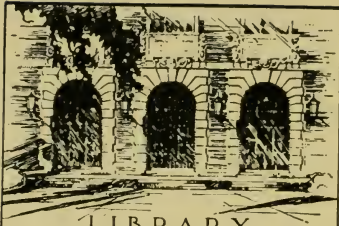


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LORDS AND LADIES.

VOL. III.

LORDS AND LADIES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“MARGARET AND HER BRIDESMAIDS,”

“THE VALLEY OF A HUNDRED FIRES,”

“THE QUEEN OF THE COUNTY,”

&c., &c.

“Musing on the little lives of men—
And how they mar this little by their feuds.”

TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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LORDS AND LADIES.

CHAPTER I.

“LUFF IT IS.”

THE sagacity of the reader will no doubt readily comprehend that the ladies had arrived at that crisis of apathetic dulness which gives history nothing to record. They were departing when we left them, for Exe church, with the determination of staying at Exe over the afternoon service.

They shed a few more tears over the sad records of the drowned, and they collected some very

interesting stories regarding not only those who were mourned, but of the mourners themselves.

On certain anniversaries, a lady and gentleman came down to Exe, and spent a sad vigil over a tomb, that recorded the names of two young girls, fifteen and sixteen years of age, drowned on their way home from school. They were the only children of this couple.

“Year by year,” said the old fisherman, who had talked to them the Sunday before, “they do cum punktivel, and they do sit o’ that there stone be the hour, and ivery year as they do cum they luiks holder and sadder nor the year afore. They be a’most so haged and feeble this year, as we do think has they wonner cum agin. They will be gone to where their little lassies is awaitin’ on ’im. They is most miserable to see, to be sure. There wor an uncommon fine man, as did

cum where a stone wor pit hover a pratty young critter, fund wi' a babby in her airms. And arter that we niver saw him more, until, may be, sax weeks agone. He wor a deal stouter, but I knowed him at oncest, by rason he wor a very fine man, and stepped remarkable. There wor a leddy wi' him, and twa slips o' lassies, and he tuk 'em straight over all the mounds, to that there grave of the young critter and her babby. And to be sure, he wor choked wi' big sobs, and the leddy had her eyes brimming wi' tears. And she pit her hond kindly on him, and says she,

“She will be my sister in heaven, Robert.”

“And wi' that he wrung her hand, but a couldn't speak. And if ye please, mum, this wor the second wife, and her childer, and I'm thinking she wor a good womman, and didn't begrudge the first wife, the pretty fair young critter drowned wi' her babby in her airms, the big sobs as wor busting the heart of that

foine man. We made bould as to be werry respectful to that there koind-'arted second wife, please, mum."

The ladies might have gone on listening to the old man all day, he went from one story into another, but the church bells warned him and them that they must go and take their seats in the church.

Perhaps they were a little sad, remembering the excitement of the last Sunday. They each took the same places they had occupied then, so that there was room between Kate and Mrs. Joscelyn for another person. It is to be feared that Kate spent the few moments they had to spare before the service began, in conjectures as to whether she should ever see that handsome face, those kindly beaming eyes looking down into hers again, as they sang together out of the same book.

Her conjectures were answered at once; the pew door opened, Colonel Erne walked in, and

took, as if it was his place by right, the vacant seat between Mrs. Joscelyn and Miss Daintree.

No veil in the world could hide the rising blushes that covered the pretty face of the Rosebud. Albeit she never raised her eyes, and could only tell by his boots that her secret question had been answered. But the blushes kept going and coming all through the service; and when the time came for singing a hymn, he took the book and found the place. Not one in the pew seemed to think it necessary to give Kate a hymn-book.

And now was enacted one of those simple deeds by which the settling of a momentous question takes place. An act, scarcely noticed by others, almost too frivolous to be recorded, but which was evidently looked for by one of the parties as that act which was to decide his fate, and was given by the other as the token that she accepted the decision of that fate.

