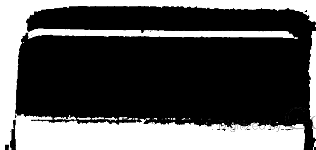

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Baddington Peerage:

Who won, and who wore it.

A Story of the Best and the Worst Society.

BY

George Augustus Sala,

Author of

"Twice Round the Clock," "Lady Chesterfield's Letters to her Daughter,"
"A Journey Due North," "Gaslight and Daylight,"
&c., &c., &c.

In Three Volumes.

Vol. I.

London:
Charles J. Skeet, King William Street, Strand.
1860.

Digitized by Google

MAIN LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

955
S159
bad
V. 1

PREFACE.

IT is questionable, whether a novel in three volumes requires any preface at all; but under some peculiar circumstances connected with this story, it is meet that I should say a few words regarding it, on this, its second introduction to the public.

The little I have to say must be divided into two parts; and the first portion is here set down, in justice to my bookseller. The "BADDINGTON PEERAGE" albeit its style is three years old, is not by any means a reprint pure and simple. From February to December, 1857, inclusive, little more than the skeleton of the story appeared in weekly chapters in the columns of the "Illustrated Times," a newspaper with which I was

074

Digitized by Google

then intimately connected. I don't think there was ever a book written in such a desultory and shiftless manner. The beginning differed very much from the commencement I had originally planned; the end was hastened, blurred and truncated; and I am afraid the middle was wanting altogether. The chapters of the "BADDINGTON PEERAGE" had to struggle and take their chance with leading articles, criticisms on picture exhibitions, theatrical notices and descriptive essays on woodcuts; and I dare say not half so interesting to the printers, or as edifying to the readers as a Murder or a Fire. I was obliged to leave England before the catastrophe hove in sight; but at last, mercifully, in a foreign country, I was permitted to affix the welcome word "Finis" to an unlucky enterprise, and to make an end of the "BADDINGTON PEERAGE." For eighteen months the dusty old files of papers lay by; and I forebore even to think of my novel. But circumstances having recently demanded its republication, I under-

Digitized by Google

took, at the request of the publishing firm whose property it has become, to clothe this musty skeleton with a little sounder flesh. Indeed, I have wholly recast the book, all has been revised, much has been added, and more re-written. New chapters have been interpolated; discrepancies amended, exuberances pruned down, and, I trust, a few exaggerations and improbabilities got rid of. What faults may be apparent now — and I am afraid they are neither few nor far between — are not faults of haste. They are errors of commission, not of omission. I am in hopes that these three volumes may pass into the hands of many who have neither seen nor heard of the original "BADDINGTON PEERAGE," and that even those who have really read the wandering and disconnected chapters in the "Illustrated Times," have not found their memory very tenacious as to the precise characteristics of that bygone attempt.

The second part of what I have to say is even more personal than the first. Very

Digitized by Google

many kind and judicious friends of my own have been candid enough, on many occasions, to express their opinion, that the "Baddington Peerage" is the worst novel that ever was written. I can't help saying, that much as I have struggled against a similar conviction, its foundation in truth has become unpleasantly palpable to my mind, and that my favourable estimate of the following pages is, on the whole, infinitesimal. There lies open to me an appeal *ad misericordiam*, for that this is the first novel I have ever written; and for that I did not undertake it of my own motion, but at the urgent solicitation of the then proprietor of the journal in which it originally limped into light. He and I made an exceeding bad thing of our bargain. But I disdain to sue for mercy; and, pleading guilty to the offence, claim no benefit of clergy, and am ready to suffer my appointed punishment. It may be somewhat angrily asked why, knowing the novel, as a novel, to be defective in almost every respect, I did not allow byegones to be byegones,

Digitized by Google

and bury the dreadful thing for ever? I assure you, that its reappearance is none of my fault. My proprietorial interest in the "Baddington Peerage" passed away more than two years since; and when its production, under the present auspices, was determined upon, I could not, in reason, refuse to do my best to render that which had hitherto been an unsightly deformity a somewhat shapelier and comelier infant. I trust that I may have succeeded. The contrary may be the case; and I may have added failure to failure. "Samson," says the sage of old, "was a strong man; but he could not pay money when he had it not." It was not in me to make this a good novel, melodramatic, comic, or sentimental. Will the benevolent reader give me credit for, at least, good intentions, and take the "Baddington Peerage" for what it is worth.

George Augustus Sala.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

CHAP. I. PAGE.

THE MORNING 1

CHAP. II.

"WATCHMAN—WHAT OF THE NIGHT?" . 32

CHAP. III.

THE NIGHT COMETH 45

CHAP. IV.

INTRODUCES A GENTLEMAN IN DIFFICULTIES . 73

CHAP. V.

THE NIGHT 92

Digitized by Google

CHAP. VI.

PAGE.

CAPTAIN POLLYBLANK SEES IT ALL . . 112

CHAP. VII.

THE MORNING AFTER 125

CHAP. VIII.

IN WHICH CAPTAIN POLLYBLANK MAKES ARRANGEMENTS TO INCREASE HIS CAPITAL 140

CHAP. IX.

"CROWNER'S 'QUEST" 154

CHAP. X.

THE TURNING TO A LONG LANE . . 168

CHAP. XI.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY GOES BACK TWENTY YEARS 187

CHAP. XII.

MRS. FALCON AT HOME 206

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XIII. PAGE.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY, AS FAR AS ONE OF ITS PERSONAGES IS CONCERNED, STOPS ALTOGETHER 217

CHAP. XIV.

TIMES, SCENES, AND PEOPLE CHANGE . 233

CHAP. XV.

HUMOURS OF PROFESSOR JACHIMO . . 261

CHAP. XVI.

THE DANGERS OF BEING PRETTY . . 276

CHAP. XVII.

ONLY A PAINTER 292

CHAP. XVIII.

PHILIP LESLIE 305

Digitized by Google

CORRIGENDUM IN VOLUME I.

Page 186, line 15: *for* Fleem's, *read* Tinctop's.

Digitized by Google

THE BADDINGTON PEERAGE.

CHAP. I.

THE MORNING.

THIRTY years since there stood (it stands now) in London Town, an inconsiderable slip of a thoroughfare, which was (and is still) one of the channels of communication between the grand street that Nash, Prince of Architects, built for George the Fourth, and the grander square erected by some other Vitruvius or Palladio—whose name I never knew, but who was probably a German—for George the First. The great street is all stucco, and the great square is all red brick; but my inconsiderable slip inclined (and inclines still) more to the dinginess of

Digitized by Google

the last than to the flimsiness of the first. This street (as it was, and is, and is to be, I presume, to the end of genteel Time, I will speak of it in the present tense) is not a handsome street. It is not a wide street. It has shops—shops both small and mean. A grocer, who sells candles, lives at one of its corners. He is not a wholesale grocer, not an Italian warehouseman; and his groceries are of so small a description, as to warrant the suspicion that he was, at no very remote period of time, a chandler's shopkeeper. Nearly opposite to him there is a barber (he calls himself a peruke-maker, *but he shaves, and for three halfpence:* selling also valentines in the season, kites, penny canes, and cheap periodicals all the year round). There was, when I first knew the street, a greengrocer's within its precincts. There are yet several lodging-houses, a boot-shop, and two taverns that flout its gentility. Yet, with all these plebeian drawbacks, Little Maddox Street, Hanover Square, was, in eighteen hundred and thirty, as it is now in eighteen

Digitized by Google

hundred and sixty—the most fashionable street in the greatest city of the world.

For in that formal, grey-stone, big-wig church of St. George's, right over against the street I have named, Fashion—etherial, capricious, beauteous, glittering, happy Fashion—has, for upwards of a century, erected a high altar for the Solemnisation of Matrimony. Since the death of Queen Anne, Fashion has elected to be married at St. George's. Fashion flutters and faints, and is flounced and furbelowed, there. It signs its name in the register; its jewelled hand trembling, its peachy cheek blushing through the roseate cosmetics prepared by Mr. Atkinson of Old Bond Street; it leaves an odour of millefleurs in the vestry, it comes forth, smiling and skirt-trailing, all lace and rich silks, and gems, and perfect felicity (of course), down these fashion-worn vestry-room steps, to where the lightly-hung chariots, with their gleaming wheels and footmen in embroidery, are waiting; to where the silky-skinned horses curvet in their armoried harness, pawing and stamping, and champing

Digitized by Google

their bits proudly, yet not with such a grace and dignity as are the special gifts of those other long-tailed, long-maned, coal-black steeds, which Mr. Resurgam, the undertaker, who lives only next door to the vestry-room, in Mill Street, owns, steeds which, in the course of time and business, have not unfrequently to curvet and stamp at Fashion's door, when the shutters are up and the blinds are down—when there are to be no more marriages, or giving away in marriage, and when Fashion is no longer Fashion, but Mortality.

You know that the vestry-room is but the second entrance—the back-door, in fact—of this aristocratic Temple; that in stately George Street, with its tall, shining windows, and red brick fronts with stone dressings, are the portico of the fane, and the broad flight of stone steps. I could never justly understand why the wedding procession should, so to speak, sneak out of the back-door, when, round the corner, it could come down to its chariots triumphantly, with room for coaches-and-six to turn, with ample space for a crowd to ad-

Digitized by Google

mire—for the charity boys to be ranged in line —for the beadle, in his scarlet and lace, to be seen to advantage—for the bride to shine forth in all her beauty, youth, happiness, wealth—for the brilliant following to show their gay feathers in all their iridescence—for all the spectators to shout, and throw up their caps, if so they listed. But Fashion has said that it will come down those steps; and Fashion is an institution of so Eleusinian and inscrutable a nature, that it baffles reason and calmly crushes consistency. Its laws, whatever they may be, and whoever framed them, are as those of the Medes and Persians. It is not for us, plebeians as we are, to question them; and they will endure, my brother, long after you and I have done with the two first sections of the first column of the "Times" Supplement (obtaining perchance not so much as a fleeting notice in the third compartment of that column), and are out of Fashion altogether.

One Tuesday, in the month of November, eighteen hundred and thirty, there was a grand wedding at St. George's, Hanover Square,—so

Digitized by Google

grand, indeed, that Mr. Scrattle, the beadle—that stern boy-compeller, with the large bright waistcoat—had not later than that morning expressed his surprise to Mrs. Muffit, landlady of the Silver Fish public-house, that the parties about to be joined together in holy matrimony were not "titled folk;" for, as Mr. Scrattle observed, "the dressins was perdigious, leastways like a Lord (as there is Two follerin, and a real Lord the bridegroom's best-man looks), and the bridesmaids, which you could measure twice your harm on their sleeves, lettin' alone 'ats with ribbing enough to set *you* up, mum, in an 'aberdasher's shop; likewise more carridges as was seen since the day that Lord Viscount Baddington—and a noble gentleman he was—married Miss Truepenny, ten years ago come Christmas."

A score of carriages at least—no pill-box-looking broughams; no dowdy clarences fit only for nursemaids to take their charges an airing in; no perched up cabriolets, with conceited horses and self-sufficient tigers; no compromises between chariots and flys—but

Digitized by Google

real roomy, thirty-years-ago carriages. They were mostly bright yellow, or of that peculiar shade of green known as "snuffy." They were addicted to red wheels; they had a leaning to hammercloths, trimmed with fringe like that which my Lord, the chimney sweep, wears on his coat on May Day; they were bountifully plastered with the heraldic patchwork of their noble owners; they were, to say the truth, clumsy, ugly, old-fashioned vehicles, but they were comfortable, substantial, and luxurious. What has become of them now? I know many of them fell into decadence and hackney-coach-hood; but what has become of the hackney-coaches themselves? Where are they gone? Have they been transplanted and transported far beyond the seas? Are the aristocracy of the Cannibal Islands borne to his anthropophagic Majesty's levees in those bygone equipages? Are they driven by Cumanchee coachmen in some out of the way South American Republic, so happy that it is never heard of in Europe? Are they the roosting places of fowls in backyards beyond mortal

Digitized by Google

hen? Or are they indeed utterly broken up and scattered?

There was no possibility of mistaking the bride's carriage—it was so grand. It was a chariot with four grays; and the whole equipage may be emphatically characterised as "shiny." For metal and glass, and rubbing and polishing, and rich, smooth stuffs, had been employed with so lavish a hand in that connubial caravan, that you could see yourself in the window-panes, the panels, the horses coats, the harness, the crimson jackets and brilliant tops of the postilions, their rubicund faces, white, fluffy, silky hats, shining spurs and glistening favours, the very rumble and imperial, and axle-boxes, even. The vehicle diffused a perfume of affluence—Fashionable affluence, mind—that floated through Maddox Street, and was wafted up Mill Street, across Conduit Street, and so into Savile Row, where it stole into faded consulting rooms of pippin-faced old sages of the Fashionable faculty, and made those wise old ravens chuckle even as they coughed, thinking that Fashion, being

Digitized by Google

married, would have children that would have chicken-pox and croup, and other ailments, from which even infant Fashion is not exempt. What does it matter if this effulgent equipage came indeed from a job-master's, and had its ordinary habitation in a livery stable instead of the coach-house of a *grand seigneur*, and had in its time conveyed plebeian couples—the sons and daughters of enriched Piccadilly tradesmen, perhaps, from humbler temples of Hymen? The banquet provided by Mr. Gunter is as succulent as the one dressed for us by our own professed cook. The stock of wine sent in half an hour ago by Messrs. Fortnum and Mason is as racy and enlivening as though it had lain for years in the dusty bins of our own cellar. Borrowed plate shines as brightly as our own silver, which we have not had time to send for from the bankers'; Mrs. Buck of Covent Garden will accommodate us with bouquets as bright and sweet-smelling as those grown in our own conservatories at Ealing or Roehampton. People job a good many things now-a-days besides horses. Borrowed plumes

Digitized by Google

are much worn this month—though I have not seen that announcement as yet in the *Follet* or the *Journal des Modes*; and I dont think we are a thousand miles distant from a favoured country, where a man may job titles and decorations that shall stand him in as good stead as the coronet of a Howard or the riband of the Garter.

Lord Viscount Baddington's carriage-horses were rubbing their nose against the rumble of the bride's chariot, sympathising doubtless with their noble owner, who was at that very moment of time engaged in saluting the bride in the vestry. His Lordship's carriage was sympathetic too. It had a gouty look: his Lordship was afflicted with podagra. It was very yellow: his Lordship's complexion was that of an over-ripe shaddock. It shook a good deal: so did his Lordship. It was very soft and luxurious, very warm and lazy-looking, very lofty and quite empty; all of which the world (which I do not believe) said were characteristics of his Lordship.

There was the carriage of the bride's papa and mamma, cosy and unpretentious, but

Digitized by Google

wealthy-looking—O! quite Crœsus-like in yellowness. There was the private carriage of Sir William Guy, Baronet, of Oldtress Manor, in the County of Kent, and Member of Parliament for the borough of Mayford, which imposing coach (plum-coloured, turned up with scarlet) was not on the present occasion (and for certain reasons) in the occupancy of its proprietor, but had brought to this most Fashionable wedding, Compton Guy, Esq., the Baronet's only brother, and a cornet in His Majesty's Horse Guards Blue. There was old Lady Tottringham's carriage, with the well-known pair of vicious black horses which fought with and bit each other as they trotted; the carriage was at every wedding—nobody exactly knew why; and there were half-a-dozen more carriages and chariots belonging to nameless notabilities—the "supers" of fashion, they may be called, whose principal occupation, it would seem, is to be rich, and drive about leaving cards, and fill up the backgrounds at births, and deaths, and marriages, whenever Fashion is born, or is wedded, or buried.

Digitized by Google

It had apparently snowed white favours during the night, so plentifully were those tokens of bridal felicity displayed on hats and jackets, in button-holes and horses' ears. Young girls in the crowd looked with a smiling roguish envy on those satin rosettes, thinking, perhaps, how many cap-ribbons had been spoiled for the decoration of grooms, and porters, and lacqueys; thinking, perchance, how agreeable it would be to have a display of similar white favours at one's own wedding, instead of sitting up half the night in the milliner's stifling workroom, making them. For I have heard my grandmother say, that a wise cruel Ruler, once, addressing his subjects from his throne, told them that the march of civilisation was like that of an army, and could not be accomplished without leaving some victims in its wake; and my grandmother, good soul, had heard from her grandmamma, I think, that Fashion marched somewhat like an army too; and would sometimes, in its advance towards Ineffable Perfection and Belgravian Beatitude, leave behind it pale cheeks, and

Digitized by Google

swollen eyes, and aching hearts, with some poverty, and considerable anguish, and a little Death.

The elements had been favourable to Fashion on this joyful occasion, and had politely provided a fine day with as cheerful a promptitude as the pastrycooks had provided the wedding breakfast, as the job-master had sent the four grays and the crimson-vested postilions, or as the Rector of St. George's had laid on an extra curate to assist him in his arduous labour of reading the marriage service. There was a November crimson fire-ball in the heavens like an artificial firework that Fashion could order and pay for. The fog had gone out of town for the day, to look up a friend in Essex (William-of-the-Wisp, Esq., the Marshes, near Plaistow), and the sky was of that reluctantly cerulean tint that resembles a rather yellow muslin window curtain through which the sun is shining. But though passably fine overhead, there was under foot as rich a stratum of good, thick, clinging mud as any covetous crossing sweeper would desire to see and make a harvest

Digitized by Google

by. There had been several political meetings of some low people called Radicals during the past week—fellows who wanted to be Represented, or something of that sort, and were very troublesome; and the elements, again acting with Fashionable high-toryism, had come down upon the rogues with rain, and had so drenched them, that they had remained, perforce, in their squalid homes, and the Prime Minister's windows had remained unbroken from Saturday to Monday. Hence the mud in Little Maddox Street; and hence the great agony and tribulation undergone by sundry exquisites, inappreciably more fashionable than any of the titled persons I have yet mentioned, more richly dressed, comelier in feature, taller in figure, loftier in demeanour, haughtier in conversation; but who, through the gross injustice, envy and partiality of Society, are never mentioned in the "Court Guide," or the "Morning Post," or the "Royal Red Book." I mean those honest gentlemen, who, for a certain yearly stipend, consent to put flour on their heads, and coals on the fire, and victuals

Digitized by Google

on the table; to be called "John" when their name may be Peter; to wear silk stockings and parti-coloured clothes; to walk before lap-dogs, and behind old ladies; to be, what should properly and courteously be termed retainers, henchmen, adherents, servitors, attendants, vassals if you will, but what irreverent men persist in calling flunkies.

There stood in the mud—the vile plebeian mud—an honest British man of this category, and he shall stand, too, as a model for all his brethren—the bride's father's sergeant-footman, none else. Six feet in height; a shapely man, broad shoulders, beef-asserting chest, lusty calves clad in silk, like pink balustrades supporting an architrave of plush. Large, glossy, protruding whiskers, wings to the calm edifice of his face—whiskers that an ambitious little foot-page might be tempted to lay hold of, that he might pull himself up to footmanhood. A front—not exactly "like Jove to threaten or command," but a good solid head for all that, with plenty of front and *plenty of back*, and bushels of

Digitized by Google

powder. White teeth, white gloves, white neckcloth, white favours, a delicate bloom on each cheek, a pensive but complacent smile, (the mud lay heavy on his soul, but the sense of duty to the Fair made him hold up), a graceful aiguillette, and the largest cocked-hat that ever was seen since the lamented demise of his late Royal Highness the Duke of York. Such was the outward semblance of John, whose name might have been Peter, as he stood in his varnished, silver buckled shoes, gracefully reclining on his gold-tipped bamboo, and waiting for his masters and mistresses to come out of church. He had the mien and bearing of a Prince; yet who would have thought that this prince was not proud, but was in secret affable, and had, only five minutes since, condescended to cross the road with Tummas, his companion, and to partake at that thirsty "Silver Fish" of Geneva and cloves?

"Who's funeral is this, footman?"

Now I put it to you if you were so dressed, so appointed, so turned out—for that is the word—from a band-box of splendour; and if

Digitized by Google

you had the same "high disdain and sense of merit" as had this magnificent creature: *how* would you like to be addressed as "Footman," and to be asked whose funeral it was on the occasion of the most fashionable wedding that had occurred for ten years?

More than this, how would you like to be so spoken to by a shameful thing, who had the form and garments of a woman, the face, and voice, and gestures of no sex, but of a phantom; whose horrible, swollen, reeling, ragged presence was a blot upon the Sun, and a shame to the day, and a scandal to the occasion; who was young in years by her black hair, and a hundred years old by her Death-discs of eyes; who looked as if she had risen suddenly from the mud, and was its sister?

I am glad that John-Peter did not fell her to the earth with his golden-tipped bamboo. He would have been justified, of course, his feelings were so dreadfully outraged; but he was a chivalrous man, devoted to the sex, and he spoke her fair.

"It aint a funeral," he responded un-

Digitized by Google

affectedly; "it's a marriage. Can't you see, stupid?"

"Curse you," the woman resumed quite rudely; "you know what I mean. Whose marriage is it, fool?"

Again the cheeks of the insulted John Thomas glowed with virtuous resentment; again the bamboo quivered for a moment in his hand, but again he withheld himself.

"Gaw'long," he said, with great forbearance.

"If you don't give me an answer, you jack-anapes," the woman exclaimed, as calmly as though she had been addressing an Equal, though every muscle in her face was trembling with suppressed passion, "I'll heave this mud over you."

She stooped as she spoke, and actually plunged her scooped hands into the kennel. The suddenness, and desperation, and abnegation of womanhood in the action—her furious face, her wild appearance, that dreadful dress, which was not that of a peasant, nor that of a beggar, nor that of a wanton, but a mixture of all three: all these things, together with her

Digitized by Google

threat, so discomposed John-Peter, that he knew not for the nonce what to reply. He looked round helplessly for Mr. Scrattle, the beadle; but that official was in the church. There was a coach-door between him and his brethren — there was no new policeman at his elbow, and he was positively constrained to give his questioner an answer.

"It's Mr. Falcon's eldest daughter, which is married to Sir William Guy, Barrinet," he explained, "which is Mr. Falcon, of Grosvenor Square, and is Lord Wycount Baddington's nevay; and now you know all about it, and—and"; but here he broke down in his oratory, and recommending the woman to "gaw'long," so concluded.

She needed no second bidding. She had turned, and taken her wretched body away, before the footman had closed his mouth. He, making a feint of driving her off by a gentle movement of the bamboo stick, was pleased to find her gone; and felt not even hurt when an angry costermonger and a street-boy, who stood upon his dignity, asked him derisively

Digitized by Google

"vere he vos a-drivin to?" adding to the inquiry the insulting epithet of "welvet shanks." Nor did he show much indignation when the depraved crowd, stirred up by the costermonger's sarcasm, saluted him and Tummas, his companion, and Chawles, his fellow, and 'Enry, his mate in servitude, with ironical cheers of "Bravo, knobsticks!" and recommendations to look at the backs of their heads, because mischievous boys had spilt bags of flour over them. For to say the truth, the woman had been too much for John-Peter's nervous system; he trembled, he winked, his whiskers became flaccid with agitation, and he did not recover his equilibrium till the appearance of Mr. Scrattle at the top of the vestry-room steps, in a high state of inflammation of face and waist-coat, announced to all concerned that the wedding party was about to descend.

The boys in the crowd began to cheer lustily as the people who had had to do with Hymen appeared on the threshold of a New Life. *Aïmè*, what a threshold! *Oïbò*, what a life! There are two gates to Saint George's, one of

Digitized by Google

Ivory and one of Horn; and where is that which is of Ivory but in Little Maddox Street? And lo, through the Ivory teeth of that door come the couple who have been joined together in holy matrimony, into a fantastic dreamy region where there is nothing certain—nothing real. She, whom the parson asks at the communion-rails if she will have yonder man in the dress-coat to be her wedded husband, takes, unconsciously, a lottery ticket from the hands of the mumbling clerk when she falters forth "yes;" and the Three Fates cower at the bottom of the vestry-room steps, and give her, as she passes the Threshold of Ivory, a prize or a blank—oft-times the latter; a Prize that shall make her fruitful, and loved, and honoured, and a crown to her husband; a Blank, that shall tell her she is yoked to a ruffian or a sot, whom she has taken for life, for poorer and poorer, for worse and worse, in health, sickness, and in soul-sorrow, for him to outrage and oppress, till merciful Death do them part.

But there was no just cause or impediment

Digitized by Google

(there never is in fashionable marriages), why *these* two parties should not come together. So down they came together accordingly, in this order of procession:—

Mr. Scrattle, Beadle, agitated, but equal to the emergency; telegraphing all the way to John who might have been Peter, who telegraphed to Tummas; so he to Chawles, 'Enry on the coach-box in outlying Mill Street not being forgotten; and Jems (Lady Tottringham's particular, grown on her Ladyship's estate), being summoned by instantaneous (juvenile and penny-feed) messengers from Mrs. Muffit's hostelry, telegraphs followed by a simultaneous and wide-spreading adjustment of cocked-hats, couching of gold-headed bâtons, and opening of carriage doors with a clang.

Next: the Bride and Bridegroom. Here is something official, which, like a flourish of trumpets, will serve to introduce two personages so important. Read this from the *Times* newspaper, of the —th November, eighteeen hundred and thirty.

Digitized by Google

"MARRIAGES.—At. St. George's, Hanover "Square, by the Rev. Lawrence Grylls, M.A., "assisted by the Rev. Caseous Lacteal, B.A., "Sir William Katesby Rookwood Fox Guy, "son and heir of the late Sir Ambrose Percy "Powderham Guy, of Oldtress Manor, near "Mayford, Kent, Bart., to Caroline Amy, "eldest daughter of Gervase Falcon, Esq., "of his Majesty's Carpet-bag, and Hat-box "office, and of Grosvenor Square."

I flatter myself that by the judicious employment of those editorial bosom-friends, the sharp-cutting scissors, I have avoided a very great difficulty, and almost imperative necessity for digression, in explaining to you "who was who" (to employ an ungrammatical but popular idiotism) in eighteen hundred and thirty.

A hat, then thought the acmé of taste, elegance and beauty, but which, now-a-days, would be considered as hideous, absurd, and unbecoming, as I fervently trust blue uglies and crinoline petticoats will be thought ten years hence — a satin cart-wheel, about which had been entangled some ribbon harness; a

Digitized by Google

white gros-de-Naples pelisse (yes, ladies and gentlemen, a pelisse); sleeves like balloons, like Titanic legs of mutton, like Brobdignag pears, like Polyphemus pegtops painted white; a lace collar something like an Elizabethan ruff, something like Herodias's charger, with — not the Baptist's head in it — but the pretty, blushing, happy face of Caroline Amy the Bride; skirts of extreme brevity, pink silk stockings, with open work on the instep; white satin shoes, with strings crossed over the foot; and — shall it be told in Gath? —it shall, for this is a faithful chronicle— some curious Vandyking and frilling manifest between the end of the skirts and the beginning of the ancle, which would have delighted the æsthetic eyes of Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, who (for gallantry's sake let me hasten to remark) could not, by any possibility, have passed the verge of infancy thirty years ago. Is not this the fact, you, gentlemen who were married in eighteen hundred and thirty? Didn't you wed a young lady in a coach-wheel hat, leg-of-mutton sleeves, short skirts,

Digitized by Google

and Vandyked trousers? Were you not married yourselves in a hat with a turned-up brim, a chocolate coat with the collar up to your ears, Cossack pantaloons, peaked boots, and three under-waistcoats? Go, tell your children this, and they in their turn shall tell their grandchildren that they married a young lady in a hoop of iron, horse-hair, and gutta-percha, with a cushion on the top of her head, and her hair scragged back like unto a Mandarin's wife of Shanghai; being themselves arrayed in a costume, in which the semblance of the tavern waiter struggles for mastery with the undertaker out for a holiday. This was the Bride; eighteen summers, bright eyes, smiles, a little foot, and — if you desire a closer portraiture, go read Sir John Suckling's ballad on a wedding.

The chocolate coat, underwaistcoats, and Cossack pantaloons hinted at, and to fill this equipment a long, strange, bony body; a longer, stranger, bonier, face; long hands; long feet; a curious, shambling, awkward gait; sleepy, yet restless, gray eyes; an ex-

Digitized by Google

pression of mouth, half amounting to a yawn, and half to a sneer; hair of no particular colour, but with a lingering suspicion of sandiness — hair that would obstinately persist in lying the contrary way to that in which it was brushed, and with an inequality in its length and thickness that made you involuntarily surmise that its owner had gone to bed without a nightcap in a room troubled with rats, and had had a portion of his *chevelure* bitten off by those voracious animals during the night. This was the Bridegroom.

A stout, well-to-do, crimson-faced gentleman, in the prime of life; his stiff, black hair a little shot with gray; white waistcoat and white neckcloth, both capacious; diamond stud buttons; heavy gold chain, seals and key. This was the Bride's Father, Gervase Falcon, Esq., of his Majesty's Carpet-bag and Hat-box Office — a sinecure, value two thousand five hundred pounds per annum.

A larger pelisse than any present, but of discreet gray silk; a larger hat and feathers, larger sleeves, longer ribbons; a larger and

Digitized by Google

more comfortable person, and lavender kid boots. Make way, O you beadle, and scatter the boys, for this is the Bride's Mamma.

A fur collar, fringing a snuff-coloured frock, brave in braiding; John-Peter, the footman's legs, but cased in black silk stockings; small, delicate, white hands, covered with signet and antique gems and brilliant rings, and disdaining the white kid gloves which were carried, as a matter of form, crumpled up in one palm; a white head, and a purple face, with twinkling gray eyes and a flexible mouth; large ears (even lords must have ears; and Midas, though more than a lord — for he was a king — had ears); a large shirt-collar; a very large hat with a broad brim; a double gold-rimmed eyeglass; the daintiest of varnished pumps; a gold-headed stick (John-Peter's baton's noble relative); a great deal of feebleness, and shaking, and tottering; but O! such true nobility of movement, action, gesture! Who could be the possessor of all these things but Lord Viscount Baddington, mincing along with the youngest

Digitized by Google

and prettiest of the bridesmaids on his arm?

But why this noble lord at the wedding of a mere commoner? Why this condescension on the part of his Lordship in attending this wedding? Why so grand a wedding at all?

So much. If you had ever seen the edition of the peerage published in the year of grace eighteen hundred and thirty, you would have read therein that the Christian and family names of Lord Viscount Baddington in the Peerage of Ireland were Charles Rook Delahawk Falcon; and if you had known anything of fashionable genealogy, you would have been cognisant of the facts that his Lordship's only and younger brother, the Honorable Hew Hernshaw Falcon, a captain in his Majesty's land forces, was slain in action in Spain in eighteen hundred and ten; that it was through the noble Viscount's influence that the deceased Captain's son and heir (to nothing), Gervase Falcon, Esq., obtained that responsible position in the

Digitized by Google

Carpet-bag and Hat-box Office, whose duties he discharged with such admirable efficiency, and the salary attached to which he drew with such praiseworthy regularity. What, then, so natural as for his Lordship to attend his grand-niece's wedding?

Behind this Noble Peer came another couple through the Ivory gate. Only Compton Guy, of the Blues, as tall as his brother, but not awkward, not grotesque, — only very listless, tired, and washed-out in appearance, and in a state of unmistakeable despair and terror at being obliged to give his arm to that immense old Lady Tottringham, who always reminded you of a trifle — not that she was of delicate dimensions, but that she irresistibly suggested a piled-up hecatomb of quivering jelly, cream sweetmeats, macaroons, and tipsy-cake. Waggish children of Fashion used to call her the bride-cake, so loaded was she with ornaments, so rich was she without and within.

Who next in the wedding train? Who next? I hope I shall not be accused of un-

Digitized by Google

due familiarity with regard to Fashion, if I sum the rest of the attendants up as the Right Honourable Tag, the Honourable Rag, and the Very Reverend Bobtail. But all bravely dressed — all glittering, and shining, and gleaming in the red sun, which, with an extra stretch of courtesy to Fashion, burst out again in augmented splendour, as the procession made its descent.

Then the bells rang out, and the boys cheered again; the noble company entered their chariots of state, the stalwart footmen jumped up behind. Away went bride and bridegroom, with their four grays and crimson-vested postilions; away went that portly papa, and portlier mamma of the bride, in *their* carriage; away went Lord Viscount Baddington and Compton Guy, and all the pretty bridesmaids and aristocratic Tags, and Rags, and Bobtails, — like the baseless fabric of a story-teller's vision, leaving not a wreck in Little Maddox Street behind.

Yet This was not a dream, nay, nor the shadow of a vain imagining, but a Truth:

Digitized by Google

that as the carriage of the bride's father drove away, there suddenly stept out from the cheering, admiring crowd, a dreadful, haggard, ragged Woman, who did not cheer, and did not admire, and did not wave her handkerchief, but with a hell-glance in her evil face, flung through the open carriage-window something like a letter, but crushed and crumpled up into a ball. It fell on Gervase Falcon's lap, and the Woman who threw it was gone again in an instant, as in the Footman's time before.

"Wot is he a doin' of?" asked of Mr. Scrattle, one of the then (very new) policemen, who, prospectively true to the future traditions of his order, had sauntered up when there was no longer the slightest occasion for his services.

"He's a readin' of a pepper" Mr. Scrattle rejoined; "and, bless my 'art alive, 'ow pale he looks!"

Digitized by Google

CHAP. II.

"WATCHMAN—WHAT OF THE NIGHT?"

A PRECISELY analogous remark to that uttered by the Beadle, though couched in language more refined, broke from the lips of Mrs. Gervase Falcon, as, when the happy wedding-party drove away from Saint George's, Hanover Square, the missive, which might have been a missile, skimmed through the window, and fell on her husband's lap.

"Good gracious! how pale you are, my dear!" This was what Mrs. Gervase Falcon exclaimed. I think a similar exclamation might be condoned even in *you*, stoic of stoics — to whom the sight, maybe, of your grandmother's ghost would cause no greater

Digitized by Google

emotion than an oscillation of the eyelid, if you were to see the face of a person, five seconds before rubicund with health and apparent happiness, suddenly assume the hue of modellers' clay, and then a tinge more awfully resembling the Clay into which God resolves this poor potsherd when the stream is dried up on which the Earthen and the Brazen float, and they come into collision and are shattered for ever.

