’ll do you more good than me. Do as Mrs. Quale bids you. If you can get into a place, it’ll be the best news I shall have heard for many a day.”

“But if it keeps you from jail, father?” she sobbed.

“It wouldn’t do that; nor half do it; nor a quarter. Get your clothes out, and, if you can, get a place of service. Better for me that I was in jail than out of it,” he repeated. “In there one does get fed.”

“Come along, Mary Ann,” said Mrs. Quale. “I told you I’d give you a lodging in my house to-night, and I will. You go on down to Cox’s and come straight back, and we’ll see the best we can do with the things. Good-night to you all, and pleasant dreams—if you can get ’em. You Unionists have brought your pigs to a pretty market!”

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

THINGS were coming to a crisis. The men had done their best to hold out against the masters; but they found the effort was untenable—that they must give in at last. The prospect of returning to work was eagerly welcomed by the greater portion of the men. Rather than hold out longer, they would have gone back upon almost any terms. Why, then, not have gone back before? may be asked. Because they preferred to resume work with the consent of the Union, rather than without it. A few were bitterly enraged at the turn affairs were taking—of whom Sam Shuck was chief. With the return of the hands to work, Sam saw no field for the exercise of his own peculiar talents, unless it was in stirring up fresh discontent for the future. However, it was not yet finally arranged that work should be resumed: a little more agitation might be pleasant first.

“It’s a few white-livered hounds among yourselves that have spoilt it all!” growled Sam to a knot of hitherto stanch friends, a day or two subsequent to that conjugal dispute between Mr. and Mrs. Dunn, which you had the gratification of assisting at in the last chapter. “When such men as White, and Baxendale, and Darby, who have held some sway among you, turn sneaks, and go over to the nobs, it’s only to be expected that you’ll

turn sneaks and follow. One fool makes many. Did you hear how Darby got out his tools?"

"No."

"The men opposed to the Union, opposed to us, heard of his wanting them, and they clubbed together and made up the tin, and Darby is to pay 'em back at so much a week—two shillings, I think it is. Before I'd lie under obligations to the non-Unionist men I'd shoot myself. What good has the struggle done you?"

"None," said a voice. "It have done a good deal of harm."

"Ay, it has—if it is to die out in this ignoble way," said Sam. "Better have been slaving like dray-horses all along, than break down in the effort to escape the slavery, and hug it to your arms again. If you had only half the spirit of men, you'd stop White's work for awhile, and Darby's too, as you did Baxendale's. Have you been thinking over what was said last night?"

The men nodded. One of them expressed an opinion that it was a "dangerous game."

"That depends upon how it's done," said Shuck. "Who has been the worse, pray, for the pitching into Baxendaie? Can he or anybody else point a finger and say, 'It was you did it?' or 'It was you?' They cannot."

"One might not come off again with the like luck."

"Psha!" returned Sam. "Well, let the traitors alone, to go their own way in triumph if you like; get up a piece of plate for them, with their names wrote on it in gold. It sickens one to see you true fellows going over to the oppressionists."

"How do you make out that White and them be oppressionists?"

"White and them? They are worse than oppressionists, a thousand times over," fiercely cried Sam. "I can't find words bad enough for *them*. It isn't of them I spoke; I spoke of the masters."

"Well, Shuck, there's oppression on all sides, I think," exclaimed one of the men. "I'd be glad to rise in the world if I could, and I'd work over-hours to help me on to it and to educate my children a bit better than common; but if you come down upon me and say, 'You shall not do it, you shall only work the stated hours laid down, and nobody shall work more,' I call that oppression."

“So it is,” assented another voice. “The masters never oppressed us like that. There’s one question I’d like to have answered—but I’m afraid it never will be answered, with satisfaction to us. What is to become of those men that the masters can’t find employment for? If every one of us was free to go back to work to-morrow, and sought to do so, where would we get it? Our old shops would be half filled with strangers, and there’d be thousands of us rejected—no room for us. Would the society keep us?”

A somewhat difficult question to answer, even for Slippery Sam. Perhaps for that reason he suddenly called out “Hush!” and bent his head and put up his finger in the attitude of listening.

“There is something unusual going on in the street,” cried he. “Let’s see what it is.”

They hurried out to the street, Sam leading the way. Not a genial street to look upon that wintery day, taking it with all its accessories. Half-clothed, half-starved, emaciated men stood about in groups, their pale features and gloomy expression of despair telling a piteous tale. A different set of men entirely, to look at, from those of the well-to-do rollicking old days of work, contentment and freedom from care.

Being marshaled down the street in as polite a manner as was consistent with the occasion, was Mr. James Dunn. He was on his road to prison; and certain choice spirits of Daffodil’s Delight, headed by Mrs. Dunn, were in attendance, hooting and yelling at the capturers. As if this was not enough cause of disturbance, news arose that the Dunn landlord, finding the house temporarily abandoned by every soul—a chance he had been looking for—improved the opportunity to lock the street door and keep them out. Nothing was before Mrs. Dunn and her children now but the parish Union.

“I don’t care whether it is the masters that have been in fault, or whether it’s us; I know which side gets the suffering,” exclaimed a mechanic, as Mr. Dunn was conveyed beyond view. “Old Abel White told us true; strikes never brought nothing but misery yet, and they never will.”

Sam Shuck seized upon the occasion to draw around him a select audience, and to hold forth to them. ‘Trea-

son, false and pernicious though it was, that he spoke, his oratory fell persuasively on the ears. He excited the men against the masters; he excited them to his utmost power against the men who had gone back to work; he inflamed their passions, he perverted their reason. Altogether, ill-feeling and excitement were smoldering in an unusual degree in Daffodil's Delight, and it was kept up through the live-long day.

Evening came. The bell rang for the cessation of work at Mr. Hunter's, and the men came pouring forth. The gas lamp at the gate shed a brilliant light, and the hands dispersed—some one way, some another. Those bearing toward Daffodil's Delight became aware, as they approached an obscure portion of the road, which lay past a dead wall, that it bore an unusual appearance, as if dark forms were hovering there. What could it be?

Not for long were they kept in ignorance. There arose a terrific din, enough to startle the unwary. Yells, groans, hootings, hisses, threats, were poured forth upon the workmen; and they knew that they had fallen into an ambush of the society's men.

Of women also, as it appeared. For shrill notes and delicate words of abuse, certainly only peculiar to ladies' throats, were pretty freely mingled with the gruff tones of the men.

“You be nice nine-hour chaps! Come on! if you're not cowards, and have it out in a fair fight——”

“A fair fight!” shrieked a female voice in interruption, “who'd fight with them? Traitors! cowards! Knock 'em down and trample upon 'em!”

“Harness 'em together with cords, and drag 'em along like beasts o' burden in the face and eyes of London. Stick 'em up on spikes! Hoist 'em on to the lamp-posts. Hold 'em head down'ard in a horse trough! Pitch into 'em with quicklime and rotten eggs! Strip 'em and give 'em a coat o' tar! Wring their necks and have done with 'em!”

While these several complimentary suggestions were thrown from as many different quarters of the assailants, one of them had quietly laid hold of Abel White. There was little doubt—according to what came out afterward—that he and Robert Darby were the two men chiefly aimed at in this night assault. Darby, however, was not

there. As it happened, he had turned the contrary way on leaving the yard, having joined one of the men who had lent him some of the money to get his tools out of pledge, and gone toward his home with him.

“If thee carest for thy life, thee’ll stop in-doors, and not go a-nigh Hunter’s yard again to work!”

Such were the words hissed forth in a hoarse whisper into the ear of Abel White, by the man who had seized upon him. Abel peered at him as keenly as the darkness would permit. White was no coward, and although aware that this attack most probably had him for its chief butt, he retained his composure. He could not recognize the man—a tall man, in a large, loose, blue frock, such as is sometimes worn by butchers, with a red, woolen cravat wound roughly round his throat, hiding his chin and mouth, and a seal-skin cap, its dark “ears” brought down on the sides of the face, and tied under the chin. The man may have been so wrapped up for protection against the weather, or for the purpose of disguise.

“Let me go!” said White.

“When thee hast sworn not to go on working till the Union gives leave.”

“I never will swear it, or say it.”

“Then thee shall get every bone in th’ body smashed. Thees’t been reported to Mr. Shuck, and to the Union.”

“I’d like to know your name and who you are,” exclaimed White. “If you are not disguising your voice, it’s odd to me.”

“D’ye remember Baxendale? *He* wouldn’t take the oath, and he’s lying with his ribs stove in.”

“More shame for you! Look you, man, you can’t intimidate. I am made of sterner stuff than that.”

“Swear!” was the menacing retort; “swear that thee won’t touch another stroke o’ work.”

“I tell you that I never will swear it,” angrily and firmly returned White. “The Union has hoodwinked me long enough; I’ll have nothing to do with it.”

“There be desperate men round ye—them as won’t leave ye with whole bones. You shall swear!”

“I’ll have nothing more to do with the Union; I’ll never again obey it,” answered White, speaking earnestly.

“There! make your most of it. If I had but a friendly



gleam of light here, I'd know who you are, and let others know."

The confusion around had increased. Hot words were passing everywhere between the assailants and the assailed—no positive assault, as yet, save that a woman had shaken her fist in a man's face and spit at him. Abel White strove to get away with the last words, but the man who had been threatening him struck him a sharp blow between the eyes, which caused the sparks to fly.

Another instant and he was down. If one blow was dealt him, ten were, from as many different hands. The tall man with the cap was busy with his feet; and it really seemed, by the manner he went into the pastime, that his whole heart went with it, and that it was a heart of revenge.

But who is this, pushing his way through the crowd with stern authority? A policeman? The men shrank back, in their fear, to give him place. No; it is only their master, Mr. Clay.

"What is this?" exclaimed Austin, when he reached the point of battery. "Is it you, White?" he added, stooping down. "I suspected as much. Now, my men," he continued, in a stern tone, as he faced the excited throng, "who are you? which of you has done this?"

"The ringleader was him in the cap, sir—the tall one with the red cloth round his neck, and the fur about his ears," spoke up White, who, though much maltreated, retained the use of his brains and his tongue. "It was him that threatened me, and was the first to set upon me."

"Who are you?" demanded Austin of the tall man.

The tall man responded by a quiet laugh of derision. He felt himself perfectly secure from recognition in the dark obscurity; and though Mr. Clay was of powerful frame, more than a match for him in agility and strength; let him only dare to lay a finger upon him, and there were plenty around to come to the rescue.

Austin Clay heard the derisive laugh, subdued though it was. He took his hand from within the breast of his coat, and raised it with a hasty motion—not to deal a blow, not with a pistol to startle or menace, but with a dark lantern!

No pistol could have startled them as did that sudden

flash of bright light, thrown full, as it was, upon the tall man's face. Off flew the man with a yell, and Austin coolly turned the lantern upon others.