Colonel Erne rose almost the first in the pew, as the singing began. He did not offer the use of his hymn-book to Miss Daintree, but he looked at her. Her eyelashes flashed up for a moment, she caught the look, she nestled to his side, and held out her hand to hold her side of the book.

Then did his eyes droop, as much to hide a scintillation of joy in them, that might have startled the congregation, as to gaze on a treasure he now considered his own. It appeared as if, without a word, with scarcely a sign, these two hearts had decided to be interested evermore in each other. She had responded silently to his unasked question, and at once he took possession of her. He had now the right to single her out from among her companions, as his peculiar care. He had but scant means of showing his privilege in a pew in church. Nevertheless, he did not lose one—he found her places in the prayer-book. It was his pleasure

to consider that she required them found for her, and it seemed her pleasure so to have them found. He was most particular in adjusting her hassock; he took her veil, just falling from her bonnet, folded it, and put it into his pocket. He laid hands upon her little glove, just laid aside for a moment, and kept it in his during the whole of the sermon. Finally, on coming out of church, he put her prayer-book into his pocket, carried her parasol, and offered her his arm as they left the church-door.

As they sat on the sea-shore, eating their luncheon, he thus explained his sudden arrival to Mrs. Joscelyn:

“I intended to stick faithfully to the Admiral all through his cruise, and not returning here till next Sunday; when, his duties being over, he would be free to come with me, and see the end of this famous challenge. But I received a letter from head-quarters yesterday,

offering me a command, which will take me from England for three years. It is not exactly the command I should like, or that is in a manner due to my services; but it is the first thing the Horse Guards have had to offer me, therefore I am grateful. They know at headquarters that I am not fond of an idle life, and that probably I might prefer accepting the offer, rather than stay doing nothing at home. But sometimes there occur periods in a soldier's life when a spell at home is absolutely necessary to him. He should have some private ties as well as public ties. I shall not lose any caste in their eyes if I refuse. The Admiral and I discussed the whole matter, and the end of it is, you see me here. Say, shall I go, or wait and see the end of the challenge?"

"That will be over long before you sail," said Clara.

"Perhaps—but still, shall I go or stay?"

Nobody said a word.

Mrs. Joscelyn because she was astonished. That the acquaintance of but a few hours should put such power into their hands, argued but one thing. And how dare she pronounce upon so important a matter in this sudden fashion?

Mrs. Spooner was silent from astonishment also. Her thoughts not being so sagacious as Mrs. Joscelyn's, only made her wonder still greater. Never quite able to divest herself of a personal interest in anything that was said or done, she had only sufficient strength of mind to felicitate herself in secret that she had put her best bonnet on.

Clara gazed eagerly, inquiringly, into his face. Her clear head and sensitive heart divined the inference that was to be drawn by the question put, the reply given. He had a restless quickness in his eyes, they wandered from one face to the other, passing over, as a

gallant gentleman should, the flushing, paling face of her gossip. Clara turned for a moment to regard her—only for a moment—and then, smiling with joyous look, exclaimed,

“Stay, oh! do stay!”

“Thanks,” he said fervently; “I had settled to stay just two seconds before you spoke.”

So no more was said.

He passed the whole of the day with them, not embarrassing the little Rosebud by any singular attentions, beyond sitting by her side, at evening service, singing with her out of the same book, and listening to all she said, as lovers listen to nightingales.

Set at ease by this judicious behaviour, the pretty little girlish thing emerged out of her throbbing state of shyness and reserve, into that of a quiet and serene happiness, that imparted to her a beauty that delighted them all.

As we have said before, there was not a rosebud in any garden ever more sweet and lovely to look upon than this dainty little creature. But now, it seemed as if the sun had kissed and blessed her, and bid her be a bud no more, but bloom out into a rose, as lovely as the dawn.

She had found her destiny, and rested well content with the glimpse she had of what it was to be.

Oh! sweet heart, gushing over with a joy that neither earth nor air can produce the like! What sight is there that can equal in purity and beauty the first dawn of love in a young girl's heart.

But "goodness gracious!" as says our dear Spooner, what business has sentiment to do with a matter-of-fact story such as this is?