Not much less pale than the face opposite were the hands which, shaking as with the palsy, unrolled that paper ball; and not much less fiery than a furnace were the eyes which scorched up and sucked in the writing on the crumpled, ragged scrap. One hand closed on the letter, summons, death-warrant, ballad —whatever it may have been—closed on it rolled up into a ball again; the other sought a certain place on the buff waistcoat, perhaps to feel the links of the heavy gold chain, perhaps to feel the pulsations of the heavier human heart beneath.

"My dear," the happy bride's Papa rejoined

Digitized by Google

to the enquiry of his spouse, "My dear, I feel — I felt — that is, I don't feel as if ——. *My God, is there anybody there?*"

"Anybody there? Mr. Falcon — my dear Gervase. Shall I stop the carriage? Are you ill?"

"Anybody there — anybody where?" In the squabs of the carriage—he looked at them. In his hat — he looked at it. Under the seat — he looked there. In the street — the sky — the sun that had gone into the gray clouds — the moon that had not risen from them yet; for Mr. Falcon had thrust his head, first out of one window, next out of the other, searching the whole prospect with those eager eyes.

Drawing in his head at last, and wiping his face, not so pale now, but very clammy, disordered, and scared, he began to laugh in a hard, dry manner.

"It's nothing, my dear Caroline, nothing," he said, with, Heavens and Earth! such a *something* in every denial. "Nothing — a begging letter. Yes; that's it. A begging

Digitized by Google

letter. Some vagabond has been writing me a begging letter. What a curious occasion to choose! Ha! ha! Our dear girl's wedding-day, and the church door! The church door, too!"

"What a cur'ous place, and what a cur'ous party!" John-Peter, on the knifeboard behind, with his gold-tipped stick at an angle of forty-five degrees with the carriage roof, was at that very instant of time thinking—thinking as at *this* present instant you may be thinking of persons thousands of miles away, or as thousands may be thinking about *you*, at your elbow, or at the farthest ends of the earth; seeming enemies with thoughts of love, seeming dear friends with thoughts of hatred, but for them and for you never to know their truth or falsity, or the thoughts themselves, till the End is here and the Soul-Silences become eternally eloquent.

As Gervase Falcon's carriage rolled swiftly Grosvenor-squarewards, it may be that its owner dreamed a dream: the ragged scrap of paper still clutched in his hand. He dreamed—

Digitized by Google

perchance, that he was at his daughter's wedding again, and that he saw the pretty bride blushing, the long bridegroom nervously twisting his fingers, the gay following rustling their robes of silk, and fluttering their garnitures of gauze and lace. There was the Reverend Grylls, and there the Reverend Lacteal, Rector and Curate, standing within the communion-rails; there was the goodly Church-and-State-presence of St. George's, Hanover Square, suggestive of the Royal Arms, the Thirty-nine Articles, plenty of plum-cake, red port wine and the "John Bull" newspaper. And it fell out that dreaming the dream, Gervase Falcon dreamed that he was dreaming another. He was still at a wedding; but it was in a little old, grey, mossy, country church. There was but one clergyman, a very nervous young country parson, evidently new to his business, who began by opening the Prayer-book at the Gunpowder Plot instead of the Marriage Service, and stammered wofully, and asked the Bride (who did *not* wear a hat and feathers, and was not—so curious are dreams—in the

Digitized by Google

least like Caroline Amy, now Lady Guy) absurd questions: saying to her, "SARAH, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded husband?" and the like; then blushing, and trying back, and being brought to great confusion. Who's wedding was this? Caroline Amy's! But Lord Baddington gave that Bride away, and here was a Bride-giver in the person of a broad-faced, bald-headed fellow, whose waistcoat bore unmistakeable marks of an apron-string, and who might have been the landlord of the village inn, summoned to perform his duties in haste. Who was the Bridegroom, too? Not Sir William Guy, Baronet, for *this* espouser was neither tall, nor nervous, nor awkward. Was the church itself St. George's, or the venerable parish church of some quiet village?—Long Mallow, Mallows Cray, Saint-Mallow-in-the-Marshes, for instance. But the parties were married in a dream. They swore to love and cherish, to honour and obey, in a dream. They were joined together—in a dream—by Heaven; and no man was to put them asunder. Never to

Digitized by Google

be put asunder, in a dream or in vital reality. Never to be put asunder?—But does not Novalis say "that when we dream that we are dreaming, we are near waking?" — and thus, as Gervase Falcon dreamed that he was dreaming of a wedding in a village church—a wedding at which the costumes of bride and bridegroom far more resembled those of eighteen hundred and ten, than of eighteen hundred and thirty, he WOKE to find himself at the door of his own mansion in Grosvenor Square, with the ragged scrap of paper still clutched in his hand.

So now all this goodly company hied into the dining-room, whose mahogany tables groaned (they always groan) beneath the weight of all the delicacies of the season. Are there any seasons, I wonder, in the year without delicacies? Not for Fashion, surely. In the night season, when deep sleep falleth upon men, Fashion can have its "delicacies" in eiderdown quilts, spring beds, and tables laid out *en cas de nuit*. In that darkest, stillest of all seasons—the Winter Season of Life—the

Digitized by Google

last day of the last year, to which no new year is to succeed—there are delicacies for Fashion, even then. For are not "rich silk hat-bands" delicacies?—and hatchments, and "crimson velvet with cherub handles and gilt nails," and the "usual achievements?"

The delicacies, however, which Gunter the renowned furnished forth for the marriage table on the present occasion, were by no means funeral baked meats. Need I describe the wedding breakfast? I long to do so. I dearly wish it were *your* bridal-feast—Idol of my soul with the chesnut locks—I had to describe. As the scene cannot here be narrated, let it be imagined; which, according to the Pandects of penny-a-lining, is "better," under all circumstances of "scenes."

...."For I am sure," Lord Baddington went on to say, standing up at the table, quite beautifully, on those polished silken legs, and holding a champagne glass in his trembling white fingers, "for I am sure, Ladies and Gentlemen, there is not one person present on this auspicious, this mirthful, I may say this de-

Digitized by Google

lightful occasion," ("Hear!" from Compton Guy, and a sigh from a Bridesmaid who, perfectly agreeing with the poet, that "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view," thought the near prospect of thirty years of age and celibacy anything but enchanting), "who will not from the bottom of his or her heart" (tears from the younger sisters of the bride) "respond heartily—nay, enthusiastically" ("Good!" from the honourable Tag and Co.; "Very. Good!" from Compton Guy) "to the toast I am about to propose.—The health of the Bride." All the honours. Seventeen times seven. One cheer more. Six cheers more. Any numbers of cheers more. They cheered in England in eighteen hundred and thirty. They were a vulgar race. Old Lady Tottringham not only drank the toast, but ate it in lobster salad. Compton Guy broke one glass and overturned another. Confusion!

A speech from the Bridegroom, consisting mainly of monosyllables, blushes and "hems." Tremendous cheering. Many more speeches, many more cheers, many more healths pro-

Digitized by Google

posed and drunk with all the honours. The ladies' eyes began to sparkle as the bubbles of Ruinart's and Moët's delicious nectarine poison —they did not drink Cliquot then—scintillated in the slender glasses. The last speeches were somewhat rambling, not to say husky, as regards utterance—not to say (oh! not for the world to hint at) somewhat incoherently champagny. Old Lady Tottringham told Compton Guy, flatly to his face, that he was tipsy; and, said the jolly old lady, that it reminded her of her young days, when Mr. Fox took wine with Mr. Sheridan. But it was a brave wedding, any way. Was there ever a braver one before or since?

The proud and happy father of the bride, after that grand speech of his, which was so much applauded, and which caused him to shed tears—of pride and happiness no doubt —was standing near the dining-room door, holding both his daughter's hands in his: She, poor little bird, blushing and sobbing, nestling on his breast; He looking in her face with inexpressible tenderness and fondness. Should

Digitized by Google

it not be so, all good people, when the first-born, the dear daughter of the house, goes forth to new ties, new obligations, and new life? The Bridegroom had spoken some manly, sensible words to Mrs. Falcon, though he was but an awkward, bony fellow of a baronet, who stammered when he spoke. Mrs. Falcon was certain, she said, that William would do his duty to Caroline. The younger sisters, Lucy Falcon of the raven tresses, and Sarah (her father had insisted that his youngest daughter should be christened Sarah—a name which Mrs. Falcon objected to as horribly ungenteel, and only admitted, under protest, as "Sara")—Sarah of the clustering ringlets clung about Caroline-Amy, and cried, and laughed, as girls in such joy-sorrows will do. The little family group were somewhat isolated. Lord Baddington—excellent nobleman—left them to the indulgence of their natural emotions, and devoted himself to the consolation of a pretty bridesmaid, in peach-coloured satin, with a lace scarf in *point d'Alençon* over it; and who, having nothing

Digitized by Google

particular to cry about, was weeping in a most heart-rending manner. Compton Guy had gone to the window, and was flattening his military nose against the panes, looking at the Bride's travelling chariot, with the four grays, and the postilions vested in pink, with the little ragamuffins, the policemen, the people with nothing to do, the nurserymaids, and the afternoons' milk waiting to see the Bride and Bridegroom come out. Tag and Co. had gone to champagne again, whispering witticisms; and old Lady Tottringham, after having eaten and drunk a good deal more than was good for her, had gone to sleep, a glass of maraschino beneath her good old nose.

"*Libiamo ne' lieti calici!*" Fill up the cup once more. A health to their life-long happiness! A fairy's silver shoe to throw after William and Caroline. The Noble Viscount suggested to the pretty bridesmaid, who, having nothing to cry about, was crying, that one of her pink satin shoes would be the very thing to throw. The pretty bridesmaid blushed. Then they opened the dining-room

Digitized by Google

door; and John-Peter, and Tummas, and 'Enry and Chawles not being omitted, threw wide open the great lions'-head knockered portals, that gave egress to Grosvenor Square.

Hark!

It was no more a Dream, but as true as Death, that, just at this moment a Scream—long, loud, piercing, horrible to hear—rang through the entrance-hall, echoing and re-echoing from basement to garret of the whole grand house. There was a start and a cry of amazement from the gay company, an unlocking of clasped hands, a suspension of whispers. Smiles dropped from lips like withered leaves, and fond looks froze in the eyes of women. Then the proud and happy father, with an awful prescience in his face, sprang through the open doorway.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. III.

THE NIGHT COMETH.

IT needed no second summons beyond that Trumpet-Scream to bring the guests pell-mell into the hall, Gervase Falcon first and foremost. There he—there they—found fighting, howling, and wrestling with the footmen on the oil-cloth of the hall, a ragged, shameful woman — possibly, to credit one's ears, mad; apparently, to credit one's eyes, in an epileptic fit; certainly, to credit one's olfactory organs, drunk.

Amid the noise and confusion, and hurrying to and fro of feet, the shrieking of the woman-kind, and the clamour of men's tongues, things naturally resulting from so untoward, unfore-

Digitized by Google

seen, and unseemly an event as the falling into a fit on an oil-cloth, of a drunken mad-woman at the threshold of a wedding feast, those whose attention had not been exclusively occupied by the contemplation of the wretched cause of the disturbance, might have noticed that the face of Gervase Falcon had assumed that same ashy corpse-like hue that overspread his countenance when the miserable woman threw the crumpled paper in at his carriage-window at the church-door. He looked, indeed, so ghastly, and shook so in every limb, and muscle, and nerve, that the contingency of his, too, falling in a fit on the floor of his hall appeared by no means improbable of occurrence. He mastered himself, however, by some strong internal effort; and, thrusting aside the staring menials, and motioning the wonderstricken guests to give the convulsionary room, knelt down by her side, and bade somebody fetch a surgeon, for God's sake.

"I know this woman," he cried out in a savage tone, for an apology or an explanation; "she's a poor rel—, a poor dependent of mine.

Digitized by Google

That is, she was. Help me, some one, to carry her upstairs."

If the poor woman had been one of the Demoniacs, who dwelt in caverns and waste-places, among bats and dragons in the Old Times, and howled their horrid lives out, she could not have looked more horrible and less earthly than when — the voice of Falcon seeming to smite her muffled senses and to wake her to something like consciousness — she, after a desperate plunge or two, sat up in the midst of the floor, and began to stare with her red eyes, and drag her fingers through her matted hair, and croon out some gabble, which, though still inarticulate, was yet a thousand times nearer human speech than the yells which a moment before had been echoing through the brave house in Grosvenor Square.

"Do you hear me! John — Charles!" Mr. Falcon exclaimed querulously. "Help me to carry this poor woman up stairs."

They had first to help to set the poor woman on her legs, prop her up against the wall, smooth her disordered garments, and moisten

Digitized by Google

her lips with water. There was a wide circle around her of frightened, astonished faces; no one near her but the two footmen who, with scared looks, supported her on either side, as their master had bid them, and Gervase Falcon, still with his knees trembling, and that old corpse-like face.

They were about (under strong mental protest from John-Peter, and Chawles his brother) to move her again, when, with a reel that was meant for a rush, she extended her gaunt arms towards Gervase Falcon, and spake:

"Do any of you know who this man is?"

If the fingers of a Hand had suddenly come out upon the wall, and written, as if in sand, that the Medes and Persians were at the gate; if she had cast a millstone into the midst of them there, and cried out that Babylon the Great was fallen, was fallen; if she had been the Witch of Endor, and had suddenly evoked the ghost of Samuel from beneath the oil-cloth, she could not have caused more terror and astonishment than she did by this simple question. And there beside her stood the

Digitized by Google

Master of the house, deadlier in hue than before, his head bent down, his hands clasped, a new palsy in his limbs.

"Do any of you know who this man is?" she asked, elaborating the words this time with painful minuteness. Before, they had rushed from her lips like a Lava-torrent. "Do you know — do you know who I am? Rot you all!"

No one answered. Who was to answer? What answer could be given, save by the Master of the house, who had declared this tatterdemalion castaway to be his poor rel—, his poor dependent. He made a movement, as if to place his hand on her mouth, laying the other on her arm; but she broke away from him, and, with a fresh sottish reel, cried out to the Bride, who was leaning, half swooning, on her husband's shoulder,

"Come here, you girl, and I'll tell you!"

"My good woman —!" Sir William Guy expostulated.

"Your good woman! your good Devil!" the creature went on, swaying her uncertain

arms about. "I'm the worst woman in the world. *He* knows I am: ask *him*!"

She pointed again to Gervase as she spoke; but the Master of the house, though his lips moved, and his knees shook, seemed utterly unable to utter one word, or to move one pace. A storm of exclamations and expostulations broke from the outraged company. Mr. Falcon must be ill. The Bride was fainting; the Bride's mother in hysterics! The woman was mad! Something must be done! What were the servants about? Where were the constables? But none of them came near her for all that.

"Hear me, every one of you!" she said, dropping on her knees. "Come nearer, you cowards! Come here, you whimpering girls! Where's that white-headed old sinner that calls himself a Lord?"

There was a stir at this pointed allusion to Lord Viscount Baddington; and a feeble voice from the remote background, where his Lordship was ensconced behind several tiers of gabions and fascines of bridesmaids, made itself heard to the effect, that the woman ought

Digitized by Google

to be ashamed of herself, that he wondered what Falcon meant by it, and that he would be obliged if somebody would order his carriage.

"Order a hangman's cart for you all, fine gentlemen and fine madams," the woman cried, still on her knees. "You shall listen to me. You don't know who I am! I'll tell you! I've held my tongue for twenty years, but I'll speak now!"

She rose to her feet again as she said this, and stood up, but reeling as she stood.

"I'll speak," she went on. "God knows it, and man shall know it. I'll have it published to the four ends of the earth. They shall all know, all know — every one of them, one of 'em v'rm. They shall know — why not, eh? Why not? *Lez 'av a 'rop o' rum.*"

So she ended, and fell down flat on the floor in a tipsy stupor. And the Master of the house raised his head again.

At this moment a tremendous double knock resounded through the hall, and 'Enry, who with Tummas had started off, in obedience to orders, in quest of surgeons, arrived panting

Digitized by Google

but successful, having for the nonce in the handsomest manner replaced the sable-liveried lacquies of Mr. Fleem, of the Royal College of Surgeons, and ridden behind that eminent practitioner's carriage to Grosvenor Square.

Mr. Fleem, Fellow of the Royal College, etc., was a gentleman of such mild, soothing, comfortable manner, that he might have been described as an Emulsion in glossy broadcloth. He had a peculiar, quiet, soliloquising interjection, too, of "T-t,tttttt," which he was continually confiding to his snowy shirt-frill in a soft whisper which was quite a composing draught in itself, and had been found, in its time, of infinite comfort and relief to his extensive circle of patients. A mild man, Fleem, a gentle creature, as delightful a companion as ever cut off a leg, or burnt holes in a friend's leg with caustic.

There was nothing serious the matter, Mr. Fleem said. Oh dear, no! Such unavoidable accidents would occur. Similar extraordinary intrusions had taken place at the Lord Bishop of Bosfursus's town mansion. Quite unavoid-

Digitized by Google

able. A pity, perhaps, that the servants had not interfered to prevent the poor demented creature's entrance; but all was doubtless for the best. A disturbance in the street would have been, under the circumstances, and in front of the residence of Mr. Fleem's friend, Mr. Falcon's eminently respectable residence, even more painful. Oh dear, yes! As to the poor woman; she certainly was ill (He had done fifty things for the poor woman all in a quiet noiseless way by this time). Epilepsy; no, he should *not* say Epilepsy: Incipient *Delirium Tremens*, more probable. Had been conversing incoherently, eh? Wandering, of course? Just so. Thank you. Wildness of the eye. Dear me! However we should see, we should see; and if you, my good fellow (John-Peter proudly pleased at being so addressed) would fetch a hackney coach, in ten minutes we will have her nicely and comfortably in St. Lazarus's Hospital.

But to the subdued astonishment of Mr. Fleem, who had seen too many wonders of nature and art in his time to be violently

Digitized by Google

astonished at anything under the eventuality of a hippopotamus performing a hornpipe, say on stilts, or on a tight rope of floss silk, and to the horror-struck consternation of the rest of the company, the Master of the house sternly and positively refused his consent to the removal of the woman. She should remain there, he said, till she grew better, and he bade his servants carry her up stairs forthwith.

"My dear Mr. Falcon," his wife reasoned, "I know this is but kind-heartedness on your part; but you can surely never allow such a creature to remain in the house!"

"My dear Papa!" said the trembling, half-weeping Bride—

"Falcon, my good fellow!" Lord Viscount Baddington—

"If you would only consider, Sir," the Bridegroom—

"Oh dear, Mr. Falcon!" a chorus of Bridesmaids—

"Now, you know," Compton Guy—

"Bless my heart, my good Mr. Falcon!" Lady Tottringham—

Digitized by Google

"And I'm sorry, Sir, but which it is true, if my coat was took hoff my back this minnit, but cannot obleege you so to demean myself, and likewise my feller-suvvent hobjects to carryin sich a bag o' rags up," John-Peter said, trembling at his own audacity, but still determined to stand by the dignity of his cloth. But the Master of the house was inflexible.

"Hold your tongues, you fools!" was his uncourteous rejoinder to his retainers in plush, "and help me to carry her up stairs, or get out of the way, and leave it to me and Mr. Fleem. Ladies and Gentlemen, stand back, or I shall do you a mischief all of you."

And with this extraordinary remark from a devoted husband and the father of a family, who, from the earliest period of authentic record had been remarkable for being as mild a spoken gentleman as ever inhabited Grosvenor Square, John-Peter and Chawles were morally coerced into lending their stalwart aid towards transporting the disreputable bag o' rags in question to one of the upper chambers of the mansion.

Digitized by Google

Brought thither of course either on some magic Arabian carpet, or aided by some Seven-League Boots, the property of the medical profession, or being in the receipt of fern-seed, and so walking invisible, there presently appeared, no one (save Mr. Fleem) knew how, a soft, straw-coloured as to hair, and raven-hued as to costume, assistant of that eminent practitioner; and before you could say "Paracelsus," the woman was quietly in bed, and a composing draught had been administered to her. She had opened her eyes and moaned once or twice during her conveyance to the bed-chamber, and had taken the draught quietly, but still seemed quite unconscious.

When they had laid her heavy head on the pillow, and the footmen being dismissed, there was no sound in the room but her stertorous breathing and the loud ticking of the Doctor's watch, the Master of the house drew the Searcher of the House of Life into the curtained embrasure of the window. He placed his finger on his lip first, and pointed, as a measure of precaution, to the straw-coloured assistant,

Digitized by Google

who had appeared no one knew how, and who was now by the patient's head, bending over a table, and performing feats of legerdemain with bottles and cups, procured no one knew whence.

"Secret and trusty," Mr. Fleem replied, in a low soft whisper. "Invaluable in family matters, my dear Sir. Deaf, dumb, and blind to everything but the requirements of his Art. Dear me, dear me, I don't know what I should do without Mr. Tinctop."

"I wish you," Gervase Falcon continued, with an impatient movement of his hand, "to get me a trusty nurse for this poor creature. I don't want her left night or day. She mustn't be left, Mr. Fleem, save with the nurse, or yourself, or myself."

"Or Mr. Tinctop," the Surgeon blandly interposed. "Faithful creature; as I remarked before, a deaf-mute and blind to family matters."

"She mustn't be left to *anybody*," broke in the Master of the house. "With no living soul, Mr. Fleem. I tell you she'll rave—rave, Sir. Do you know a nurse you can trust?"

Digitized by Google

He asked the question so suddenly, and in such a hoarse, harsh voice, that the Surgeon raised his keen gray eyes to his face, with, for so mild and composed an eminent practitioner, quite an unusual expression of interest. Why did Gervase Falcon hang his head guiltily when the gray eye met his, and why did the old ashy hue come over his face again?

"Do I know a trusty nurse?" softly repeated Mr. Fleem. "Surely, my dear Sir; surely."

"I confide in you," Mr. Falcon continued, resuming his self-possession. "There is a skeleton in every house, my dear Doctor, as you know full well; *and I entirely confide in you.*"

The Doctor, who was aware of a complete anatomical museum in half-a-dozen adjacent private houses, of an extensive bonehouse in a duke's mansion half-a-hundred yards off, and of materials for a complete course of lectures on osteology in a countess's boudoir in Berkeley Square, nodded his head, as men will do when they hear a pleasant truism.

"You *may* confide in me, of course," he

Digitized by Google

replied. "Tut, tut, an everyday matter. Black sheep. Disgrace to respectable families. Highly improper to alarm the ladies by the sight of such fallen creatures. Mr. Tinctop," he said to the deaf and dumb assistant, "if you will be good enough to remain here and watch the case, in ten minutes you shall be relieved by Mrs. Lint. My dear Sir, good morning. Thank you—gloves; ah! yes! I shall look in again in the evening."

He had taken a farewell *resumé* of the state of the patient, whispered final instructions to Mr. Tinctop, pocketed his fee, put on his gloves, trotted down stairs, slipped into his comfortable carriage, and driven away, all in his quiet noiseless manner, but with marvellous celerity. Then Gervase Falcon, casting, too, a look upon the slumbering form on the bed, went down to join the wedding guests again.

The end of a feast—a banqueting-table when the viands have been duly consumed, and the sparkling wines duly poured down—when the merriment and speech-making are all over, and

Digitized by Google

the flowers begin to fade—is, albeit an instructive, not at any time an enlivening spectacle. Mr. Gervase Falcon descended to his breakfast-parlour, to find that banqueting-hall almost deserted: lights fled, garlands dead, and all, save one guest, departed: his wife.

Mrs. Falcon was one of those comely, fresh-coloured, virtuously-composed matrons who may be said to smile and sail through life;—a species of Gorgeous Galley— a strong guiding sense of the Respectabilities at the helm, and good looks, and a handsome settlement at the prow. She was never flurried; she was never vexed, never cross—in company; though her maid, her children, and her children's governess, had other tales to tell on the question of her equanimity *à huis clos*. She was one of those wives a man may live with for more than nineteen years, before he finds out that she has a Devil of a temper. There is as prodigious an amount of cecity and surdity in Marriage as in Householding; and it is generally by the neighbours rushing in, and the fire-engine coming clanking up to the door,

Digitized by Google

that a man discovers that his house is on fire. A score of years had very nearly elapsed since that Gordian knot, which it used to take a thousand pounds worth of steel to cut, had been tied between Gervase Falcon and Caroline his wife; and it was only on re-entering the breakfast-room that Mr. Falcon discovered that his wife could be in a rage, and was in one.

There is a process known in feminine warfare as "bouncing," which may be otherwise defined as a moral charge of the female heavy horse. The strongest man will draw back when a lady "bounces" at him. Mrs. Falcon commenced her onslaught by that favourite movement.

"I wish to know, Mr. Falcon," she asked, in a high, shrill voice, and "bouncing" as she spoke; "whether my house—our house, I mean—is to be turned into an hospital, a workhouse, a rag-shop, for all the vile drunken wretches you may choose to pick off the streets?"

For all reply, her husband sat down at the

Digitized by Google

further end of the table, and, with a trembling hand, filled a tumbler half full of wine, which he drank greedily, moodily gazing at his wife meanwhile.

"Will you answer me, Mr. Falcon?" his wife continued, in a yet higher, shriller tone. "Who is this woman? Where does she come from? What does she want here? Why does your confidential surgeon, Mr. Fleem, come down to this room, and tell me that I am not to seek admittance to the chamber where you have presumed to harbour her? I demand to know. I insist upon knowing!"

"The woman is dangerously ill," her husband answered wearily, leaning his head on his hand. "It would be as cruel as unsafe to leave her. Ask yourself—ask Mr. Fleem! Besides," he added, more to himself than to her, "I know something of her."

"Know something of her!" the indignant matron retorted, and only, so it seemed, restrained from bouncing bodily as well as morally at Mr. Falcon, by the interposition of some sixteen good solid feet of breakfast-table

Digitized by Google

between her and her spouse. "Know something of her! I have not the slightest doubt you do. More of her than you ought to do. Enough to be ashamed of yourself for, I am convinced. But I'll not bear it, Mr. Falcon; either she leaves this house, within an hour, or I do!"

"Will you hold your tongue, woman?" her husband at the end of the table cried out, starting up from his seat so suddenly that the chair fell heavily to the ground.

"Woman! hold my tongue! This language to me! to your wife! to the mother of your children! Ugh! you wretch!"

"Mrs. Falcon," the husband of that lady remarked, stepping as he spoke from the station he had occupied, and clasping one of her arms very tightly and very sternly, "I don't think, during the twenty years of our marriage, I have ever given signs of a disposition to ill-treat you: but, by the Lord! if you don't sit down in that chair and hold your tongue, except to answer my questions, I'll leave such marks on you as you and I will both be sorry for!"

Digitized by Google

There was that in his eye, his blanched cheek, his set lips, which gave indubitable proof that he was in earnest, and thoroughly so. The bounce was taken out of Mrs. Gervase Falcon at once—perhaps for good and all; and she sat down as she was desired, tacitly indignant, but quite obedient.

"Where are my daughters?" her husband asked.

"Up stairs in the drawing-room. William is with Caroline, who is in a state dreadful to be imagined."

"Hold your tongue! You are talking nonsense! Why are not William and Caroline gone?"

"The travelling carriage was countermanded, and will be here again in half-an-hour. We were all waiting to hear an explanation of your extraordinary conduct—I mean, to know your wishes."

"Those you will hear presently. Where are all the people who were eating and drinking half-an-hour since?

"All gone—very much shocked and an-

Digitized by Google

noyed, and, I am afraid, scandalised, though I implored them to observe secrecy. Your uncle went away infuriated."

"My uncle," Mr. Falcon responded, quite leisurely and calmly; "my uncle, Baddington, the gaping fools that have been gorging and swilling in this respectable house, and you, Mrs. Falcon, may go to the devil!"

Not only his house, but he, too, had been a respectable man all his life, with an exquisitely keen sense of the proprieties and the conventionalities, just as she had always been a sweetly tempered woman. What had come to both of them, for the lamb to turn lion, and the turtle-dove tigress?

"My dear!" Mrs. Falcon could only faintly ejaculate, "consider the servants."

"In which recommendation," Mr. Falcon continued, composedly resuming the thread of his discourse, "I include the servants. *They* may go to the devil too—all of them—all of you! Curse you all!" he cried. "I don't care *that* for you. Who's afraid?"

As he strode up to the table again, and

Digitized by Google

emptied some more wine into a tumbler, and drank it, snapping his fingers defiantly, the husband and father, Grosvenor Square householder and Prothonotary of his Majesty's Carpet-bag and Hat-box Office, quite went out from him, and nothing but a desperate ruffian at bay remained behind. Mrs. Falcon, fairly frightened that her husband was going mad, was timorously moving towards the door, when he rushed across the room, and caught her by the shoulders.

"Stay here!" he said. "No; my dear Caroline," he continued, with a strange and horrible revulsion of tone and accent, "pray give me your arm, we will go upstairs together to my children."

So they went upstairs together, arm-and-arm, to their children, a very unlovely pair to look upon. John-Peter (who, by-the-way, was in rather suspiciously close proximity to the door when Mr. and Mrs. Falcon came out) could make nothing of them. He said as much to Chawles his friend and help-mate, as, profiting by the absence of the heads of the

Digitized by Google

family, he and several other vultures in red plush or white aprons hastened to swoop down on the *débris* of the feast, before the arrival of Mr. Gunter's men with the green boxes.

"I tell you somethin's wrong, and not a little wrong neither," John-Peter remarked sententiously, and making a clean breast of a cold fowl, if ever one there were, as he did so. "What does she come and throw a Manny-script into Master's carridge? Why does the old 'un turn as white as parsnips when he reads it? Wot does she go for to hask me wot weddin' it is? Wot do she come a faintin' for 'ere, and a havin' fits in sich like dis-repsectable manners?"

A smart housemaid, allured from the upper regions by the prospect of Trifle and Chantilly-basket, here observed that in her opinion the general proceedings were "howdacious;" and the youngest footman—not so stout or strong in the legs as could perhaps be desired, but reputed to be a wit, and a great favourite with the ladies,—remarked, in an off-hand manner, that the

Digitized by Google

woman who had fainted was an "'ussey, and that was hall about it."

So the high life below stairs could make nothing of the low life that was above stairs. They made a good deal, however, of the lobster and chicken salads, the game pies, the plovers' eggs, the ices, jellies, creams, and comfits, that lay in glorious wreck upon the table. They made even more of the glass dregs, and wine lees, and sundry untouched bottles that were there, till Mr. Binns, the Butler, who had considerately allowed them reasonable grace for living at free quarters, came out of his own pantry suite of apartments with Mrs. Trupple, the housekeeper, and scattered the liquorish crew.

Now, from this time, which might have been three of the clock, to seven in the evening, there reigned great quiet and stillness in the house of Falcon, in Grosvenor Square. Some few incidents diversified the monotony of the November twilight. A voluminous mass of faded and slightly mouldy-smelling garments, surmounted by a portentous bonnet

Digitized by Google

with a shawl tied over it, the whole ballasted on either side by a basket and a bundle, arrived early. The voluminous mass announced itself (by a printed card—not engraved) to be Lint, Nurse, et cetera, Bulgin's Mews, Berkeley Square; and also (by voice issuing from between a hooked nose and a hooked chin) to come by orders of Mr. Fleem, and to be extremely anxious to see "the blessed creetur as was a sufferin" directly. Lint, nurse, was ushered into the bed-room you are aware of, and there saw that unblessed creature who was indeed suffering. Not long after this, came back to the door the travelling chariot and four grays, which have been so frequently alluded to as connected with the proceedings of the morning. They had not long to wait this time. The Bride and the Bridegroom came down speedily, not quite so radiant as they had been four hours before, but still keeping up their state proudly. Doors opened and clanged to again; and Bride and Bridegroom were gone upon their honeymoon, and were launched upon the illimitable Sea of Human

Digitized by Google

Chances. Last there came, toward five o'clock, Lord Baddington's own body servant, with a letter for Mr. Falcon. He waited an answer, and receiving it ultimately from the hands of John-Peter, exchanged a wink of mysterious import with that servitor, and so departed.

Mrs. Falcon's maid was summoned soon after this to bring a jug of hot water to her mistress's room, and the rumour ran through the basement floor that she was bathing her eyes, after much weeping. She was in her room; her two daughters in theirs; but the master of the house rang no bell, and troubled no one, and was not heard of till it was quite dark, when, coming down stairs, and looking far more like a ghost than a human being, he bade John-Peter fetch him a hackney-coach.

The footman, who had had little more to do during the last five hours than stare and be astonished, was bewildered at so plebeian a vehicle being ordered, when his master had two carriages in the adjacent mews. Whatever was the good of two spacious coach-houses and ample stabling, when respectable

Digitized by Google

people in Grosvenor Square took to such democratic, radical, hackney-coach ways? He went on his errand though, being, for all his six feet and his calves, desperately frightened, and as he went along, determined to give warning at the first convenient opportunity, and leave this fashionable Bedlam to its own devices.

Gervase Falcon remained waiting in his lamp-lit hall, till the hackney-coach came rumbling up to the door. At this moment Mrs. Falcon's own maid Flitters came down stairs, and with great fear and trembling, and hesitating, stammering, and apron-corner twitching, conveyed to him a message from her mistress, respectfully asking when Mr. Falcon might be expected home.

"Tell Mrs. Falcon to mind her own——," the Master of the house began; "no," he continued more mildly; "tell her I am going on a Journey."

A journey! but he had his gala dress on beneath his cloak. A journey! but he ordered neither carpet-bag nor portmanteau to be

Digitized by Google

packed. A journey! he had bid none farewell —left no instructions behind him.

A journey whither?—Whither, who should say? The Morning was past, and the Night was come. The Night—black, secret, and impenetrable—,when treasure is buried, and men slain, and murdered corpses flung into pools. The Night was come, full of mystery and silence. Who but the Omniscient could disclose its secrets fully?

Digitized by Google

CHAP. IV.

INTRODUCES A GENTLEMAN IN DIFFICULTIES.