"Bennett—and Strood—and Ryan—and Cassidy!" he exclaimed, recognizing and telling off the men. "And *you*, Cheek! I never should have suspected you of sufficient courage to join in a thing of this nature."

Cheek, midway between shaking and tears, sobbed out that it was "the wife made him;" and Mrs. Cheek roared out from the rear: "Yes, it was, and she'd have shook the bones out of him if he hadn't come."

But that light turning upon them everywhere, was more than they had bargained for, and the whole lot moved away in the best manner that they could, putting the stealthiest and the quickest foot foremost; each one devoutly hoping, save the few whose names had been mentioned, that his own face had not been recognized.

Austin, with some of his workmen who had remained—the greater portion of them were pursuing the vanquished—raised Abel White. His head was cut, his body bruised, but no serious damage appeared to have been done. "Can you walk, with assistance, as far as Mr. Rice's shop?" asked Austin.

"I dare say I can, sir, in a minute; I'm a bit giddy now," was White's reply, as he leaned his back against the wall, being supported on either side. "Sir, what a mercy that you had that light with you!"

"Ay," shortly replied Austin. "Quale, there's the blood dripping upon your sleeve. I will bind my handkerchief round your head, White. Meanwhile, one of you go and call a cab; it may be better that we get him at once to the surgeon's."

A cab was brought, and White assisted into it. Austin accompanied him. Mr. Rice was at home, and proceeded to examine into the damage. A few days rest from work, and a liberal application of sticking-plaster, would prove efficacious in effecting a cure, he believed. "What a pity but the ruffians could be stopped at this game," the doctor exclaimed to Austin. "It will come to attacks more serious, if they are not."

"I think this will do something toward stopping it," replied Austin.

"Why? Do you know of any of them?"

Austin nodded. "A few. It is not a second case of impossible identity, as was Baxendale's."

"I am sure I don't know how I am to go home in this plight," exclaimed White, catching sight of his strapped-up face and head, in a small looking-glass hanging in Mr. Rice's surgery. "I shall frighten poor old father into a fit, and the wife, too."

"I will go on first and prepare them," said Austin, good-naturedly.

Turning out of the shop on his errand, he found the door blocked up. The door! nay, the pavement—the street; for it seemed as if all Daffodil's Delight had collected there. He elbowed his way through them, and reached White's home. There the news had preceded him, and he found the deepest distress and excitement reigning, the family having been informed that Abel was killed. Austin reassured them, made light of the matter, and departed.

Outside their closed-up home, squatting on the narrow strip of pavement, their backs against the dirty wall, were Mrs. Dunn and her children, howling pitiably. They were surrounded with warm partisans, who spent their breath sympathizing with them, and abusing the landlord.

"How much better that they should go into the workhouse," exclaimed Austin. "They will perish with cold if they remain there."

"And much you masters 'ud care," cried a woman, who overheard the remark. "I hope you are satisfied now with the effects of your fine lockout! Look at the poor creatur' a-sitting there with her helpless children."

"A sad sight," observed Austin, "but *not* the effects of the lockout. You must look nearer home."

To the intense edification of Daffodil's Delight, which had woke up in an unusually low and subdued state, there arrived, the following mid-day, certain officers within its precincts, holding warrants for the apprehension of some of the previous night's rioters. Bennett, Strood, Ryan, and Cheek were taken; Cassidy had disappeared.

"It's a shame to grab us!" exclaimed timid Cheek, shaking from head to foot. "White himself said as we were not the ringleaders."

While these were secured, a policeman entered the

home of Mr. Shuck, without so much as saying, with your leave, or by your leave. That gentleman, who had remained in-doors all the morning, in a restless, humble sort of mood, which imparted much surprise to Mrs. Shuck, was just sitting down to dinner in the bosom of his family; a savory dinner, to judge by the smell, consisting of rabbit and onions.

“Now, Sam Shuck, I want you,” was the startling interruption.

Sam turned as white as a sheet. Mrs. Shuck stared, and the children stared.

“Want me, do you?” cried Sam, putting as easy a face as he could upon the matter. “What do you want me for? To give evidence?”

“*You* know. It’s about that row last night. I wonder you hadn’t better regard for your liberty than to get into it.”

“Why, you never was such a fool as to put yourself into that!” exclaimed Mrs. Shuck, in her surprise. “What could have possessed you?”

“I!” retorted Sam; “I don’t know anything about the row, except what I’ve heard. I was a good mile off from the spot when it took place.”

“All very well if you can convince the magistrates of that,” said the officer. “Here’s the warrant against you, and I must take you on it.”

“I won’t go,” said Sam, showing fight; “I wasn’t nigh the place, I say.”

The officer was peremptory—officers generally are in these cases—and Sam was very foolish to resist. But that he was scared out of his senses, he would probably not have resisted. It only made matters worse; and the result was, that he had the handcuffs clapped on. Fancy Samuel Shuck, Esquire, in his crimson necktie with the lace ends, and the peg-tops, being thus escorted through Daffodil’s Delight, himself and his hands prisoners, and a tail the length of the street streaming after him.

You could not have got into the police-court. Every avenue, every inch of ground was occupied; for the men, both Unionists and non-Unionists, were greatly excited, and sought to hear the proceedings.

The five men were placed at the bar—Shuck, Bennett,

Cheek, Ryan, and Strood; and Abel White and his bandaged head appeared against them.

The man gave his evidence. How he and others—but himself, he thought, more particularly—had been met by a crowd the previous night, upon leaving work; how the crowd had first threatened and then beaten him.

“Can you tell what their motive was for doing this?” asked the magistrate.

“Yes, sir. It was because I went back to work. I held out as long as I could, in obedience to the ‘Trades’ Union; but I began to think I was in error, and that I ought to return to work, which I did, a week ago. Since then, they have never let me alone. They have talked to me, and threatened and persuaded me; but I would not listen; and last night they attacked me.”

“What were the threats they used last night?”

“It was one man did most of the talking; a tall man in a cap and comforter, sir. The rest of the crowd abused me and called me names, but they did not utter any particular threat. This man said, would I promise and swear not to do any more work, in defiance of the Union; or else I should get every bone in my body smashed. He told me to remember how Baxendale had been served, and was lying with his ribs stove in. I refused; I said I would never belong to the Union again; and then he struck me.”

“Where did he strike you?”

“Here,” putting his hand up to his forehead. “The first blow staggered me, and took away my sight, and the second blow knocked me down. Half a dozen set upon me then hitting and kicking me; the first kicked me also.”

“Can you swear to the first man?”

“No, I can’t, sir. I think he was disguised.”

“Was it the prisoner, Shuck?”

White shook his head. “It was just his height and figure, sir, but I can’t be sure that it was him. His face was partially covered and it was nearly dark, besides; there are no lights about, just there. The voice, too, seemed disguised; I said so at the time.”

“Can you swear to the others?”

“Yes, to all four of them,” said White, stoutly. “They were not disguised at all, and I saw them after

the light came, and knew their voices. They helped to beat me after I was on the ground."

"Did they threaten you?"

"No, sir. Only the first one did that."

"And him you cannot swear to? Is there any other witness who can swear to him?"

It did not appear that there was. Shuck addressed the magistrate, his tone one of injured innocence:

"It is not to be borne that I should be dragged up here like a felon, your worship. I was not near the place at the time; I am as innocent as your worship is. It is not likely I should lend myself to such a thing; my mission among the men is of a higher nature than that."

"Whether you are innocent or not, I do not know," said his worship; "but I do know this is a state of things which cannot be tolerated. I will give my utmost protection to these workmen; and those who dare to interfere with them shall be punished to the extent of the law; the ringleaders especially. A person has just as much right to come to me and say, 'You shall not sit on that bench; you shall not transact the business of a magistrate,' as you have to prevent those industrious men working to earn a living. It is monstrous."

"Here's the witness we have waited for, please, your worship," spoke one of the policemen.

It was Austin Clay who came forward. He bowed to the magistrate, who bowed to him; they occasionally met at the house of Mr. Hunter. Austin was sworn, and gave his evidence up to the point when he turned the light of the lantern upon the tall assailant of White.

"Did you recognize the man?" asked the bench.

"I did. It was Samuel Shuck."

Sam gave a howl, protesting that it was *not*—that he was a mile away from the spot.

"I recognized him as perfectly as I recognize him at this moment," said Austin. "He had a woollen scarf on his chin, and a cap covering his ears, no doubt assumed for disguise, but I knew him instantly. What is more, he saw that I knew him; I am sure he did, by the way he slunk off."

"Did you take the lantern with you purposely?" asked the clerk of the court.

"I did," replied Austin. "A hint was given me, in

the course of yesterday afternoon, that an attack upon our men was in agitation. I determined to discover the ringleaders, if possible, did it take place, and not to let the darkness baffle justice, as was the case in the attack upon Baxendale. For this purpose I put the lantern in readiness, and had the men watched when they left the yard. As soon as the assault began, my messenger returned to tell me."

"You hit upon a good plan, Mr. Clay."

Austin smiled. "I think I did," he answered.

The proceedings were pretty long, but they terminated at length. Bennett, Strood, and Ryan were condemned to pay a fine of £5 each, or be imprisoned for two months. Cheek managed to get off. Mr. Sam Shuck, to whom the magistrate was bitterly severe in his remarks—for he knew perfectly well the part enacted by the man from the first—was sentenced to six months at the treadmill, without the option of a fine.

What descent for Slippery Sam!

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## CHAPTER XIX.

THESE violent interruptions to the social routine, to the organized relations between masters and men, cannot take place without leaving their effects behind them; not only of the bare cupboards, the confusion, the bitter feeling while the contest is in actual progress, but of the results when the dispute is brought to an end and things have resumed their natural order. You have seen some of its disastrous working upon the men, you cannot see it all, for it would take a whole volume to depicture it. But there was another upon whom it was promising to work badly; and that was Mr. Hunter. At this, the eleventh hour, when the dispute was dying out, Mr. Hunter knew that he was unable to weather the short remains of the storm.

Drained, as he had been at various periods, of sums paid to Gwinn, of Ketterford, he had not the means necessary to support the long-continued struggle. Capital he possessed still; and, had there been no disturbance, no strike, no lockout—had things, in short, gone on upon their usual course uninterruptedly, his capital would have been sufficient; not as it was. His money

was locked up in arrested works, in buildings brought to a standstill. He could not fulfill his contracts, or meet his debts; materials were lying idle; and the crisis, so long expected *by him*, had come.

It had not been expected by Austin Clay. Though aware of the shortness of capital, he believed that, with care, difficulties would be surmounted. The fact was, Mr. Hunter had succeeded in keeping the worst from him. It fell now upon Austin like a thunderbolt.

Mr. Hunter had come early to the works: in this hour of embarrassment—ill as he might be, as he *was*—he could not be absent from his place of business. When Austin went into his private room he found him alone, poring over books and accounts, his head leaning on his hand. One glance at Austin's face told Mr. Hunter that the whispers as to the state of affairs, which were now becoming public scandal, had reached his ears.