Let us go back to realities. All that we have been recording in the last two pages is almost stated upon presumption. It will be

a sad thing if it has all to be unsaid, and to discover that the Colonel was, after all, only "philandering."

But still, Miss Daintree, as we know, dear reader, has another string to her bow. We may as well let her indulge all her flights of fancy, now she has begun to feel what love is.

"Solitude," Zimmerman tells us, "breeds all sorts of humours in us."

Perhaps it was owing to their dull life at Luff that Miss Daintree so suddenly—but, I forgot, Miss Daintree never allowed it was dull. To this day, she repeats it was and ever will be the most delicious period of her life. Truly it may be so now, for the Colonel rows them home. The Colonel does not land at Luff, but he sits in the boat, and is waited on by ever so many kind hands. One brings him tea, another sugar, a third the cream—in fact, the giving him merely one cup of tea took up nearly two hours.

The Colonel thought that tea so good, that he came early in the morning and had another cup.

The Colonel took three of the ladies for a row in his boat. The Colonel brought them in the evening a dish of fish. Moreover, he had another cup of tea.

And this continued until the Thursday morning, when the fates ordered him to go to London.

Fates are so inexorable in their orders.

In the early part of this history, it is recorded as a fact, for she said it with her own lips, that Miss Daintree loved "flirting."

She was having quite a dose of it, and at Luff, too, where they were under a sort of solemn engagement to hold no intercourse with any male thing, but Spitz, the lap-dog.

If the ladies had not now infringed the

rules and regulations of the challenge, I should like to know who had. As the gentlemen had discussed their broken vows on dining ashore, the ladies now wondered how far they were culpable in admitting the visits and friendly attentions of a gentleman, even though he never landed on their island.

If his boat could speak, how many hours would it not tell the ladies had floated about in her, accompanied by a gentleman!

Grieved as I was to have it to record that the gentlemen made up their minds to say nothing about their "lapsus," unless, as the Squire bargained, his wife should ask him point-blank, I have now to tell, which I do with blushing pen, that the ladies made no reservation at all.

They agreed not to mention one syllable of all this tea-drinking, boat-flirting, and goings on. Mrs. Joscelyn did not even say, "If my

husband asks me;" or rather she did say, "if I am asked—I shall say nothing."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

As if to punish the ladies for this base conduct, all that Thursday evening a great cloud kept gathering about him still larger and blacker clouds, until the one side of heaven presented a phalanx of awful grandeur, that made the wicked, the perjured, the false, shudder to look at.

So of course our ladies shuddered.

Mrs. Joscelyn shuddered lest so great a storm was brewing, that their rickety house, grand in appearance, but most fragile in reality, might be blown over their heads.

Mrs. Spooner shuddered because she feared if the sea arose it might swallow up the island of Puff. Bessie comforted her by saying that the island of Puff—properly called Puffin in ancient maps—had existed time im-

memorial, and it was not likely to be expunged from the face of the globe this particular month in which they inhabited it.

“But such strange things do happen, now a-days, Bessie, dear!”

“I think,” responded Bessie, “it will be too strange to occur.”

Clara shuddered because the howling and sighing of the wind, as it gathered from all quarters in sullen moans and hurrying blasts, reminded her of the night she was orphaned and homeless.

Kate shuddered because “somebody” might be in danger. She did not specify who was that somebody, but everybody took it for granted she meant the whole world now on the water. So she was allowed to shudder a good deal.

Bessie did not shudder at all, and Susan thought “noffin of winds a-roring of theyselves hout o’ breath,” so much as, “that they ’ood

leave hoff they prauks" in time for the boat to come and replenish their stores.

Now, the four ladies, we know, had reason to shudder for their sins, without giving any reason for their fears. But it is of no use wasting time discussing their delinquencies—the storm came. It was furious!

They had to put up the shutters in the daytime, to prevent the windows being blown in. They dare not go to bed, because they did not like to separate. They improvised couches, and lay all huddled together, as if their weight would keep the house in its place, and prevent it being bodily blown away.