JOHN POLLYBLANK, temporarily of the Borough of Southwark, Esquire, by courtesy called Captain Pollyblank, but commonly, and among his friends and acquaintances, known as Jack Pollyblank, condescended, at about nine of the clock on the very same evening on which this veracious history opens, to enter the tap-parlour or coffee-room (there was but one room for the "sitting-down" customers, so either name will serve) of the "Blue Pump" tavern in Gravel Lane, hard by Hatters' Hall, Southwark, and there to order of Dick, the unclean but indefatigable waiter, a pint of London porter.

Digitized by Google

"In the which," Mr. Pollyblank, who affected precision in his diction; "in the which, Richard, you may, the weather being chilly (having previously warmed it on the hob, mind, not in that tin foolscap of yours) place a dash of ginger and twopennyworth of the right sort," meaning Old Tom.

Perfectly definite as was the nature of Mr. Pollyblank's instructions, they did not appear entirely lucid to Dick the waiter, who stood scratching his head, and grinning doubtfully, till the expectant guest threw out a mild suggestion that "Sharp was the word!"

But sharp, though an excellent word, did not appear to be *the* word in this instance,—the key to the enigma or the beer-piston of the "Blue Pump."

"Is it trust or pay, Cap'en?" Dick asked hesitatingly.

"Fellow," the gentleman addressed as "Cap'en" indignantly retorted; when, appearing to recollect himself, he added, "why, Dick, it must stand over—only till to-morrow, Dick!"

Digitized by Google

This explanation did not seem by any means satisfactory to the attendant on the "Blue Pump's" parlour customers, who, with a very ill-boding shake of the head, and a muttered remark that he "must ask mas'r," left the room, slamming the door viciously behind him.

"A bad waiter that!" was Captain Polly-blank's observation on the disappearance of Richard; "a sulky dog! perhaps the worst waiter in the most particularly infamous tavern hereabouts. Their beer, too, is villanous; and as to the gin, it reminds me that there was once a fox who was passionately fond of the ruby-tinted fruit that cluster 'midst the trailing vines. Heigho! heigho!"

Whereupon the Captain fell into a fit of head-shaking, boding much more evil, either for his chances of obtaining the refreshment he had ordered, or for himself, or for society and the world generally. He then proceeded to seat himself on the edge of the one Pembroke table, and to disembarrass his neck of a red worsted shawl so long and so attenuated that

Digitized by Google

he looked, under the circumstancs, like a human cocoon, who had enjoyed a surfeit of mulberry leaves, and was unwinding himself to be able to breathe freely.

When thoroughly unwound, and when his face and figure were visible, it must be admitted that Captain Pollyblank's personal appearance was little, if at all, improved by the operation he had just undergone. To be truthful, too, it must be confessed that he did not look in the least like a Captain. There are, I know, Captains and Captains. One may be a Captain-General and Grandee of Spain, or a Captain in the Life Guards Blue, a Captain in a marching regiment, of a line-of-battle-ship, of the main-top, of a penny steam-boat, of a coal-pit, or of a gang of banditti. There is even the most dubious Captain of all — the "Copper Captain," the Pistol of private life. Well, even he has certain generic and typical traits: a braided surtout, lacquered spurs, bushy moustache, a half-military, half-jail-bird swagger, tight-strapped trousers, hat on one side. cane with a tassel, some semi-martial cha-

Digitized by Google

racteristic of costume or demeanour. But Captain Pollyblank had none of these. He was a very fat, white-faced young man, with a vast quantity of coarse black hair on his head, combed several ways, and rebelling in each separate hair against its neighbour; but neither whiskers nor moustaches, nor chin-tuft. His face, cutaneously viewed, was slightly scorbutic; he had an ugly gash in the place where his mouth ought to have been; his nose appeared to have been originally intended by nature for an unpretending and retiring snub, but in some fit of passionate caprice, to all appearances, had been violently wrenched into a swollen and protuberant, though still snubbiform, condition. I am glad Phrenology was not so much talked about thirty years since as now; else Mr. Donovan would have augured rather dismally for the chances of Captain Pollyblank's future career, in consideration of the lowness of his forehead, and the peculiar bulginess and bumpiness of the back of his neck. He had somewhat elevated cheek-bones, and somewhat watery eyes; and — which was

Digitized by Google

rather ghostly to look at — his eyelashes were, if not altogether absent, as few and far between as angels' visits are said to be. With reference to Mr. Pollyblank's attire, I can only say that it was strictly in accordance with the latest Engravings of the Fashion, allowing such an Engraving to be torn, soiled, and fly-blown, and hung up in a dolly-shop in Petticoat Lane, instead of an aristocratic tailor's show-rooms. As to the colour and general state of the Captain's garments, both might decidedly have been better, though neither could by any possibility have been worse. So desperate altogether was the condition of the Captain's costume that his only safeguard against being "smugged" for a Guy, or carried off bodily for a Scarecrow, seemed to be in his neck-shawl, which was so long, so red, and so loudly and defiantly vivid in its redness, that it dazzled the eyes, and carried off general attention from the woeful case of the rest of the Pollyblankian entity, and led some unthinking ones to surmise that the Captain was next door to a Beau, when the philosophically-inclined had satisfied

Digitized by Google

themselves that he was in reality next door to a Beggar.

When Captain Pollyblank had quite unwound his shawl, he stuffed it violently into a very limp-brimmed hat, and, stirring the fire with the thick ash stick he carried, soliloquised meanwhile.

"Coals cost nothing when you don't pay for them," was his philosophical observation. "Though stony-hearted landlords may refuse beer, and take away pokers, ash seasoned in the fire will stir; so let us poke, warm, and be merry, even if to-morrow we starve."

He desisted from knocking the coals about for a moment, and inclined his ear as if to listen for the advent of the waiter with the beer and et ceteras. But it was a false alarm; and, sighing, he began to move again.

"That beast licensed to victual and insult gentlemen," he said, "no doubt egged on by yonder fiend in pot-boy shape, will, of course, pleading some ridiculous three-and-ninepence scored against me on the slate, refuse further credit. Of course, Jack Pollyblank being

Digitized by Google

penniless, none of the boys,—Tinctop, Skalple, Pessel—none of the convivial St. Lazarus' brethren, will be here to meet him. Just so. Of course."

There was no gas in the room; none in the house, I believe, then. But the fire burned with a deep red glow, and the room would have been comfortable enough with a pipe, or a tankard or so.

"Upon my word, Jack Pollyblank," the Captain exclaimed, finding out perchance an image of himself in the face-teeming fire, and moodily punching it with his stick; upon my word, you're in for it!"

"This, then, is the result," he resumed, "of the large sums spent by your parents on your medical education, and of the immense amount of clinical knowledge you never acquired. For this have you seen life, spent your own patrimony, and helped to spend that of several devoted friends; to say nothing of the encouragement you have given to commerce by obtaining goods from confiding tradesmen on pretences more or less false. For this have

Digitized by Google

you been to India's spicy climes, once, nay, thrice; surgeon's mate in an Indiaman. For this have you learned to play every game on the board; to be unequalled at skittles; to have no peer at the charming relaxation of bagatelle. For this, to be refused trust for thruppence in the pot-room of an alehouse!"

He said "thruppence" as if in defiance to the education of which he was vaunting himself; and then began to walk up and down, with his hands in his pockets, to the imminent peril of the seams of those garments themselves. It is to be observed, too, that among the idiosyncrasies of Mr. or Captain Pollyblank was that of almost always talking, even to himself, in a strain of stilted cynicism, and semi-humorous bombast. I dare say, ancient Pistol did the same; for you see there are some men who, for all their villany, are afraid of looking themselves in the face, and dare'nt confess in plain language to their own conscience what scoundrels they are.

"Of friends," he went on, "who'll give me the social glass, there are say half-a-dozen;

so long as I gibe and jest for them, and make them merry, will they make me drunk; of friends who'd give me a crust of bread to keep me from starving, or a nail towards my coffin when I am starved and dead, I ca'nt think of one—not one. Of clothes, I've just what I have on me; and this ash stick—and, yes, *to* be sure, I still have it—This!"

He took These from his waistcoat-pocket, and as he fingered them, looked half vengefully, half contemptuously, at a little square pile of pawnbroker's duplicates, the handwriting almost faded, the tickets cracked and limp with long wear, and grimy and soiled with pocket fluff.

"Query," he continued, "when the interest exceeds the value of the articles pledged, is there much good in redeeming said articles?"

He then took THIS, not hastily, but very slowly and cautiously, and almost fearfully, from a breast-pocket. THIS was wrapped up in an old blue silk pocket-handkerchief, holey almost like a colander, and again in several envelopes of such soft, grey paper as the

Digitized by Google

Nuremberg chapmen used to wrap their toys up in. Then he held THIS to the red fire light, having previously opened the dark morocco jewel-case, lined with white satin, which held it; in the midst of which THIS, a bracelet of just half-a-dozen curious-looking, semi-transparent, blackish-blue or blueish-black beads, lay coiled up like a shining little Serpent.

"Here, safe enough," the Captain said gloomily, bending his head over the case. "This, in the right place with the right man to take it off my hands, would make Jack Pollyblank's fortune, and yet it would'nt pawn for eighteenpence. Mr. Dobree don't know what stones the bracelet is made of. Ha! ha! Where is that queer fellow I had the famous drinking bout with here, I wonder? But what's the good of asking? He was screwed,—I know I was awfully—and never meant it when he said he would give me twenty pounds for the shining thing. I gave him my address. He promised to call. He didn't. Of course not. To-morrow I shan't have any address to give. Meanwhile, who'd give me anything for

Digitized by Google

this bauble? Eighteenpence, said I. I don't believe I could raise fourpence on it. Fourpence? not the price of a pint, even. Who'd believe me when I said that it came from India, that it was the young man and the old man's best companion under circumstances of peculiar difficulty! There isn't a pin's-worth of gold and silver about it. However, it *may* be useful to you some-day, Jack, my boy, and soon too."

This reflection, with regard to the ultimate utility of the bracelet, seemed to impart far less comfort than tribulation to Jack, his boy, who, wrapping up and replacing THIS in his breast-pocket, set his teeth, and leaning his elbows on his hands, his chin on his palms, and twining his fingers in his hair, scrooped the legs of his chair along the ground in a most broken-spirited manner, and gave vent to a sound which began like a whistle and ended like a groan.

"Hallo," he cried, starting up as the door opened. "That's either Dick with the beer, or Dick without it, or a customer. Wrong again. Now for the Blue Pump."

Digitized by Google

It was, indeed, the Blue Pump, in the person of Mr. Meggot, its landlord, and not its waiter, who entered the room, and, to the intense astonishment of Captain Pollyblank, with the nearest approach to a bow that he could command; and, which was far more important, with a steaming tankard of purl, two clean pipes, and a screw of tobacco.

"I'm sure, Cap'en," the Blue Pump said apologetically to his amazed customer, "I'm wery sorry that yare gopus shouldn't for 'ave rightly hunderstood your horder. 'Ere is the stuff, Cap'en, and welcome."

"The cash," Captain Pollyblank stammered, for he was quite taken off his guard by this unforeseen attendance to his wishes, "will be right to-morrow. It will be righteous. It will be jannock. Yea, wholly and entirely upon the square. I may say, Meggot, that it will be as right as ninepence." So saying, he extended one hand for the tankard and another for the pipe, and trembled with emotion; for liquor and tobacco were as milk and honey to the soul of Jack Pollyblank, yet he was not

Digitized by Google

quite certain but that Meggot was tantalising him, and might at last withdraw the coveted purl and birdseye.

"Right or wrong," the Pump answered, "it's all one to Sim Meggot, licensed to be drunk on the premises. Its settled."

"You don't mean to say that you're going to stand it, Sim?" asked the Captain, thinking that the Blue Pump had either come into a fortune, or gone out of his mind.

"I mean to say," was the reply, "*that it's paid for;* by a gent as wos 'ere five minutes ago, come out of a 'ackney coach, hasked if you wos 'ere. Hasked wot you wos 'avin, sed he'd be back directly, and o's 'ere now this blessed minit waitin' for to come in."

"In with him, Sim," Pollyblank said hastily and delightedly, and clapping his hand to his breast-pocket as he spoke. "By Jove!" he muttered aside, as the landlord left the room, "it's that queer fish. Now for business."

A gentleman, stout, and of the middle height, swathed from head to foot in an ample cloak, whose collar came far above his ears

Digitized by Google

and almost entirely concealed his face—in the which last circumstance there was nothing, believe me, very noticeable or mysterious, for the November night was raw and foggy, and in 1830, paletots and talmas were not, and cloaks of the Spanish fashion were, very generally worn—a gentleman answering to this description entered the room as the Blue Pump left it, and whispering to that licensed victualler as he passed him—who bowed obsequiously, and retiring, closed the door carefully after him—came up to the red fire, and sat down over against Jack Pollyblank.

"Do you know me again?" he asked, unclasping the collar of his cloak, and showing a portly, handsome, middle-aged face, with hair just shot with grey: "Mr. ——; but I forget your name."

"Know you?" Jack Pollyblank answered; "I should rather think I did, Mr. ——. But, by Jove, I've forgotten your name, too. Never knew it, either," he added, mentally.

"There, it does not much matter," his interlocutor broke in. "I have not called on

Digitized by Google

you before now, for Reasons. To-night, for Reasons, too, I came. The people where you live told me, with an ill-grace, that I might find you here, and I have found you. You know what you promised me, what I offered you, and what I want."

"Exactly so," acquiesced Jack.

Have you got it with you?"

"Here."

"Let me have it, then, immediately," said the middle-aged gentleman, and curious to relate, as he spoke, red as was the glow of the fire, Jack Pollyblank observed that his face grew ashy pale.

It was not that facetious but embarrassed individual's business to pry into the causes of his entertainer's discomposure. He very slowly and deliberately took the old pocket-handkerchief from his breast, unwrapped it, then removed the envelopes of soft grey paper, and discovering the morocco jewel case, just opened it to show the black, beady serpent coiled up inside, held it out to him that wore the cloak, and then extended to him his other empty palm.

Digitized by Google

"In matters of business," the business-like and imperturbable Pollyblank observed, "promptitude is everything."

His middle-aged friend had pounced upon the jewel-case, and had the bead-bracelet in his hand, and was fondling it, and devouring it almost with avid eyes. He seemed not to hear the Captain's remark.

"Take care what you're about," that strange dealer in jewels said, raising his voice. "The ornament's of a brittle nature—you might break it; and there's not one of the same pattern on this side the Cape of Good Hope. Now, Squire, if I might trouble you for the ready."

"Here are four five-pound notes," the individual addressed as "Squire" said, handing him a packet as he spoke. "This bracelet for twenty pounds. That was our agreement; we are quits!"

"Pardon me, Squire," Jack Pollyblank replied politely but decisively; in these matters flimsies are of no account. Bless your heart, my worthy Sir, Sim Meggot here, of the Blue

Digitized by Google

Pump, wouldn't give more than three-pound-ten for a five-pound note. Twenty pounds were our agreement; but I must have those twenty pounds in George or William sovereigns, or I call 'a go.'"

"Do you think I'm a thief?" the other asked angrily, snatching back the notes tendered him by Jack, and pouring from a purse some gold pieces into his hand, which he began to count.

"Far be from me such a suspicion," the Captain, with much unction, explained; "the only danger is, that, *particularly if anything happened*, people might take *me* for a thief. Twenty pounds. That's just it. Thank you. You're quite welcome to the bauble, I'm sure!"

As he greedily clutched at the glittering yellow pieces, and crammed them into his waistcoat's maw, the other rose up, and had wrapped his cloak round him, and had gained the door, and his hand was on the handle of the lock.

"Excuse me," said Pollyblank, "if I ask

Digitized by Google

you one question. Quite confidential, you know, though I daresay you won't tell me the truth. Self or friend?"

The man in the cloak moved impatiently, but muttered something concerning experiments, at which the Captain, for the third time in this chapter, again shook his head, but in a manner thrice more ominous and evil-boding.

"MYSELF, then," his companion cried out, with savage brusqueness.

He had opened the door himself, had passed up the narrow entry, and had disappeared before Jack could stop him, even if he had been so minded.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. V.

THE NIGHT.

HE who had so curious a taste for trinkets that he could give without murmuring twenty golden pounds for a bracelet of black beads, went out from the tavern in Gravel-lane into the Night. There was no hackney coach waiting for him now, and there was none at hand; but had he not that ample Spanish cloak round him? What, then, should he care for the rain?

Which began to pour down just then in torrents, rapidly, perpendicularly, persistently, relentlessly, as though the clerk of the weather had been cognisant of the myriads of fools who are always going about the world trying to set the Thames on fire, and were, himself,

Digitized by Google

benevolently determined to frustrate that aquatic arson. It rained so fast and so fiercely, that though Gravel Lane at most times swarms with gossiping women, and beggars, and drunkards, and impoverished dogs, and hatters more or less mad, the wearer of the Spanish cloak had very nearly the whole street to himself. What few night wanderers were abroad cowered in doorways; the dogs crept into dry places, under carts and empty barrels, and dreamed of unattainable paunch; the hatters went home; and the drunkards thronged all the tippling shops, rejoiced for once to have a legitimate cause for seeking shelter. As the traveller sped onward, and meeting from time to time with a hackney-coach hailed it, he was answered either surlily or derisively that he could by no means lodge in one of those vehicles. He seemed to give up the pursuit of wheeled vehicles under difficulties at last, and walked doggedly on.

It rained so hard that the spirited proprietors of several small chandlers' shops put up their shutters, and betook themselves

Digitized by Google

to pipes, despairing of doing any more trade that night; so hard, that the oyster man, the sprat and apple woman, the renter of the potato-can, and he who sold pies, abandoned out-door traffic in despair, and rushing, rain-streaming into crowded bars, disposed of their merchandise at alarming sacrifices; so hard, that the panes of the gas-lamps were obscured, and the gas within could only give a moist and marshy glimmer; so hard, that the itinerant vendors of umbrellas, who had gone to bed in disgust at the fineness of the day's forepart, woke up, hearing the rain scourging the window panes, and contemplated dressing, going out, and making a little fortune by the sale of ginghams that night alone, till, hearing it rain even harder still, they concluded there was no place like home, and wrapping themselves — secure rogues! — in their tattered blankets, went to sleep again, and had visions of an Utopia of umbrella-selling, where it was always raining, and where it was equally punishable by death for a man to be without a second-

Digitized by Google

hand umbrella as to be with a new one. It rained so hard that Gervase Falcon was wet through, Spanish cloak and all, by the time he had reached the Elephant and Castle.

Of course he had strayed thither, losing his way among the congeries of roads—leading all and always to the Elephant, but apparently no where else—with which malevolent surveyors have ornamented, but decidedly failed to utilise, the boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark. And the Elephant even, to him unused to these unaristocratic localities, was not much of an oasis in the watery desert. He might have wandered up roads and down roads, finding himself still close to the Elephant, till morning; but by chance there happened to be a solitary hackney-coach disengaged, at the door of that renowned hostelry. He cast himself into the vehicle, and told the coachman to drive him home. Home, you understand; to that fine mansion in Grosvenor Square, where there had been the brave wedding that morning.

Was it that the gas was of inferior quality

Digitized by Google

in 1830, or that indeed the lamps were effected by the prevalent moisture, or that Gervase Falcon's eyes were dimmed and weakly? For though gas was plentiful enough, and there were numerous shops still open, he seemed to be journeying through a valley of black shadows. He did not see the gaily-lit taverns, the flaring butchers', which keep open so late as to give cause for assumption that the lower classes of this country are considerably more addicted to hot meat suppers than is generally supposed; but he could always see the red and green bottles in the chemists' shop windows, and looked inquisitively at the reflections of their parti-coloured show flasks in the wet pavement. There were a great many chemists' shops between the Elephant and Castle and Grosvenor Square.

So many, that as he was nearing the termination of his journey, he stopped the coach in Mount Street, and alighting at a shop full of Medical Bengal lights in the shape of bottles, asked the lad who was

Digitized by Google

dozing behind the counter for some scented lozenges — something he wanted, he said, to take away the smell of smoking. The youthful Galen, who was very sleepy and very stupid, began to rummage fitfully among the stock, in the hope that something might turn up — cantharides, tincture of rhubarb, colocynth, prepared lint, or spirits of wine — which the customer might think was the right thing, and so purchase; for chemists and chemists' assistants were not nearly so careful or so attentive in supplying the right drugs in 1830 as in 1860. Accidents did really sometimes happen then, from gross negligence, which they never do now — oh dear, no! under any circumstances.

As the customer, however, wanted lozenges, and would have nought but lozenges, the sleepy lad was fain to summon his master, who—a little, round, punchy man, with a bald head like a Dutch cheese — came out of his comfortable back parlour, very warm and shining, and with a balmy odour of pork-chops about him, as if he had been disturbed

Digitized by Google

from his supper. "Lozenges to take away the smell of smoking did the gentleman want? Surely, surely. Here were some now (taking them triumphantly from a jar labelled 'Tamarinds') that would take away the smell of anything from tobacco to turpentine, but were extra good for smoking. Would the gentleman take an ounce of those lozenges, the celebrated Tee-loo-goo Pectoral Comfits, recommended by the Faculty?"

Yes, the gentleman would take them. They were tied up, he paid for them, and re-entered the coach, sucking one of the lozenges as he rode — to judge, doubtless, of their efficacy in taking away the smell of tobacco smoke; he who had never touched a pipe or a cigar in his life. Was he about to commence that baleful habit of tobacco smoking now?

He dismissed the hackney-coach at the corner of Grosvenor Square, and walked towards his own house through the rain. He paid the coachman his fare, so prodigious a one — even for a hackney-coach fare — that the Jarvey quite lost his self-possession, and

Digitized by Google

was almost inclined to quarrel with the generous traveller, for not giving him cause to grumble. He compromised the matter, however, by swearing at his horses, and with tongue and whip led those forlorn animals a terrible life, till he obtained another fare in North Audley Street, who was a stingy fare, and not paying him more than twice his due, afforded Jarvey an opportunity of abusing him till he had smoothed his ruffled spirits.

It was strange that a wayfarer from home so late, and in so fearful a night, should, when close to a luxurious abode, seem reluctant to enter it; yet Gervase Falcon walked three times round Grosvenor Square, in the rain, before he stopped even, at the door of his own fine house. Once he leaned against the railings as if faint and weary; once he turned as though he would retrace his footsteps away from the square altogether; once he stopped beneath a gas-lamp, and drew out that morocco case that held the bracelet like a serpent, sheltering it as well as he

Digitized by Google

could from the rain with his cloak. But a great plash of moisture came, and blurred the dainty white satin lining of the case, and he hastily shut it, and walked on.

The neighbouring church clock struck out twelve slowly and timidly, as though it too were wet through and dispirited. Gervase Falcon waited till the last peal of the bell had died away with a moist echo, like the sigh of an expiring wave, and then he went up his white and black marble chequered steps, opened his door with a latch-key, and so into the hall of his grand house.

Where all was still as Death. Gervase Falcon, being a great, good and rich man, kept a hall-porter, of course — a fat hall-porter — a very Great Tun of Heidelberg in livery; but being also a merciful man, he was merciful to that obese amalgam of three flunkies rolled into one, and suffered him to sleep in his comfortable bed, instead of keeping night watch in the huge, black, alcove of a hall-chair, which, all leather and gilt nails — a very bower of Beef and British respectability

Digitized by Google

— snoozed by itself into a remote corner of the great hall, where it loomed among the shadows imposingly. His own silver bed-candle-stick, with its waxen taper and chased extinguisher, awaited him on a slab. He took it, and went up stairs, creeping carefully as though he feared to wake the mice, or to trouble the innocent dreams of the black-beetles in the coal-cellar. I have heard that there are black-beetles even in Grosvenor Square, and that a daddy-longlegs has been detected ere now in the basement of Buckingham Palace. The most devoted husband, coming home from his club, could not have been more considerate. But Gervase Falcon had always been distinguished as a respectable man.

There did not, on the face of the facts, appear to be much necessity for all this caution on the part of the Master of the house. It had but just chimed midnight, which was by no means a late or dissipated hour for so grand and so fashionable a dwelling. Aitchbone, the hall-porter, though released from

Digitized by Google

the night watch, it is true, had by no means gone to bed yet, but was indulging in placid intercommunication with John-Peter and his comrades, in the Servants' Hall below. But then Mr. Falcon had always been so considerate a gentleman, so kind a master. He did not like to disturb his servants unnecessarily, even at that comparatively early hour.

For so devoted a husband and so respectable a man, it was passing strange that he should not at once have repaired to the sleeping apartment of his own lawful wife. His lawful wife, certainly! But it was not to Caroline Falcon's bedchamber that Gervase Falcon betook himself, but to that impromptu sick-room whither the wretched woman who had fallen down dead drunk in the hall had been removed. And as he stole softly up, like a thief in the night—and, indeed, he was intent on Robbery, for he who takes away aught, not his own to give, is a Robber—he kept whispering to himself, whispering over and over again—

Digitized by Google

"To unscrew the tail end of the clasp, and take the fourth bead on the string, and warm it at the candle — warm it at the candle. Yes, that was what he told me — that was what he told me."

Softly, oh! so softly he went into the room where the sick person had been. Lint, nurse, by the side of the bed, the curtains of which were closely drawn. Lint, nurse, fast in a stolid, stony sleep. He felt immensely relieved when he found Lint, nurse, so fast asleep — so close to the table where the physic bottles and empty cups and glasses were.

He had had the morocco case out before this, and had drawn off some beads, and held ONE between his finger and thumb. He cast a covetous eye towards the candle in its night-shade, as though he would have liked to warm something in its light; but Lint, nurse, might wake, so he refrained, just then; for he must be cautious. He kept repeating to himself that he must be very cautious.

Digitized by Google

Cautious! the devils must have laughed to hear him! With all his caution he had been patiently accumulating a body of evidence against himself, from the moment he had called the hackney-coach that evening — enough to hang him as high as Haman.

He had slipped the shining black bead, that was the fourth from the tail-end of the clasp, into his waistcoat-pocket. The morocco case lay on the table. There was a curious clasp to that curious bracelet — the head and tail of a serpent; and when the clasp was closed the tail was in the serpent's mouth — a curious emblem, and a very fit one.

He thought it fit and curious, as, glancing again at Lint, nurse, and satisfying himself that she was still fast asleep, he, with a hand that had been unaccountably shaking all that day, and was shaking more than ever now,— he, with a face ghastlier, and eyes more terrible than at any time before, drew aside the curtains of the bed to look upon the sick woman.

Digitized by Google

As Judith to look on Holofernes, as Jäel on Sisera; as Brinviliers on her husband; as Theodore Broughton, as Castragnes on their victims.

Murder before Heaven! Murder most foul and most unnatural! Wilful, barbarous, horrid murder!

Not yet.

Stolen out while Lint, nurse, slept. Spirited away — forced away, inveigled away — it mattered not. *The bed was empty* — the wretched woman was GONE; the Skeleton-Secret was abroad again, stalking forth like the pestilence at noonday.

In a paroxysm of rage and terror, he fell now to shaking the heavy sleeping nurse, now to tugging at the bed-room bell; but for all he shook, and almost buffeted the insensible Lint, she neither opened eye nor spoke word.

Down stairs they were more wakeful. John-Peter came up frightened: imagining that the mad woman had arisen from her bed, and was performing a fantasia on the bell, intending to call him, John-Peter, up

Digitized by Google

stairs, and devour him; or that she had fallen on Mrs. Lint, and rent that attendant on the sick asunder. He was the more amazed to find the bed empty, and his master standing on the carpet, ghastly and furious.

"Where is she?"

The domestic could no more answer than he could have conjugated a Greek verb. All he could say was that Mr. Tinctop had visited the invalid about nine o'clock—that the porter being at supper in the servants' hall, he, John-Peter, had let the Surgeon's Assistant out, and had been told by him that the patient was getting on nicely. And this was all he knew, he was sure.

John-Peter omitted to mention—perhaps he forgot it—that Mr. Tinctop—(haffable gent that; no pride about 'im, has there is about *some* deppity doctors)—had, at the time he opened the street door fer him, presented him with a bright half-crown, wherewith to drink his "'elth;" and that he, John-Peter, who had partaken of mixed liquors on that exciting day, to float a four-oared cutter, had just

Digitized by Google

slipped round "promiscuous" to the house of refreshment in the adjacent Mews, the "Robin Redlegs," an establishment much frequented by the gentlemen of his cloth,—to partake of a "cooler," after his unwonted potations. He had discreetly left the door ajar, and returning (after some ten minutes' enjoyment of the "cooler" and the conversation of some other gentlemen in livery, moving in the most fashionable circles) found the rain beginning to descend. These particulars, however, being *cosas de España*, "affairs of Egypt," or at least, matters appertaining to the Royal Arch, the grand orient of masonic flunkeydom, could not possibly have interested his master—how should they?—So John-Peter discreetly said nothing about them.

Where was Mrs. Falcon?

She had ordered the carriage shortly after Mr. Falcon left, and had been driven to Lord Baddington's, in Curzon Street. The coachman was to fetch her, with 'Enry as footman, at twelve. They were gone to fetch her, now.

He might go.

Digitized by Google

So, John-Peter being also departed, Gervase Falcon took the candle from the night shade, and held it before the face of the sleeping nurse. He shook her again roughly by the shoulder, and bawled in her ear—still unavailingly. She snored heavily on.

He sat down in a chair by the empty bed side—the bed which, tumbled and tossed about, and with its downy billows throwing great black shadows, looked like a grave newly rifled of a corpse; the bed, in the folds of whose heavy drapery mocking devils seemed to hide, pointing at him with denouncing fingers; the bed, every sprig and flower in the pattern of whose furniture had a Face in it with fierce, staring eyes: and, with his heavy hands, tried to think, and to form a plan of action. He formed his plans as drunken men frame schemes of impossible achievements; and mad letters they will write to women they love, believing strongly in their feasibility for the thousandth part of a second, and then dismissing them with a desperate laugh. The nurse had been drugged: it was easy to see

Digitized by Google

that. That villain Fleem had stolen the woman away. No; it was not Fleem, it was Tinctop: a fellow who, yesterday, he would have thought unworthy to garter his hose: a wretched doctor's boy: a miserable pill-blister — a low-life hound of an apothecary — so he called him in that proud, vengeful, aristocratic mind of his, — but who was his Master now. Stay, it was his wife. Should he kill her, Tinctop, Fleem? Kill them all? His wife was at his Uncle Baddington's. They were in full conclave about *him*. She — the woman — was there, denouncing him. His eyeballs grey hot at the thought: the vessels in his throat seemed to collapse, his teeth chattered, a ring of cold sweat crowned his forehead, and his heart moved upon itself like a sick man on his weary pallet. Just then a cinder fell from the grate on to the hearth, and he shivered in every limb, and the hair of his flesh stood up.

Who could he bribe? Whose silence could he buy? Fleem — Tinctop. He was not a rich man; still he could raise thousands on his name. But he could not bribe them all. He could not bribe *her*. It was too late.

Digitized by Google

He would fly. But whither? He would deny it all. To what avail? It was too late, too late, for all save One thing.

Should he wait? For what? For exposure, detection, infamy, disgrace, beggary, ruin? No; it were better so, better so, much better so. God forgive him. He listened for a moment at the door, to be certain that there was no one coming up stairs. He held the candle again to the nurse's face to see if she still slept; and still did she sleep. He did not try to wake her now, for it were better so. God forgive him.

The fourth bead from the tail end of the clasp must be warmed at the candle. Sleep on, Nurse Lint; for the trembling fingers hold the bead, and warm it, warm it—till strangely this seeming crystal globule, grows soft and elastic. Sleep on Nurse Lint, Gervase Falcon has drawn the curtains, and is on his knees by the bed-side. He has slipped all the beads, save ONE, on to the string, and has closed the clasp again, and laid the trinket, coiled up in its case, on the table.

Digitized by Google

He raised himself on his knees, and thrusting the globule he had warmed into his mouth, crunched it between his teeth, and swallowed it. Then fell forward on his face DEAD.

Watchman, what of the Night? The Night was gone and past for Gervase Falcon. The DAWN was come, paling for him the horizon of Eternity. Now, wake up Nurse Lint, and wake up all the house, and take this man, and bury him in a crimson velvet box, for he is a Lord's nephew.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. VI.

CAPTAIN POLLYBLANK SEES IT ALL.

TO be ragged, destitute, hungry, and in debt, and suddenly to be placed in possession of twenty pounds sterling, is in itself an occurrence of so unlooked-for and gratifying a nature, that the indulgence of the more jocund and convivial feelings of humanity on the part of the recipient must be regarded as a natural consequence of the event. The present writer had once a fourth share in a freehold situate in a slum in Somers Town; and that freehold being, under the terms of a Will, sold by auction at Garraway's, and realising some score more pounds than had been anticipated, the writer is not ashamed to confess, that he immediately

Digitized by Google

cast all his preconceived plans for a chop and a glass of sherry at the "Cock," in Threadneedle Street to the winds; and, for the space of about ten minutes, lived at the rate of ten thousand a year, inasmuch as he revelled in a half-pint basin of real turtle, and a glass of iced punch at Birch's. The extravagance was scored up against him at the time, doubtless, with triply-notched chalk, and he will have to howl for it some day; but the turtle was delicious, and he did not forget to drink in iced punch the health of the speculative purchaser who had bidden so boldly for the freehold; which for his (the writer's) part, albeit it looked very well in the auctioneer's advertisement, was, to look at, about the dismallest tenement one could realise after a conception of Tennyson's "Moated Grange," and Hood's "Haunted House."

With twenty golden effigies of his Majesty rattling in his trousers' pockets, Captain John Pollyblank sat on the edge of the pembroke table in the equivocal parlour of the "Blue Pump" until very late on the same wet night

Digitized by Google

that the man in the cloak came to buy the bracelet of him, and whose use of that bracelet a little after midnight you have heard in the sixth chapter. The outward appearance — as to vestments — of the Captain was in no wise changed. He was as shabby, ragged, dirty, and disreputable looking as before; but it needed no tongue in the Captain's cheek, no wink in the Captain's eye, no hand-slapping of the Captain's pocket, to tell you that Captain Jack Pollyblank was in luck and in funds, and didn't care twopence for the Sheriff of Surrey.