"Yes, it is perfectly true," said Mr. Hunter, before a word had been spoken by Austin. "I cannot stave it off."

"But it will be ruin, sir!" exclaimed Austin.

"Of course it will be ruin. I know that better than you can tell me."

"Oh, sir," continued Austin, in agitation, "it must not be allowed to come. Your credit must be kept up at any sacrifice."

"Can you tell me of any sacrifice that will keep it up?" returned Mr. Hunter.

Austin paused in embarrassment. "If the present difficulty can be got over, the future will soon redeem itself," he observed. "You have sufficient capital in the aggregate, though it is at present locked up."

"There it is," said Mr. Hunter; "were the capital not locked up, but in my hands, I should be a free man; who is to unlock it?"

"The men are returning to their shops," urged Austin. "In a few days, at the most, all will have resumed work; we should get our contracts completed, and things would work round. It would be *needless* ruin, sir, to stop now."

"Am I stopping of my own accord? Shall I put myself into the *Gazette*, do you suppose? You talk like a child, Clay."



“Not altogether, sir; what I say is, that you are worth more than sufficient to meet your debts; that, if the momentary pressure can be lifted, you will surmount embarrassment and regain ease.”

“Half the bankruptcies we hear of are caused by locked-up capital—not by positive absence of it,” observed Mr. Hunter; “were my funds available, there would be reason in what you say, and I should probably go on again to ease. Indeed, I know I should; for a certain heavy—heavy——” Mr. Hunter spoke with a perplexed hesitation—“A heavy private obligation, which I have been paying off at periods, is at an end now.”

Austin made no reply. He knew that Mr. Hunter alluded to Gwinn of Ketterford; and perhaps Mr. Hunter suspected that he knew it.

“Yes, sir; you will go on to ease—to fortune again; there is no doubt of it. Mr. Hunter,” he continued, “it *must* be accomplished somehow. To let things come to an end for the sake of a thousand or two is—is——”

“Stop,” said Mr. Hunter. “I see what you are driving at. You think that I might borrow this ‘thousand or two’ from my brother, or from Dr. Bevary.”

“No,” fearlessly replied Austin. “I was not thinking of either one or the other. Mr. Henry Hunter has enough to do for himself just now—his contracts for the season were more extensive than ours; and Dr. Bevary is no business man.”

“Henry has enough to do,” said Mr. Hunter. “And if a hundred-pound note would save me, I should not ask Dr. Bevary for its loan. I tell you, Clay, there is no help for it; ruin must come. I have thought it over and over, and I can see no loophole of escape. It does not much matter; I can hide my head in obscurity for the short time I shall probably live. Mine has been an untoward fate.”

“It matters for your daughter, sir,” rejoined Austin, his face flushing.

“I cannot help myself even for her sake,” was the answer, and it was spoken in a tone that told of a breaking heart.

“If you would allow me to suggest a plan, sir——”

“No, I will not allow any further discussion upon the topic,” peremptorily interrupted Mr. Hunter. “The

blow must come: and, to talk of it, will neither soothe nor avert it. Now to business. Is it to-day or to-morrow that Grafton's bill falls due?"

"To-day," replied Austin.

"And its precise amount? I forget it."

"Five hundred and twenty odd pounds."

"Five hundred and twenty! I knew it was somewhere about that. It is that bill that will floor us—at least, be the first step to it. How closely has the account been drawn at the bank?"

"You have the book there, sir. I think there is little more than thirty pounds lying in it."

"Just so. Thirty pounds to meet a bill of five hundred and twenty. No other available funds to pay in. And you would talk of staving off the difficulty!"

"I think the bank would pay it were all circumstances laid before them. They have accommodated us before."

"The bank will *not*, Austin. I have had a private note from them this morning. These flying rumors have reached their ears, and they will not let me overdraw even by a pound."

There was a commotion as of sudden talking outside at that moment, and Mr. Hunter turned pale. He supposed it might be a creditor. "I would pay them all if I could," he exclaimed, in a tone of wailing; "God knows how willingly."

"Sir," said Austin, "leave me here to-day to meet these matters. You are too ill to stay."

"If I do not meet them to-day I must to-morrow. Sooner or later it is I who must answer."

"But indeed you are ill, sir. You look worse than you have looked at all."

"Can you wonder that I look worse? The striking of the docket against me will be the breaking of my heart."

The talking outside now subsided into laughter, in which the tones of a female were distinguishable, and Mr. Hunter thought he recognized them. In fact, they were those of one of his women servants, who, unconscious of the proximity of her master, had been laughing and joking with some of the men, whom she had encountered upon entering the yard.

"What can Susan want?" exclaimed Mr. Hunter, signing to Austin to open the door.

“Is that you, Susan?” Austin exclaimed, as he obeyed.

“Oh, if you please, sir, can I speak a word to my master?”

“Come in,” called out Mr. Hunter. “What do you want?”

“Miss Florence has sent me, sir, to give you this, and to ask you if you'd please to come round.”

She handed in a note. Mr. Hunter broke the seal and ran his eyes over it. It was from Florence, and contained but a line or two. She informed her father that the person who had been so troublesome at the house once or twice before, in years back, had come again, had taken a seat in the dining-room, removed her bonnet, and expressed her intention of there remaining until she should see Mr. Hunter.

“As if I had not enough upon me without this!” muttered Mr. Hunter. “Go back,” he said, aloud, to the servant, “and tell Miss Florence that I am coming.”

A few minutes given to the papers before him, a few hasty directions to Austin, touching the business of the hour, and Mr. Hunter rose to depart.

“Do not come back, sir,” Austin repeated to him. “I can manage all.”

When Mr. Hunter entered his own house, letting himself in with a latch-key, Florence, who had been watching for him, glided forward.

“She is in there, papa,” pointing to the closed door of the dining-room and speaking in a whisper. “What is her business here? what does she want? She told me she had as much right in the house as I.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Mr. Hunter. “Insolent, has she been?”

“Not exactly insolent. She spoke civilly. I fancied you would not care to see her, so I said she could not wait. She replied that she should wait, and I must not attempt to prevent her. Is she in her senses, papa?”

“Go up-stairs and put your bonnet and cloak on, Florence,” was the rejoinder of Mr. Hunter. “Be quick.”

She obeyed, and was down again almost immediately, in her deep mourning.

“Now, my dear, go round to Dr. Bevary, and tell him you have come to spend the day with him.”

“But, papa——”

“Florence, go! I will either come for you this evening or send. Do not return until I do.”

The tone, though full of kindness, was one that might not be disobeyed, and Florence, feeling sick with some uncertain shadowed-forth trouble, passed out at the hall door. Mr. Hunter entered the dining-room.

Tall, gaunt, powerful of frame as ever, rose up Miss Gwinn, turning upon him her white, corpse-like looking face. Without the ceremony of greeting, she spoke in her usual abrupt fashion, dashing at once to her subject.

“Now will you render justice, Lewis Hunter?”

“I have the greater right to ask that justice shall be rendered to me,” replied Mr. Hunter, speaking sternly, in spite of his agitation. “Which has most cause to demanded it, you or I?”

“She who reigned in this house as mistress is dead,” cried Miss Gwinn. “You must acknowledge *her*.”

“I never will. You may do your best and worst. The worst that can come is, that it must reach the knowledge of my daughter.”

“Ay, there it is! The knowledge of the wrong must not even reach her; but the wrong itself has not been too bad for that other one to bear.”

“Woman!” continued Mr. Hunter, growing excited almost beyond control, “who inflicted that wrong?—myself, or you?”

The reproach told home, if the change to sad humility, passing over Miss Gwinn’s countenance, might be taken as an indication. “What I said, I said in self-defense, after you, in your deceit, had brought wrong upon me and my family.”

“*That* was no wrong,” retorted Mr. Hunter. “It was you who wrought all the wrong afterward, by uttering that terrible falsehood.”

“Well, well, it is of no use coming back to that. I am come here to ask that justice shall be rendered, now that it is in your power.”

“You have had more than justice—you have had revenge. Not content with rendering my days a life’s misery, you must also drain me of the money I had worked hard to save. Do you know how much?”

“It was not I,” she passionately uttered, in a tone as if she would deprecate his anger. *He did that.*”

“It comes to the same. I had to find the money. So long as my dear wife lived, I was forced to temporize: neither he nor you can so force me again. Go home, go home, Miss Gwinn, and pray for forgiveness for the injury you have done both her and me. The time for coming to my house with your intimidations is past.”

“What did you say?” cried Miss Gwinn. “Injury upon *you?*”

“Injury, ah! such as rarely has been inflicted upon mortal man. Not content with that great injury, you must also deprive me of my substance. This week the name of James Lewis Hunter will be in the *Gazette*, on the list of bankrupts. It is you who have brought me to it.”

“You know that I have had no hand in that: that it was he; my brother—and *hers*,” she said. “He never should have done it had I been able to prevent him; in an unguarded moment I told him I had discovered you, and who you were, and he came up to you here and sold his silence. It is that which has kept me quiet.”

“This interview had better end,” said Mr. Hunter. “It excites me and my health is scarcely in a state to bear it. Your work has told upon me, Miss Gwinn, as you cannot avoid seeing, when you look at me. Am I like the hearty, open man whom you came up to town and discovered a few years ago?”

“Am I like the healthy, unsuspecting woman whom you saw some years before that?” she retorted. “My days have been rendered more bitter than yours.”

“It is your own evil passions which have rendered them so. But I say this interview must end. You——”

“It shall end when you undertake to render justice.”

“When your brother was here last—it was on the day of my wife’s death—I was forced to warn him of the consequences of remaining in my house against my will. I must now warn you.”

“Lewis Hunter,” she passionately resumed, “for years I have been told that she—who was here—was fading; and I was content to wait until she should be gone. Besides, was not he drawing money from you to keep silence? But it is all over, and my time is come.”

The door of the room opened and some one entered. Mr. Hunter turned to it with marked displeasure; he wondered who of the household was daring to intrude upon him. Not any servant; but Dr. Bevary.

When Florence reached her uncle's she found him absent; the servants said he had gone out early in the morning. Scarcely had Florence entered the drawing-room, when she saw his carriage drive up, and himself alight from it. He came in, and she told him her papa had dispatched her to be his guest for the day. But there was something in her manner, as she spoke, foreign to its usual candid openness; the doctor detected it, and he drew from her what had occurred.

"Miss Gwinn of Ketterford in town!" he uttered. And then, leaving Florence, he ran down to the street, calling to his coachman, whose orders had been to put up the carriage. Had it been anybody but Dr. Bevary, the passers-by would have deemed the caller mad. The man heard, turned his horses, and came back.

"Miss Gwinn is the very person I was wanting to see—wishing some miraculous telegraph could convey her hither at a moment's notice," he said to Florence. "Make yourself at home, my dear. I must go out again, and it is uncertain when I shall return."

He stepped into the carriage, ordering it round to Mr. Hunter's. There he broke in upon the interview.

"I was about to telegraph to Ketterford for you," he observed, to Miss Gwinn.

The words agitated her strangely, as with a shrinking fear. She caught hold of the doctor's arm. "What has happened? Any ill?"

"You must come with me now and see her."

Shaking from head to foot, gaunt, strong woman though she was, she turned docilely to follow the doctor from the room. But, suddenly, an idea seemed to strike her, and she stood still.

"It is a ruse to get me out of the house. Dr. Bevary, I will not quit it until justice shall be rendered to Emma. I will have her acknowledged by him."

"Your going with me now will make no difference to that, one way or the other," dryly observed Dr. Bevary.

Mr. Hunter stepped forward in agitation. "Are you

out of your mind, Bevary? You could not have caught her words correctly."

"Psha!" responded the doctor, in a careless tone. "What I said was, that Miss Gwinn's going out with me could make no difference to it one way or the other."

His bearing calm and self-possessed, his manner authoritative, Dr. Bevary passed out to his carriage, motioning the lady before him. Self-willed as she was by nature and by habit, she appeared to have no thought of resistance now. "Step in," said Dr. Bevary.

She obeyed, and he seated himself by her, after giving an order to the coachman. The carriage turned toward the west for a short distance, and then branched off to the north. In a comparatively short time they were clear of the bustle of London.

Miss Gwinn sat in silence; the doctor sat in silence. It seemed that the former wished, yet dreaded to ask, the purport of their present journey; for her white face was working with emotion, and she glanced repeatedly at the doctor, with a sharp, yearning look. When they were clear of the bustle of the streets, and the hedges, bleak and bare, bound the road on either side, broken by a house here and there, then she could bear the silence and suspense no longer.

"Why do you not speak?" broke from her in a tone of pain.

"First of all, tell me what brought you in town now." was his reply. "It is not your time for being here."

"The death of your sister. I came up by the early train this morning. Dr. Bevary, you are the only living being to whom I lie under an obligation, or from whom I have experienced kindness. People may think me ungrateful; some think me mad; but I am grateful to you. But for the fact of her being your sister, I should have insisted upon Emma's rights being acknowledged long ago."

"You told me you waved them in consequence of your brother's conduct."

"Partially so. But that did not weigh with me in comparison with my feeling of gratitude to you. How impotent we are!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands. "My efforts by day, my dreams by night, were directed to one single point through long, long years of

fever—the finding Lewis. I had sworn to be revenged; I had cherished the thought of revenge until it became part and parcel of my very existence; I determined to expose him to the world. But when the time came, and I did find him, I found that your sister was his wife, and that revenge could not be taken upon him without touching her. I hesitated; I took time to consider what course to pursue—whether to sacrifice gratitude or revenge. I went home to deliberate, and there some spirit of evil put it into my head to acquaint my good-for-nothing brother that the man, Lewis, was found. I might have known what would follow. He hastened to town, and drew large sums of money out of Mr. Hunter's fears. That decided me—to wait. Accounts said that your sister's could not be a prolonged life; and I have waited until now."

"Then you have come up—if I understand you aright—for the purpose of insisting upon what you call her 'rights?' Is it so?"

"What *I* call!" retorted Miss Gwinn. "They are her rights: you know it. But tell me, Dr. Bevary, why are you taking me thither?"

"I received a message early this morning from Dr. Kerr, stating that—that something was amiss. I lost no time in going over."

"And what was amiss?" she hastily cried. "Surely there was no repetition of the violence? Did you see her?"

"Yes, I saw her."

"But of course you would," resumed Miss Gwinn, speaking rather to herself. "And what do you think? Is there danger?"

"The danger is past," replied Dr. Bevary. "But here we are."

The carriage had driven in through an inclosed avenue, and was stopping before a large mansion; not a cheerful mansion, for its grounds were surrounded by dark trees, and some of its windows were barred. It was a lunatic asylum. It is necessary, even in these modern days of gentle treatment, to take some precaution of bars and bolts; but the inmates of this one were thoroughly well cared for, in the best sense of the term. Dr. Bevary was one of its visiting inspectors.



Dr. Kerr, the resident manager, came forward, and Dr. Bevary turned to Miss Gwinn. "Will you see her, or not?" he asked.

Strange fears were working within her, Dr. Bevary's manner was so different from ordinary. "I think I see it all," she gasped. "The worst has happened."

"The best has happened," responded Dr. Bevary. "Miss Gwinn, you have requested me more than once to bring you here without preparation, should the time arrive—for that you could bear certainty, but not suspense. Will you see her?"

Her face had grown white and rigid as marble. Unable to speak, she pointed forward with her hand. Dr. Bevary drew it within his own to support her.

In a clean, cool chamber, on a pallet bed, lay the corpse of a woman. Dr. Kerr gently drew back the snow-white sheet with which the face was covered—a pale placid, face, and a little band of light hair folded underneath the cap.

She—Miss Gwinn—did not stir; she gave way to neither emotion nor violence; but her bloodless lips were strained back from her teeth, and her face was white as that of the dead.

"God's ways are not as our ways," whispered Dr. Bevary. "You have been acting for revenge; he has sent peace. Whatsoever he does is for the best."

She made no reply; she remained still and rigid. Dr. Bevary stroked the left hand of the dead, lying in its utter stillness—stroked, as if unconsciously, the wedding ring on the third finger. He had long believed that it had been placed on that finger, years and years ago, by his brother-in-law, James Lewis Hunter.

And she who had worked the lie, the delusion, who had embittered Mr. Hunter's life with the same dread belief, who had persisted in it, still, up to that hour, stood there at the doctor's side, looking at the dead.

Reader, it is a solemn thing to persist in the acting of a wicked falsehood, in the mysterious presence of death. The spirit has fled to where all truth must be brought to light; who is hardy enough not to bend under that solemn fact?

Not even Miss Gwinn. As Dr. Bevary turned to her with a remark upon the past, she burst forth into a cry,

and gave utterance to words that fell upon the physician's ear like a healing balm, soothing and binding up a long open wound.

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## CHAPTER XX.

THOSE readers will be disappointed who look for any very romantic *denouement* of "A Life's Secret." The story is a short and sad one. It teaches the wretchedness and evil that may result when truth is deviated from; it teaches the lengths to which a blind, unholy desire for revenge will carry an ill-regulated spirit; and it also shows how, in the moral government of the world, sin casts its hateful consequences upon the innocent as well as the guilty.

When the carriage of Dr. Bevary, containing himself and Miss Gwinn, drove from Mr. Hunter's door on the unknown errand, he—Mr. Hunter—staggered to a seat, rather than walked to it. That he was very ill that day, both mentally and bodily, there was no doubt; he was only too conscious of it. Austin had said to him, "Do not return: I will manage," or words to that effect. At present Mr. Hunter felt himself incapable of returning.

He sunk down in the easy-chair, and closed his eyes, his thoughts thrown back to the past. An ill-starred past: one that had left its bane on his after life, whose consequences had clung to him like a covering, and must remain with him to the end of his days. It is impossible, but ill-doing must leave its results behind: the laws of God and man alike demand it. Mr. Hunter, in early life, had been betrayed into committing a wrong act, and Miss Gwinn, in the gratification of her passionate revenge, had visited it upon him heavily.

Heavily, most heavily, was it pressing upon him now. That unhappy visit to Wales, which had led to all the evil, was especially present to his mind this evening. A handsome young man, in the first dawn of manhood, he had gone to the fashionable Welsh watering-place—partly to renew a waste of strength, more imaginary than real; partly in the love of roving, natural to youth; partly to enjoy a few weeks' relaxation. "If you want unusually respectable lodgings, go to Miss Gwinn's house, on the South Parade," some friend, whom he had encountered

at his journey's end, had said to him. And to Miss Gwinn's he went. He found Miss Gwinn a cold, proud woman—it was she whom you have seen—bearing the manners of a lady. The servant who waited upon him was garrulous, and proclaimed, at the first interview, amidst other gossip, that her mistress had but a limited income—a hundred, or a hundred and fifty pounds a year, she believed; that she preferred to eke it out by letting her drawing-room and adjoining bedroom, and to live well, rather than to rusticate and pinch. Miss Gwinn and her motives were nothing to the young sojourner, and he turned a careless, if not a deaf ear to the gossip. “She does it chiefly for the sake of Miss Emma,” added the girl; and the listener so far roused himself as to ask, apathetically, who “Miss Emma” was. It was her mistress' young sister, the girl said; there must be twenty good years between them. Miss Emma was but nineteen, and had just come home from boarding-school; her mistress had brought her up ever since the mother died. Miss Emma was not at home now, but was expected on the morrow, she went on. Miss Emma was not without her good looks, but her mistress took care they should not be seen by everybody. She'd hardly let her go about the house when strangers were in it, lest she should be met in the passages. Mr. Hunter laughed. Good looks had attractions for him in those days, and he determined to see for himself, in spite of Miss Gwinn, whether Miss Emma's looks were so good that they might not be looked at.

Now, by the merest accident—at least, it happened by accident in the first instance, and not by intention—one chief point in the future ill was unwittingly led to. In this early stage of the affair, while the servant-maid was exercising her tongue in these items of domestic news, the friend who had recommended Mr. Hunter to the apartments arrived at the house, and called out to him from the foot of the stairs, his high, clear voice echoing through the corridors:

“Lewis, will you come out and take a stroll?”

Lewis Hunter hastened down, proclaiming his acquiescence, and the maid proceeded to the parlor of her mistress.

“The gentleman’s name is Lewis, ma’am. You said you forgot to ask it of him.”

Miss Gwinn, methodical in all she did, took a sheet of note paper and inscribed the name upon it, “Mr. Lewis,” as a reminder for the time when she should require to make out his bill. When Mr. Hunter found out their error—for the maid henceforth addressed him as “Mr. Lewis,” or “Mr. Lewis, sir”—it rather amused him, and he did not correct the mistake. He had no motive whatever for concealing his name; he did not wish it concealed. On the other hand, he deemed it of no importance to set them right; it signified not a jot to him whether they called him “Mr. Lewis” or “Mr. Hunter.” Thus they knew him, and believed him to be Mr. Lewis only. He never took the trouble to undeceive them, and nothing arose to do it accidentally. The one or two letters only which arrived for him—for he had gone there for idleness, not to correspond with his friends—were addressed to the post-office, in accordance with his primary directions, not knowing where he should lodge.

“Miss Emma” came home; a very pretty and agreeable girl. In the narrow passage of the house—one of those shallow residences built for letting apartments at the sea-side—she encountered the stranger, who happened to be going out as she entered. He lifted his hat to her.