He had not been idle since the departure of the strange gentleman who had bought the bracelet that had not four pennyworth of gold in it, but just the worth of One Human Life prisoned in the fourth bead from the tail end of the clasp. Beef and pickles had been ordered for the Captain's refection, and brought in and voraciously consumed. The purl had been allowed ignominiously to cool, and grow flat and mawkish; and a real bowl of punch — the very best, both as to punch and bowl, that

Digitized by Google

the "Blue Pump" could put on its pembroke for five shillings — steamed at the Captain's elbow. He had ordered Dick, the waiter, to have what he liked; and Dick had had what he liked, and a great deal more than was good for him. He had invited Simon Meggot, victualler, to partake of punch. So liberal was the Captain on the strength of his newly-fledged prosperity, that I have no doubt he would have treated the company to glasses round of anything to which they chose to give a name: only the night was so wet, that the "Blue Pump" parlour was deserted by its usual frequenters — medical students attached to the neighbouring Hospitals, St. Fawkes's, St. Griddle's, and St. Catherine Wheeler's; and sometimes even nascent practitioners from the great west-end Hospital of St. Lazarus. Medical students are more choice now-a-days in their houses of entertainment, and would indignantly resent being called "Sawbones." The company in the bar, consisting mainly of inebriated hatters, and those peripatetic dealers in fish, fruit, and vegetables, known under the

Digitized by Google

generic name of "Costers," with a sprinkling of slipshod women, babies in arms, and mendicant cripples without any arms at all, were not a company who could be treated by a gentleman of the Captain's position and prospects. So Jack sat and smoked his pipe, and drank his punch by himself, indulging in Alnaschar-like dreams the while, and fingering his twenty golden sovereigns; for his riches were still intact.

"And a remarkable circumstance it is," reasoned the Capitalist, "that when a man is known to have no money, everybody wants to see the colour of that money before they will sell him a penny-loaf or a saveloy; whereas, directly he is known to have plenty of money, nobody wants to see it, but insist on selling him turtle or venison on credit. That chuff, Meggot, would have refused me trust for fourpenn'orth of liquor an hour since; and now I am at least eight shillings into those flinty ribs of his, only because he has caught a glimpse of the twenty pounds my uncle from India made me a present of. It would be only serving

Digitized by Google

the rascal out not to pay him at all, even now."

"My uncle from India," he continued, with complacent thoughtfulness, emptying the ashes from his pipe on the table, and slowly refilling that calumet; "my uncle from India is a most remarkable relation. A species of Dutch uncle, I may say. A close card, my uncle. A sly card. He wanted that for *himself*, did he? Ah! I daresay. However, it's no business of mine. The stuff will tell no tales."

It never entered the wretched man's mind that it was his own immortal Business to know the purpose to which he, to whom he had sold a subtile and deadly Poison, intended to apply it — a poison that, save a slight odour, would leave no mark, no sign, no trace, internal or external, on the body of the person to whom it had been administered. It never entered into his mind to reflect with horror, that he was by that time the guilty and cold-blooded accomplice in either a murder or a suicide. We prate about conscience, and its still, small voice. We talk about stifling conscience, drugging it,

Digitized by Google

searing it. I tell you, there are fifty thousand villains that swagger in the streets every day between Temple Bar and Hyde Park Corner—villains with consciences as loud-voiced as the trumpets that blew down the walls of Jericho. Such villains let their conscience bray out as blatantly as it pleases. They laugh at conscience, and call it "my boy"; and dig it in the ribs, and clap it on the shoulder. Grave doctors tell us, that every Murderer is, to a certain extent, mad when he murders. I believe that Murderers abound, who, calculating chances, nicely weigh the odds between impunity and the scaffold; who, with a Conscience wide awake, and watchful as a police-inspector or a newspaper editor, go and murder; and take conscience with them, simply because they want to murder; and even when they *know* detection to be certain, and the gallows imminent, yet go and murder, because it suits their murderous purpose. And it is certain that these men go on studying Greek and Hebrew, betting on Derbys and Oaks innumerable; marrying wives, and rearing children; cram-

Digitized by Google

ming strychnine down the throats of their friends and relations; eating pig and plum-sauce; and sleeping comfortably in four-post beds, and nightcaps with tassels that tie under the chin—and murdering still with Conscience at their elbow. Paradoxical it may seem; but I believe the poor Archbishop of Paris's conscience, or that of any other thoroughly good, harmless man, troubled and pained him about five hundred times more, than the conscience of M. Verger — or any other bloodthirsty villain — troubled that late ecclesiastic and assassin.

"Some men," was the profound remark of the man with a Conscience, his new pipe being lighted to his satisfaction, "are said to be ready for anything, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter. To the first I may say I have been addicted from my youth upwards. With the last, Jack, it strikes me you are not very far from intimate acquaintance."

"I wonder what it was," he resumed, "Love, Forgery—a Brother, or a Wife, that stood in his way. Somebody to get rid of, I'll go bail.

Digitized by Google

Was there ever such a curious thing as *my* being in this very room, not three months since, perdition hard up (though, by the way, that isn't so curious a thing), and on a night just as miserable as this one? Was there anything so fortuitous as for that respectable preoccupied individual to come here in that identical and interesting Spanish cloak of his, quite, as I am willing to believe, by accident, and merely driven in by stress of weather, while in pursuit of a wild-goose chase after a woman—what did he say was the name she passed by?—A woman about forty years of age, with black hair, and deucedly dissipated-looking, who, he said, had been last heard of living in a three-pair-back in Sun Court, and who, according to him, was a most uncommon good one at the rum-bottle! By the way, he had been rather a good one at some bottle or another himself, that night; for I never saw a closer imitation of a party who had been going in rather freely at the 'maddening wine cup.' Maddening wine cup! It must have been port by bucketsful, or sherry in quart-pots.

Digitized by Google

Was there anything ever so curious, either, as the way in which he went on here at the maddening brandy-flask, likewise at the maniacal gin-noggin, to say nothing of the frantic whisky measure? He emptied them into that respectable throttle of his, as though he had been a waste butt turned into a churchwarden, or banker, or a Lord. He must have been one of them."

The bird's-eye had burned down low into the bowl again, and Jack Pollyblank contemplatively used a fork-prong for a tobacco-stopper.

"Drunk as William who came to grief, drunk as the pet female spaniel of the traditional violinist, was likewise John Pollyblank, armiger," he still mused, "on the eventful evening when it rained cats and dogs. Out came the domestic cat from J. P.'s bag. Blown was Jack Pollyblank's gaff—blown as a balloon. I told him my own story; I borrowed a 'quid,' a saffron-coloured pound from him; I told him of that bracelet I got hold of in the Black Town at Calcutta. I wish I'd

Digitized by Google

never seen it, nor her who gave it me; for she's got more of those sort of wares in stock, I know, and she'll murder me with a toothpick, or a shirt-pin, or a waistcoat-button, some day, I'll be bound.

"Why should I regret it, though? He said he'd look me up again if he wanted it, and now, by Jove! he has looked me up, and he wants it, I suppose, for somebody; and Jack Pollyblank is twenty pounds the wiser, and can see no law why he should not enjoy himself thereupon. Hoorah!"

So mused, smoking and drinking, Captain Pollyblank. He was an atrocious scoundrel and villain, with a dash of humour and a spice of *bonhommie* in him; would robbing Peter of five pounds invest five pence in treating Paul to drink, and would have his joke when he perjured himself. These, ladies and gentlemen, are delightful social characteristics of about the most dangerous class of these roaring lions, who are continually running up and down seeking whom they may devour. When the demon is a jolly fellow and is fond of his joke,

Digitized by Google

he is about the worst demon that you can meet on this side Tophet.

Captain Pollyblank's reflections had not been wholly of a dry nature; for at their termination he found the punch-bowl empty. Ringing the bell to order that festive vessel to be replenished, he suddenly became aware of the presence of another visitor in the parlour of the "Blue Pump."

In the person of a slight man of no particular age, who, if his name had happened to have been Smith, might have been called "Old Smith" or "Young Smith" indifferently, and with equal safety; a person who was straw-coloured as to hair, and raven-hued as to costume, and who must have been, seemingly, in the receipt of fern-seed, and so have walked invisibly, for he had come no man knew whence, and no man knew how. At least, Captain Pollyblank didn't. But the mysterious appearance was there, at all events.

"Why, it's Sal Tinctop!" the Captain cried in a loud, cheery voice. "Welcome, Sal. Welcome, little stranger. Welcome, thou

Digitized by Google

silent, pale-faced, snub-nosed haystack. Welcome to the halls of Pollyblank; for Pollyblank is in funds, and will treat thee royally, 'Chy-ike!'"

With which mysterious adjuration, or expletive, or masonic "*jödel*" of "Chy-ike!" whatever it meant, Jack made a feint of embracing the straw-coloured man in black, whom he addressed as Sal Tinctop, and welcomed him to the halls of Pollyblank; then, and for that time situate in the parlour of the "Blue Pump."

"I see it all," exclaimed the Captain.

Just then the clock struck twelve. I wonder what it was the Captain saw.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. VII.

THE MORNING AFTER.

THE reader who pays attention to the march of time, will remember that it was twelve o'clock at night when the convivial Pollyblank hailed the entrance into the parlour of the "Blue Pump," of a person of light complexion known to him by the appellation of Tinctop, and who could not by any possibility have been a nearer relative to the morally deaf and dumb assistant of Mr. Fleem, F.R.C.S., than he was, seeing that he happened to be that deaf and dumb assistant himself.

The mere appearance of this confidential practitioner had been sufficient to cause

Digitized by Google

Captain Pollyblank to explain that "he saw it all," but it was not till about two o'clock *on the morning after*, and subsequent to the consumption of quantities of punch and tobacco, which to those unacquainted with the capacity for holding alcohol and inhaling nicotine possessed by the Captain, would have seemed unattainably immense, that he started up, declaring that he saw it now as clear as crystal, and that Mr. Tinctop was a thrice-distilled ass — only that he did not use so mild an epithet as that — for not enabling him to see it all two hours sooner.

"You sappy Spooney! you dolt! you nincompoop! you jolter-headed, batter-pudding-brained griffin! you bag of soft sawdust from a timber head," he cried out in a rage; "you've been leading me on the wrong scent, with your confounded humming and hawing. Why couldn't you come straight to the point, pap-skull?"

"How was I to know that *you* knew the parties?" meekly remonstrated the maligned Mr. Tinctop. "What a one you are to go

Digitized by Google

on, Jack! How could I tell that Mr. Falcon of Grosvenor Square ——"

"There, hold your tongue," hastily interposed his friend. "Stop," he added suddenly, seizing the deaf and dumb assistant by the collar of his coat, and looking steadily, and with a kind of humorous ferocity, in his face. "Look you here, Tinctop of mine."

"W-w-well, what is it Jack?" stammered that gentleman, among whose personal qualities, it may be observed, once for all, personal courage did not by any means shine.

"You have known me for a long time, and you know me pretty well, I *think*."

"Y-y-yes, Jack."

"Listen, then, to the wisdom of Pollyblank, my friend," the Captain resumed quite jocosely. "You have made a communication to me to-night which you could not help yourself in making, seeing that the Three Fates, the Nine Muses, and the Board of Ordnance have decreed that you, Seth Tinctop, shall be for ever and a day my Pump, and that I, Jack Pollyblank, shall be your

Digitized by Google

sucker. That communication is useful to me — may make my fortune, and yours too into the bargain. On the other hand, I have told you certain things that might, hereafter (if supported, which they are not, by credible evidence) lead certain fools to believe that I have been an accessory before a certain fact. Observe: There is an oracle herein that I intend to work, a game of hazard at which I mean to throw a main. If you attempt to interfere with, or cross, or counteract whatsoever I choose to do — if you don't keep that tongue of yours as tight as handcuffs between your teeth — and if you are not in all things my tool, deaf, dumb, blind, halt to everything but what I choose to tell you, I'll —"

"What, Jack, what?" the victim asked imploringly.

"I won't say that I'll jump upon you," the Captain good-naturedly explained, "or that I'll pitch you into the Surrey Canal, or that I'll cut your throat, or poison you; but by —, Seth Tinctop," and here he swore

Digitized by Google

a frightful oath, "I'll MURDER you!" He threw his friend away from him as he spoke, with sportive brutality; and then taking his arm in a tight, but most friendly manner, and saying that it was "time to travel," swaggered out with him through the bar.

If Seth Tinctop had heard Captain Pollyblank take any oath in the witness-box of any court of justice, he would have known very well that his friend—false, ruffianly, depraved as he was—would immediately afterwards have perjured himself chin-deep, had it suited him so to do, without the slightest hesitation or remorse. But it is a curious fact, that Captain Pollyblank's remarks, made at two o'clock in the morning and when highly inflamed with spirituous liquors, were by their hearer implicitly believed, and would have attained as unequivocal credence had they lacked the immoral support of an imprecation. For Seth Tinctop knew his man; and Captain Pollyblank knew his also.

The landlord was fast in a sottish sleep behind his bar; and Dick, the waiter, drow-

Digitized by Google

sing by the closed door, woke up to let them out. "There was fifteen and eightpence to pay," he muttered in leaden language. It was perfectly in consonance with the more facetious phases of the Captain's character to have at once disabled the somnolent servitor by a cunningly-directed blow in some sensitive part of his anatomy, and, profiting by the bar between himself and the landlord, to have made a run for it, without paying the score at all. On the present occasion, however, with an integrity and a magnanimity and generosity wonderful to record and delightful to view, the Captain threw a shining sovereign on the beer-stained pewter of the bar counter, and bade Dick take it out of that, and keep the change.

Dick wanted no second telling, but sprang on the precious coin, taking care to bite it, as a measure of precaution, before he drew the bolts of the door. So these loving friends went out into the morning.

It had cleared up wonderfully, and the moon was out. Interrogated by Pollyblank

Digitized by Google

as to whither he was going, Mr. Fleem's assistant announced his intention of returning home to the residence of his chief, which was situate in a grandly dull street, as befitted so eminent a practitioner, in the neighbourhood of Park Lane. To this Captain Pollyblank rejoined, that, such being the case, and in consideration of the fineness of the weather, he would walk that way himself, for fear, too, he humorously added, his dear friend might lose himself or get into mischief. It is not improbable that the Captain had other motives in thus volunteering to accompany Mr. Tinctop to his domicile. Perhaps he wished to walk off the fumes of the punch and tobacco; perhaps he desired to worm out, *en route*, some further information on a subject so momentous to him. Be it as it may, the two walked on together down and up and along streets and thoroughfares great and small, and over bridges, till in due time they reached Grosvenor Square itself, and passing through it on their way to the grandly dull street close by, found

Digitized by Google

themselves opposite Gervase Falcon's mansion. Late, or rather early, as it was, there was a crowd before the house. There were carriages — Mr. Fleem's and Lord Baddington's; there were constables; there was the beadle; and there was a miscellaneous assemblage of night prowlers, and people with apparently no homes to go to.

The hall door was wide open; and John-Peter, in a distracting *deshabille*, was vainly endeavouring to answer five hundred questions, categorically put, at once. Failing in that, he gave five hundred answers in incoherent fragments, anyhow.

What was the matter? What was the noise, the crowd about? Captain Pollyblank kept asking the question of everybody. Everybody answered, Death was the matter. Murder the matter? No! not murder, only "sooacide." Mr. Falcon had killed his'self; Mrs. Falcon, the two Misses Falcon, had pisoned theirselves. It *was* pison. And above the din you might hear the scared treble of John-Peter, making a lexicological

Digitized by Google

salad of his five hundred answers, and as a last resource imploring everybody to "gawlong."

Through the tumult there suddenly came out to his carriage, Mr. Fleem, who espying Tinctop his assistant, suddenly collared him, and demanded to know instanter "where the woman was."

"Where is she, you scoundrel?" exclaimed the indignant surgeon. "Where is she? What have you done with her?"

"I — I — don't know what you mean, Mr. Fleem," his deaf and dumb assistant, in an agony of terror, answered. He looked round hopelessly for Jack Pollybank, but the Captain had swiftly and discreetly withdrawn himself.

"Didn't I tell you to let no one come near her, you villain?" asked Mr. Fleem.

"And I let no one come near her," answered Tinctop, "except Mrs. Lint, whom you sent. I visited her three times during the evening; and left her for the last time at nine o'clock, and she was then in a comfortable sleep.

Digitized by Google

Mrs. Lint said she was getting on quite nicely."

"Mrs. Lint is a fool," cried his superior. "Mrs. Lint is a stupid fool, and a drunken fool, Sir; Mrs. Lint went to sleep, and we had all the trouble in the world to wake her. And she says that she must have been drugged with laudanum."

"And isn't the patient better, Sir?" the assistant asked innocently.

"Better, you Idiot!" exclaimed the surgeon, passionately. "Better — *She's gone.* What have you done with her?"

"Mr. Fleem," replied Tinctop, respectfully, but with as much firmness as he could infuse into his quavering voice, "I attended to your directions. I left the patient with the nurse you selected. Mr. Falcon's footman let me out at nine o'clock, after my last visit, and I'm not further responsible. And I'll trouble you, Sir, to take your hand off my collar."

The surgeon unhanded his assistant, looking at him with a vexed and puzzled air.

Digitized by Google

Then he said, "Come in here;" pushed Tinctop into his carriage; said "Home" to the coachman, and began biting his nails, and looking at Mr. Tinctop with a more puzzled expression than ever.

"What do you do in Grosvenor Square at three in the morning?" he asked imperiously.

"You will remember, Sir, that you gave me permission to absent myself after ten o'clock last evening, to visit a sick friend. I did so, and sat by his bed-side till past two o'clock this morning, as you were good enough not to limit me to time, and Mr. Scalple the junior being at your house. I came home through the Square, and naturally stopped, seeing the crowd. Has anything happened to Mr. Falcon, Sir?"

"Mr. Gervase Falcon," the surgeon slowly answered, "has committed suicide!"

"Good Heaven, Sir!"

"Poisoned himself. How, Heaven may know, but I don't. All I can say is, that at half-past twelve I found him, by the empty

Digitized by Google

bed-side of that woman, stark, stiff, and dead. There was a powerful aromatic smell hanging about the body, tallying in odour with that of a box of lozenges I found on the table. Lozenges must be analyzed of course. Post-mortem, too, as soon as it is daylight."

"Perhaps he died in a fit," Mr. Tinctop suggested.

"Died in a fiddlestick!" Mr. Fleem retorted, testily. "I tell you he poisoned himself. Though how the deuce," he added, with a desperately puzzled expression, "he managed to do it, I know no more than Lady Rabbetwarrenne knows when she is going to leave off making Sir Hutchins Rabbetwarrenne a father."

"I suppose Mrs. Falcon is dreadfully afflicted," remarked the assistant, as the carriage drew up before Mr. Fleem's house.

"What business is that of yours?" was the polite reply. "I brought you with me to ascertain whether *you* know anything, not to be catechised by you. There, go to bed, and hold your tongue. You'll be wanted

Digitized by Google

for the post-mortem, in the morning, and for the inquest after that."

So saying, and with a yawn, the distinguished Surgeon dismissed his inferior, and went up-stairs to his own bed-chamber, muttering to himself as he went along that it was a deuced strange thing, and that he couldn't make it out at all.

"Go to bed and hold my tongue," said the assistant, between the teeth of his mind as he snatched up a bed-candle, and went up-stairs to bed too. "Hold my tongue! That's what all of 'em say. We'll see! We'll see."

"I know more than all of 'em now, I think," he resumed when he was safe in his own little apartment, and had locked the door. "*She* is in my hands, oho! Jack can't stir a peg in the matter without me. I told him I had got her, and not *where*. A wrong number, oho! and a wrong street. He'll go there before he sleeps, ha! ha! I think I've enough, too, in my hands, to hang Jack Pollyblank, and to bring all these high

Digitized by Google

and mighty Falcons on their knees. Perhaps, though, I'd better work with Jack; I don't like being alone in a swim. Jack's such a knowing card—he's such a safe card, too. I shall be sure to hear from him in the morning, though."

The thoughts that he *should* be sure to hear from Jack in the morning, and that he had deceived Jack as to a certain number of a house in a certain street, were sufficient to cause Mr. Seth Tinctop to break out into a cold perspiration. He began to remember, with terrible distinctness, the assurance his friend had given him in the "Blue Pump" parlour, of his intentions towards him in case of misconduct on his part; and, as he remembered, he trembled.

"I *must* work with Jack," he groaned at last, throwing himself on his bed; "I *must* work with him; but I'll see him hanged, and be the hanging of him too, some day, for all that."

With which Christian hope and resolve he put his head on his pillow, and slept very soundly.

Digitized by Google

Sleep, on such a night! Ay, they all slept. the surgeon and the assistant, the villain and the beadle, and the penny-a-liner — the daughters of Gervase Falcon in the first hours of their bereavement — the widow in the first agony of her widowhood! Sleep mercifully knitted up the ravelled sleeve of their care, even for the most afflicted. All slept; but none so soundly as Gervase Falcon, who lay with his hands clinched, and his jaw bound up, on the bed on which the woman had lain before — lay there with lights at his bed-head, and the watchers of the dead at his feet.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. VIII.

IN WHICH CAPTAIN POLLYBLANK MAKES ARRANGEMENTS TO INCREASE HIS CAPITAL.

ANTICIPATING a scene of Equivoque of some sort or other between Mr. Fleem and his assistant, and one which by some remote chance might turn out disagreeable to all parties, Captain Jack Pollyblank had, as has been hinted in the previous chapter, prudently withdrawn himself from the scene of conversational operation, immediately he heard Tinctop addressed. The singular modesty and reticence of Captain Pollyblank likewise prompted him to lurk behind walls and skulk round corners till Mr. Fleem's carriage had driven away, and was well out of

Digitized by Google

sight:—the collateral disappearance of Tinctop did not the least disturb him;—for as his friend rightly augured, he knew where to find him; and where, and how to have him in the morning.

Thus, too, when the impromptu crowd had dispersed, and John-Peter, by a vast exertion of physical and moral courage, had refused to answer any more questions from anybody, and had shut the outer door in everybody's face, the cautious captain did not attempt, either by rap, or ring, or parley, to obtain ingress to that House of Death, out of one, or some, or all of whose Living occupants he had already settled in his mind—with all the sternness of a scoundrel's *idée fixe* to make his fortune.

Tinctop had given him, both at the "Blue Pump" and in their walk thence, a hurried outline of the Falcon-cum-Baddington genealogy; and he was now passably acquainted with the bearings of that Peerage: still, to borrow an expression of the captain's, culled from the fruitful vocabulary of his favourite game of billiards, he could not yet fit all the

Digitized by Google

right cues to the right balls; and in one or two instances he was at fault altogether. For instance he had not as yet, from what Tinctop had told him, any reason to believe that the woman who had fallen down in the hall that morning was not still safely a-bed in the upper chamber. You, reader, have been in already.

Another consideration prompted the captain to examine the ground carefully before he commenced his financial campaign. It was incumbent on him to satisfy himself as to the exact circumstances under which Mr. Falcon had died, and whether he had left anything behind him calculated to compromise him, Pollyblank. And there was a last and a very weighty reason for the captain's reluctance to adopt any rash course of procedure, in the fact that he had been swallowing strong liquids, and inhaling the fumes of strong tobacco for the major part of the last five hours, and that he was now considerably more than three parts drunk.

"Which is a state," the captain (round the corner) soliloquised, quite coherently, but

Digitized by Google

somewhat huskily as to utterance: "which is a state in which I never do business. Seeing which, I shall just indulge in a pint of Snobbins and a pipe, till my head gets clear, and leave the bereaved swells to their peaceful slumbers. Pleasant dreams to 'em!"

Captain Pollyblank had been brought up in quite a Lacedæmonian school of deboshed discipline, and looked upon soda-water as a new-fangled invention; it was comparatively so then—and as the diluent of milksops. When he had takan too much, which occurred as often as he could get enough, he inclined, as a refresher and brain-cooler, to the genial "Snobbins," which was indeed the smallest ale or the smallest beer that he could obtain at the lowest public-house or the humblest chandler's shop. There is more virtue in small-beer than has yet been chronicled.

On this occasion, however, the Captain, feeling extraordinarily feverish and thirsty, looked round for some time vainly for an open tavern or shop: for night-houses were, as may well be imagined, scouted from the

Digitized by Google

genteel precincts of Grosvenor Square. By great good luck, however, the "Robin Redlegs" had opened its doors a good two hours earlier than usual, in consequence of the profitably mournful event close by, and was already driving a brisk trade. Into this ark of refuge Jack Pollyblank incontinently dived, and ordering the "Snobbins" in question, proceeded to pour that refreshing beverage down his parched throat.

"Hot coppers," the captain said, with a complacent sigh, as he replaced the pewter mug on the counter.

"Hot, indeed; comes of being up all night, racketting about," said, in a responsive echo, a voice close by.

Captain Pollyblank turned sharply round, and was on the point of asking, with considerable irritation, what the Devil the speaker meant by taking his words up, when he caught sight of the speaker himself; on which the expression of his face immediately changed from hostility to amity, and he thrust forward a bunch of very coarse, clumsy, dirty fingers

Digitized by Google

which belonged to a hand of his, and clutched the hand of the person who had mentioned hot coppers in connection with stopping out all night in the most friendly manner.

"Why, Zillah the betrayed, my hearty, how goes it?" he cried.

Zillah the Betrayed was a flat-footed, shambling, Leaning-Tower-of-Pisa of a man, about forty, all askew, like that celebrated sample of architecture not quite right in its head. The top of Zillah's head was not quite right either, for it was flat on the surface, with a round fleshy nob like a dome dominating a city. You had frequent opportunities of remarking this curious feature on Zillah's head formation; for he (he *was* a he) was continually taking off a hat with a rusty crape band to it, and a brim quite vandyked with long fingering, extract a cotton pocket-handkerchief, literally snuff-coloured, for it had only the colour of the snuff wherewith it was impregnated, and wiping with it his face, which, though pale, was in a state of perpetual perspiration. Desperately pock-marked was Zillah the betrayed, and the

Digitized by Google

few tufts of hair he possessed, chiefly *about* the temples and the bumps of the maxillaries, were in colour as red as the foxes of the field. He had a flaming red nose, set amidships in his face—a nose that was a very cairn of crimson cherry-stones, a very standard rose-tree of grog-blossoms. An apter simile might perhaps be found, were I to compare that rubicund truncated cone to a big beet root set up on one end in the middle of a ploughed field, with twinkling little eyes on either side, like field mice eagerly watching and anxious to nibble it.

The attire of Zillah the betrayed was black in hue, but of the rustiest and the most woe-begone. There were more button holes than buttons on the breast of his coat, though that garment was closed right up to the neck, and more pins than either. His trousers had "knees" to them. You know what "knees" are—unsightly protuberances and bagging of the cloth on the region of the patella, due somewhat to bad tailoring *in principiam*, but more to long and unrelieved wear. They

Digitized by Google

were terribly frayed round the bottom edges; and, from one leg of the trousers being much longer than the other, grievous cause for suspicion was warranted that the braces of Zillah the betrayed were in an abnormal condition. Zillah had gloves of brown Berlin; but his fingers peeped through them. His hat above the rusty crape band was shiny enough; but one skilled in such matters might have known that the lustre was due to the friction of a wet brush. Zillah carried in that hat, by the way, besides the snuff-coloured handkerchief, a quantity of blue-wove foolscap paper, wrapped up in a ragged newspaper. Finally, from head to heel of him, soap and water were as evidently inimical to his habits as everybody's enemy is said to be to holy water; and there no more appeared about him, at his neck or his wrists, the sign of a shirt than there appeared a sail during the first two days that Mr. Dibden's ship, name unknown, lay in the Bay of Biscay.

Such was Zillah the betrayed, whose name, by the way, was Gafferer. He was a ragged

Digitized by Google

looking rogue enough, and his attire, taken in the aggregate, might in Rag Fair have fetched some twopence-halfpenny less than Jack Pollyblank's; yet, for all his rags, the man looked better to do in the world than his friend with the hot coppers, and he had an expression withal of being incomparably more honest.

"Why, Jack," he said, returning the Captain's salutation, "You're always starting up when nobody expects you. Last time was at Greenwich fair; time before in Whitecross Street; time before in Smithfield, on a market morning; time before that in the gallery of the Cobourg. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"What have *you* been doing with yourself, Zillah?" retorted the other. "The last time *I* saw you, you were making a fortune out of that immortal 'betrayed one' of yours. Let me see; you had her in a three-act melodrama, at the Cobourg; in a novel, at a penny a number; in a halfpenny song, in the Dials; outside a show, in a comic recitation, at the 'Admiral Gambier,' in the Borough Road; in a political satire, for the 'Reformer's Catechism;'

Digitized by Google

and, if I'm not mistaken, in an acrostic, for the blacking man in the Strand. Are you at the old game still? Does it pay, Zill? Will it yet wash, Gaff?"

"Ah," replied Mr. Gafferer, otherwise Zillah, with a touch of melancholy in his voice. "I've forsaken Literature and the Drama, Jack; at least, *that* sort of Literature. I've taken to something else now."

"Undertaking!"

"No; not exactly that—I don't think I could exactly bring myself to black work, Jack."

"I could," answered that gentleman calmly. "I should like to be a mute amazingly. If I wasn't a gentleman, I'd be one. What *are* you then? Something queer, I'll be bound, to be out this time in the morning."

"Guess!" Zillah the Betrayed said mysteriously.

"Begging-letters?"

"Well then," Jack impatiently threw in, "street preacher, cadger, government spy—(there's many of *them* about)—reform lecturer, Sunday-school teacher? Stop! I have it:—are you a resurrection-man?"

Digitized by Google

"No, Jack, not quite; though I have something to do with them."

"I thought," the Captain (who had lighted a pipe again by this time) resumed, "that you weren't a regular bone-grubber. You're too seedy for that, and resurrectioning pays well just now. Perhaps you're a Burker, and trust the surgeons too much;—or what the deuce *is* your business?"

"Murder's my business," replied, sententiously, and in a low voice, the individual catechised.

"Murder!" Captain Pollyblank rejoined, not exactly starting back, or looking horrified; but still showing signs of very considerable astonishment. "Murder!"

"Battle, murder, and sudden death," added the Betrayed one. "Especially sudden death. Shipwrecks, fires, suicides, appalling accidents, and singular occurrences: *that's* my business. I'm on the Press."

"What Press?"

"Why, the newspaper Press, to be sure. I do short paragraphs about such things as have

Digitized by Google

happened round the corner, for instance. I'm an occasional reporter. They call me"—he added in a low, hissing whisper—"a 'liner,' —a 'penny-a-liner.' Tell 'em, they're liars. Are you going to stand any beer?"

"Quarts," cried the generous Pollyblank; "and after that some breakfast as well, if you like. Lord, Lord! who'd 'a thought of your being a lin—, an occasional reporter, I mean. And does it pay, Gaff?"

"But so-so, but so-so, my dear fellow. But you, what are *you* doing? You never did much that I know of, Jack, except drink, and fight, and swear, and play cards."

"Oh, I," replied the Captain, changing another sovereign with a gesture worthy of a Louis Quatorze, "I'm making my fortune, my dear fellow."

"Glad to hear it," remarked the Occasional Reporter after a pull at the beer Jack had ordered and paid for. "You weren't making it a year ago, Jack."

"Bother a year ago," interposed the Captain testily. "I want to talk to you about this

Digitized by Google

queer start round in the square last night. *You* know all about it, I suppose."

Zillah the Betrayed winked, laid his forefinger by the right side of that monstrous crimson nose of his, and nodded significantly.

"Well," continued Captain Pollyblank, "I want to know all about it, too; and as I'm rather in a hurry, I should like to hear it now, before it gets into one of those newspapers of yours, when, of course, all the world will know it."

"I beg your pardon, Jack Pollyblank; all the world won't know it," Mr. Gafferer broke in, in accents of friendly remonstrance. "Do you think all I know goes into the newspapers? Besides, for aught I know, you may be 'lining' — I mean reporting — this case of suicide, I mean sudden death, as well as myself. You'd better find out for yourself, Mr. P."

But Zillah the Betrayed, who was as simple-minded and guileless-hearted a creature as could be found between Grosvenor Square and Gorgona, was easily soothed and pacified. He had sent his report of the sudden death, or

Digitized by Google

suicide, call it which you will, down to the newspaper offices by messenger, and was waiting near the spot, to see if he could obtain any "additional particulars" that might come in handy preparatory to the inquest. The prospect, moreover, of additional beer, and even of breakfast in the back ground, may have been somewhat of an incentive to Mr. Gafferer, who, satisfying himself that Pollyblank did not belong to the honourable corps of penny-a-liners — indeed, he knew most of them intimately, and all their names familiarly — sat down by the Captain's side in the darkest corner of the Robin Redlegs' tap; and, in accents studiously low, and reading from mysterious scraps of paper, told him, who already knew *something*, as much as he knew of the circumstances of Gervase Falcon's death.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. IX.

"CROWNER'S 'QUEST."

THE "highly respectable jury" impannelled for the purpose, sate upon the body of Gervase Falcon, and made very little of him. Many of the highly respectable jurymen had served the dead man with provisions — butter, cheese, and the like—and thought it rather a liberty to sit upon him at all. Others were indifferent, and others too stupid, and others much too clever, attributing the lamented gentleman's demise to most astonishing and conflicting abnormal causes, ranging from sunstroke to spontaneous combustion. The man was dead, however, and all the respectable juries in the world could not bring him to life again.

Digitized by Google

Mr. Fleem, F.R.C.S., sat at the head of the jury table, and at the right hand of the Coroner, as was meet to a man whom that functionary delighted to honour. Mr. Fleem told his story, which did not add much to anybody's information. He had found Mr. Falcon dead. He had opened the body, and found nothing in it; nothing of a deleterious character, at least. Yes; the brain *was* congested slightly. Apoplexy? Well, he should say that the tissues—and here the learned Fleem proceeded to bewilder the jury with such an extent of erudition, commencing at tissues and ending nowhere, that the highly respectable jury made haste to return a verdict of "Death from natural causes," and to get out of the house, which had already that mysterious closeness and leaden oppression in its atmosphere, which hangs about every dwelling where Death is.

The inquest had been held in the parlour where the feast had taken place the day before; and the paper and pens and ink coldly furnished forth the bridal table. The highly

Digitized by Google

respectable jury went bundling through the hall, meeting with heart-breaking difficulties in the recovery of their hats and coats, and treated with the most contemptuous neglect by John-Peter and his brother servitors, who stood together in a knot, and whispered comments respecting the inquest. It is the privilege of Fashion, when it dies suddenly, to be sat upon in its own house. If John-Peter, or any of his degree, had so ended, they would have held an inquest on him at the "Robin Redlegs," in the Mews.

Said the Coroner to Mr. Fleem, drawing on his gloves, "A very curious case."

"Remarkably so," the medical practitioner acquiesced.

There was a dead pause after this; and the Coroner took off one of his gloves again, by way of diversion.

"*Re*-markably so," Mr. Fleem repeated, feeling that the Coroner was looking at him, and expected him to say something.

"A most estimable gentleman, I believe," the legal functionary observed, moving towards the door.

Digitized by Google

"Estimable!" Mr. Fleem cried, in a melancholy ecstasy of admiration. "Estimable! a jewel of a man, my dear sir. Husband, father, brother, and man, he was estimable in every social phase, and in every relation of life. His loss will never, never be repaired. I wonder what the deuce he poisoned himself for!" Mr. Fleem added, but mentally, you may be sure.

"A terrible loss!" remarked the Coroner.

"Terrible, terrible, terrible!" Mr. Fleem sighed, bowing the Coroner through the hall. "Terrible!" he said, in an alto key, to remind John-Peter that there was a visitor to be let out. "So estimable a gentleman!" he concluded, as the Coroner took his departure. Then Mr. Fleem, cogitating very deeply as he walked, went upstairs into the drawing-room, and the Coroner went to sit on somebody else.

It was agreed on all sides that the deceased was estimable. Nobody said that he was a suicide, and ought to be buried in a cross-road with a stake through his heart. "Estimable in every relation of life" sounded well in

Digitized by Google

eighteen hundred and thirty — sounds well now. The morning newspaper, which in a twelve-line paragraph recorded his death, said he was estimable. Mr. Resurgam, the undertaker, was quite sure he was estimable, as he listened to his assistants driving the nails into Gervase Falcon's fine coffin, with the superfine cloth and the cherub handles. Mr. Fiddyas, the mortuary sculptor, hadn't a doubt about his estimable qualities, and had his eye already upon "estimable" for the fourth line or so of the monumental inscription. How estimable he was to his family, those bereaved ones only knew.

There are some men who may be called human ravens, and who only make their appearance when Death is about. We have all of us some special funeral-friends, people we don't see for years and years together; but who are summoned to meet us, as a matter of course, when there is anybody to be buried; then we lose sight of them again till somebody else dies. There is another human raven in the person of the Death Lawyer, who never

Digitized by Google

seems to have anything to do with births or marriage settlements, but is always in at the Deaths.

His name was Pratt, and he was the Family Lawyer, and sat composedly among the weeping Falcons in the drawing-room, and was not even awed by the presence of the great Lord Baddington himself. He was one of a stately firm of lawyers, dwelling in a large house, dreadfully dingy, but immensely respectable, in Bedford Row. There were half-a-dozen partners in the house, and the Deaths were his department. He was what you may term a built-up man; that is, to his *valet de chambre* he was very probably less a hero, than a long, lean, lank, and shrivelled man, not unlike a forked radish; but the exterior building-up, including a tall white neckcloth, a curly black wig, a heavy gold chain, and especially very large white wrist-bands, made Mr. Pratt what he was—solemn, dignified, stiff, and highly respectable.

He sat at the table covered with papers, which should properly have been secured by

Digitized by Google

black instead of red tape. He sat over against Lord Baddington; and I think that nobleman was slightly afraid of him. As Mr. Fleem came into the room, and whispered what he had to state respecting the result of the Inquest, the Family Lawyer, who otherwise always sat bolt upright, condescended to incline his black-wigged head a little downwards, and on one side, in which position he bore no inconsiderable resemblance to a magpie looking into a marrow bone.

"I apprehend, my Lord," he said, at length, "that it is not necessary for me to go any further into detail on this painful topic. I will leave the papers here for your Lordship's inspection, and hold myself, at any future period, at your Lordship's disposal."

He should suddenly have flapped out two solemn wings from those shoulder blades of his, and flown away, like a bird of ill-omen, as he was. But he contented himself with taking his black presence out of the room in the ordinary manner, and the door downstairs closed upon him with a solemn bang, that

Digitized by Google

made the hearers upstairs start and almost shudder in their seats.

"Oh! uncle, uncle," Mrs. Falcon cried out, bursting into a fresh-flood of tears, "this is indeed dreadful!"

The poor woman had been weeping ever since the morning—ever since the horrified servants had rushed up to her room to tell her that her husband was lying on the floor dead. She had passed from paroxysm to paroxysm of sorrow. She had parted from her husband in grief, in doubt, in mystery, and in passionate resentment. The sun had gone down upon her wrath, but was to rise no more. He was afar off—her husband—beyond the Sun and Stars, at the other end of a dreadful gulf, looking at her with sad eyes.

There were in the room beside her now only Lord Baddington and Mr. Fleem. The girls were bewailing in their own bedchambers. A messenger had been sent post that morning to Brig, Hastings, in whose vicinity the happy Bride and Bridegroom were staying, to tell them the awful news. Compton Guy had been and

Digitized by Google

was gone again. That youthful Guardsman had been dreadfully shocked, and at his club that day could ejaculate little beyond "By Jove!" He couldn't make it out, he said. Nobody could make it out, not even Mr. Fleem.

Who was sidling mildly from the room, now that he had imparted his intelligence; but Lord Baddington and Mrs. Falcon both besought him to stay, for they had something of the most vital importance to communicate to him.

His Lordship was slightly nervous as he made these inquiries, and glanced with a very ambiguous expression at the Doctor. But the expression suddenly ceased to be ambiguous. Mr. Fleem felt that he was expected to reassure, and, if possible, console Mrs. Falcon; and if long words, mild delivery, and an elaborate disquisition upon nothing, could have done it, he would certainly have succeeded.

"For the tissues you see, my dear madam," he was explaining, by way of peroration—

He was at those tissues again, and would have harped upon the congenial chord for an-

Digitized by Google

other five minutes, when the widow cut him short.

"Mr. Fleem," without further preface, she said, "my husband poisoned himself."

"My dear Caroline," remonstrated Lord Baddington.

Mr. Fleem said nothing, but looked in mild expostulation at the carpet.

"As there is a Heaven above," Mrs. Falcon said again, "he poisoned himself; or there has been foul play."

"My dear Madam," Mr. Fleem rejoined, not virtuously indignant, but only shocked—severely shocked, "what motive could the late Mr. Falcon—"

"What motive! Who was that woman—that ragged wretch—that cast-off mistress of his, who came here to reproach him?"

"His cast-off mistress—No!" a voice said very calmly and quietly.

The voice was not that of a Banshee, or of an evil spirit; it only emanated from a person straw-coloured as to hair, and raven-hued as to costume, who must have been seemingly in

Digitized by Google

the receipt of fern-seed, and so walked invisible; for he had come no man knew whence, and no man knew how, and stood at the door looking very quietly, but confidently, at the Lord, and the Doctor, and the Widow.

"You impudent dog!" Mr. Fleem cried, starting up in passion; "you impertinent rascal! what do you mean by coming here? Who asked for you? Who sent for you?"

"Yes, sir, who sent for you?" echoed Lord Baddington.

Mrs. Falcon was grief-fully amazed.

The assistant did not deign to notice his master's anger; he simply repeated,

"His cast-off mistress—no!"

"How do you know? what do you know about it—about her?" eagerly asked Mrs. Falcon.

I know *all* about her," Mr. Tinctop calmly answered.

"Then why the deuce don't you speak!" cried his master furiously. "You told me this morning, you knew nothing about the matter. Speak, you villain!"

Digitized by Google

"Yes, sir, speak!" Lord Baddington added; "and what the deuce do you mean by standing with your back against that door? Ring the bell, Fleem, and have him kicked down stairs?"

"You'd better not," Mr. Tinctop coolly remarked; "I've not only got my back against the door, but locked it directly I came in; and I've got the key in my pocket."

"He's mad!" cried Lord Baddington.

"He's drunk!" exclaimed Mr. Fleem, making towards his assistant, as though to collar him again.

"Mr. Fleem," if you lay a finger on me I'll run a scalpel into you."

The surgeon drew back, for his assistant had a certain look in his pale face that was very ominous and not at all pleasant.

"He *must* be mad," he muttered.

"Neither mad nor drunk," the bold assistant replied. "Quite sane and sober, and the master of you all."

"In heaven's name, man," cried Mrs. Falcon, "do not keep us longer in this agonising susdense. If you have anything to say—"

Digitized by Google

"*If* I have anything to say!" interrupted Mr. Tinctop. "Of course I have something to say. I shouldn't have come here, shouldn't have locked the door, if I hadn't. But, do you want me to say it before old Fleem."

"Mad as a march hare," the surgeon whispered to himself. "Old Fleem, indeed—confound his impudence!"

"Speak, sir," Lord Baddington said, "Mr. Fleem is a friend of the family, and enjoys the entire confidence both of Mrs. Falcon and of myself."

"Well, then, I'll just go back a little," Mr. Tinctop proceeded, very slowly and deliberately. "As you were, if you please. *Not* his cast-off mistress — oh, no!"

"What then?"

"Not by any means his cast-off mistress — oh, dear, no! His lawful wedded WIFE, to whom he was married at Mallows Cray Church, in Kent, one-and-twenty years ago."

"Scoundrel and liar!" the Peer exclaimed, starting up.

"Hands off!" retorted Mr. Tinctop; "and

Digitized by Google

you, governor, don't look as if you could eat me up. Look to that good lady on the carpet there; for she's fainted!"

Mrs. Gervase Falcon no longer. The cast-off mistress lay in a faint, on the carpet. His WIFE! Heavens and earth! his wife!

Digitized by Google

CHAP. X.

THE TURNING TO A LONG LANE.

IT is stale news to hint that Seth Tinctop was a coward. He was indeed as arrant a poltroon as was ever capable of holding, with shaking hands, a candle, while some bolder villain, his companion, did a deed of violence. You will remember that it was not till after Madame Manning had shot Mr. O'Connor with an air-gun, and Mr. George Frederick Manning appeared on the scene, and, standing over the expiring wretch, did, to use his, Mr. G. F. Manning's, own words, "finish him off with a ripping chisel." He was the Captain Pen of crime, and not the Captain Sword.

The statement, therefore, that the pusillani-

Digitized by Google

mous Tinctop had made alone a filibustering expedition into an aristocratic drawing-room—had actually locked the door thereof, put his back against it, and the key in his pocket, would seem naturally startling, if not incredible, to those acquainted with the assistant's want of heroism, but for the fact I now feel it my duty to disclose, that Mr. Tinctop was throughout acting under the instructions of Captain Pollyblank, who, with singular delicacy and moderation, had chosen to remain for the nonce in the background, and to delegate his medical friend to act as his Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary. Thus Mr. Tinctop, conscious of the support of his chief, and strong in the moral force of his credentials, stood still, sternly and composedly, with his back to the door. He even folded his arms in the manner invented by the Great Frederic, and perfected by the greater Napoleon, and looked on with philosophic calmness, while Mr. Fleem applied the usual remedies to recover the unhappy Mrs. Falcon from her swoon.

Digitized by Google

There were scents and essences in plenty about, as was to be expected in so aristocratic a saloon; and these, with the opening of the window, were sufficient to restore the widow to a miserable consciousness, without rendering the attendance of her ladies' maid necessary. Her ladies' maid! Would not that chastest and most fastidious of Abigails have repudiated her mistress on the spot, had she known that the name of Falcon, that the state of widowhood, no more belonged to her than the state of wife had ever done.

She began to wail and pray incoherently; and, casting herself at length on a sofa, found some relief in a flood of tears. But she speedily rose, and said she would go to her children, and was with difficulty restrained; then she cast herself back again, and adjured the dead man, now in terms of passionate endearment, now in accents of as passionate invective. But she was quite useless for any purpose of rational discourse; and Lord Baddington, softly motioning Mr. Fleem to keep watch over her, beckoned to Tinctop; and that assistant quitting his

Digitized by Google

post before the door, drew him into the embrasure of a heavily-curtained window in the back drawing-room.

Mr. Tinctop's vicarious bravery was not quite perfect or consistent. He felt as valiant, standing against the door, as though he had felt Jack Pollyblank's back, instead of the wooden panels behind him. He could, in verity, have perforated, as he had threatened, the diaphragm of Mr. Fleem with the instrument of surgery before mentioned; but now that he found himself comparatively alone with the Lord, the courage he had wrapped around him like a mantle, began to hang very loosely and insecurely on his shoulders. It fact, it threatened to fall off altogether in rags and tatters, like the historical mantle of Don Cæsar de Bazan.

The Lord was as proud a Lord as could be met with in a pleasant stroll through the pages of the peerage. He was an old man, too; and Tinctop was afraid of old men. He was a clever man, and Tinctop was desperately afraid of clever men.

Digitized by Google

"There is either," Lord Baddington said, *in* a soft, but very determined voice, "some terrible mystery—more terrible if it happen to be true, Mr. Tinctop—in this matter; or there is a wanton attempt to cause additional pain and misery to this bereaved lady and her relatives. If you have one feeling, one sentiment of humanity in you, I conjure you to give an explanation of the extraordinary statement you have made."

Mr. Fleem, F.R.C.S., in the front drawing-room, keeping professional watch over Mrs. Falcon, sobbing on the drawing-room sofa—Mr. Fleem, F.R.C.S., straining each professional tympanum to catch the slightest vibration of his Lordship's voice. Confound those old men! how inaudible they were.

The young men, though, were scarcely more audible. One young man, Mr. Tinctop, answered his Lordship in a nervous whisper.

"My Lord, I have stated only what I kuow to be the truth. Here in my hand I have documents to prove the marriage between Gervase Falcon, Bachelor, of London, and

Digitized by Google

Sarah Collett, of Mallows Cray, in the county of Kent, Spinster. The parties were married at Mallows Cray Church, on the tenth of February, eighteen hundred and ten; and scarcely six months afterwards, the same Gervase Falcon, Bachelor—you will remember, my Lord, Bachelor—was married at St. George's, Hanover Square, to the lady who now bears his name and has no right to it, and who is lying on that sofa in a bad way, I am afraid."

"And the other ——?"

"The other Lady, who does *not* bear his name, but who has the best right in the world to bear his name, is quite safe, and in my keeping. I am sure I am doing injustice to your Lordship's discrimination, in telling you that she was the lady who was put to bed yesterday afternoon in the bed-room where, early this morning, her husband was found a corpse."

"And you—you, Sir," interposed the Peer, with a very evil expression in his countenance, "you dared to spirit this woman away, after

Digitized by Google

concocting between you, I suppose, this preposterous tale."

"I got the woman out of the house," was the naïve confession of Mr. Tinctop, "during the evening, in the best manner I could; having previously arranged to keep the footman out of the way, and administer to Mrs. Lint—she was always fond of a night-cap, good soul—a night-cap so hot, strong, and sweet, that it sent her into a dead sleep for hours. Yes, my Lord, I took Mrs. Gervase Falcon—Mrs. Sarah Collett Falcon—away, as neatly and noiselessly as was possible; and I have her safe and sound in a certain locality, known only to myself."

Safe and sound, oh, Tinctop! Safe and sound, oh, schemer! There is nothing safe, nothing sound, but the safeness and soundness of him who lies above stairs.

"It may be very true, Sir," Lord Baddington remarked with a dolorous impatience, "that you abducted this unhappy, and I believe insane woman, as you have stated; but what proof does that afford that the story you tell may not be a monstrous fabrication?"

Digitized by Google

"Are certificates monstrous fabrications?" was the reply. "Even if they were forged, there is the parish registry at Mallows Cray Church; there is the clergyman, there are the witnesses; the landlord of the village inn, who gave the bride away; there is the bride herself to prove it. Bless your heart, my Lord, I am not stating facts without evidence to support them. Half an hour's conversation last night, and another hour's this morning with the 'unhappy, and perhaps insane woman,' as you call her, has put in my hands the honour of the whole house of Falcon."

"What do you mean, Sir?"

"You know very well what I mean, my Lord. You know that it is not only this respectable lady's fair fame which is at stake; not only the honour of that pretty young lady who was married yesterday; not only the credit of Sir William, her husband; not only the reputation of Mr. Falcon's two unmarried daughters; not only your honour, my Lord Baddington, purse-proud and pedigree-proud as you are."

Digitized by Google

"Fellow!" the Lord interposed, the nobleman rapidly losing his temper.

"Fellow or no fellow, you had better hear me out. Here, shut those folding-doors, will you, my Lord Viscount."

Tinctop was himself — or rather, was somebody else who wasn't a coward — again. The peer stared at him for a moment in sheer amazement; then slowly, and as it were mechanically, he obeyed the mandate of the assistant, and returned to the embrasure of the window.

Mrs. Falcon — *this* Mrs. Falcon a little more composed on the sofa, murmuring to Mr. Fleem that it could not — no, it could not be true, and asking repeatedly if that horrid man were gone. She knew very well that he was not gone; that by some means he had become possessed of an awful secret, and that he was telling the story of her shame in the adjoining room.

Mr. Fleem soothing the widow as in duty bound, and not asking himself whether the horrid man were gone, but frantically wishing

Digitized by Google

that he could run rusty pins into the horrid man's eyes, or pull up his lungs piecemeal with pliers, or skin him first and boil him afterwards. Oh! for the pleasure it would be to dissect that villian Tinctop, thought Mr. Fleem.

Lord Baddington came out of the back drawing-room some twenty minutes afterwards, looking very pale and grave. He was followed by Tinctop, not flushed or excited, but with a very faint twinkle of exultation in his small eyes. His Lordship bowed very solemnly and courteously to this person; and telling him in a low voice that he would be with him very shortly, waited till Tinctop had replaced the key in the door, opened it, and made his exit down the stairs. Then it was Lord Baddington's turn to shut the door and to lock it, both of which acts he performed, and then he came round to where Mrs. Falcon was reclining on the sofa, sat down in a chair by her side, and took hold of her hand as gently as he could for his great agitation.

His Lordship was growing old and shaky,

Digitized by Google

and some people said, maliciously, was growing paralytic, too. Recent events had much discomposed his Lordship; and he was wiping his wrinkled face with his cambric handkerchief in one hand, and holding the widow's in the other, a very pitiable spectacle of aristocratic discouragement. A close observer might have noticed that one curl of Lord Baddington's beautiful brown wig was positively out of curl, and that his brilliantly-false teeth clacked slightly in his jaws as he spoke.

"My dear Caroline," he began, after many ineffectual attempts to find his usual voice, his genteel voice, his Lord-Viscount's voice, and resorting ultimately to the voice of a feeble, broken-down old man — "these dreadful news are true. I have heard the whole of the story from that man just gone; and after what he has told, what he has shown me, I can have, I fear, no reason to doubt its being correct. The miserable woman you saw here yesterday, and who disappeared so strangely yesterday night, was the wedded wife of him, with whom for twenty years you lived and loved as your husband."

Digitized by Google

"And, and—my husband—my children! Oh God, my children!" cried the poor creature, starting up.

"Compose yourself, compose yourself, for mercy's sake!" the Peer went on. "Shall I leave you? Shall the girls be called?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mrs. Falcon (it were better to call her so, and not that other woman), with a shudder.

"Have you strength, then, to listen to the rest of this wretched tale?"

"I have, uncle. I can drink the cup to the dregs. Go on. You see I am listening. Listening."

She was listening in a screaming fit of hysterics; laughing and weeping, and throwing her arms about wildly. She had been such a decorous, such a genteel woman, all her married life, that the revulsion, now, was all the more sudden—all the more violent. The young ladies had now indeed to be summoned; but both Lucy of the raven tresses, and Sarah of the clustering ringlets, happily ascribed their mother's paroxsysm to the natural violence of

Digitized by Google

her grief. They, poor children, had been weeping almost without intermission since the morning. They were pained, but not surprised, to see their mother in hysterics. The loss had been so sudden — so awful.

So in the whole of this fatal house there was to be no peace — neither by night nor by day. They got Mrs. Falcon comparatively calm at last; and Mr. Fleem said she would do very well, if she were left alone for some little time with her daughters. So, with the girls kneeling at her feet and soothing and fondling her, Mrs. Falcon grew better; and Lord Baddington, with a warning glance at his niece-in-law, and a warning finger on his lips, took Mr. Fleem's arm, and went away.

"If I don't leave this house for half-an-hour," he said, "I shall choke."

His carriage was at the door in waiting, and begging Mr. Fleem to accompany him, he entered it, and ordered his servant, that he might be driven towards the city. Mr. Fleem dismissed his own discreet charioteer, and followed his noble companion.

Digitized by Google

"Mr. Fleem," Lord Baddington said, "I've just given a promissory note for a thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds, my Lord!"

"A thousand pounds; which I shall redeem this evening by payment of that amount in cash. I have given this money, which I can't well afford, to save the honor of my nephew's family — to save his own prospects from being blasted. To save the future of that poor boy at Canterbury."

For nothing beside that, my Lord — for nothing beside that? Not to save your own honor, your own future? Not to save the Baddington Peerage?

"And I don't believe," the Peer continued, "after what I have heard from the lawyer this morning, that, house and furniture, plate and pictures, sold and added to the balance at his banker's, Gervase Falcon has left money enough to pay the twentieth part of what he owes. He died a beggar, Sir."

"You astonish me, my Lord — you really do astonish me," said Fleem, who really was

Digitized by Google

astonished in the highest degree; for in common with the fashionable world in general, he had always imagined Gervase Falcon to be a prudent and prosperous man, who lived within his income, and was on the whole somewhat better off financially than his uncle. "But what connection, may I ask, exists between this sad circumstance, and your Lordship's parting with so large a sum?"

"The thousand pounds," continued Lord Baddington, "have been given to, and will be divided between, two of the most precious scoundrels that ever possessed a secret, and made use of it for purposes of extortion—your assistant, Mr. Tinctop, and some ruffian with an unpronounceable name, which I can't remember, who is his confederate, and I think his master in villany. I bought this document, this acknowledgement of marriage written by my nephew, with the thousand pounds, Mr. Fleem."

The Surgeon could only read it over, wonder, and return it to Lord Baddington.

Digitized by Google

"I am willing to believe," the latter said, "that it was inadvertently that Tinctop made his first statement in your presence. I fancy that he was instructed to confide it only to poor Caroline or to myself, and that he acted contrary to his instructions in so doing, and that he will probably have his head broken (how I hope he may!) by the master villain with the unpronounceable name, for having been so wanting in caution."

"He is a coward, Tinctop," observed Mr. Fleem; "and his fits of Dutch courage only last a few minutes. He is soon at low water-mark again."

"Very low would the water-mark be that *I* would have him down to," the Peer said, with a malevolent chuckle. "Poltroon or paladin, however, he lacks no astuteness, no ingenuity, by times. It is perfectly marvellous how he managed to worm the whole of that wretched woman's story out of her; to persuade her, that if she would place herself in his hands for a few hours, he would bring about a reconciliation between

Digitized by Google

her and her husband, to cajole her to entrust him with that document you have just read."

"And you have purchased his silence at this enormous price! Why not have defied Tinctop, and acted on the better feelings of the woman herself? A small annuity, now"—

"Her better feelings—a small annuity! Alas! my dear Doctor, without meaning it, you are talking moonshine. The woman has been for years a roaring drunkard; but in her sober intervals, rare as they are, has the cunning and malignity of a fiend. Gervase has been buying her silence for years. I tell you he spent thousands on her; he gagged her with bank-notes. All this money she squandered, as only a drunken woman can squander money; then would come rags, destitution, frenzy, and a threatening letter to her husband. One of these threatening letters—a ragged scrap of paper, she threw into his carriage at the wedding yesterday. She followed the carriage home to Grosvenor

Digitized by Google

Square — got drunk on the road, I presume; you know the rest."

"But she was very ill, very ill indeed."

"A drunken fit. Has had them times out of number, she told Tinctop. When she had slept for an hour or two, she woke up cool, cunning, and malignant as ever, and it was then she left the house."

"And she is now — ?" the surgeon asked anxiously.

"If I had known where she is this morning, Mr. Fleem," Lord Baddington responded almost testily, "I would have saved my thousand pounds, and would have sent Mr. Tinctop and his vagabond friend to Botany Bay. Tinctop has the woman in keeping, I tell you, and we are going to meet her now. See, here is Temple Bar, and here is your admirable assistant, Mr. Tinctop, waiting. I brought you with me, Doctor, for I am sure I — all of us, can trust you — and that *you* don't want bribing."

The nobleman spoke truth. Mr. Fleem was as inquisitive as a magpie; but he scorned

Digitized by Google

the dishonest characteristics of that operatic bird. He was fond of secrets, garnered them up, as the magpie would secrete morsels of purloined cheese. He had glory-holes full of secrets relating to noble families; but Mr. Fleem and Mr. Fleem's secrets were not to be bought. He had no need to sell them. He was rich enough — unmarried, solitary, unambitious to rise higher. He had but one care or trouble in life — the lumbago; and all the money paid for all the secrets in the world would not cure that dorsal ailment.

The carriage stopped, as Lord Baddington spoke, at the inner-side of Temple Bar, and Mr. Fleem's straw-coloured head became manifest at the window.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XI.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY GOES BACK TWENTY YEARS.

LEG-OF-MUTTON sleeves were unknown, and the genius who was to invent coach-wheel hats, was, if not unborn, certainly as as yet in his swaddling clothes, when people lived and died in the village of Mallows Cray, Kent, nearly forty-eight years ago.

It was a little village in a little verdant hole—a vale would be a more poetical appellation, but *hole* is the apter one—approached by a narrow tumble-down road, on which the milestones and guideposts all stood askew, like so many minature leaning-towers of Pisa. Through the green hole, there ran a brawling little skein of water, by an extreme of courtesy

Digitized by Google

called the river Craywell, which made its appearance at its source, a fissure in a scraggy hill, with quite a lilliputian Niagara splash and bustle, but disappeared at the other end very meanly, splitting itself up into a tangled web of shiny aqueous threads, by bridges utterly disdained, and were only tolerated as a place of misanthropic seclusion by sundry piscatorial Timons in the shape of trout, weary of the world. The river recovered its health and strength afterwards, however, and made a grand end of it at Mallow-in-the-Marshes, a brackish townlet of a place, where it widened surprisingly, and tumbled, somehow calling itself a creek, into the most famous river in the world.

The world did not take much notice of Mallows Cray in the year eighteen hundred and nine; and in revenge, the Mallows Crayfish or men took not the slightest notice of the world; nor had they taken much, it was said, for many centuries past. They had very little leaning towards politics, save as regarded in so far a chronic hatred for the French (generic term,

Digitized by Google

Mounseers), of whose violent invasion of England in general, and Mallows Cray in particular, the wise men of the village (parish clerk, schoolmaster, and fat innkeeper) were in continuous and anxious expectation. They were much attached to the Lord Bishop of Bosfursus, who had a country seat (delightfully old, picturesque, and haunted, and containing in its vast cellars some of the finest port in Europe: "mitre seal" fetches now its nine guineas a dozen, some five miles away), and did much cosy, old-fashioned unostentatious good among the villagers. And they believed very strongly in the virtues of butcher's meat, of which from their tenderest years, they consumed vast quantities—the flesh-pots of Egypt had been popular among them since the days of the Heptarchy; and there was even a tradition among sundry of the men of Mallow, that raw beefsteak was the most nourishing food for a newly-weaned babe, and that a nursing mother could not have too much roast leg-of-mutton. Beef, in its normal and cud-chewing condition, they reared with

Digitized by Google

great success; the green hole was girt about by fat farms, where farmers as fat raised corpulent crops, and flocks of obese sheep perspired under weighty fleeces. Two or three very wealthy squires, together with the Lord Bishop, were the territorial suzerains of the Mallow land; and as they were liberal of butcher's meat and October beer on rent-days, the Crayfish paid their rents very cheerfully. Men lived to a prodigious age in Mallows Cray. There was no pauperism to speak of; for if a Crayfish fell into difficulties in the Cray, the villagers either indignantly kicked him out of the happy valley, or he "flitted," as it was called, of his own accord, paying nobody, and not being heard of any more. As for gipsies and tramps, they knew better than to trouble Mallows Cray much or often; for the natives regarded them all as "foreigners," and as naturally akin to the detested Mounseers; and as they not only had stocks, and cage, and whipping-post, and all the will to use them, for the coercion of vagrants, but likewise incited the village boys to pelt all strangers with stones,

Digitized by Google

the tramps and the children of Egypt gave Mallows Cray a wide berth, and placed cabalistic diagrams of turf-sods at the corners of the road, leading to the village, warning, in the hieroglyphics of the wandering profession, their brother beggars and Bohemians that the Crayfish were a bad lot, and that the less they had to do with them the better.

There were pleasing poets at Mallows Cray, who wrote epitaphs for one another, in staggering rather than halting lines. These poets ate butcher's meat, and drank pots of cyder, occasionally, for wagers. They fought, too, sometimes, very fiercely and savagely; not only at fisticuffs among themselves, but in the way of cock-fighting, dog-fighting, and badger-drawing. There had been a town-bull in Mallows Cray once; and, in remoter ages, a town-bear, for sporting purposes, which had been put down, according to rumour, by Oliver Cromwell, whose memory, on that account, was hated by old and young in Mallows Cray. Outdoor sports, humorous and athletic, yet obtained; and on gala-days it was pleasant to watch,

Digitized by Google

couched on the green sward, and with a tankard of the famous October ale by your side, the Olympian games of Mallows Cray. Then did the uncertain chase after the pig with the saponaceous tail take place; then did rubicund damsels contend in swiftness of foot for the much-prized undergarment, decorated with many-coloured ribbons, and, in simple Saxon, hight a "smock"; then were wheelbarrows trundled up acclivitous chalk-hills for a pinchbeck watch; then was the well-greased pole ascended in quest of the appetising leg of mutton—and loud were the outcries of the simple rustics, when, on one fête-day, the meaty victor confessed himself to be a washed chimney-sweep from Whitechapel—then were the lancing poles darted at the rude heap of hinged carpenter's work, supposed to represent a Saracen's head; and then did strongly competing peasants and lancers struggle through their appointed heat in sacks, or bob for apples, or compete for rolls and treacle.

There was a capital school-house in Mallows Cray, with a famous old schoolmaster not quite

Digitized by Google

blind, and not quite deaf, who wore silver buckles in his shoes, taught the children a little, and thrashed them as much as was requisite for the due preservation of their health, morals, and loyalty to church and state. The villagers married early, and after short courtships — a good, hearty meat tea being the usual *premier pas* in amatory matters, and a declaration in the form of a decorous tickling of the adored object in a hay-field, the culmination. They believed in ghosts, witchcraft, wart-charming, fortune-telling, and dream-construing. They went to bed early, and rose earlier; they went to church, and to sleep in it, once a week, and played at bowls afterwards; they made no fortunes, but had good wages, ate and drank heartily, had large families, smoked long pipes, danced at Christmas and Harvest-time, and were sufficiently happy in their generation.

Peaceful and peaceable they were certainly; although in 1809 the world was convulsed by wars, and rumours of wars; and there were hundreds of hills and valleys all over the world that were running with rivers, not of limpid

Digitized by Google

water, but of blood. Now and then, a mysterious potentate called the Emperor of Rooshia came accidentally on the tapis, or rather on the sanded floor of the village inn-parlour; and every now and then the dreaded and detested name of "Boney," seldom amplified into "Boneypartey," was used by mothers to frighten troublesome children withal; by quarrelling boys as a term of insulting derision; by the three wise men of the village, as a clincher to the argument that the French must certainly invade England and Mallows Cray soon. When a recruiting party came down into the little green punchbowl of a place, which was of very rare occurrence, the village lasses stared a-while at the red coats and streaming ribbons; and, in temporary agitation of mind, cooked the meals unskilfully for the next twenty-four hours or so; but his Majesty's Onety-oneth, or Old Hundredth regiment of foot, took no hearts as they marched away from the girls they left behind them. The village lads listened to the rub-a-dub of the drums, the enlivening tootle-tooings of the

Digitized by Google

fifes, and the seductive oratory of the Sergeant Kite of the party, with broad grins, and wide-staring eyes; but they steadily refused to partake of refreshment with the gallant sons of Mars on these occasions; and to all enticements to take the King's shilling, shook their shock-heads, and answered, "Naw, naw! Ut wor time to ger hard knocks whun a' French kum an' ger hard knocks tiv thun;" which, in the Mallows Cray vernacular, meant that they didn't see the fun of going to Spain to be shot, and preferred shooting or being shot on their own hearths, and in their own homes. The only exception made to this repudiation of the military service of the country, was, of course, when the periodical ballots for the militia took place, and then the Crayfish bought themselves and each other off with all convenient speed; and again, when any one of the village families was troubled with a black sheep, in the form of a refractory, good-for-nothing son, who was so perpetually told that he would come to be hung if he didn't 'list, by all his friends and relatives, that, in sheer despair, he

Digitized by Google

generally made haste to enroll himself in the service of his king, in order that he might die by powder and ball, and not by hemp; but was perhaps eventually hanged after all (such is the uncertainty of human destinies) by Lord Wellington in Spain, even as Bardolph was "hanged for stealing a pix."

Now, it was because there was a black sheep of this description, Will Catteran by name, who had so been compelled to enlist in a marching regiment in 1808, that I have been obliged to take this history back twenty long years; that I have said anything about recruiting parties coming into Mallows Cray; that I have mentioned Mallows Cray at all.

For if William Catteran, village-rake, spendthrift, sluggard, pugilist and ne'er-do-weel, had not enlisted, Sarah Collett, the Beauty of Mallows Cray, would not have been left without a sweetheart; and if Sarah had not thus been bereft of her dissolute swain, she would not, after the first bitterness, and vexation, and pining of her virgin widowhood had passed, have begun to look out, with eyes which,

Digitized by Google

though not red with weeping, were exceedingly sharp, for sweetheart number two.