“Who is that, Nancy?” she asked of the chattering maid.

“It’s the new lodger, Miss Emma; Lewis, his name is. Did you ever see such good looks? And he has asked a thousand questions about you.”

Now, the fact was, Mr. Hunter—stay, we will also call him Mr. Lewis for the time being, as they had fallen into the error—had not asked a single question about the young lady, save the one when her name was first spoken of, “Who is Miss Emma?” Nancy had supplied information enough for a “thousand” questions, unasked; and perhaps she saw no difference.

“Have you made any acquaintance with Mr. Lewis, Agatha?” Emma inquired of her sister.

“When do I make acquaintance with the people who take my apartments?” replied Miss Gwinn, in a tone of reproof. “They naturally look down upon me as a letter of lodgings—and I am not one to bear that.”

Now comes the unhappy tale. It shall be glanced at as briefly as possible in detail; but it is necessary that parts of it should be explained.

Acquaintanceship sprung up between Mr. Lewis and Emma Gwinn. At first they would meet in the town, or on the beach, accidentally; and then, I very much fear that the meetings were tacitly, if not openly, more intentional. Both were agreeable, both were young, and a liking for each other's society grew in each of them. Mr. Lewis found his time hang somewhat heavily on his hands, for his friend had left; and Emma Gwinn was not restricted from walking out as she pleased. Only one proviso was laid upon her by her sister—"Emma, take care that you make no acquaintance with strangers, or suffer it to be made with you. Speak to no one."

An injunction which Miss Emma disobeyed. She disobeyed it in a particularly marked manner. It was not only that she did permit Mr. Lewis to make acquaintance with her, but she allowed it to ripen into intimacy. Worse still, the meetings, I say, from having been at first really accidental, grew to be sought—sought on the one side as much as on the other.

Ah! young ladies, I wish this little history could be a warning to you, never to deviate from the strict line of right—never to stray, by so much as a thoughtless step, from the straight path of duty. Once allow yourselves to do so, and you know not where it may end. Slight acts of disobedience, that appear to you as the merest trifles, may yet be fraught with incalculable mischiefs. The falling into the habit of passing a pleasant hour of intercourse with Mr. Lewis, sauntering on the beach, in social and intellectual converse—and it was no worse—appeared a very venial offense to Emma Gwinn. But she did it in direct disobedience to the command and wish of her sister; and she knew that she so did it. She knew also that she owed to that sister, who had brought her up and cared for her from infancy, the allegiance that a child gives to a mother. In this early stage of the affair she was alone to blame—not Mr. Lewis. It cannot be said that blame attached to him. There was no reason why he should not while away an occasional hour in pleasant chat with a young lady; there was no harm in the meetings, taking them in the abstract. The blame

lay with her. It is no excuse to urge that Miss Gwinn exercised over her a too strict authority; that she kept her in, in some points, with an absurdly tight hand. But poor Emma Gwinn dreamt not of future ill as the result, and little thought what she was doing. At length it was found out by Miss Gwinn.

She did not find out much. Indeed, there was not much to find: except that there was more friendship between Mr. Lewis and Emma than there was between Mr. Lewis and herself, and that they often met to stroll on the beach, and enjoy the agreeable benefit of the sea breezes. But that was quite enough for Miss Gwinn. An uncontrollable storm of passionate anger ensued, which was vented upon Emma. She stood over her, and forced her to attire herself for traveling, protesting that not another hour should she remain in the house while Mr. Lewis remained. Then she started with Emma, to place her under the care of an aunt, who lived so far off as to be a day's journey.

"It's a shame!" was the comment of sympathetic Nancy, who deemed Miss Gwinn the most unreasonable woman under the sun. Nancy was herself engaged to an enterprising porter, to whom she counted on being married some fine Easter, when they had saved up sufficient to lay in a stock of goods and chattels. And she forthwith went straight to Mr. Lewis, and communicated to him what had occurred, giving him Emma's new address.

"He'll follow her, if he have got any spirit," was her inward thought. "It's what my Joe would do by me, if I was forced off to desert places by a old dragon."

It was precisely what Mr. Lewis did do. Upon the return of Miss Gwinn, he gave notice to quit her house, where he had already stayed longer than she originally counted upon. Miss Gwinn had no suspicion but what he returned to his home—wherever that might be.

You may be inclined to ask why Miss Gwinn had fallen into anger so great. That she loved her young sister with an intense and jealous love was certain. Miss Gwinn was of a peculiar temperament, and she could not bear that one spark of Emma's affection should stray from her. The real fact of the case being—only, it is not the fashion, as you are aware, in our civilized life for polite relatives to betray the precise nature of their senti-

ments one for the other—that very few sparks indeed of Emma's affection went toward her sister at all. She did not entertain for her even a cool sisterly regard; and the cause may have lain in the stern manners of Miss Gwinn. Deeply, ardently as she loved Emma, she yet was to her invariably cold and stern; and such manners do not beget love from the young. But to account for Miss Gwinn's passionate and causeless bursts of anger would be a vain attempt. They were frequent.

It was an old tale, that, which ensued. Thanks be to good manners and morals, we can say an "old" tale, in contradistinction to a modern one. A secret marriage in these days would be looked upon in condemning askance both by old and young. Under the purest, the most domestic, the wisest court in the world, manners and customs with us have taken a turn, and society calls underhand doings by their right name, and turns its back upon them. Nevertheless, such foolish things as private marriages and runaway marriages were not unknown once: possibly, many of you, my readers, may remember instances amid the circle of your acquaintance.

I wonder whether one ever took place—where it was contracted in disobedience and defiance—that did not bring, in some way or other, its own punishment? To few, perhaps, was it brought home as it was to Mr. Hunter. No apology can be offered for the step he took; not even his youth, or his want of experience, or the attachment which had grown up in his heart for Emma. He knew that his father would have objected to his marrying her, on several grounds. In fact, he dared not tell him his purpose. Her position was not equal to his—old Mr. Hunter, a proud man, would not have deemed it to be so—and he would have objected on the score of his son's youth. Worst bar of all, there was madness, rank madness in Emma Gwinn's family. So James Lewis Hunter took that one false, blind, irrevocable step of contracting a private marriage; and the consequences came bitterly home to him.

Six months afterward Emma Gwinn—nay, Emma Hunter—lay upon her death-bed. She had lived on at her aunt's as Emma Gwinn, he being chiefly in London at his own home. A fever broke out in the neighborhood, which Emma caught, and Miss Gwinn, when apprised

that she was in danger, hastened to her. Medical skill could not save her, and when she was in the death agony she confessed her marriage; the bare fact only; none of its details; she loved her husband too truly to expose him to the dire wrath of her sister; and she died without giving the slightest clew to his real name—Hunter.

Dire wrath, indeed! That was scarcely the word for it. Insane wrath would be better. In Miss Gwinn's injustice (violent people always are unjust), she persisted in attributing Emma's death to Mr. Lewis. In her bitter grief, she jumped to the belief that the secret must have preyed upon Emma's brain in the delirium of fever, and that that prevented her recovery. It is very probable that the secret did prey upon it, though, it is to be hoped, not to the extent assumed by Miss Gwinn.

Strange coincidence as it may appear to be, Mr. Lewis arrived from London on the day after the funeral. He had been for some weeks on the Continent, as his wife had known; hence the reason that she did not write to him when taken ill. Nobody need envy him the interview with Miss Gwinn; on her part, it was not a seemly one. Glad to get out of the house and be away from her reproaches, the stormy interview was concluded almost as soon as it was begun, and the same night he returned to London a widower—Miss Gwinn still in ignorance of his real name.

Following almost close upon Emma's death, illness attacked another sister of Miss Gwinn's—Elizabeth. It has not been necessary previously to mention her. Though but little older than Emma, she was married, and lived with her husband in the Isle of Jersey. When Miss Gwinn heard of her illness, she hastened to her, as she had done to Emma; for the one was quite as dear to her as the other had been. It was a peculiar illness, and it ended in a hopeless affection of the brain. Insanity had always been feared for her—though not in a greater degree than for the rest of the family. They were all liable to it in the opinion of the medical men.

Once more Miss Gwinn's injustice came into play. Like as she had attributed Emma's death, in a remote degree, to Mr. Lewis, so did she now attribute to him the affliction which had come upon this other sister. That the two young sisters had been very warmly attached was



undoubted; but to say that this state of mind had resulted from Elizabeth's sorrow at her sister's loss, at the tidings of what had preceded it, was untrue. It may have had something to do with it, in the shape of bringing out the malady sooner than it would otherwise have shown itself; but its cause it was not. The poor young lady was placed in an asylum in London, of which Dr. Bevary was a visiting physician; and, by the death of her husband soon afterward, she had to be maintained there at Miss Gwinn's cost.

Miss Gwinn could only do this at the expense of giving up her home. Ill-tempered as she was, we must confess she had her troubles. She gave it up without a murmur; she would have given up her life to benefit either of those, her young sisters. Retaining but a mere pittance, she devoted all her means to the comfort of Elizabeth. Private asylums are expensive; and she found a home with her brother, in Ketterford, where she spent her days bemoaning the lost, and cherishing a really insane hatred against Mr. Lewis—a desire for revenge.

She had never come across him, until that Easter Monday, at Ketterford. And that, you will say, is scarcely correct, since it was not himself she met then, but his brother. Deceived by the resemblance she attacked Mr. Henry Hunter in the manner you remember; and Austin Clay saved him from the gravel-pit. But the time soon came when she stood face to face with *him*. It was the hour she had so longed for—the hour of revenge.

What revenge? But for the wicked lie she forged, there could have been no revenge. The worst she could have proclaimed was that James Lewis Hunter, when he was a young man, had so far forgotten his duty to himself, and to the world's decencies, as to contract a secret marriage. True, he might have acknowledged he had done so; but his wife had died shortly, leaving him free. And though he had mourned her sincerely, the time came when he had grown to think that all things were for the best—that it was a serious sort of embarrassment removed from his path.

What revenge could there have been in this? None, certainly, to satisfy one so vindictive as Miss Gwinn. She found him a man with social ties. He had married Louisa Bevary; he had a fair daughter; and the demon of mis-

chief put it into her head to impose upon him the story that his first wife was still living; that she—she herself—had deceived him when she told him of her death; that she was, in fact, the patient of the asylum. From that hour—you must remember the interview, and Mr. Hunter's fearful agitation subsequent upon it—the sun of his life's peace had set. Dr. Bevary became impressed with the same belief—not by broad assertions from Miss Gwinn, but by doubtful hints which so frightened him that he dared ask nothing. Next came down Gwinn of Ketterford upon Mr. Hunter. He learnt from his sister what she had done, and he turned it pretty handsomely to his own account. When Miss Gwinn found out that he was using it for the base purpose of extorting money, she felt half inclined to frustrate the scheme, by declaring the truth to Mr. Hunter. With all her faults, she was not mercenary. A fine life, between them, had they led Mr. Hunter, in his agony of mind, at the disgrace cast upon Mrs. Hunter and his child; in his terror lest the truth (as he believed it) should reach them, he lived, it may be said, a perpetual death. And the disgrace never could be removed; and the terror had never left him through all these long years.