She was the daughter of old Daddy Collett, the schoolmaster of the Cray. She was not a *piquante* beauty, a fragile beauty, a beauty the "irregularity of whose features was redeemed by expression;" she was simply a most beautiful young woman, who "felt her life in every limb;" who, but a step removed from the condition of a peasant, moved, and looked, and talked like a Queen who, reared among boors, was royally graceful, dignified, haughty; who, in fine, was one of those rare and perfect gems to be found oft-times in the oddest, humblest, plainest caskets, and which seem thrown there, hidden there, in some sly caprice of nature, and are brought forth to the world by times to be encircled with gorgeous settings and tributary jewels, humorous satires upon the boastings of "unsullied pedigree," illustrious ancestry, and *sangue azul*, and humorous proofs that the obscurest, remotest kindred of the "grand old gardener and his wife," can, and do, wrench the golden

Digitized by Google

apple sometimes, even from the high-bred descendant of Robert Fitz-Leman or Hugo Fitz-Sykes, who came over with the Conqueror seven centuries since, as gallant knights, but who would have gone over with the Convict-ship as felons in this less chivalrous age.

The girl had no accomplishments; for, with a wonderful natural capacity, she was as lazy as she was beautiful. She could neither dance, nor play, nor paint, nor sing, as those frivolities are understood by the polite world; yet she would have been quite at home in the boudoir of a duchess; and her little cottage keeping-room looked like a palace-chamber as she sat in it. Fond of finery, she had few pence to purchase any, and went perforce plainly clad; but the trashiest trinket shone on her magnificent figure as the famous *collier* might have shone on wretched Marie Antoinette; and she had but to let her black hair down, to be enveloped in the mantle of an empress.

The girl was proud, and vain, and passionate; and if she possessed any heart at all, it was as hard as the nether millstone: but she simulated

Digitized by Google

love—as the priests of heathen temples simulated piety—that she might have incense for her altars and offerings for her shrines. She might, under other influences, have been a Semiramis, a Laïs, a Phryne, a Dubarry, a Pompadour, a Vittoria Colonna, or a second Catherine; yet she was but a schoolmaster's daughter, living among rude and ignorant cottagers, and tearing her hair with vexation because the clumsiest clodhopper of the village, Will Catteran—with whom she was, *au fond*, no more in love than you with me, Belinda—had chosen to turn out a most notable scamp, to snare Squire Lupus's game, to play skittles instead of cultivating the soil, and finally, being excommunicated by the united body of Crayfish, to enlist in the Hundred and Tenth, or "Nottingham Roughs," Light Infantry.

A great battle had been fought in Spain; and Britannia, wanting men very badly just then, joyfully accepted William Catteran, and, giving him a shilling and promising him six pounds by way of bounty, made him, densely intoxicated, a full private on the spot. Bri-

Digitized by Google

tannia was subsequently genial and condescending enough to cheat William Catteran out of his six pounds. She gave him, indeed, some rubbish which he threw away in the first campaign, calling it a "kit," and charging a goodly sum for it; she fed him on biscuit, which, when it was'nt hard as iron was soft with maggoty decay. She gave him rations pretty regularly of salt horse and new rum; she led him to seek the bubble of a Chelsea pension at the cannon's mouth, and she never forgot to inculcate the virtues of cheerfulness and obedience, telling him that if he grumbled he should be flogged, and that if he ran away he should be shot. On the other hand, Britannia, in the noblest and most generous manner, several times, by the voice of the Houses of Lords and Commons, publicly thanked William Catteran and some hundred and fifty thousand more of his brethren, for their achievements in the field; and he and they had the inestimable satisfaction of knowing that the commanders of the great army of Catterans had been made

Digitized by Google

peers and Field Marshals, and Knights Grand Crosses of the order of the Bath. Sarah Collett heard the sound of the last drum and the last fife die away as the recruiting party wound through the orange and crimson-hued lanes (it was autumn time); and when her lover was gone, she went out into a corn-field, and cast herself down on the scattered sprays of gold, and wept for rage and spite, and not for sorrow, and much more against the truant Will than for him. She would not have married the man at any time; she probably would have treated him in very dog-like fashion, had he returned that very moment. I don't think she would have fainted, or gone into very violent hysterics, had the constant predictions of the Mallows Crayfish respecting him been fulfilled, and had William been hanged outright. But she was in a rage with herself, with him, with all the world, because he was gone, because pretty Meggy Saunders, and black-eyed Rose Eagleton, and especially Mary Anne Terryton, the baker's daughter——all rival belles, and jealous of her because

she was ever so slightly elevated above them in social position, and a million degrees in majestic beauty—because these lively, and not unfrequently uncharitable young ladies, would rejoice at her humiliation, and utter disparaging remarks concerning her at that grand gossiping exchange, the "everything shop," where old Mrs. Plaistermidge sold linen-drapery and lanterns, sweetstuff and scrubbing brushes, beaver hats and birch brooms.

Sarah Collett, the beauty of Mallows Cray, sulked in her maiden bower for seven whole days. She did not contemplate a funeral pyre for herself, like the late unfortunate Queen Dido; she did not meditate strangulation in the manner patronised by the equally late and unfortunate Miss Bailey; but she was very miserable. But the evening of the seventh day happening to be a most gloriously mellow and sunny one, and her father having gone to sleep, as was his usual evening custom, over "Law's Serious Call," she slipped on her hat and spencer, and determined to pay a visit

Digitized by Google

for comfort and condolence to her only chosen friend and ally, Miss Tubbs, who was the daughter of stout old John Tubbs, the landlord of the village inn, and who, being exceedingly ugly and exceedingly servile, had been discovered to be an admirable and devoted friend by the belle of the village.

Sarah walked down the steep little street, sheepishly saluted by three-fourths of the unmarried male Crayfish, the vast majority of whom were madly in love with her, and paternally addressed by the married men of Mallows, to the great indignation of the sweethearts of the Bachelors and the wives of the Benedicts of Mallows. Miss Saunders passed her, and giggled at her; Miss Terryton passed her, and tossed her head; Miss Rose Eagleton looked over her dimpled shoulder at her, and nodded in the most provoking and patronising manner; in return for all which amenities of salutation it would have been inexpressibly delicious to Sarah, the beauteous, but the irascible, not to say vindictive, to have torn

Digitized by Google

their hair from their heads and their eyes from their sockets—but she didn't.

There was a handsome gig, with a big brown horse in silver-mounted harness, standing at the door of the inn, and a groom was taking a portmanteau and hat-box from beneath the seat of the vehicle. The apparent proprietor of the vehicle stood, whip in hand, by the horse, patting the handsome steed on the flank. Sarah noticed that he was a tall, comely, florid, young man, rather inclined to be stout, perhaps, but decidedly good-looking. He was clad in the deepest mourning.

He was about to put up, both man and horse, at the inn: that was easy to see, for the groom carried the portmanteau into the low-roofed vestibule, with its bottle and glass furnished bar on one side, and the parlour on the other, as Joe, the hostler, ran to the horse's head. It was curious, too, that as Sarah slipped modestly into the hostlery in her way to Miss Tubbs's private keeping-room, she should have been tempted to cast an inquisitive glance on

Digitized by Google

the portmanteau lying at the foot of the stairs, and that she should have noticed a brass plate on the top of that article of luggage — a brass plate engraved with these initials — G. F.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XII.

MRS. FALCON AT HOME.

THE same great battle in Spain that had put Britannia to the strait of picking up by sound of fife and drum such waifs and strays as Will Catteran, "had placed" (to use the newspaper obituary locution) "many of the most distinguished families in mourning." For it is a way that Death has in the army (and, to do him justice, in the navy, the church, and the civil service likewise) of smiting down impartially the common soldier, who, wrapped up in scarlet blanketing, and carrying the inevitable Brown Bess, sells his liberty and his life for thirteenpence a-day, and the gorgeous captain in feathers and lace, who has purchased

Digitized by Google

a commission as he would buy a park-hack, to amuse himself withal, and who has, maybe, not thirteen pence, but thirteen thousand pounds a-year in addition to his pay. The Spanish battle had been a very bloody one; officers as well as men had fallen thick and fast under the scythe of the Great Reaper, who respects neither the mammoth ear of corn, nor the humble tare that the husbandman has forgotten to pluck up; and it is not at all unlikely that a fragment of the same shell that created that gap in the ranks of the "Nottingham Roughs," which Will Catteran was destined to fill up, was instrumental in plunging into mourning many of the most distinguished families of this favoured country, including that of Lord Viscount Baddington, in the Peerage of Ireland.

For in good sooth, his Lordship's younger and only brother, Captain the Hon. Hugh Hernshaw Falcon, a most promising officer, (*vide* despatches), was in that desperate fray slain, as he was valiantly leading on his company.

Digitized by Google

The deceased left one son, Gervase, an undergraduate at the ancient University of Oxford, who, by the lamented Spanish casualty, became (his uncle Baddington being a widower, and childless) next heir to the Baddington Peerage. As the young man happened to be of an impetuously affectionate disposition, he thought less of his exalted distinction than, perhaps, as a scion of the aristocracy, he should have done. He thought, certainly, much more of his widowed mother (a consumptive, delicate, high-born lady, who did not long survive); he thought more still of the awfully sudden death of one of the kindest and most affectionate of fathers. So violent was his grief, that change of air and scenery was imperatively recommended to him by the fashionable faculty, who suggested Weymouth, Scarborough, or Brighthelmstone (then just allowing the germ of the immortal and inimitable BRIGHTON, that was to spring from its shingly bed, to peep out), as places where fashionable grief might be decorously consoled, and fashionable cheerfulness genteelly restored. But Gervase Falcon, telling

Digitized by Google

the faculty that he would think about it, bethought him of quite another place of rural retirement: the little village of Mallows Cray, distant about eighteen miles from the great metropolis; and where he had, in some long vacation gone by, spent a very pleasant fortnight—sometimes pretending to read, and sometimes pretending to fish; but in reality engrossed in the delightful pursuit of doing nothing. So down to Mallows Cray he came in his gig—gentlemen drove gigs then—and, putting up at the Angel, the sign of the sole inn at the Cray, had not been there a fortnight before he fell desperately in love with that other Angel of the Cray, Sarah Collett, the schoolmaster's daughter.

'Twas the most natural and yet the most accidental thing in the world. The girl was always meeting him accidentally—he was always meeting her, accidentally, of course. Her friend Miss Tubbs was so fond of her dear Sarah that she was always sending messages to her to come to tea: the yielding Sarah could not resist the invitations of her attached

Digitized by Google

Tubbs. Then the strange gentleman—who, by the way, did not disclose his name, had no letters addressed to him, paid his bills regularly and munificently, and was known either as Number Four, the numeral of his apartment, or as Mr. G. F., from the initials on his portmanteau—the strange gentleman was at times so lonely and out of spirits, that he was glad to take a cup of tea in Miss Tubbs's private parlour, where he conversed in the most affable and condescending manner. It was on these occasions that stout Mr. Tubbs, the landlord, suddenly remembered that he had not been to see his neighbour Collett lately, and went off to spend the evening over a pipe with that instructor of youth. So Number Four and Sarah took tea in the private parlour; and then one of the most remarkable things in the world was, that Miss Tubbs always had the most important business to attend to, and of which she had only just thought, in the bar, which would only detain her for a moment, but which detained her, somehow, a good many moments and a good many half-hours.

Digitized by Google

The son of Captain Falcon met Sarah as he went a-fishing—he met her as he returned; in his morning walk and his evening walk; when he took a drive round the country even he was always falling across the Beauty of Mallows Cray—of course by the merest accident.

He grew desperately, fiercely, blindly in love, as only a very young and inexperienced man can love. If he had been five years older, he would have turned bridle-rein, and ridden away from a woman beneath him in every degree, beautiful as she was, for ever; or if he had been five years older, and a villain—he was not *that* in his sunny twenty years prime—he would have deceived the girl, thrown away the plaything when he had toyed with it long enough, and there an end. As it was, he had for her that love, stone-blind, stone-deaf, but not dumb—no! burningly eloquent in its clumsy fanaticism—which we all, the coldest of us even, have had, or must have for a fair woman, once at least in our lives. You have so loved, or will so love, my stoical friend, one day. You have loved, or love, or

Digitized by Google

will love, so that you listen for the voice and wait for the shadow, to kiss it, of her you love; that you are enraged with the garden gravel her foot presses upon; that you have a mad hatred for dogs, and birds, and horses, and children, which she will pet and fondle with a familiarity she will not admit you to, yet; that if she were to say to you, "Go steal," you would rob a church, your father, a poor box, or a blind man's tray; that if she were to say to you, "Go kill," you would, knife in hand, run-a-muck, like a mad Malay, among your dearest friends; that you would dress up in the absurdest mountebank costume, to perform as many preposterous tricks as a poodle —beg, fetch, carry, dance, stand on your head, crawl on all fours, shave off your eyebrows, paint your face—anything, if she so commanded it. He who has not loved in this wise, has not yet loved at all.

The love of a very young man is sometimes and not inappropriately, termed "calf love;" but the next love of adolescence might not inaptly be called "roaring-bull

Digitized by Google

love." For as the bull, blind and unreasoning, dashes at a gate, smashing his knees and horns in his onslaught to boot, so does the fanatico-bovine lover rush as blindly and madly at certain rails that fence the church communion-table. He cannot help it; the woman he adores is as inaccessible to him as a castle of steel and adamant: yet one little word will make the whole of that fair citadel yield — outwork and keep, curtain and bastion — one little word will make her all his own, his to have and to hold in fee-simple and in frank-pledge for ever: so he rushes at the rails as the bull at the gate, and as a fool according to his folly.

She had him so well in the toils, that when he left Mallow's Cray in the ensuing November, it was under the solemn promise, sworn to with passionate protestations, Heaven knows how often, to return and marry her in the second month of the next year. He, the aristocrat, and nephew to a Lord, had plighted his troth to a village schoolmaster's

Digitized by Google

daughter without a farthing to bless herself with! He was to leave Mallows for a time, and then return. She had him so well in the toils, that he grew more desperately in love with her during the eight weeks that he was absent; that he came back, furious to see her; that in February, 1810, he was married to Sarah Collett, before high heaven, and in the parish church of Mallows Cray. The wedding took place early in the morning, by special license, and in the presence, besides the clergyman and his clerk, of but two witnesses — Tubbs the landlord, and his daughter.

He had wished to be married at some other church, but his Sarah, with a strange wilfulness of caprice, had insisted that there or not at all the ceremony should take place. As it was, the wedding was almost a secret. A few of the village gossips had heard from the parish clerk, and gossiped over the matter at Mrs. Plaistermidge's Everything Shop, that Sarah, the Beauty (*as she thought herself*, they added ironically), had been

Digitized by Google

married on the sly to that odd-looking young squire in black, who stopped at the "Angel" last Autumn; that they were off to furrin' parts somewhere, and that old Daddy Collett — "and a heartless puss she must have been to leave the poor old man," they said, with virtuous ire — "was to have fifty pounds a year pension." Some of the young lady gossips went so far as to disbelieve the marriage story altogether. They hoped it was all "c'rect" they hinted, but they doubted it. She had always been a "bold thing." Well, well! it was no business of theirs; but it must be a dreadful thought to that poor, dear old man at the school yonder. By degrees the interest died away. The wedding couple were gone. Daddy Collett lingered for a few months till he had a more serious Call than even the Rev. Mr. Law's, and, obeying it, died. The Mallows Crayfish had always been remarkable for not minding the world; and as Sarah Collett, now Falcon, was no longer the Beauty of Mallows Cray, but the Beauty of somewhere

Digitized by Google

else, the Crayfish had no longer anything to do with her; so they abandoned her to her own devices, and betook themselves with renewed ardour to butcher's meat and cock-fighting; and the petty gossips at the everything shop, found out another Beauty to talk about and be jealous of.

Only the old landlord of the "Angel" and his daughter, an old clergyman, and his older clerk were there to witness it — only the feebly-scrawled entry in the dusty register was there to prove it; but then marriages are registered in heaven besides. That we know.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY, AS FAR AS ONE OF ITS PERSONAGES IS CONCERNED, STOPS ALTOGETHER.

CAPTAIN the Honorable Hugh Hernshaw Falcon had no money when he died.

Stay, there may have been half a dozen napoleons, a few reals, and a packet of English one-pound notes in his pocket-book, under his uniform *coatee*, when the shell took away his life. Of whatever he possessed, he was quickly and comfortably relieved the evening after the battle, by one of the *vivandières*, alias Moll Flaggons, attached to the baggage department of the British army. The same warm-hearted sister was

Digitized by Google

also good enough to strip the lace off his uniform, the epaulettes off his shoulders, the galloon from his hat, to force the ring from his dead finger, and even to remove the boots — quite new, and of the latest fashion — from his feet. What do dead men want with boots? Beyond this, the Honourable H. H. Falcon was as insolvent as a patrician can well be. To his son Gervase there might have been applied the observation made by Hostess Quickly respecting Lieutenant Bardolph:—"Alas! he is poor—he hath nothing." That rubicund-proboscised boon companion was, it will be remembered, advised by Falstaff to "coin his nose;" and, alive to the exigencies of the situation, for mortal man must have bread, and aristocratic men must have luxuries, Gervase Falcon lost no time in endeavouring to coin his gentility. He was more successful than Bardolph. There is a certain divinity of credit in England, that hedges, not only a king, but a lord, and even the remotest connection of a lord; and though a scion of the aristocracy may

Digitized by Google

be worth financially, as is very often the case, much less than nothing, he is always worth something, so long as he has a name known at the Herald's College, which is a tower of strength.

Gervase Falcon did not return to London from Mallows Cray as the married man he really was. He returned as a bachelor, and as gay a young bachelor as the very recent death of his father would genteelly allow him to be. He had, surely, no reason to be ashamed of his marriage; but it is a fact that he did not inform the polite world of the alliance he had just concluded, and that he specially kept the interesting event secret from his immediate friends and relatives. He brought the beautiful woman he had wedded to town, and took a Bower of Bliss for her in the quiet, courtly vicinage of Kensington; then he moved the Venus of the Bower to a cottage near Harrow; and then again, being unaccountably nervous, to another cottage at Richmond; then he began to study a mental map of the world in quest of some

Digitized by Google

other locality, where the Bower might be with propriety established; and finally an impression began to grow on his mind that the very best place for the Bower of Bliss to be in future maintained in a state of florescence, would be the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, with the beautiful woman he had wedded sunk there unnumbered fathoms, with fifty tons of lead at her head, and fifty at her heels.

For in about two months from the date of his miserable wedding-day, he had begun to discover that he might just as well have been married to a beautiful Fiend, as to the beautiful woman he was bound to by indissoluble ties. He was fettered to a being hopelessly and impracticably perverse and evil-minded; to a woman who was incapable of loving, and consequently, through sheer energy of misdirected feeling, began to hate him; to a woman whose tastes were foreign to his; whose thoughts, whose wishes, whose aspirations were all diametrically opposed to those which he himself possessed.

Digitized by Google

So to the honeymoon succeeded a gloomy bee's-wax moon, and then a moon of gall and bitterness, and utter despair. "Better to sit up all night," says the good old Bishop of Charles the Second's time, "than to go to bed with a dragon." Gervase Falcon became gradually to be of this opinion, though he had never troubled himself much about Bishop Taylor, or any other Father of the Church. He evaded the dragon as often and as much as he conveniently could. He took, if not to sitting up, at least to staying away all night — sometimes for weeks and weeks together. When he and the dragon were together, they quarrelled, reviled, carped at, sneered at, insulted one another. They were in a fair way to fight. Genteeler couples have fought ere now, believe me.

His love for her was quite, quite gone. His amorous day-dream was over; and with waking there came a cold, shuddering horror and loathing. Such things and such changes happen over and over again in marriage; they will happen so long as love is blind and deaf and mad.

Digitized by Google

All this time he had been coining his gentility — that is, borrowing money from usurers; for he was a lord's nephew, and his Lordship (not a very rich lordship, but still a lord), had promised to do something for him. He would have given the beautiful dragon at home any quantity of rich clothes, jewels, money, she chose to ask for; but the dragon wanted more than these; she wanted to be the recognised wife of Gervase Falcon, the wife of a "born gentleman" — and to parade her gentility before the great world. It was but her due, to be sure; but she insisted upon it with perhaps needless acrimony.

Time after time, she harried the man who had been idiot enough to marry her to make their union public; else, she threatened, she would herself publish it. She would write to Lord Baddington — she would put it in the newspapers. By what right was she cooped up at home? Was she compelled to go to theatres and gardens surreptitiously, muffled up — all but disguised? By what

Digitized by Google

right was her fair fame to be compromised? By what right was an opportunity afforded to scandalous tongues to whisper that she was Gervase Falcon's mistress, and not Gervace Falcon's wife? She would not bear it; why should shê? She was not ashamed of her marriage; why should he be?

To quiet her, he took her into Scotland, and tried everything in his power to flatter and cajole her into silence — even as she had cajoled him into marrying her. They would not have long to wait, he said; but his family was so proud, so vindictive, so prejudiced. If his uncle Baddington knew that he had married without his consent, he would inevitably discard him. He had nothing to depend upon but his expectations from that nobleman. Surely, his dear Sarah did not wish to ruin him, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

They led this miserable life for four months. I pray Heaven, that you may never live such a life as this—to break your dream and find it empty; to stir up the lees of your once spark-

Digitized by Google

ing goblet, to strip away the velvet and gilding of the throne, and discover the base deal boards beneath—to outlive your liking. To find out a new fault every day; to be angry with the rustle of a woman's dress; to be possessed with a feverish, fretful, morbid desire—not that she would die, not that she would fall sick, for you wish her no harm, but that she would put the breadth of fifty oceans between you and herself; and the more because you have loved her so much, and clasped her so fondly. There are two dreadful things in the world—yea, two that are utterly appalling—a faded letter from a dead friend who has died at enmity with you, and a woman you have loved, but love no more.

Without any open compact, there was a tacit understanding between them, that it was impossible to live together any longer, and that they must soon separate for ever. Just at this time the "something" which Viscount Baddington was to do for his nephew was done; and Gervase entered upon those responsible duties in his Majesty's Carpet-bag and Hat-

Digitized by Google

box office, which necessitated his attendance at the Treasury no less than four times per annum, in order to draw his handsome quarter's salary. His punctuality in the performance of these duties was admirably unvarying.

Sarah the Beauty went to live at Cheltenham, upon a liberal allowance her husband was but too glad to give her. She knew, as well as he knew, that she was his wife; that he was about to break his marriage-vow; that he was about to commit a great social crime; that his aristocratic friends had found him a wife of his own condition; that he was about to lead a wealthy heiress to the altar he had once before profaned. Either she was indifferent, or she was calculating in her malignity, and chose to wait patiently for vengeance. It is certain that she gainsaid him not in his wicked purpose, and saw with calmness in the newspaper that he had accomplished it at the grand church in London, where twenty years afterwards his daughter was to be married. But he had not deceived the poor girl who believed herself to be Mr. Gervase Falcon's wife many

Digitized by Google

months, before the Mrs. Gervase Falcon who lived at Cheltenham, bore the husband she was to see no more a Son. The boy was born in the winter of eighteen hundred and ten.

Meanwhile, Gervase lived a grand life in Grosvenor Square, and the Caroline who believed herself to be his wife bore him children too. First a girl, then a boy, who was christened Charles, after his uncle Baddington, and who has not yet been mentioned in this history, for the reason that he was with his regiment at Canterbury, were he was in garrison, a smart young cornet of hussars.

Mr. Falcon made the woman at Cheltenham a gift of a thousand pounds in addition to her annual allowance when her son was born. He would have taken the child from her, and have reared it up himself secretly; but she steadily refused even to let him see it. She lived under an assumed name at Cheltenham, as the widow of an East Indian colonel; lived there quietly enough till the great peace of 1815, when she went abroad. Gervase Falcon heard from the bankers through whose hands the money was

Digitized by Google

remitted to her, that she was wandering over the Continent, being now in Italy, now in France, now in Germany. She had a great capacity. She was a schoolmaster's daughter; but she picked up more learning in a month in the great world than she would have acquired in years of painful study in her father's schoolroom at Mallows Cray. She graduated very rapidly at Cheltenham, and the half illiterate village girl soon became an adept in genteel small-talk and fashionable slang. She got to know the name of many things, which is next door to knowing the things themselves. Then, from an aristocratic acquaintance just returned from Florence, Gervase Falcon heard that the handsome widow, Mrs. Colonel Chutnee, was about to be married to an Italian Marquis descended from Hercules, son of Jupiter, possessor of a magnificent palace without any furniture, and with an income of about threepence halfpenny per annum. Then again he heard that her reputation was not a very good one; next that it was gone altogether, and that she was living with a travelling Irish

Digitized by Google

blackleg, who had been a captain of dragoons. This threw him into an agony of terror, till she suddenly disappeared altogether, made no sign, drew no more money; and he began to hope that she was dead.

What she did with herself or where she went, during ten long years, no one ever knew; but one summer's night, in eighteen hundred and twenty-six, Gervase Falcon, coming out of the crush-room of the King's Theatre, alone, waiting under the colonnade for his carriage, found crouched by one of the columns a babbling, drunken, ragged, miserable object—his wife. All her beauty was gone: there was nothing left now but the dragon—a dragon without burnished scales, or green and golden wings and brilliant eyes, but as virulent and rapacious as the "blatant beast" that Spenser drew. Where her son was she refused to tell. That he was alive, was all she would confess; and Gervase Falcon was never able to gain the slightest information relative to the child, who, son of that debased creature, and perhaps a wandering beggar,

Digitized by Google

was yet his lawful son, and the next heir to the Baddington peerage.

She had taken to drinking — drank almost incessantly, drank horribly; but was sensible and cunning enough in her sober moments. You may guess the rest of the tragedy's fifth act. She was *Atra cura*, and sat behind Gervase Falcon's fine park-hack. She reversed Bürger's awful ballad, and made Falcon the Lenore, while she was the demon trooper swiftly riding with him towards Death. To give her money was as throwing a handful of gold-dust into a quicksand. She spent and drank; and went from one degree of vice to the other, always holding the Damocles' sword of a Secret over her husband's head.

Her father, the clergyman and clerk of Mallows Cray, and Tubbs, the landlord of the Angel, were all dead. Miss Tubbs had been married, and had gone to Canada with her husband years since. The very name of the once famous Beauty was heard no more in her native village; but she lived and lived, till in the brain of her husband a dreadful Phantom

Digitized by Google

of a resolve grew up, that either he or she must live no longer. The Phantom grew every day stronger and stronger, into a more palpable terror of reality.

The Phantom sprang into life, fully armed, on the day of his daughter's wedding.

The Phantom-Reality said plainly, that SHE — the woman, Sarah — must die, as he stood by the sleeping nurse, and with his hand on the curtain of the bed.

But it was a Phantom again, and lied; for his murderous scheme was frustrated; and his end I have narrated.

It will be remembered, that Lord Baddington's carriage drew up at the west side of Temple Bar. Descending from it, his Lordship and Mr. Fleem found Mr. Tinctop, who did not look either quite so confident or quite so defiant as he had done an hour previously.

"Pray make haste, my lord, pray make haste, Mr. Fleem," he said, nervously. "She is much worse; she is very bad indeed."

He hurried them up a narrow court, whose

Digitized by Google

mean houses, crazy and rotten and dingy, were shored up by timbers that looked more crazy and rotten still. Then to a door, on whose steps a brood of ragged children and ragged dogs swarmed and cried, and fought and played with mud and brickbats. Then up a narrow staircase into a darkened room, where there was a bed, a chair, and an old trunk, and nothing else: nor fender, nor table, nor window curtain.

"She's been at it again while I was away," he whispered, as they entered. "Persuaded the people of the house to get her some rum; drunk as a lord — I beg pardon, as a fish — when I returned. She's only just coming round."

She lay all her length on the bed, silent, save from time to time a low gasp. Mr. Fleem went up to her, felt her pulse, felt it again, and shook his sapient head.

She did not gasp any more, nor move, nor open her eyes.

"She will be better presently," Mr. Fleem said in a low voice.

Digitized by Google

She was much better already. She was dead.

* * * * *

"He *must* pay the promissory note," mused Mr. Tinctop to himself as he covered the wasted face of her who had once been as beautiful as an Angel. "He must pay; for a register's as good as a marriage-certificate any day, and *she told me where to find the boy* — a fine fellow by this time. Ho! ho! I'll go abroad and lead a jolly life till Jack Pollyblank 's hanged."

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XIV.

TIMES, SCENES, AND PEOPLE CHANGE.

GEORGE the gentleman, by the grace of the Act of settlement, King of England, Pavilionsburg, and Virginia Water, Defender of the Faith — in curly brown wig, fur collar, and white kid pantaloons — slept with his progenitors, George the bad-oyster-eater, George the Hogarth-hater, and George the madman; and another king reigned in his stead who knew not Perdita, and refused to believe in the "Lass of Richmond Hill." William the Radical — the good, though slightly "cracked" sovereign — was King of England; and the year of grace was eighteen hundred and thirty-five.

Digitized by Google

Now, in those days there was a great city of ships on the river Mersey, in England—a city which was vast and astonishing to look upon then, but which has grown inconceivably vaster and more astonishing in our own day. Once a marshy pool, the resort of that now fabulous wild-fowl the Liver, which stalked about on its attenuated legs in places where now are Custom House long-rooms and Exchange flags, where merchants, ship-owners, and cotton-brokers meet and chaffer over their money bargains;—once an inconsiderable seaport, muddy and fishy, and to the "running" of contraband cognac and surreptitious silk goods much addicted;—then enriching and enlarging itself by a grim perseverance in not the most reputable branches of commerce and industry in the world, such as crimping, kidnapping, and especially slave-trading;—then a huge emporium of trade, famous among maritime cities, but unrepresented in Parliament, and in the municipal scale weighing not half so much as some mouldy little cathedral town in an agricultural county, with the grass

Digitized by Google

growing in its High Street, and an enlightened constituency of sartorial and sutorial pot-wallopers, not half so much, perhaps, as Grampound's dilapidated hovel, or Old Sarum's ruined walls;—and then at last LIVERPOOL, twenty years since as now, Empress of Marts, sending forth galleons and caravels, bi-remes and tri-remes, to the uttermost ends of the earth—with its Tyre on the Lancashire, and its Sidon on the Cheshire coast; with its acres of docks, its miles of ships, ships, ships, and still more ships; its bursting bonding warehouses, its gabbling 'Change, its narrow lanes choked up with men feverishly, breathlessly, pursuing Mammon; its overflowing shops; its merchant-palaces, crime-and-wretchedness-breathing cellars; foundries, ship-yards, taverns, jails, wealth, squalor, magnificence, and dirt.

In those days Liverpool had a Sister (who lives and flourishes greatly to this day), called Manchester, living some five-and-twenty miles off. This sister being as comely, and famous, and prosperous as she; and the commencement

Digitized by Google

of her splendour having been nearly coëval with her own, it was not unnatural that she should hate her heartily; a thing which occurs sometimes among brothers and sisters, made of quite other materials than bricks and mortar. She contemptuously called her sister's sons "Manchester men," while her own offspring she denominated "Liverpool gentlemen." Her sister was not slow to retort. Liverpool having spoken slightingly of Salford, Manchester abused Birkenhead, (both sisters agreed in denouncing Warrington). Liverpool said Manchester was grimy with smoke, and disfigured with cotton fluff. Manchester said that Liverpool reeked with the odour of tar and hemp, and that the blood of enslaved niggers cried for vengeance from beneath the very pedestal of Huskisson's statue. In truth the sisters were as reciprocally rude as the celebrated Saucepan was to the Kettle of proverbial philosophy:—not Tupper's.

Their rivalry was meteorological, too. Manchester gloried in having more rainy, and more dreadfully rainy, days than any other town

Digitized by Google

under the sign of Aquarius. Forthwith Liverpool enlisted under the united banners of Leo and Scorpio; and while her sister drenched you with rain, she baked or broiled you with fierce sunshine.

One certain July afternoon in the year 1835, it being of course a day of drenching rain in the city of chimneys, it was a glaringly, frizzlingly hot one in the City of Ships. The vessels' sides themselves wept tears of tar; and the masts, coming in contact with Sol's red-hot-pokerlike rays, burnt their taper fingers, and had blisters of paint on their knuckles. The mutton pies, facetiously supposed (under the disguise of cats and dogs) to be falling in Manchester, might have been baked to a turn on the broad quay flags of Liverpool. The nigger cooks on board the ships on the Mersey, basked in the hot sun, and joyously fried themselves in it. Malays, Cingalese, and Lascars, were so comfortably warm as only to have about half-a-dozen shivering fits per diem. Men worth a hundred thousand pounds walked the streets with their hats in their hands, till,

Digitized by Google

overcome with thirst, they slid into cool oyster-cellars for iced ginger-beer and "shandy gaff," and found their own clerks assuaging their drought with cider and bitter ale. They could not be angry with their subordinates, these stern merchants and shipping-brokers; for were they not to the full as thirsty as themselves? The very dogs had hallucinations; and in every twinkle of their blood-shot eyes, and oscillation of their hot, protruding dessicated tongues, looked strait waistcoats and padded rooms. The crossing-sweepers cast their brooms aside, and took to gambling for battered coppers in shady nooks. The Mayor's servants regretted for once the splendour of their scarlet waistcoats, — those vestments made them feel so hot; forlorn beggars rejoiced for once that they had no waistcoats at all, and no shirts either, or pantaloons to speak of — the want of those garments made them feel so cool. Vendors of frigid beverages, salad, and shell-fish were likewise jubilant; but eating-house keepers, who had cooked large joints of meat and found none hungry, not even the

Digitized by Google

destitute, cursed in dark pantries. Everybody felt very hot, lazy, thirsty, and strongly disposed to concur in Sydney Smith's desire to take off one's flesh and sit in one's bones. Yes; it was a *giorno caldissimo*, — a roaster.

Señor Juan Manuel Harispe y Crimpo y Malovo, whose high-sounding patronymics were by the time-saving Liverpudlians abbreviated into "Old Harispe," was of opinion that the day was exceedingly hot, as without coat, waistcoat, or shoes, he sat in a rush-bottomed chair in front of his own house, in Liverpool, with a fragrant cigar of considerable length in his mouth, and a Panama straw hat of enormous diameter on his head, reading the last false news of the Christina and Carlist squabbles from a ragged old Spanish "Epoca," or "Clamor," of some sort, and ever and anon turning in the rush-bottomed chair to scream out some directions in Iberio-Saxon to an old woman, who might have been descried through the open door slaving in a hot kitchen on the ground-floor, and at the back of the house, which looked like an interior by Gerard Douw.

Digitized by Google

If Señor Harispe were of the old Castilian blood — the blue blood — that blood being of the blueness of cheese — I am inclined to think that there was some of the mitiness of the real Stilton combined therewith. The Señor looked not unlike a large human maggot, being sallow as to costume and complexion, and having an unpleasant habit of wriggling as he sat, and of crawling as he walked. He was bald, too, although that was immaterial, as he seldom removed the Panama straw hat; but as he also wore spectacles, and maggots do not generally affect those aids to vision, or straw hats, or, indeed, cigars, or newspapers, I will abandon the animalcular simile, and say that the Señor was a very diminutive shrunken man, almost a dwarf, rather crooked, very short-sighted, with a shrill voice and a very vicious disposition.

The Señor was, it was bruited about, a very rich man; yet his mansion was situate in one of the worst and most hideous little streets in Liverpool; though again, hideous as it was, it was hard by the head-quarters of Liverpool

Digitized by Google

wealth and luxury, and rents were prodigious in its limits. In this unpleasant neighbourhood was a street, the chosen residence of the sons and daughters of Erin, who "waked" their dead as loudly as though they wished to wake all the dead that had died since the Deluge, who broke each other's heads periodically in contentions concerning the Pope of Rome and the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of one William, a Dutchman, connected long since with the orange market, and whose porcine friends and rent-payers were not always content to dwell in the parlours, but wandered about the neighbourhood, and, like most amateurs, prevented the dogs from earning a honest livelihood.

He lay there, just across the door, enjoying the blazing sun, quiescent, placid, contented, a very lotos-eater, or Oriental sunk in trance of *theriarki* or *haschisch*. He was enjoying his "*kef*," as the Arabs would say. His small eyes were not entirely closed: they indulged in a lazy wink from time to time — a peep at the beneficent luminary which pleased him so

Digitized by Google

much. He lay on his side, his short legs stretched out, a demure smile wrinkling his wide mouth, and that which was behind him gently agitated, but only for a moment, ever and anon. He lay there — this sluggish, epicurean, honest fellow of a PIG — right behind the Señor's rush-bottomed chair, and as he did, he enjoyed himself thoroughly till the Señor, espying him, was rude enough to administer unto him a sounding kick, moved by which reminder, he stood upon his four short legs, wagged his curly tail in meek and gentle remonstrance, and with a series of short squeaks in his well-known falsetto, betook himself to more hospitable regions; and on Phelim O'Doolan's door-step, with a saucepan-lid for his pillow, and Phelim's youngest son but one as his bed-fellow, soundly and tranquilly slept till sundown.

"Margrat, Margrat!" the diminutive Señor cried, rushing into his house in a fury. "Dog-pork of she, yourself! Vat of this must you these Irish beestes of pig still here to drive me mad allow? And why? De dinner he not

Digitized by Google

ready yet, and five hour by San Nicolas he strike already gone. Soon come the Señori and Señoriti, and you have yet the soup to adjust. Eh, doggess, dello!"

Señor Harispe's English was fluent—indeed, he had resided fifteen years in England and in Liverpool; but it was peculiar, and its syntax was defective.

"Shure then, Misther Harisp," replied the lady so ungallantly apostrophised as a "doggess," "an' it's all the haste in the wurrold I'm makin', an' all to plaze ye; an' it's little harrum the p'hoor dum craturs of p'higs and things can do, takin' jest a ha'porth of slape on a Christian doorstep. Isn't it slape ye always take in the midhst o' the day, yerself, Misther Harisp? Though it's litthle of a Christian ye is, ye ould wrinkled atomy of a furze sthub," she remarked, confidentially, to a saucepan; "ye aght to be shown about for a penny, loike the pig-faced lady an' the gyrll with two heads, ye ould mermaid."

Not particularly troubling herself about the propriety of applying such an epithet as "mer-

Digitized by Google

maid" to her master, Margaret the cook turned her back in dudgeon, plunged into a grove of copper kitchen-utensils, enveloped herself in savoury fumes, in which garlic predominated; and to further objurgations made no reply.

Juan Manuel Harispe was the proprietor of a *Fonda Español*, a Spanish hotel and restaurant — dirty, dear, and prosperous — and had kept it in the same street in the same town of Liverpool, for ten years. He had come to the city of ships, steward of a schooner from Cadiz, laden with oranges and almonds. He had commenced with a very small, nay, almost invisible capital; but was now reputed to be exceedingly wealthy. He was not very popular among his English neighbours, because he was a Papist; among his Irish neighbours, because, although enjoying a communion of religious creed with them, he was stingy, morose, abhorred whiskey, and was a sworn foe to pigs; among any class at all, in fact, for that he was, as I have hinted, vicious, and that there was a peculiar appearance of hardware about his eyes, when he was moved — a Sheffield

Digitized by Google

cutlery appearance — a "knify" appearance, in short.

To Juan Manuel Harispe's *Fonda* came captains, chief mates, and supercargoes of foreign ships; Spanish merchants of the middle class; Spanish exiles when they had any money — for poor exiles were the Señor's great aversion; and he always took care to inform them where the best English hotels were to be found. He was unmarried—though he lived not quite alone — was avaricious, bigoted, repulsive, and insolent; and was almost continually smoking in his Panama hat and his shirt-sleeves.

A rage being a luxury that cost nothing, was by the Señor indulged in, not once a week, but rather once a day, if not ten times during the twenty-four hours. His rages began with an infuriated gobble, like unto that of a turkey with an indignant apprehension of Christmas and Leadenhall Market in his mind, and usually ended with a prolonged scream. I will not fatigue you with a short-hand report of the Señor's style of eloquence, couched as it was in a well-nigh incomprehensible jargon of mixed

Digitized by Google

Spanish and English. Suffice it to say, that he constantly showered on his cook, "Margrat," or Margaret, the most powerfully perfumed, if not the choicest, flowers of rhetoric; and that the epithets he selected wherewith to qualify the estimate he expressed of that domestic's character, were mainly of a zoological character. On the present occasion, he was fast approaching the prolonged scream which was the customary climax to his agreeable ebullitions of temper, when a young person came through a doorway, and, laying her hand on his, said, in a soft tone, and, seemingly, not in the least afraid of the redoubtable Señor:—

"Uncle of mine, what vexes thee?"

You have seen an angry child, its face all smirched with passionate tears, its cheeks flushed, hair flustered, eyes swollen, little hands clenched; and, lo! instantaneously, at the sight of a glorious picture-book (one penny plain, twopence coloured), or at a droll grimace made by one of the chosen clowns and self-appointed jesters to the young, the child will forbear to cry, will clinch its tiny palms, raise its vexed lids,

Digitized by Google

beam out joy, and smile a smile of Angels. You have seen, through the murkiest cloud, a ray of the sudden sun come in jolly triumph, and dig its golden finger into the ribs of the storm, laughing its ill-humour away. You may imagine such a look as Napoleon the Great, one day in 1813, sunk in black reverie of ruin and despair, might have cast, as, turning his eyes from some despatch fraught with news of defeat, they lighted on the little King of Rome, nestling on the pillow by his side, his golden hair flowing over the velvet pillow, his little fingers entwined in his father's sword-knot, and smiling in his sleep. So Juan Manuel Harispe, screaming with rage, forbore to scream any longer, and was mollified and appeased, looking quite as benignant as his dwarfish stature and exceeding ugliness would permit him, when the young person I have mentioned, came out of the door-way, and laid her hand on his.

She who had exercised so sudden and salutary an influence on the temper of the proprietor of the "Fonda Fulgencia," as Señor Harispe's establishment was designated, was

Digitized by Google

but a slight, fragile, mite of a thing—a young girl, who had possibly numbered sixteen summers, but who had certainly never known an inkling of the winters thereof.

She was adorably pretty, this young person; and I want similes to give you a just idea of her prettiness. I was myself once over the crown of my head with a young lady who took it into her pretty, capricious head to fall in love, not with the undersigned, but with a friend he has, and has still—one of the handsomest, merriest, kindest, worthiest young fellows of a family, all as handsome, merry, kind and worthy as he, and some of them wise. She was always telling me how handsome my friend was—you may imagine how I winced; —he was like "wax-work," she said; and as I felt I did not resemble any "works" to speak of, save, perhaps, bone-works, or occasionally fire-works, it was with but a rueful relish that Orestes listened to these perpetual panegyrics on his friend Pylades. I could not help wishing, sometimes, that he were not quite so handsome, aware as I was that her admiration

Digitized by Google

for him might lead her to compare it with the personal charms *of another*, and conscious as I was of the odious nature of comparisons in general. But the "wax-work" shall stand me in stead for a simile, now. She—not *my* she, but that other she—was very like one of those coquettish-looking Mexican figures which Madame Montanari modelled in wax, attired with such picturesque elegance, and exhibited in the great glass house of 'fifty-one. A very dark brunette, but with more of the clear olive, and less of the dusky coppery hue of the plastic lady's Indian heroines. But the same lithe, slim, symmetrical limbs; the same blue-black, silky hair, gorgeous in its length and luxuriance; the same ripe rosy lips shaped —oh, the trite but true image!—like Cupid's bow; the same dark-pencilled eyes—the brows rainbows of the night, the eyelashes' silken curtains veiling alcoves of lustrous pupils, sable, but full of light and mirroring depths, as are the pools of ink which the Magicians of Grand Cairo pour into the palms of neophytes for them to see strange sights within; the same

Digitized by Google

gleaming white, semi-transparent, teeth—ivory stockades before a fortalice of rubies; the same sharply cut, resentful nostrils; the same mellow bloom on the cheek, like that on a Catharine pear, "the side that's next the sun;" the same suppleness of limb, tigress-like ease of attitude and movement—no; not tigress-like, say rather jaguar-like; the velvety softness and seeming meekness combined with the swiftness and the fierceness when roused to spring, to leap upon, to rend and to destroy. Then a dress easy, graceful, flowing—a dress which she wore only because she knew people must wear dresses. She carried it with impatience as did Musidora, and would have dispensed with it as readily, had there been a leafy forest and a limpid pool at hand. She would much rather have been Sara la Baigneuse, swinging in her hammock, the lazy thing, the whole harvest-day. In her costume, there was a dainty mixture of the English and the Spanish elements:—the muslin robe of a Lancashire witch, and the high comb and lace mantilla of a maiden of Seville; then there was a dimpled

Digitized by Google

hand whose little fingers seemed longing for a fan; but in these common-place, unpicturesque latitudes contented themselves at most seasons with some needlework in coloured worsted; sometimes with a book. Then a tiny foot shod in the nattiest, neatest of bronze kid slippers. Diogenes, the cynic, would have crawled forthwith from his tub, and kissed those little slippers: he could not have helped himself, the rogue! And then, finally, in every movement, gesture, glance of eye and smile of lip; a burning reminiscence of the South—its sun, its orange groves, its vineyards, its blue skies, and its sparkling fountains.

All this was not the heiress of the Duke of Lerma, the daughter of the Duke of Medina-Celi. This was not an Infanta. Only little Manuelita, the niece of old Harispe, the eating-house keeper, and herself only a dancer at twenty-five shillings a week salary at the Apollo Belvidere Concert Halls, Paradise Street, Liverpool.

Her dwarfish uncle certainly loved her — certainly doted upon her, certainly idolised her more than anything, except

Digitized by Google

the money he cozened his guests out of, and which he hid (he mistrusted banks, and mortgages, and all other investments) in rags, old stockings, corners, and in boxes under beds. But he let his Manuelita dance for a salary of five-and-twenty shillings per week, nevertheless. You see money is money; and five-and-twenty shillings are a silver crown more than a golden pound. She was an orphan; father and mother both dead; and he had brought her with him a mere babe when he first came to England. Early she had manifested great talent for dancing; and Harispe had absolutely gone to the length of paying money of the coinage of the realm to have her instructed in *pirouettes* and *entrechats*, first by Mr. Blaber, who taught the Polonaise, the Lancers, and the College Hornpipe, in addition to that genial dance known as the Lancashire Clog-dance, all for twelve-and-sixpence a quarter. But the little girl manifesting a decided leaning to the choregraphic art as developed on the boards of Thespis, her uncle, after a dreadful internal

Digitized by Google

struggle, so far enacted the part of a generous Crœsus, as to pay a premium of twenty pounds to Madame Hyppolite, ballet-mistress of the Liverpool Theatre Royal, and was for the space of three years one of that *ci-devant première danseuse*, but somewhat wrinkled Terpsichore's multitudinous articled pupils. The little Manuelita played seraphs and sprites, zephyrs and wilis, peris and houris. She was once (a great Italian lyrical star condescending to visit Liverpool) promoted to play one of the two children of the ill-used Norma (how often have I seen those children knock-kneed and without pocket-handkerchiefs!); and had not her pronunciation of the English tongue, fluent and correct as was her knowledge of the language, been marked by a strong, though very pretty, Spanish accent, she would have been selected to play the part of Puck in the "Midsummer Night's Dream." Madame Hyppolite predicted a great career for her. She offered to produce—to *lancer* her—as she phrased it, at Manchester, at the King's Theatre in London, at the great *Academie*

Digitized by Google

Royale of Paris itself. She would be a Taglioni, an Elsler — stars just then unrivalled in the choregraphic firmament. Manuel Harispe was nothing loth to see his Manuelita glorified, and himself enriched; but among the idiosyncrasies of the ballet-mistress was one for binding her pupils to her by stringent agreements, making them work like cart-horses, and drawing their salaries. She is Bohemianising about Europe even now, is Madame Hyppolite, a more wrinkled Terpsichore than ever. I think the last time I came across her was at Copenhagen, where she had the seventy-four Moldo-Wallachian children whom she had taught to dance like sylphs, but whom she beat, and starved a little — people said.

So Manuelita, her articles being at an end, began to dance on her own account; and Mr. de Joskins, manager of the Royal Apollo-Belvidere Concert Hall, being then in want of a *prima ballerina* to dance between the acts of his heterogeneous entertainment, (which comprised comic and romantic singing,

Digitized by Google

humorous recitations, running in sacks, sacred music, sparring with the gloves, conjuring, ventriloquism, tumbling, dancing and pyrotechnics), offered her the munificent terms of five-and-twenty shillings per week salary, which at the instance of her uncle she accepted, and the Concert Hall being close by the "Fonda Fulgencia," tripped gaily to Mr. de Joskins's dazzling realms of splendour every night—save Sunday—at eight, and danced there on her ten toes till eleven. At first, Senor Harispe used jealously to accompany her to and from the Hall; waiting behind the scenes as she danced, and till she had finished; but finding that Mr. de Joskins allowed no smoking in his *coulisses*; that if he went in front, even with an order, he was expected to partake of some refreshment which cost money; and being besides fully persuaded of how good a little girl his Manuelita was, he allowed her to go to and from Paradise Street, under the convoy either of Margaret, or of Ogon Alleon, his Spanish and one-eyed head waiter.

Digitized by Google

Manuelita waited with a pretty patience till her uncle's scream died away into an inarticulate murmur, and said again, and as softly, in Spanish:

"And what vexeth, what aileth thee, uncle of mine?"

"That brute boor, that kitchen woman, to whom the saints send chillblains, lets greasy Jews of pigs congregate even on my doorstep," replied Harispe, removing the Panama hat for a moment to wipe his bald head. "And thou knowest, my bird, my angel's pinion feather, that the people will be here soon to dinner. And that beldam hag of Morocco is late as usual. Wasting the precious oil and butter, and gravy, too, I will be bound, as though they were water. The unburnt sorceress!"

It was one of the great woes and agonies of Manuel Harispe's life, that, though he charged them round sums for their board and lodging, he was obliged to give his guests anything to eat at all. To see them eat precious meat, drink up costly soups and sauces, and call for wine to pour down their unsatiable throttles,

Digitized by Google

caused him inexpressible unhappiness. He only recovered his equanimity, when, retiring to a little private den of his own, smelling very powerfully of bees' wax, garlic, and salad oil, he visited the gluttonous delinquencies of his guests by heavy additions to their bills.

"To say nothing, little niece of nieces," he continued, replacing the Panama straw-hat, that thou, thy dear self, must already be hungry, and waiting for thy dinner."

"Say rather," Manuelita interposed, smiling, "that thou hast smelt the puchero, and art hungering for it. I am not so hungry — I," she added, half aside, and with half a sigh.

The sigh seemed involuntary, for, blushing, she hung down her head. Why should she blush or sigh — and why wasn't she hungry at dinner time, this little Manuelita?

They called her the "Little Spanish Wonder" at the Apollo-Belvidere Concert Hall — sometimes the "Star of Spain." She drew large sums of money, not for her own, but for Mr. de Joskins's benefit. She had scores of admirers; scores of *billet-doux* were slipped

Digitized by Google

into her hand, or laid on her dressing-room table, or left for her at the stage door, or given to her by too willing emissaries. But she turned a deaf ear to all her admirers, and burnt all the *billet-doux*. All? Well, perhaps she kept one, just for fun, which that grand gentleman sent her — that great dandy in the *beautiful* coat with the black velvet collar, and the satin stock with the real diamond in it, and the red velvet waistcoat, the gold chain, the eye-glass, the little shiny boots, and especially the *beautiful* moustaches, who came over from Manchester to see Mr. de Joskins, and treated him to champagne, and was so affable and kind, and such a real gentleman. She knew his name, too; she had seen it in a red book, called an "Army List," at the circulating library. He was a real captain of soldiers — a captain of Hussars. There it was. "Twenty-First Hussars: Colonel — General Lord Pogueysburg, G.C.B.; Lieutenant-Colonel — Snape; Majors — Widgeon and Tealotson; Captains" — ah! now she came to it — "Captains — Machoof" — no, that wasn't

Digitized by Google

it — "Sir Tony Lumpkin" — no — "Lord Charles Chiffinch" — no: ah! here he was — "Captain Charles Rook Delahawk FALCON." Mr. de Joskins said that he hadn't much money, but that he was the nephew of the great Lord Baddington, and that he would be a lord himself some day, for that his Lordship was getting very old and feeble now. "He was a wild spark, too, the Capting," Mr. de Joskins observed. What could a wild spark be? Was Tom Tippercorn, the clown, who drank too much, and beat his wife, a wild spark? Was Mr. Rosinupp, the leader of the band, when he ran away without paying his rent — was *that* wild sparkishness? Charles—Captain Falcon, she meant — could never be a wild spark; he was such a nice gentleman, had such a soft hand, such a sweet smile. He was with his beautiful regiment of horse-soldiers in barracks at Manchester, and came over in his own dog-cart on purpose to see Mr. de Joskins; wasn't that kind of him? He was very young — only twenty-four; and his father, Mr. de Joskins told her, was a grand London gentle-

Digitized by Google

man, but he died very suddenly while Charles — Captain Falcon, she meant — was with his regiment at Canterbury. It had all been in the papers, the manager said, and some people had said that the old boy — that was old Mr. Falcon, she presumed — had destroyed himself. But nobody believed that, of course. Poor fellow, to lose his father so early and so suddenly! But he had a mother and sisters alive — she was glad to hear that. Was she glad to hear that? Finally, Mr. de Joskins bade her "play her cards well, and she might make a good thing of it." What was playing her cards well; and what good thing could she make of it by so playing them? She kept Charles's — Captain Falcon's — note just for fun; but she refused to accept the emerald ring he tried to force upon her; and she threatened to box his ears if he attempted to kiss her again. She did not box his ears that night, however; and he drove back to Manchester in his own dog-cart, with a peculiar smile of triumph in his countenance.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XV.

HUMOURS OF PROFESSOR JACHIMO.

"HOW now, Don No-Whiskerandos, thou bald-faced Spanish stag? How goes it with thee, smooth pate? What thy feelings, thou decayed rind of a mildewed Seville orange? And how are you to-morrow, my poppet?"

These were the words sung out rather than spoken, in a loud and confident tone; and, if truth must be spoken, in an impudent tone likewise, by a big man who became suddenly apparent opposite the Fonda Fulgencia — (he had come round the adjacent narrow street-corner) — and crossing the road unceremoniously, being one of those aggressively swaggering and pavement-usurping individuals

Digitized by Google

for whom no thoroughfare—not even the Nevskoi Perspective—seems wide enough, and who may be said, like the late Lord Sandwich, to walk on both sides of the street at once, this same portentous appearance eclipsed Señor Harispe and his niece to boot with his big blue shadow.

"Saints in heaven who sing!" the landlord of the Fulgencia exclaimed; "it is the Señor Professor. Señor Professor, you are as welcome as—as the dinner you will be of having on this instant of time. Saints in heaven!" the little man continued, but to himself, "how gladly would I burn candles to the whole calendar, Saint Nicolas and all, if the Professor were in heaven—or somewhere else."

The person to whom the title of Professor had been given was a hale tall man, of an indefinable age, but seemingly under forty. His face was bronzed by long and fierce exposure to the sun. He was quite beardless, while his black hair, being closely cropped to his head in the manner affected in those days

Digitized by Google

by the French citizens ill affected to the government of the citizen-king Louis Philippe, and called *à la mécontente*, and furthermore, his eyes being well nigh as small as those of the quadruped who paid Mr. Phelim O'Doolan's rent and slept in his parlour, their facial grace gave him a rather Tartar-mandarin, and very much of a sinister, expression of countenance. He had large coarse hands with creases on the knuckles, and the joints of which seemed to be particularly supple, the thumbs especially were broad, squat, unshapely, yet pliant and plastic-looking.

The Professor's attire was of the most ornate description: an olive-brown surtout covered with frogs and braiding, and cuffed and faced with a profusion of velvet; a green watered-silk waistcoat, across whose depths meandered a golden cable rather than a watch-chain; a deep stock of brocaded satin of many colours—a very Joseph's coat cut up for a neck-kerchief—in the midst of which was stuck an enormous brooch, which may possibly have been paste, but which glittered like the bravest

Digitized by Google

of diamonds; snowy-white duck trousers, with a stripe of golden braid down the outside seam; jean boots with tiny varnished tips; a white hat with a black band—worn more, to judge from the sparkling appearance of the remainder of the Professor's costume, for the sake of ornamental contrast than as a symbol of recent domestic affliction; a gauzy cream-coloured wrapper over the olive-brown surtout—not to keep the Professor warm, for of the heat of the day you have been told, but to keep the Professor free from dust; the most flaming of yellow silk pocket-handkerchiefs; sparkling rings on almost every finger of those coarse hands; and a Malacca cane with a prodigious gold knob on the top, and two long silken tassels; this carried in one hand, and a pair of straw-coloured kid gloves in the other, thus splendidly and triumphantly "completed the costume"—to adopt the time-honoured locution—of this astounding Professor. It was not a military costume, a naval, an ecclesiastical, a Spanish, not even exactly a theatrical costume; but it was a very wonderful whole

Digitized by Google

to look at—a *mêlange* of the riding-master, the lover in a pantomime, the Frenchman in a farce, a quack doctor, and a member of the swell mob—a kind of gauntlet thrown down to all the tailors of the universe, from the renowned Poole, head of the House of Burlington, to the Sartor-nonsartus of H.M. the King of the Cannibal Islands, with this defiance "Match it if you can!"

When little Manuelita saw this splendid being, the curious observer might have noticed that she shrank back, and caught hold of her uncle's arm as she drew him into the doorway; that she made him retreat quite precipitately in the long, low, unsavoury apartment where the *table d'hôte* of the Fonda was held; and that, as she encountered the bold stare of impudent admiration which the Professor deigned to bestow upon her, there came over her pretty face a flush that told, unmistakably, not of admiration, but of indignant dislike.

"There! don't pull my arm off, little Manuelita!" said her uncle, gently disengaging himself. "One would think thou wert

Digitized by Google

afraid of the Señor Professor. Dost thou think he will eat thee up?"

"Eat her up!" cried the Professor, casting himself, with a boisterous laugh, on to a ricketty chair, and flicking the dust from his varnished boot-tips with his yellow pocket-handkerchief. "Eat her up! and so I would —without pepper, without salt, without the particularly musty and rancid oil which you, O skinny and shrivelled father of man-monkeys, and grandfather of all the chimpanzees out of the Zoological Gardens! put into all the eatables and drinkables from your bread to your beef. Eat her up! who wouldn't eat Manuelita up? Pretty Manuelita! charming Manuelita! coquettish Manuelita! nice yet naughty, wondrous yet wicked Manuelita! rogueish Manuelita! Star of Spain! Iberian treasure! Apple of every body's eye! Peninsular diamond!"

He laughed again, more coarsely and boisterously still. A merry man was the Professor—fond of his joke, always.

The girl looked at him with an expression

Digitized by Google

of unmistakeable loathing, which expression of distaste seemed to tickle the Professor immensely, and made him laugh with renewed force. Manuel Harispe looked too at his guest, at first in a very evil manner; but he muttered to himself, between his teeth, "He pays so much!" and the dangerous expression in his face melted into a cringing, fawning smile.

"You are so always so good your laugh to have, Ballero Professor," he said, rubbing his yellow hands together; "always so funny man are you—ah, much!"

"There!" the Professor answered, with insolent nonchalance, "that will do, my servile friend. Just hurry on with the dinner, for I am as hungry as Nimrod, that mighty hunter, must have been when he came home from shooting hippopotamuses. Dish up, do you hear, Shylock! Tell Margaret to put some sauce that one can eat in the dishes;—I wouldn't mind a beef-steak powdered with some of the gold dust thou hast sown up in thy flannel waistcoat, thou Infant of Avarice, thou griping Don! And, Manuelita, my child

Digitized by Google

of the sunny South, go you and do up your hair, and look as pretty as ever you can, that I may make love to you all dinner-time."

The niece of Manuel Harispe disdained to answer, but with an indignant flutter of her muslins, brushed past her uncle and out of the room. But in the passage she caught hold of both Harispe's hands—he had followed close at her heels, and in a low—and for so pretty, gentle a creature, almost a fierce—whisper, hissed in his ear—

"Uncle, I hate that man."

Manuel Harispe gave a puzzled shrug.

"Darling niece of mine," what am I to do? I too hate him as a *contrabandista* hates a *doganero*. Doth not the *borrico* hate his pack-saddle? Doth not the peasant hate the priest, who watches his olive crop and counts his chesnuts, of tithes thinking? It is a brute beast—an English cow man—but he *pays so much*."

They spoke in Spanish, lowly and softly, but with much gesticulation.

"I tell you I hate him," the dark little

Digitized by Google

maiden went on. "I who love almost all the creatures that live. He is a bad, wicked, deceitful, cruel man. Look at his bad eyes! hear his bad voice! Not a day passes but he insults your sister's child."

"Insults!" the elder savagely interposed; "insults *you*, my dove? I should like to have his false heart's blood for that."

"Nay, tut, tut," Manuelita whispered; "I meant not so much. If he insulted me there should be no need for *you* to take his blood, oh, my uncle; but his voice insults me; his manner, his odious smile, his fool's talk, all insult me. Have him no more in this house, dear uncle."

"Little darling," the Senor responded, with dolorous indecision. "He drinks many, many bottles of red wine weekly. He asks never, no never, for change. He flings silver crowns at the head of Margrat and at the head of Ogon Alleon; and *they give me half*. He is worth to me, my Manuelita, this piece of pork and gold, this Morisco mingled with the Jew, not three, not four, but five golden English

Digitized by Google

guineas every eight days. He has been here already three months, while doing his witchcraft and devilries at the Minerva Hall; and here he says he will stay and pay, misery of me! three months longer."

Manuelita saw that it was in vain to reason further with her uncle just then on this topic, and that his avarice outweighed even his affection for her. She therefore adjourned the subject of the hated Professor's presence *sine die*, determined however to resume it on a more favourable occasion. She kissed her uncle on his skinny forehead, and tripped lightly up a narrow flight of stairs to her own little bower, which, indeed, her taste and elegance had made as much like a bower as a wretched little cockloft was susceptible of being made; there to make herself as pretty as possible (which was difficult, for that immortal ladies'-maid, Nature, had made her so already); and thus beautified and adorned herself, not in obedience to the insolent behests of the Professor, but because she felt it to be a duty she owed to herself and to

Digitized by Google

society, including the other *table d'hôte* guests whom she did *not* hate, to look pretty.

Down she came in about ten minutes, looking of a verity radiant, and with a dimpling smile took her accustomed seat at her uncle's right hand at the head of the table. She had almost forgotten the Professor, no naturally pleased was she with the murmur of admiration which invariably greeted her every afternoon on her entrance into Manuel Harispe's *salle à manger*.

The guests had been dropping in by twos and threes while she had been engaged in her brief toilet, and the table was now quite full. There might have been some four-and-twenty Spaniards, Mexicans, and Italians, all in two rows, with a Frenchman here and an Englishman there, like angels' visits, or the plums in a school pudding, few and far between. The vice-chair was taken by a very long, bony, American captain of a brig from Havannah, who brought sugar to England, and took "notions" to Cuba, and who, evil-disposed people whispered sometimes, by way of diver-

Digitized by Google

sion, traded between Havannah and the West Coast of somewhere with certain commodities, which certainly were not at all saccharine, and which, if they came under the head of "notions" at all, were rather dark notions, woolly-headed notions, thick-lipped notions, and especially handcuffed and bilboed notions, who, having human hearts, and being troubled with such things as immortal souls, were nevertheless shipped and bought and sold, like the veriest notions in a dry goods store.

Nearly all the guests were smoking as they came in, and laid their smouldering cigars or cigaritos by their plates' sides, resuming them with a charming absence of ceremony in the intervals of the repast, or so soon as they had eaten and drunk enough. There were no ladies present save Manuelita. The dinner was of a very ambiguous and cosmopolitan description — the contents of the dishes being mostly dark in colour and powerful in odour; but two things were certain, that the Castalia of Margaret, the cook's, inspiration was the great river of oil, and the Tree of her culinary

Digitized by Google

knowledge the great clove of garlic. Beyond the certainty of these elements' presence, the dinner must indubitably have been reckoned among the Cosas de España—dark and mysterious things, incomprehensible to those who have not climbed the pillars of Hercules, assisted at a *funçion*, or wandered from their youth upwards through the halls of the Abencerrages. Marvellous things are the Cosas de España! Spanish bonds are among them. Spanish gratitude, Spanish cigaritos and mantillas and guitars (for where can the first be rolled, the second draped, the third drummed, out of Spain?) Spanish jackasses, which, I am told, are nearly as large as white elephants, and Spanish flies. And the most wondrous of the Cosas de España we have seen in these latter days is the Spanish campaign in Africa, and the sublime impudence with which a few paltry skirmishes with a pack of dingy, ill-armed, half-naked, and undisciplined Moorish rascals have been magnified into a series of heroic achievements worthy of Rodrigo de Bivar — of the immortal Ruy Cid Campeador

Digitized by Google

himself, his sword Escoriante, and Bavicca his steed.

Margaret, the Milesian, and Ogon Alleon, the tawny Spanish waiter, who might have been of Moorish extraction, so tawnily complexioned was he, waited at table efficiently, but with a remarkable freedom from politeness. Everybody seemed to do very much as he liked, and almost everybody drank water.

Save the Professor, who, eating mightily, as became his stature and strength, was profuse in his consumption of red wine. He drank it as though he had been accustomed to it all his life, which may or may not have been the case. He challenged the American captain to drink, who responded, nothing loth, to the challenge, and, to tell the truth, looked as though he could drink the Professor under the table with any liquor from champagne to sherry-cobbler. He specially invited Manuel Harispe to imbibe red wine; albeit that illustrious Spaniard abhorred fermented liquors, yet knew full well that the more he drank at his guest's expense, the more he, Manuel Harispe, financially

Digitized by Google

profited; so he drank and made wry faces, but was gladdened in his inmost heart. But little Manuelita steadily refused all invitations, even to wet her lips with the Professor's proffered grape-juice; she would as readily have quaffed hemlock. She had, I have said, nearly forgotten her persecutor's presence when she first sat down to dinner; but he soon made her aware that he, on his part, had not forgotten her. He sat as close to her as he possibly could, a propinquity which she could not, and her uncle would not, prevent. He paid her loud, bold compliments, which made her blush and tremble with shame and anger. He leered at her; he laughed and talked and abused Harispe, who, whenever he found the dangerous feeling creeping over him, as it would sometimes, softly whispered to himself, "He pays so much!"

Who was this bold Professor, and what did he profess? He — but he is of sufficient importance, I think, to demand a fresh chapter specially to introduce him.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XVI.

THE DANGERS OF BEING PRETTY.

THREE months agone, Professor Jachimo, Unutterable Wizard of the Eight Hemispheres, and Chief Magician to the Emperor of Seringapatam, had landed in Liverpool from an American steamer, having concluded a triumphantly prosperous tour in North and South America, India, and the adjacent countries. Ceding to the repeatedly-urged request of the nobility and gentry of Liverpool and its dependencies, he had consented to give a (strictly limited) number of magical representations at the Minerva Hall, in the thronged thoroughfare known as Whitechapel, in that vast commercial emporium, prior to his

Digitized by Google

unavoidable departure to fulfil his numerous engagements in British India, Honduras, the Bay of Fundy, and the Island of Formosa. For particulars see huge wood-cuts, flaming chromo-lithographs, and small bills.

In good sooth, and in sober earnest, Professor Jachimo was a conjuror, and a very good conjuror as conjurors go. He had an extensive magical apparatus, and considerable dexterity of sleight of hand. He went about the world conjuring pigeons out of pocket-handkerchiefs, and half-crowns out of plum-cakes, smashing up gold watches in hats, burning five-pound notes in candles, cutting off people's heads before their faces, and otherwise setting the laws of gravitation, optics, therapeutics, logic, and common sense at defiance. His entertainment in Liverpool was highly successful. Besides his apparatus and his facility in feats of legerdemain, he had a stock of verbal and facial impudence, always on hand and at command, perfectly tremendous in its magnitude. He drove a handsome mail-phaeton about Liverpool, with two

Digitized by Google

grooms in sky-blue liveries, and with two, and occasionally four, fiery horses, on the morrows of very successful performances at the Minerva Hall, the full team of four-in-hand always appeared: but this was not to be taken as an infallible criterion of his commercial fluctuations; for the Professor was often heard to say that if he did badly, he would have six horses to his phaeton, and that if he utterly failed and went bankrupt, he would have eight. He patronised the coffee-rooms of the most expensive hotels in the town, and smoked the biggest and choicest cigars. With his partiality for red wine the reader has already been made acquainted. Finally, he was very generous in the distribution of small change and in the discharge of his sumptuary expenses; and he was reported to have amassed immense riches during his travels.