All this was what his thoughts were cast upon, as he sat now in the easy-chair of his dining-room. How long he sat there he scarcely knew; but it was for hours. Then he aroused himself to the present; he remembered that he had purposed calling that day upon his bankers, though he had no hope—but rather the certainty of the contrary—that they would help him out of his financial embarrassments.

There was just time to get there before the bank closed, and Mr. Hunter had a cab called, and went down to Lombard Street. He was shown into the room of the principal. The banker thought how ill he looked. His first question was about the heavy bill that was due that day; he supposed it had been presented and dishonored.

“No,” said the banker. “It was presented and paid.”

A ray of hope lighted up the sadness of Mr. Hunter's face. “Did you indeed pay it? It was very kind. You shall be no eventual losers.”

"We did not pay it from our own funds, Mr. Hunter. It was paid from yours."

Mr. Hunter did not understand. "I thought my account had been nearly drawn out," he said; "and by the note I received this morning from you, I understood that you would decline to help me."

"Your account was drawn very close indeed; but this afternoon, in time to meet the bill upon its second presentation, there was a large sum paid in to your credit—two thousand six hundred pounds."

A pause of blank astonishment on the part of Mr. Hunter. "Who paid it in?" he presently asked.

"Mr. Clay. He came himself. You will weather the storm now, Mr. Hunter."

There was no answering reply. The banker bent forward in the dusk of the growing evening, and saw that Mr. Hunter was incapable of making one. He was sinking back in his chair in a fainting fit. Whether it was the revulsion of feeling caused by the conviction that he *should* now weather the storm, or simply the effect of his physical state, Mr. Hunter had fainted, like any girl might do. One of the partners lived at the bank, and Mr. Hunter was conveyed into the dwelling-house. It was quite evening before he was well enough to leave it.

He drove to the yard. It was closed for the night, and Mr. Clay was gone. Mr. Hunter ordered the cab home. He found Austin waiting for him, and he also found Dr. Bevary. Seeing the latter, he expected next to see Miss Gwinn, and glanced nervously round.

"She is gone back to Ketterford," spoke out Dr. Bevary, divining the fear. "She will never trouble you again. I thought you must be lost, Hunter. I have been here twice, been home to dinner with Florence, been round at the yard, worrying Clay, and could not come upon you."

"I went to the bank, and was taken ill there," said Mr. Hunter. "Austin"—laying his hand upon the young man's shoulder—"what am I to say? This money can only have come from you."

"Sir!" said Austin, half laughing.

Mr. Hunter drew Dr. Bevary's attention, pointing to Austin. "Look at him, Bevary. He has saved me. But for him, I should have borne a dishonored name this day.

I went down to Lombard Street, a man without hope, believing that the blow had been already struck in bills dishonored—that my name was on its way to the *Gazette*. I found that he, Austin Clay, had paid in between two and three thousand pounds to my credit, and so saved me.”

“I could not put my money to a better use, sir. The two thousand pounds were left to me, you know: the rest I saved. I was wishing for something to turn up that I could invest it in.”

“Invest!” exclaimed Mr. Hunter, deep feeling in his tone. “How do you know you will not lose it?”

“I have no fear, sir. The strike is at an end, and business will go on well now.”

“If I did not believe that it would, I would never consent to use it,” said Mr. Hunter. “Austin, how am I to repay you?”

A red flush mounted to Austin’s brow, but he hastily answered: “I do not require payment, sir; I do not look for any.”

“Will you link your name to mine?”

“In what manner, sir?”

“By letting the firm be from henceforth Hunter & Clay. I have long wished this; you are of too great use to me to remain anything less than a partner, and by this last act of yours, you have earned the right to be so. Will you object to join your name to one which was so near being dishonored?”

He held out his hand as he spoke, and Austin clasped it. “Oh! Mr. Hunter!” he exclaimed, in the strong impulse of the moment, “I wish you would give me hopes of a dearer reward.”

“You mean Florence,” said Mr. Hunter.

“Yes,” returned Austin, in agitation. “I care not how long I wait, or what price you may call upon me to pay for her. As Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel, so would I serve for Florence, and think it but a day, for the love I bear her. Sir, Mrs. Hunter would have given her to me.”

“My objection is not to you, Austin. Were I to disclose to you certain particulars connected with Florence—as I should be obliged to do before she married—you might yourself decline her.”

“Try me, sir,” said Austin, a bright smile parting his lips.

“Ay, try him,” put in Dr. Bevary, in his quaint manner, “I have an idea that he may know as much of the matter as you do, Hunter. You neither of you know too much,” he significantly added.

Austin's cheek turned red; and there was that in his tone, his look, which told Mr. Hunter that he had known the fact, had known it for years. “Oh, sir,” he pleaded, “give me Florence.”

“I tell you that neither of you know too much,” said Dr. Bevary. “But, look here, Austin, the best thing you can do is, to go to my house and ask Florence whether she will have you. Then—if you don't find it too much trouble—escort her home.”

Austin laughed as he caught up his hat. He found Florence alone. She looked surprised to see him, and asked why he had come.

“To take you home, for one thing. Do you dislike the escort, Florence?”

He bent toward her as he asked the question. A strange light of happiness shone in his eyes—a sweet smile hovered on his lips. Florence Hunter's heart stood still, and then beat as if it would burst its bounds.

“What has happened?” she stammered.

“This,” he answered, drawing her gently to him; “the right to hold you here, Florence—to make you my wife, to love you, and demand that you love me in return—forever. It has been given to me by your father.”

The words, in their fervid earnestness, carried instant truth to her heart, lighting it up with a joyousness as of the brightest sunshine. “Oh, what a recompense!” she impulsively uttered from the depths of her great love: “what a recompense after all my doubts and trouble!”

“No more doubts, no more trouble,” he fondly whispered. “It shall be my life's labor henceforth to guard them from you, Florence, God helping me.”

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## CHAPTER XXI.

“DID it ever strike you that Austin Clay knew your secret?” inquired Dr. Bevary of Mr. Hunter, when he

was left alone with him after Austin's departure in search of Florence.

"How should it?" returned Mr. Hunter.

"I do not know how," said the doctor, "any more than I know how the impression, that he did, fixed itself upon me. I have felt sure, this many a year past, that he was no stranger to the fact, though he probably knew nothing of the details."

"When did *you* become acquainted with it?" rejoined Mr. Hunter, in a tone of sharp pain.

"I became acquainted with your share of it at the time Miss Gwinn discovered that Mr. Lewis was Mr. Hunter. James, why did you not confide the secret to me? It would have been much better."

"To you! Louisa's brother!"

"It would have been better, I say. It might not have lifted the sword that was always hanging over Louisa's head, or have eased it by one jot; but it might have eased *you*. A sorrow kept within a man's own bosom, doing its work in silence, will burn his life away; get him to talk of it, and half the pain is removed. It is also possible that I might have made better terms than you, with the rapacity of Gwinn."

"If you knew it, how was it that you did not speak openly to me?"

Dr. Bevary suppressed a shudder. "It was one of those terrible secrets that a third party cannot interfere in uninvited. No; silence was my only course, so long as you observed silence to me. Had I interfered I must have said, 'Louisa shall leave you.'"

"It is over, so far as she is concerned," said Mr. Hunter, wiping his damp brow. "Let her name rest. It is the thought of her which has well-nigh killed me."

"Ay, it is over," responded Dr. Bevary; "over, in more senses than one. Do you not wonder that Miss Gwinn should have gone back to Ketterford, without molesting you again?"

"How can I wonder at anything she does? She comes and she goes, with as little reason as warning."

Dr. Bevary lowered his voice. "Have you ever been to see the poor patient in Kerr's asylum?"

The question excited the anger of Mr. Hunter. "What do you mean by asking it?" he cried. "When I was

led to believe her dead I shaped my future course according to that belief. I have never acted, nor would I act, upon any other—save in the giving money to Gwinn, for my wife's sake. If Louisa was not my wife legally, she was nothing less in the sight of God."

"Louisa was your wife," said Dr. Bevary, quietly. And Mr. Hunter responded by a sharp gesture of surprise. The doctor continued:

"James, had you gone, though it had been for an instant, to see that unhappy patient of Kerr's, your trammels would have been at an end. It was not Emma, your young wife of years ago."

"It was not! What do you say?" gasped Mr. Hunter.

"When Agatha Gwinn found you out here in this house, she startled you nearly to death by telling you that Emma was alive—was a patient in Kerr's Asylum. She told you that, when you had been informed in those back days of Emma's death, you had been imposed on by a lie—a lie invented by herself. James, the lie was uttered *then*; when she spoke to you here. Emma, your wife, did die; and the young woman in the Asylum was a sister."

Mr. Hunter rose. His hands were raised imploringly, his face was stretched out in its sad yearning. "What!—which was true? which was he to believe?"

"In the gratification of her revenge, Miss Gwinn concocted the tale that Emma was alive, knowing, as she spoke it, that Emma had been dead for years and years. She contrived to foster the same impression upon me; and the same impression, I cannot tell how, has, I am sure, clung to Austin Clay. Louisa was your lawful wife, James."

Mr. Hunter, in the plenitude of his thankfulness, sank upon his chair, a wailing burst of emotion breaking from him, and the drops of perspiration gathering again on his brow.

"That other one, the sister, the poor patient, is dead," resumed Dr. Bevary. "As we stood together over her, an hour ago, Miss Gwinn confessed the imposition. It appeared to slip from her involuntarily, in spite of herself. I inquired her motive, and she answered, 'To be revenged on you, Lewis Hunter, for the wrong you had done.' As she stood in her impotence, looking on the dead, I asked

her which, in her opinion, had done the most wrong, she or you?"

Mr. Hunter lifted his eager face. "It was a foolish deceit. What did she hope to gain by it? A word, at any time, might have exposed it."

"It seems she did gain pretty well by it," significantly replied Dr. Bevary. "There's little doubt that it was first spoken in the angry rage of the moment, as being the most effectual mode of tormenting you, and the terrible dread with which you received it—as I conclude you so did receive it—encouraged her to persist in it. James, you should have confided in me; I might have brought light to bear on it in some way or other. Your timorous silence has kept me silent."

"God be thanked that it is over!" fervently ejaculated Mr. Hunter. "The loss of my money, the loss of my peace, they seem to be little in comparison with this welcome revelation. She—the sister—you say, is dead?"

"She is dead, poor thing; and Miss Gwinn has gone back home to trouble you no more."

They continued talking. After some time Austin entered with Florence. Dr. Bevary turned upon them with mock gravity.