It certainly appeared strange, under these circumstances, that, being to such an extent the favourite of fortune, Professor Jachimo should have chosen to reside in so dubious a neighbourhood as that in which the Fonda of

Digitized by Google

Juan Manuel Harispe was situated, and in such an inelegant establishment as that Fonda itself; for the Adelphi, the George, and the Queen's — those sternly frowning hotels of the city of ships — would gladly have thrown open their several portals to so wealthy a wizard, and one who disbursed so largely. Again, the Professor's stock of Spanish was meagre in quantity, and anything but satisfactory in quality: it could scarcely be with a view towards perfecting himself in the Iberian tongue, that he sought the shelter of Señor Harispe's roof; for, once there, he scarcely ever condescended to essay a phrase in Spanish, and conducted his polite conversation with his landlord and his landlord's niece through the medium of a well of English not wholly undefiled. The Professor's language was always garnished with slang, and sometimes with oaths. Chance, or some fellow-passengers in the steamer, may have led him in the outset to become a guest at the Fonda Fulgencia; but he must have had some motive for remaining there so long. Whatever that motive might

Digitized by Google

have been, he imparted it to no one, though he did not appear to be of a secretive nature, generally.

When the foreign gentlemen had finished their repast, they betook themselves to smoking with great vigour and gusto. Black coffee, too, was brought, and shortly after its consumption, packs of cards began to be produced; then mysterious squares of green baize, which after a short lapse of time began to be covered with little heaps of silver, and half-crowns, and, at last, half-sovereigns and sovereigns, nay, not unfrequently crumpled bank-notes. You saw more of the foreign gentlemen's hands than of their heads about this time, for the former were stretched out on all sides eagerly over the squares of green baize, and quivered and clawed the air as they were so stretched; while the latter were bent down almost to a level with the table, in their rapt attention to the varying chances of the game. The foreign gentlemen who were guests at the Fonda Fulgencia, were all gambling for dear life, as it is the dearest thing in life for foreign

Digitized by Google

— and especially Spanish — gentlemen to gamble. And they smoked incessantly, and drank little besides cold water.

Professor Jachimo, whose magical performances took place only four nights a week, and who had a holiday that evening, entered with great ardour into the spirit of the game. He played largely himself, and won as largely, almost invariably. For it was a remarkable circumstance connected with Professor Jachimo, that he was very lucky at play, and as lucky at games of chance as at games of skill. The foreign gentlemen were not without misgivings about playing cards with a wizard; but they too kept their eyes open to their full amplitude, and were, besides, so fond of gambling for gambling's sake, that, I doubt not, they would have taken a hand at cards with the enemy of mankind himself, had that personage offered to cut in. The Professor, though with quite enough to occupy him with the cards before him, had remarkably sharp eyes for other things passing around him. He had an eye for Juan Manuel

Digitized by Google

Harispe, watching that Hidalgo very much in the scrutinising fashion, in which a cat watches a mouse. Harispe, for his part, sat greedily noting the alternate losses and gains of the gamblers, and longing, yet fearing, himself, to play. When he began he could not leave off; and he was a desperately unlucky player. Often and often he had seen depart from him in a night the fruits of a week's guest-fleecing. The Professor had eyes for other things too. He saw Manuelita leave the room, as was her wonted custom, about seven o'clock, and small as were his eyes, and palpably dark the corridor that led away from the *salle à manger*, he saw Margaret, the Milesian, slip a note into the hands of her young mistress. The girl started, whispered the cook, and then ran up the narrow stairs. Her footstep seemed lighter than usual, whereat Professor Jachimo chuckled.

He heard her come down again; the door was closed this time, but he knew it must be about a quarter to eight, and that muffled

Digitized by Google

up in a thick mantle, half Sevilian mantilla, half Maltese *faldetta*, she was about to wend her way to the Apollo Belvidere Concert Hall. What motive, I wonder, could the Professor have had in ascertaining, as he had done, that Manuelita only danced twice that night, and that she would leave Mr. De Joskin's temple of delight (he was the manager), soon after ten o'clock, nearly two hours before her usual time?

The foreign gentlemen usually continued their play deep into the night; and Professor Jachimo ordinarily only commenced devoting himself to the pursuit of fortune in her gambling chase, on his return from his magical entertainment. On the present occasion, however, he played till half-past nine, and then bidding Don Juan Manuel Harispe a humorous good night for the present, pocketed his winnings, which had been very considerable, and saying he was going for a stroll in the cool night air, sauntered leisurely out.

"The Englishman is lucky," a tall smoke-

Digitized by Google

dried Mexican, in a full suit of nankeen, remarked sententiously, as the door closed on the Professor.

"Lucky!" Juan Manuel Harispe cried, bringing his fist down on the table with as much force as the fist was capable of, and beginning, instead of ending, a rage by a long scream. "Lucky! he is a beast, a devil, a pig, that Englishman. His looks poison me. I hate him. My house"—by which I presume he meant Manuelita—"hate him. He cheats, he lies, he thieves, he conjures. I should like to see him hanged. I should like to see him drowned. I should like to see him burnt." The Señor concluded with another scream.

"Yet he is a good customer, Papa Harispe," observed a mild, fat little man in a jacket, who was not unlike Sancho Panza in appearance, and was perhaps the most inveterate smoker present, but had a curious propensity for emitting the fumes of the tobacco he inhaled from his eyes, or his nose, or his ears, in preference to his mouth.

Digitized by Google

"He drinks much," said the sententious Mexican, in corroboration.

For all reply, Harispe breathed hard, bit his nails, and looked at his guests with an air remarkably like that of a disappointed wild cat. Then muttering to himself, he slid noiselessly out of the room.

You will have begun to perceive that the Professor, although splendid in his attire, and liberal in his expenditure, was not popular at the Fonda Fulgencia. Of the two dozen and odd foreign gentlemen there present, there were probably not half a dozen whom he had not insulted. On Juan Manuel Harispe he had been especially hard, both during and after dinner; and the sententious Mexican had been looking *espingardas* at him for the last half hour. Nobody seemed in the least to appreciate his fine clothes, his jewellery, his red wine, or his wit; but all experienced a wish to resent his aggressive hilarity, and coarse ribaldry, and brutal insolence of manner. Little Manuelita could have found in that room, and at that hour,

Digitized by Google

full four-and-twenty partizans, to avenge her quarrel with Professor Jachimo, even to the death.

All unconscious of, or uncaring for, the unfavorable criticisms to which his conduct had given rise, the maligned Professor bent his steps in a cheerfully independent manner towards the Apollo Belvidere Concert Hall. He loitered somewhat on his way, as though he were rather before than after the time of his appointment—if appointment he had. He produced from a handsomely embroidered case, the largest of Havannah cigars, and smoked that fragrant weed down to the very butt, strolling along leisurely as he smoked, and communing with himself as he strolled. He could not have been a gentleman, you see, for a real gentleman only smokes two-thirds of a real Havannah, which is apt to grow bitter towards the butt. He then throws it away, and lights another.

"That little half-bred Spanish filly is driving me quite wild," he mused; "was there ever such a provoking little minx?

Digitized by Google

She hates me, I know; is in love with the soldier-officer from Manchester, Captain Falcon — Captain Falcon, ha, ha!"

He stopped in the street, involuntarily as it were, and kept repeating the name of Falcon, almost mechanically.

"Five hundred pounds was not much for a fellow's share in such a secret; the other fellow got as much as I, when it should all have been mine. ALL — confound it, I did not play my cards well; and he played them only too well. Yes — yes, he gave me the five hundred pounds as per agreement, but he kept from me the great secret; the secret that would be worth not five hundred but five thousand pounds to me. If I could only find out where that boy is! Perhaps dead — perhaps never born; perhaps my precious partner never knew, and only lied in the matter. All men lie, and especially those you do business with. I have ever found it so; at least I could never get on in business without telling lies. At all events, the villain disappeared, and from the day we were to

Digitized by Google

have started for America together till now, I have never set eyes on him or heard of him. The paltry, treacherous hound! Upon my word," he soliloquised, apostrophising his absent friend, "upon my word, my attached friend and ancient comrade, if ever I come across you again, I'll shake that secret out of you, and then murder you afterwards — bless you!"

He knocked the last bright ashes from his cigar, and throwing away the stump, quickened his pace till he came to the grand entrance of the Apollo Belvidere Music Hall.

It was a huge building, one of those overgrown places of miscellaneous amusement that you only find in a provincial metropolis. The windows were one blaze of light. Crowds of people were passing in and out: ragged boys, mechanics, sailors — English and foreign — cheap Liverpool dandies, and women in satin dresses, and bonnets covered with artificial flowers.

The Professor gazed at the exterior of the

Digitized by Google

building with the stale and accustomed air of one *blasé* to the outside as well as the inside of places of public amusement. He waited patiently in the dark shadow of the portico, till from a door adjoining the grand entrance — a humble little door always on the swing — there glided a female figure muffled up in some garment resembling a mantilla. And this figure, after a momentary pause, was swiftly but cautiously followed down the gas-lit street by Professor Jachimo.

The entertainments at the Apollo Belvidere were varied, not very refined, not very edifying, but decidedly entertaining. What more was wanted? Mr. De Joskins understood the taste of the town, and catered for it skilfully. So, while the company at the two theatres were playing to empty benches, and the Mechanics' Institute was falling into debt and decay for want of members, the Apollo Belvidere was crowded every night. Ladies and gentlemen sang comic songs and duets; sometimes (on gala

Digitized by Google

nights especially) mounted on the backs of donkeys, or with geese under their arms. There were short comic interludes, pantomimes and burlettas. All sorts of people danced all sorts of dances: *pas seuls*, *pas de deux*, *pas* of as many choregraphers as Mr. De Joskins chose to engage. He had formerly been a clown to a circus; had promoted himself to the lesseeship of a beer-shop; after an unusually successful bespeak, had risen to the great altitude of licensed victuallerdom; and so migrated naturally into some theatrical management. Recitations from the poets were to be heard at the Apollo Belvidere, also ditties chaunted in the Liverpudlian crambo, and in Tim Bobbin's Lancashire dialect. Graceful youths of both sexes danced on spades, on stilts, in Highland kilts, in clogs and in fetters. Professors of renown exercised elaborate hornpipes, amid diagrams of broadswords, and mazes of eggs and crockery-ware, all without cutting their shins or breaking the eggs and tea-things. There was a string-band and a wind-band at

Digitized by Google

the Apollo Belvidere, a gorgeously-coloured and villanously-drawn act-drop, and a glittering chandelier. There was a rock-harmonicon, a set of musical glasses, and a Church-organ. Only nigger-dancing and singing, the bones and the banjo, walking on the ceiling and balancing on the *perch*, were amusements not yet introduced from the United States. Between fifteen hundred and two thousand people nightly patronised the Apollo Belvidere, where they smoked tobacco, drank stout, and rum and water, sometimes called for "Rule Britannia," and sometimes fought. The Apollo Belvidere had formerly been a chapel.

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XVII.

ONLY A PAINTER.

MANUELITA was in a hurry to reach home, and walked at a quick pace—too quick a pace, indeed, to please the Professor, who was somewhat given to *embonpoint*, and *faisait du ventre*, to use the significant expression of our Gallic neighbours. She seemed nervous too, and looked round once or twice as though she were afraid that somebody was following her. In fact she *was* nervous; she scarcely knew why, and could not help wishing that her uncle or the Hibernian Margaret were with her. The unpleasant image of her necromantic admirer haunted her perpetually; and every passing figure, from the great-coated policeman stalking along his beat, to

Digitized by Google

the homeless Irish vagrant roaming along the inhospitable pavement, and wandering he knew not whither, seemed to assume the much-bedizened guise of Professor Jachimo.

She had not proceeded fifty yards on her way home, when she felt a hand softly placed on her shoulder, and turning suddenly round, with an affrighted start and a half-suppressed shriek, she found herself face to face with the terrible Professor himself.

"My little angel," he said, "what a deuce of a hurry you are in!"

She tossed her little head indignantly, and made as though she would have resumed her way; but the Professor was not a man to be got rid of so easily; he caught her affectionately but tightly by the wrist, and, in a jaunty but still a most offensive manner, placed himself before her, and effectually barred her passage.

"Come, come, duck of diamonds!" he went on coaxingly, "don't be so cross to-night. Surely you're not afraid of me, my humming-bird! I've a thousand things to say to you

Digitized by Google

—sweet things, tender things, delightful things. Come, take my arm, and we will have a stroll; it's just the evening for a stroll—quite cool after the blazing sun. The silvery moon shines brightly, and looks approvingly on young lovers. I am not young, but I love. You are both young and lovely, and loveable. Would that you were as loving. Come, bird of paradise, whose home is the fleecy cloud in the blue empyrean. Come."

Will you let me go, Sir?" the girl cried violently, when the Professor had rattled off this instalment of his stilted jargon. The man seemed to be able to speak in no other way; and, I have little doubt, spoke as bombastically as he talked. For to this you may school yourself, and speak in ancient Pistol or Cambyses' vein to your conscience, when you want to hush its still small voice. "I'll tell my uncle!" Manuelita continued.

"Tell him as much and as often as you like, Sweetlips. He's up to his eyes in cards."

"I'll call the police, then! I'll scream, Mr. Jachimo! How dare you molest me? Will you let me go?"

Digitized by Google

"Not unless you take my arm, you provoking little thing."

"You *shall* let me go!" exclaimed Manuelita, struggling with her unwelcome suitor.

She had turned out of the gas-glaring and crowded Paradise Street, Whitechapel, and they were in a silent, shabby, little street, never thronged, even at the busiest part of the day, full of tall, dingy warehouses that smelt of hay and cheese, and now silent and deserted. Manuelita looked round in vain for assistance; for as far as her eyes could scan, she could not see a solitary figure.

The Professor laughed his coarse laugh of humorous triumph, and kept tight hold of the girl's delicate wrist. He knew that she would be loth to scream, and fancied, in his gross vanity—the man, for all his shrewdness, was as vain as a woman—even that the dislike she manifested for him was assumed, and that she would, after some further parley, capitulate, and take the arm he offered her. But he was mistaken. Setting her teeth close, and concentrating all her strength in one

Digitized by Google

desperate effort, Manuelita actually managed to extricate herself from the abhórrent grasp of the Professor, and with a gesture of defiance, fairly took to her heels and fled. But her persecutor was not to be baffled. He followed as swiftly as his portliness would permit in pursuit, laughing at her anger, and coming up with her, caught hold of her mantilla to arrest her progress.

There started all at once, like a spectre, from the black shadow of a doorway, the figure of a man. A short man, and an old man he proved to be, when the light from a gas-lamp fell upon him as he emerged from his hiding-place—a man marvellously like Don Juan Manuel Harispe, landlord of the Fonda Fulgencia—his likeness ceased to be surprising, when, addressing himself to speak, he turned out to be that avaricious and irascible Iberian himself.

"Dog-beast," was all that the Señor said, as he leaped, very much in the manner of a tiger-cat, at the Professor. But though his words were few, his actions were most eloquent

Digitized by Google

and explicit; for there gleamed suddenly in the gas-light the blade of a long, murderous Knife, and it clove the air, and was aimed with most homicidal dexterity right at the regiono f the Professor's heart; and Manuelita, seeing the weapon uplifted and descending, screamed in good earnest this time, and her piercing shriek issued through the little street.

All the shrieks in the world would not have rescued Professor Jachimo from the impending stab, for Harispe stood between her and his victim; but it so fell out that, simultaneously with the murderous gesture of the infuriated Spaniard, another and a taller figure had unobservedly joined the group, and that as the Professor, taken quite off his guard, recoiled in horror from the deadly steel that flashed before his eyes, the arm of Harispe was seized in mid-air, the knife wrested from his hand, and himself flung violently back by the person who had made his appearance in so sudden and so opportune a manner.

"You murderous old villain, you're at your stiletto tricks again, I see," the unknown

Digitized by Google

benefactor exclaimed; then, addressing the Professor, he continued hurriedly, "I happened to be passing accidentally, and knowing something of this fellow, and mistrusting his purpose, I determined to watch him. You shall sleep in Bridewell, my Spanish friend, to-night," he concluded to Harispe.

"Not a bit of it," the Professor interposed, evincing a most Christian-like desire for forgiveness of injuries. "I'll just take the liberty of picking up that knife, and of punching his head afterwards; and if ever I catch myself in his confounded house, or his confounded company again, he may spit me and eat me. By Jove, it was a near toucher, though!"

He had not waited to conclude this speech before putting in execution one part of his announced intentions—that of picking up the knife, which was a clasp one, and shutting it up, he slipped it into his pocket. The weapon was fair spoil of war; and so Professor Jachimo thought. It seemed very probable, too, that he designed putting his threat of "punching" his would-be assassin's head into immediate

Digitized by Google

execution; for he made at the Señor with a most menacing gesture, and catching hold of his collar, proceeded to inflict a preliminary chastisement, in the shape of a violent shaking. From further violence, however, he was deterred by Manuelita, who threw herself between him and the object of his wrath, entreating him to spare her uncle.

A policeman had strolled up during this parley, too late, however, to see the knife, or to ascertain the primary cause of the quarrel; and he stood looking at the group with a very dubious and puzzled look. Perhaps he was an Irish policeman, and didn't like to interfere in a brawl, of which, in the course of his municipal experience, he saw one or two dozen, more or less murderous, in the course of every day. Perhaps he was a stupid policeman, and didn't see that there was any quarrel going on at all. Perhaps he ascribed this evident misunderstanding either to religion or to rum, the two great causes of dissension in the Liverpool of those days. The Liverpudlians never quarrel now, save when the

Digitized by Google

frolicsome cotton-brokers, on the Exchange-flags, pelt the police too mercilessly with snow-balls. Under any circumstances, the constable confined himself to taking out his dark-lantern, and bringing the belligerents within the focus of his bull's-eye.

The behaviour of Juan Manuel Harispe under these trying circumstances was philosophical, and even dignified. He folded his short arms, planted his feet firmly on the pavement, and with a scowl of defiance looked at his assailant, although evidently prepared to stand any amount of shaking. He was Regulus come back to Carthage, and ready for the worst tubs full of rustiest nails. He did not open his lips even, when, apparently moved by Manuelita's intercession, the Professor released him from thraldom.

Meanwhile, the personage whose prevenient arrival had been the cause of averting certain bloodshed and possibly Death, went up to the policeman, and telling him that it was "all right," and that it was only a little bit of misunderstanding about a young lady—which

Digitized by Google

indeed, in a limited sense of the term, it was —gave that functionary half-a-crown—he did not look, this individual, as though he had many half crowns to spare—and said he would see that all the parties went home quietly.

The preserver of order now for the first time appeared to have something like a definite knowledge of the course that events were taking. The hazy state of doubt in which he had been, appeared to be immediately dispelled by the magic, though mute, eloquence of the silver effigy of his Majesty William the Fourth, pocketing which, and with a wink containing whole encyclopædias of mysterious comprehension, he shut up the slide of his dark lantern, and betook himself to fresh fields and pastures new, in the shape of a remote slum where eight Protestants were breaking the heads of eight Papists, on a disputed question in which the right of property in a tin-pail had merged in general politics, comprising the usual bellicose topics, the Battle of the Boyne, the Repeal of the Union, and the Pope of Rome.

Digitized by Google

Juan Manuel Harispe availed himself of his unexpected deliverance from the clutches of his stalwart enemy to seize his niece and hurry her away. Poor little Manuelita, who was almost scared out of her wits, gathered her mantilla about her, and clinging to her uncle, left the Professor and his deliverer together, casting a look, in which curiosity was mingled with gratitude, at the latter.

The Professor, on his part, was profuse in his professions of gratitude to the person who had prevented the commission of a great crime, and saved him from, perhaps, an immediate and final termination to his feats of legerdemain. All these professions the unknown took very coolly, contenting himself with saying that it was all right, and that he had suspected the old Spaniard from the commencement.

He was a comely young fellow to look upon, this unknown deliverer—tall, well made, active in his movements (he had given one striking sample of his activity a few minutes before). In age he might have numbered some

Digitized by Google

five and twenty years. He had a frank, open, manly face, bright blue eyes, sparkling with life and gaiety; light curly hair, and a mouth about which played a genial and kindly smile. Small hands and feet, that a woman might have envied, gave him an air of distinction somewhat belied by his attire, which argued anything but elevated position or prosperity. An old shooting-jacket, most wofully out at elbows, a cap carelessly slouched on one side of his head, and a shirt-collar turned down over a frayed silk neck-kerchief, were the most noticeable items in his vestments, if we except the fact that he wore a light blonde moustache. Now moustaches in 1835 were rarities. Cavalry officers wore them, artists had begun to wear them; couriers wore them, and foreigners wore them; but the unknown looked neither like a dragoon nor a painter, nor a courier, nor a Frenchman.

"He can't be an actor," mused the Professor as, taking the arm of the unknown (who seemed nothing loth), he walked away from the scene of contention. "He'd starve

Digitized by Google

if he were on the boards, that's certain. He isn't a gentleman; he's so deucedly seedy. I wonder what he is. I have it," he continued; "he's a fiddler. He must be a fiddler."

Digitized by Google

CHAP. XVIII.

PHILIP LESLIE.

THE strange acquaintanceship that had been formed between the Professor of the black art and the young man whose moustaches caused so much perturbation to the necromancer — an acquaintanceship formed, too, through the medium of an assassin's dagger — was not long in ripening (as such sudden acquaintanceships frequently do) into as strange a friendship. The moustached unknown, had he asked himself the question, whether he was much and favourably impressed with what he had already been enabled to discern of the character of his new friend,

Digitized by Google

would not probably have been able to give an answer in the affirmative; yet, with an odd recklessness and *insouciance* that seemed to be part of *his* character, he allowed himself to glide into the terms of a treaty of close alliance, none the less close because it was temporary and ill-assorted.

The Professor, treating the murderous assault upon him by Juan Manuel Harispe very lightly, and regarding it simply as a significant *point d'arrêt* to his gallantries towards Manuelita, not to be passed over in its portents any more than the first stroke of disease which attacks thrice before it kills, limited his arrangement of precautionary measures to giving Señor Harispe, his niece, and his establishment a very wide berth; and announcing his intention, as a pleasant alternative, to be flayed alive rather than return there, added that he should send for his luggage in the morning, pay the swindling old cub of a Spanish cut-throat his bill, and knock off half the items, and for the few remaining days that he intended to remain in

Digitized by Google

Liverpool set up his tent at some more civilised and Christian-like caravanseraï.

"And however," the Professor remarked, as arm-in-arm with his new friend he proceeded toward the palatial Adelphi Hotel, "however I came to make such a consummate fool of myself as to remain unnumbered weeks in that unmitigated dog-kennel, knocks me into ten-penny nails, renders me as soft as the head of a cauliflower. I suppose I must have been in love with that black-eyed little puss of a niece, who is as hard-hearted as cannel coal, as artful as a blue-nosed monkey, and as downy as the knocker of Newgate. Were you ever over Newgate? As visitor, of course. I have enjoyed the acquaintance of several sheriffs. Naughty little Manuelita! However, I'm well out of it, I don't mean Newgate, but my Spanish courtship; and well rid of you, my cherub, as things go. The idea of the eminent Professor Jachimo being made cold meat of—and deucedly ugly cold meat, too, knocked down like a bullock in the shambles, scored like a loin of pork for the bakehouse—and all

Digitized by Google

for the sake of a designing little minx in a mantilla, is simply preposterous, simply absurd."

His companion gave a sudden start as he mentioned the girl's name, and seemed inclined to withdraw his arm. It is given to writers of fiction to know intuitively the inmost thoughts of their heroes—to read in their divining crystals the secrets of their heart of hearts. When it suits their purpose, but only then, they condescend to admit the public to a participation in their second-sight; and being in a communicative humour just now, I vouchsafe to inform my readers, that when Professor Jachimo's new friend heard that humorous person speak of Manuelita in the terms I have just set down, he experienced an almost irresistible desire to fall incontinent on the Professor, and to beat, punch, and pound him till he assumed the similitude and complexion of an Egyptian mummy. But he was either irresolute, or had a purpose to learn something more, for he took no hostile steps.

The Professor turned his head with a horse-

Digitized by Google

laugh when he noticed the slight movement we have described, and laughed louder still at the sight, perchance, of the reflex of his internal opinion to be descried in the countenance of his companion.

"Body of me!" he cried, "you're not in love with her, too, youthful and mysterious stranger? Why, everybody's in love with her! The swell captain of dragoons—ha! ha! what a grand name he has! — who comes all the way from Manchester, and has got no work to do save to make love to this brown little gipsy. The manager, the fiddlers, the fellows who sing the comic songs and dance the clog-hornpipe, and your humble servant to command. Are *you* in love with her? Say, noble Roman!"

"I'm not a noble Roman," the unknown answered, nettled, it would appear, at the bantering tone of the Professor. "I'm a poor devil of a painter — a scene-painter at the Fontenoy Street Theatre; and as to Manuelita Harispe, I think she's an angel. It was for her sake, not yours, and to avoid her being

Digitized by Google

brought into trouble, that I kept watch over your precious life this night, and prevented that Spanish bravo from sheathing his long knife in your body."

"And very much obliged to you I am," exclaimed the Professor, assuming as much heartiness into his tone as he could muster. "Grateful I am, and grateful I mean to be. There, there, I mean no offence," he continued, seeing that the self-designated "poor devil of painter," still continued somewhat sullen. "Manuelita *is* an angel, a seraph. I suppose I'm not the Mr. Right of her affections, and that she doesn't like me — a great many people don't like me, funnily enough. I hope she likes you better, my young friend, though I am monstrously inclined to fancy that the dragoon has the best chance of it. 'With his long sword, saddle, bridle, whack, fal de ral' — you remember the song? What! angry again! Dear, dear! what a gunpowder magazine it is! You should be anchored in the middle of the Mersey, and painted drab to prevent danger. There, give us your hand,

Digitized by Google

and I'll say no more about it, save to ask you to drink Manuelita's health."

He did not wait for a response to his invitation, but seized the painter's small white hand in his own brawny palm, clapping the other meanwhile approvingly on his companion's shoulder. He had not a wheedling way with him, Professor Jachimo, not a coaxing way, not a persuasive way — not, generally, a pleasant way, by any means; but he had a hearty way — a very hearty way with him — and that, I entreat you to pardon the tautology, went a very great way indeed. Naturalists have observed the same heartiness of manner, and disinclination to take a denial when on hospitable thoughts intent, on the part of that social animal the grisly bear. Professor Jachimo may have been a grisly bear, very closely and clearly shaven.

The painter, though quick in temper, was apparently of a sufficiently placable disposition, for he returned the Professor's hand-shake as heartily as need be, and echoed his willingness to say no more about it. Then the pair went

Digitized by Google

amicably enough up the great steps of the Adelphi, and into the coffee-room of the mammoth haven for travellers.

There was no one in this saloon (it was now nearly midnight) but an American gentleman — to judge by his complexion, from the South — who, having tried to dissipate the *ennui* of the evening by a succession of juleps, had resorted to whittling the "Liverpool Albion" up into fine shreds, which was no very difficult matter, and had then gone fast asleep, with his slippered feet on the mahogany table, and his face turned upwards towards heaven and the coffee-room ceiling, and was probably tranquilly dreaming (with a trombone accompaniment) of docile niggers with small appetites, and abundant cotton crops, himself ruling the market. There was one waiter — a bald-headed man, with a highly-respectable appearance, and the tie of whose white neckcloth would have done honour to any churchwarden — who was not quite asleep, but was making desperate efforts to keep awake; and to divert his mind, had tortured his erst snowy napkin

Digitized by Google

into so many knots and twists, that the most rational theory that one could form respecting it was, that he wanted to make a halter of it, and hang himself forthwith.

The Professor — who was known personally and by reputation, both by printing types and engraved portraits, everywhere in general, and all over Liverpool in particular — had no difficulty in securing a bed at this aristocratic hotel: the general distrust as to travellers without luggage common among hotel-keepers being in this instance vanquished by the magic power (of the purse) well known to be possessed by the renowned Professor Jachimo. The Magician would have asked his deliverer to take up his quarters there, too, and did actually hint at the soft couches and luxurious fare which the Adelphi afforded to wayfarers; but the Painter said, with quiet decision, that he lived close by, that he should be glad to take a glass of soda and sherry, and that he would then bid the Professor good night, for that he was tired out of his life.

The Wizard, whose narrow escape had con-

Digitized by Google

tributed, perhaps, to make him hungry, ordered some supper, of which he partook with great gusto, strongly but ineffectually pressing his companion to "do as he did." All that he could persuade him to tàke was a biscuit and the effervescing beverage before named. The Painter sat opposite to him, tapping his fingers on the table, and glancing at him from time to time with looks of considerable curiosity. Professor Jachimo, when the first cravings of his appetite had been appeased, began to look with equal curiosity at the friend who had done him such signal service. Finally, he laid down his knife and fork, and honoured his guest with a prolonged stare.

"You will excuse my taking a very great liberty," he said, "though perhaps it isn't so much a liberty; but might I ask you whether you know my name?"

"I know it well enough," replied the Painter, with a careless laugh; "I ought to know it by this time. It's on every wall, in every shop-window —."

"On every tongue that can give utterance

Digitized by Google

to the praises of art and the ineffability of magical paraphernalia," the Professor modestly interposed. "You were plain if not complimentary, young man; so I supplied the sugar-candy at my own cost and charges. Soap, thank the beneficent stars, is cheap, although an Excise duty yet weighs heavily on that useful article. Flummery can always be got for nothing. You are aware of my being the celebrated and accomplished Professor Jachimo?"

"I know who you are well enough," his interlocutor contented himself with repeating, though with a slight touch of disdain in his tone this time.

"And you, my generous preserver?"

"As I told you, a scene-painter at the Fontenoy Street Theatre."

"Yes; you were good enough to inform me of that fact before; and you will not be offended if I tell you, that my experience led me to form a notion, on first seeing you, that you were indeed connected with the theatrical profession, but more in a musical

Digitized by Google

than an artistic point of view. To tell the truth, I took you for a fiddler."

"I wonder you didn't take me for a horse-rider — I've been that and all the others. I paint now."

"Anything else?"

"Starve."

"I thought so. The Fontenoy Street Theatre — pretentious 'gaff,' as it is — has known not the walk of the Treasury-haunting ghost these eight weeks. A bad look out."

"*I* find it bad enough, I can tell you."

"Might I be so bold as to ask your name? We shall then be quits, so far as preliminary introductions go."

"What the deuce do you want to know my name for?" was the retort, rather fierce than courteous, of the individual who was being so cross-questioned. "Pshaw!" he continued in a milder tone, "what does it matter? You may see it in the playbills any day. New scenery and effects, by Mr. Leslie. That's my name—Philip Leslie, at your service, at anybody's service except his Majesty's."

Digitized by Google

"Is that your real name?"

"That's either a very simple or a very insolent question. I shan't answer it."

"I meant no offence. It's the only gratuitous thing I never take. I can't make money by it; for I've a large stock of offensive things of my own to give away, always on hand. You know as well as I do that in the profession names are as easily picked up as blackberries off a hedge in September. *My* name now," he continued, with a wink and smile of much significance, "has not always been Jachimo."

"What may it have been, then?"

"Well," the Professor replied, jauntily, "perhaps Cholmondely, perhaps Howard, perhaps Percy, perhaps P——, perhaps Popkins," he in some confusion added, as if he wished to correct some mistake he had inadvertently committed in his system of nomenclature.

"You may have as many aliases as you please," his companion wearily returned, "and I dare say you *have* been known by a good

Digitized by Google

many in the course of your career. But Leslie — Philip Leslie — is the only name I ever had or care to have; stay, there is one other name I should like to change it for; or rather there is one little prefix I should like to make to it."

"And that is —"

"The *late* Philip Leslie!"

"Bah, bah! my young friend," said the Professor, in a tone of consoling jocularity; "so young and so sick of life."

"I *am* sick of it," the Painter said vehemently. "Sick of it — sick of my name, if my real name be Leslie at all!"

Why did the Professor — certainly it could have been by no effort of volition — stretch forward his head eagerly when he heard this last remark, and in a voice that betrayed considerable nervous anxiety, say:—

"Your name — your name! Didn't you tell me you had but one — Leslie?"

"And but one I have — Leslie. Still, I may have reason to doubt its being my real name."

Digitized by Google

"What reasons?"

"The same reasons I may have for doubting most other things."

"What name do you imagine, then, is properly yours?"

"That's my business," Philip Leslie answered unconcernedly.

"But," the Professor continued, "might I ask if you have any cause to think that Leslie is not your real name?"

"I scarcely know; yet, from time to time, when I have troubled myself about the matter at all, I have wondered who I was, what I was, and how much of the Philip or the Leslie there was in me. I cannot remember my father at all. I can only recollect my mother; and I was separated from her at a very early age, never to meet her again. My eyes, you see, are blue, but her's were dark; and I can recall them and her darker hair, poor soul, now."

The Professor gave a shrug. "I have talked with five hundred such as he," he thought. Indeed, most of the people with

Digitized by Google

whom Professor Jachimo came in contact, rejoiced in names that didn't belong to them. He lived in a "shadowy land, where all things wear an aspect not their own." Most rogues do.

Inquisitive Professor! what business could it have been of his? May he have been, perhaps, a man with some engrossing object of pursuit always before him? May he have been a man with a fixed idea, and that fixed idea the discovery of somebody who bore a name that didn't belong to him, but was entitled to a name he had never borne? Who knows?

END OF VOL. I.

WERTHEIMER AND CO., PRINTERS, CIRCUS PLACE, FINSBURY.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

14 DAY USE
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED
LOAN DEPT.
This book is due on the last date stamped below, or
on the date to which renewed.
Renewed books are subject to immediate recall.

17Jul'61DA

REC'D LD
JUL 5 1961

LD 21A-50m-12,'60
(B6221s10)476B

General Library
University of Califo
Berkeley

Digitized by Google