"How you have hurried yourselves! I fear you must be ill from walking fast. What can have kept him, Florence?"

"Not your patients, doctor," said Austin, laughing, "though you are keeping them. Some, whom you made an appointment with, are vowing vengeance against you for not attending to it."

"Ah," said the doctor, "we medical men do get detained sometimes. One patient has had the whole of my time this day."

"Is she better?" inquired Florence. "Was it a lady?"

"No, my dear, she is not better; she is dead," was the grave answer. "And therefore," the doctor added, "I have no further excuse for absenting myself from those other patients who are alive and grumbling after me."

He made an imperceptible sign to Austin, to follow him from the room, and linked his arm with his as he crossed the hall. "How did you become acquainted with that dark secret?" he breathed in his ear.

"Through a misdirected letter of Miss Gwinn's. After



I had read it, I discovered that it must have been meant for Mr. Hunter, though addressed to me. It told me all. Dr. Bevary, I have had to carry the secret about with me all these years, bearing myself as one innocent of the knowledge—before Mrs. Hunter, before Florence, before him. I would have given half my savings not to have known it.”

“Were you aware that—that—one was living who might have displaced Mrs. Hunter?”

“Yes; and that she was in confinement. The letter, a reproachful one, was too explanatory.”

“She died this morning. It is with her—at least with her affairs—that my day has been taken up.”

“What a mercy!” ejaculated Austin.

“Ay, mercies are showered down every day; a vast many more than we, self-complaisant mortals, acknowledge or return thanks for,” responded Dr. Bevary, in the quaint tone he was given to favor. And then, in a few brief words, he enlightened Austin as to the actual truth.

“What a fiend she must be!” cried Austin, alluding to Miss Gwinn of Ketterford. “Oh, but this is a mercy indeed! And I have been planning how to guard the secret always from Florence!”

Dr. Bevary made no reply. Austin turned to him, the ingenuous look upon his face. “You do approve of me for Florence, do you not, sir?”

“Be you very sure, young gentleman, that you should never have got her, had I not approved,” oracularly nodded Dr. Bevary. “I look upon Florence as part of my belongings; and, if you mind what you are about, and don’t offend me, perhaps I may look upon you as the same.”

Austin laughed. “How am I to avoid offense?” he asked.

“By loving your wife with an earnest, lasting love; by making her a better husband than James Hunter has been enabled to make her poor mother.”

The tears rose to Austin’s eyes with the intensity of his emotion. “Do you think there is cause to *ask* me to do this, Dr. Bevary?”

“No, my boy, I do not. God bless you both! There!

leave me to get home to those patients of mine. You can be off back to her."

A few days given to preliminaries, and then Mr. Hunter stood before his workmen, his arm within Austin Clay's. He was introducing them to his new partner. The strike was at an end, and the men—so many as could be made room for—had returned; but Mr. Hunter would not consent to discharge the hands that had come forward to take work in the emergency.

"What has the strike brought you?" inquired Mr. Hunter. "Any good?"

Strictly speaking, the men could not reply that it had. In the silence that ensued after the question, one man's voice was at length raised. "We look back upon it as a subject of congratulation, sir."

"Congratulation!" exclaimed Mr. Hunter. "Upon what point?"

"That we have had the pluck to hold out so long in the teeth of difficulties," replied the voice.

"Pluck is a good quality when rightly applied," observed Mr. Hunter. "But what good has the 'pluck,' or the strike, brought to you in this case?—for that was the question we were upon."

"It was a lockout, sir: not a strike."

"In the first instance it was a strike," said Mr. Hunter. "Trollope's men struck, and you had it in contemplation to follow their example. Oh! yes, you had, my men; you know as well as I do that the measure was under discussion. Upon that state of affairs becoming known, the masters determined upon a general lockout. They did it in self-defense; and if you will put yourselves in thought into their places, judging fairly, you may not wonder that they considered it was the only course open to them. The lockout lasted but a short period, and then the yards were again opened—open to all who would resume work upon the old terms, and sign a declaration not to be under the dominion of the 'Trades' Unions. How very few availed themselves of this, you do not need to be reminded."

"We acted for what we thought the best, sir," said another.

"I know you did," replied Mr. Hunter. "You are—speaking of you collectively—steady, hard-working, well-

meaning men, who wish to do the best for yourselves, your wives and families. But, looking back now, do you consider that it was for the best? You have returned to work upon precisely the same terms you were offered then, having held out to the very verge of starvation. Here we are in the depth of winter, and what sort of homes do you possess to fortify yourselves against its severities?"

What sort indeed! Mr. Hunter's delicacy shrank from depicting them.

"I am not speaking to you now as your master," he continued, conscious that men do not like, and in some cases will not brook, this style of converse from their rulers. "Consider me for the moment your friend only; let us talk together as man and man—as equals on the great stage of life. I wish I could bring you to see the evil of these convulsions; I do not wish it from motives of self-interest, but for your sole good. You may be thinking, 'Ah, the master is afraid of another contest; this one has done him so much damage, and that's why he is going on at us against them.' You are mistaken; that is not why I speak. My men, were any further contests to take place between us, in which you held yourselves aloof from work, as you have done in this, we should at once place ourselves beyond dependence upon you, by bringing over foreign workmen. In the consultations which have been held between myself and Mr. Clay relative to the terms of our partnership, this point has been fully discussed, and our determination taken. Should we have a repetition of the past—and some think that it is not unlikely—Hunter & Clay would then import their own workmen."

"And other firms as well!" interrupted a voice.

"We know nothing of what other firms might do; to attend to our own interests is enough for us. I hope we shall never have to do this; but it is only fair to inform you that such would be our course of action. If you, our native workmen, brothers of the soil, abandon your work from any crotchets——"

"Crotchets, sir!"

"Ay, crotchets—according to my opinion," repeated Mr. Hunter. "Could you show me a real grievance, it might be a different matter. But let us leave motives

alone, and go to effects. When I say that I wish you could see the evil of these convulsions, I speak solely with reference to your good, to the well-being of your families. It cannot have escaped your notice that my health has become greatly shattered—that, in all probability, my life will not be much prolonged. My friends”—his voice sunk to a deep, solemn tone—“believing, as I do, that I shall soon stand before my Maker, to give an account of my works here, could I, from any paltry motive of self-interest, deceive you? Could I say one thing and mean another? No; when I seek to warn you against future troubles, I do it for your own sakes. If you can keep clear of them, do so. Whatever may be the urging motive of a strike, whether good or bad, fancied or real, it can only bring ill in the working. I would say were I not a master, ‘Put up with a grievance, rather than enter upon a strike;’ but, being a master, you might misconstrue the advice. My attention has been very much drawn of late to past strikes, and I cannot read of one that was not productive of evil. I am not going into the merits of the measures—to say this past strike was right, or that it was wrong; I speak only of the terrible amount of suffering they wrought. A man said to me the other day—he was from the factory districts—‘I have a horror of strikes, they have worked so much evil in our trade.’ You can get books which tell of them, and read for yourselves. How many orphans, and widows, and men in prisons are there, who have cause to curse this past strike! You know of a few; you do not know of all. It has broken up homes that, before it came, were homes of plenty and content, leaving in them despair and death. Let us try and go on better for the future.”

Every word spoken by Mr. Hunter, Daffodil's Delight could echo. Whether the men were in fault and brought the contest on needlessly, or whether they were justified, according to the laws of right and reason, it matters not here to discuss; the effects were the same, and they stood out broad, and bare, and hideous. Men had died of want, had been cast into prison, where they still lay, had committed social crimes, in their great need, against their fellow-men; worse than all, some, unable longer to bear up against their accumulation of distress, mental and bodily, had rushed, uncalled, into the dread presence of

God. Women had been reduced to the lowest extremes of misery and suffering, had been transformed into viragoes, where they once had been pleasant and peaceful; children had died off by scores. Homes were dismantled; Mr. Cox had cartloads of things that stood no chance of being recalled, and that could not be replaced in a dozen years. Families united before were scattered now; young men were driven upon idleness and evil courses; young women upon worse, for they were irredeemable. Would the men learn wisdom for the future by all this? It was uncertain.

When Austin Clay returned home that evening, he gave Mrs. Quale notice to quit. She received it in a spirit of resignation, intimating that she had been expecting it—that lodgings such as hers were not fit for Mr. Clay, now that he was Mr. Hunter's partner.

Austin laughed. "I suppose you think I ought to set up a house of my own."

"I dare say you'll be doing that one of these days, sir," she responded.

"I dare say I shall," said Austin.

"I wonder whether what Mr. Hunter said to-day will do any of 'em any service?" cried Peter Quale. "What do you think, sir?"

"I think it ought," replied Austin. "Whether it will, is another question."

"It mostly lies in this—in the men's being let alone," nodded Peter. "Leave 'em to theirselves, and they'll go on steady enough; but if them Trade Union folks, Sam Shuck and his lot, get over them again, there'll be more outbreaks."

"Sam Shuck is safe for some months to come."

"But there's others of his persuasion that ain't, sir; and Sam'll be out some time."

"Quale, I give the hands credit for better sense than to suffer themselves to fall under his yoke again, now that he has shown himself in his true colors."

"I don't give 'em credit for any sense at all, when they get unsettled notions into their heads," phlegmatically returned Peter Quale. "I'd like to know whether it's the Union that's helping Shuck's wife and children. Nancy said she was a-buying a sheep's heart yesterday."

“Sheep’s hearts is cheap now, in this quarter,” put in Mrs. Quale. “When customers run scarce, meat goes down. To think of the fools this Daffodil’s Delight has turned out this last six months!” she emphatically added. “To have lived upon their clothes and furniture, their saucepans and kettles, their bedding and their children’s shoes, when they might, most of ’em, have earned thirty-three shillings a week at their ordinary work! When folks can be so blind as that, it isn’t of no good talking to ’em; their eyesight’s obscured, and black looks white, and white black.”

Austin laughed at the remark, though it was not void of some rough reason—and went out. He was not going in to see John Baxendale. The man’s injuries had taken a turn, and he was recovering fast, hoping soon to be at work again. He was sitting by the bedside, dressed, when Austin entered.

“Well, Baxendale—still getting better?”

“Oh, yes, sir; I’m thankful to say it. The surgeon was here to-day, and told me I need fear no further relapse. I am a bit tired this evening; I stood a good while watching the folks opposite. She was giving him such a basting!”

“What! do you mean the Cheeks?”

Baxendale laughed. “She set on and she shook him soundly, and then she scratched him, and then she cuffed him—all outside the door. I do wonder that Cheek took it from her; but he’s just like a young puppy in her hands, and nothing better. Two good hours they were disputing there.”

“What’s the warfare about?”

“About his not getting work, sir. Cheek’s wife was just like many another wife in Daffodil’s Delight—urging her husband not to go to work, and vowing *she’d* strike if he didn’t stand out. I don’t know but Mother Cheek was about the most obstinate of all—making a merit of keeping him herself, and finding him in beer and tobacco. The very day of the night that I was struck down I heard her blowing him up for not ‘standing firm upon his rights,’ and telling him *she’d* rather go to his hanging than see him go back to work. And now she beats him because he can’t get anything to do.”

“Is Cheek one that cannot get any?”

“Cheek’s one, sir. Mr. Henry took on more strangers than did you and Mr. Hunter; so, of course, there’s less room for his old men. Cheek has walked about London these two days, till he’s footsore, trying different shops, but he can’t get taken on; there are too many out for him to have a chance. And she turns round and visits it upon him.

“I think some of the wives in Daffodil’s Delight are the most unreasonable women that ever were created,” ejaculated Austin.

“*She* is—that wife of Cheek’s,” rejoined Baxendale. “I don’t know how they’ll end it. She has shut the door in his face, vowing that he shall not put a foot inside it until he can bring some wages with him. Forbidding him to take work when it was to be had, and, now that it can’t be had, turning upon him for not getting it! If Cheek wasn’t a donkey he’d turn upon her again. There’s other women just as contradictory. I think the bad living has soured their tempers.”

“Where’s Mary this evening?” inquired Austin. Since her father’s illness Mary’s place had been by his side; it was something unusual to find her absent.

Baxendale lowered his voice as he replied, “She is getting ill again, sir. All her old symptoms have come back, and I am sure now that she is going fast. She is on her bed, lying down.”

As he spoke the last words, he stopped, for Mary entered. She seemed scarcely able to walk; a hectic flush shone on her cheeks, and her breath was painfully short.

“Mary,” Austin said, with much concern, “I am sorry to see you thus.”

“It is only the old illness come back again, sir,” she smiled, as she sunk back in the pillowed chair. “I knew it had not gone for good—that the improvement was but temporary. But now, sir, look how good and merciful God is—and yet we sometimes doubt him. What should he have spared me for, and given me this glimpse of strength, but that I might nurse my father in his illness, and be a comfort to him? He is nearly well—will soon be at work again, and wants me no more. Thanks ever be to God!”

Austin went out, marveling at the girl’s simple and beautiful trust—feeling that she was fit for her removal

whenever it should come. As he was passing up the street he met Dr. Bevary.

"I hear Mary Baxendale is worse," the doctor said.

"Very much worse," replied Austin. "I have just left her father."

At that moment there was a sound of contention and scolding, a woman's sharp tongue being uppermost. It proceeded from Mrs. Cheek, who was renewing the contest with her husband. Austin gave Dr. Bevary an outline of what Baxendale had said.

"And if another strike should come in a year's time, these women would be the first again to urge the men on to it—to 'stand up for their rights!' " exclaimed the doctor.

"Not all of them."

"Of course, not all. They have not all done it now. Mark you, Austin! I shall settle a certain sum upon Florence when she marries, just to help you both, and any olive branches you may be troubled with, in bread and cheese, should these strikes become the order of the day, and you get engulfed in them."

Austin smiled. "I think I can take better care than that, doctor."

"Take all the care you please. I shall put Florence on the safe side, in spite of your care. I have no fancy to see her reduced to one maid and a cotton gown. *Of course*, you are going round to her! you can tell her so."

Austin laughed; but he warmly grasped the doctor's hand.

He had turned on his way, when a man stole up to him from some side entry—a cadaverous-looking man, pinched and careworn. It was James Dunn; he had been discharged out of prison by the charity of some fund at the disposal of the governor. He humbly begged for work—"just to keep him from starving."

"You ask what I have not to give, Dunn," was the reply of Austin. "Our yard is full; and, consider the season. Perhaps, when spring comes on——"

"How am I to exist till spring, sir," he burst forth in a voice that was but just kept from tears—"and the wife, and the children?"



"I wish I could help you, Dunn. Your case is but that of many others."

"There have been so many strangers took on, sir!"

"Of course—to do the work that you and others refused."

"I have not a place to lay my head this night, sir. I have not so much as a slice of bread. I'd do the meanest work that could be offered to me."

Austin felt in his pocket for a small piece of money, and gave it to him. "What misery they have brought upon themselves!" he thought, as he moved away, and proceeded to Mr. Hunter's.

"Austin, you must live with me."

The words came from Mr. Hunter. Austin happened to remark that he had been giving Mrs. Quale notice, and must now determine upon his future residence. He looked at Mr. Hunter.

"Do you think that I could spare Florence? Where my home is, yours and hers must be. Is not this house large enough for us? Why should you seek another?"

"Quite large enough, sir. But—but I had not thought of it. It shall be as you and Florence will."

They both turned to her; she was standing underneath the light of the chandelier, the rich damask color mantling in her cheeks.

"I could not give you to him, Florence, if it involved your leaving me."

The tears glistened on her eyelashes. In the impulse of the moment she stretched out a hand to each. "There is room for us all, papa," she softly whispered.

Mr. Hunter drew his away. He clasped both their hands in his; he raised the other over them in the act of benediction, the tears which only glistened in the eyes of Florence, falling fast from his.

"Yes, it shall be the home of all, and—Florence!—the sooner he comes to it, the better. Bless, oh bless my children! and may this prove a happier, a more peaceful home for them than it has for me and mine!"

"Amen!" answered Austin, in his inmost heart.

[THE END.]



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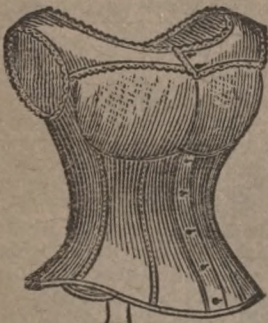
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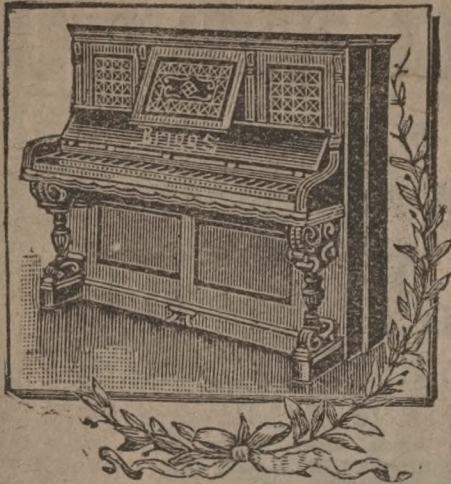
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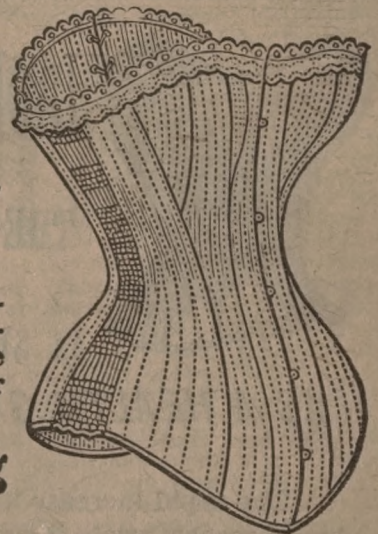
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As a soothing and strengthening nerve, "Favorite Prescription" is unequalled and is invaluable in allaying and subduing nervous excitability, irritability, exhaustion, prostration, hysteria, spasms and other distressing, nervous symptoms commonly attendant upon functional and organic disease of the womb. It induces refreshing sleep and relieves mental anxiety and despondency.

**Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription** is a legitimate medicine, carefully compounded by an experienced and skillful physician, and adapted to woman's delicate organization. It is purely vegetable in its composition and

perfectly harmless in its effects in any condition of the system.

**"Favorite Prescription"** is a positive cure for the most complicated and obstinate cases of leucorrhœa, or "whites," excessive flowing at monthly periods, painful menstruation, unnatural suppressions, prolapsus or falling of the womb, weak back, "female weakness," anteversion, retroversion, bearing-down sensations, chronic congestion, inflammation and ulceration of the womb, inflammation, pain and tenderness in ovaries, accompanied with internal heat.

In pregnancy, "Favorite Prescription" is a "mother's cordial," relieving nausea, weakness of stomach and other distressing symptoms common to that condition. If its use is kept up in the latter months of gestation, it so prepares the system for delivery as to greatly lessen, and many times almost entirely do away with the sufferings of that trying ordeal.

**"Favorite Prescription,"** when taken in connection with the use of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, and small laxative doses of Dr. Pierce's Purgative Pellets (Little Liver Pills), cures Liver, Kidney and Bladder diseases. Their combined use also removes blood taints, and abolishes cancerous and scrofulous humors from the system.

**Treating the Wrong Disease.**—Many times women call on their family physicians, suffering, as they imagine one from dyspepsia, another from heart disease, another from liver or kidney disease, another from nervous exhaustion or prostration, another with pain here or there, and in this way they all present alike to themselves and their easy-going and indifferent, or over-busy doctor, separate and distinct diseases, for which he prescribes his pills and potions, assuming them to be such, when, in reality, they are all only symptoms caused by some womb disorder. The physician, ignorant of the cause of suffering, encourages his practice until large bills are made. The suffering patient gets no better, but probably worse by reason of the delay, wrong treatment and consequent complications. A proper medicine, like Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, directed to the cause would have entirely removed the disease, thereby dispelling all those distressing symptoms, and instituting comfort instead of prolonged misery.

**"Favorite Prescription"** is the only medicine for women sold, by druggists, under a positive guarantee, from the manufacturers, that it will give satisfaction in every case, or money will be refunded. This guarantee has been printed on the bottle-wrapper, and faithfully carried out for many years. Large bottles (100 doses) \$1.00, or six bottles for \$5.00.

Send ten cents in stamps for Dr. Pierce's large, illustrated Treatise (160 pages) on Diseases of Women. Address, World's Dispensary Medical Association, No. 663 MAIN STREET, BUFFALO, N. Y.

# COLGATE & CO'S

For the thorough introduction of the perfume into every particle of the soap, elaborate and intricate machinery is used and every cake is stamped with such enormous pressure (30 tons) that it will outlast all other toilet soaps.

## CASHMERE

In addition to the unequalled washing qualities of Cashmere Bouquet, its perfume is exceptionally delicate and delightful, being composed of sweet delicious Oriental odors.

## BOUQUET

Messrs. Colgate & Co. have sold in the past year an amount of their CASHMERE BOUQUET Toilet Soap far in excess of the combined imports of Toilet Soaps from England, France, Germany, Italy, and all other countries.

## TOILET SOAP.

This enormous sale of a single soap is all the more remarkable when it is remembered that Cashmere Bouquet is but one of 103 varieties of toilet soaps manufactured by Colgate & Co.

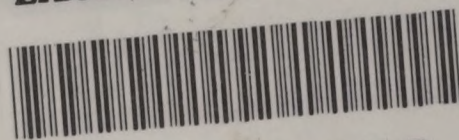








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