They could only light one fire, and that was in a little back kitchen, whose chimney was a little funnel, sheltered in a corner of the house, so that the wind never found it out. They had to sit many hours in the dark, because the candles were getting short.

Daisy, the cow, lowed dismally, adding to their fear. They would like to have brought her too into the drawing-room, where Runa and Spitz were already kennelled, but Clara and Susan together, with infinite difficulty, and getting wet through, contrived to tie her up in the coal-hole, where she ate up the hay that was to last her a week, that very night.

So she was obliged to be let loose in the morning to go to seek her food, which she did among the new flower-beds—cropping up with her succulent tongue all the pretty plants and shrubs they had imported and planted with such care.

It rained with such impetuosity, power, and perseverance, that they began to think the sea had got up into the sky, or that the rain was determined to drown the sea.

Many slates having been blown off the roof, they were almost obliged to sit under umbrellas, for the rain poured down everywhere. They

went about in waterproof-cloaks, and kept their goloshes handy, excepting when these goloshes went swimming away on a little voyage of their own.

On Saturday evening there was a lull of a few hours, during which time a pale dripping sun attempted to dry up the world.

Mrs. Joscelyn urged them all to exert themselves to warm and fumigate the house. They opened every door and window, lighted large fires, dried all their damp things, drank oceans of hot tea, and were just getting merry and lively again, when a roaring sound was heard in the distance; they hastily got the doors closed, and the window-shutters up, when down it came, and shook the house with a dreadful power, that made them all pallid with fear. How it ever "kep its feet," as Susan said, they did not know, for the storm seemed to have returned, as the parable saith, "with seven spirits more wicked than itself." They appeared to howl round the unfortunate house, only built

for pleasure, as if their sole business was to hurl it to the ground. They gathered together, as if trying to lift the roof, when suddenly, with a whirling and tumultuous roar, they would battle at every window like an army of besiegers, and roll off again in sullen roars, like the growlings of angry demons. It was impossible to sleep, to rest, to do anything; and they could have no help, for no boat could live in such a sea.

And now came little privations in the way of food. Unlike the gentlemen, they had hitherto feasted royally. But it was absolutely necessary to give Daisy the last of their vegetables. Then, with a view to take what was easiest prepared, they had indulged in tea or coffee, instead of regular dinner, which, indeed, it was, as nothing else could be cooked; and so their sugar was all gone, and the tea getting lamentably short.

Every now and then they were cheated into fancying there was a lull in the storm, when

the winds would come back, whispering at the keyholes like ghosts; then becoming peevish and angry, at last, in raging fury, they would send down a slanting shower of rain, that seemed to pierce the air like long polished spears. And as if that was not enough, they would rend the cloud asunder, whiten the ground with hail, and whirl it off in clattering bursts of thunder. Altogether, they mutually agreed that never had they known such a storm, or one to last so long a time.

It was on Sunday afternoon that the clouds, covering the earth like a tent-roof, began to roll themselves up and float away. One or two large heavy ones seemed pulled aside like curtains by the wind, which was still rioting up in the heavens. And before they went, they shed a cataract of rain on the already half-drowned earth. But at last they were all gone, and by the time the stars were beginning to peep timidly out, the clouds were as filmy as cob-

webs, but torn into every fantastic remnant.

The wind began to sigh like a troubled heart, as if sorrowful for the wild ruin it had spread, and as it sighed it died away in little gushes of tears.

Gently and solemnly rose the pale and quiet moon, edged with a pearly rim; and as she gazed down on the heaving sea, cleft into caverns, and rising into tumultuous snow-capped hills, the great ocean seemed to tremble with love of her beauty, and strove to calm his wild rage.

And there was rest and peace that night in the Palace of Luff.

The day broke over the sea calm and soft, clad in grey, like a pilgrim. Was it mourning for those who had not lived to see it rise?

The tender-hearted girls could not but think that there might be more tombstones added to the sad number already filling the

churchyard at Exe—added because of this storm, which was to be registered evermore in their lives as an epoch, a time, that could never be forgotten.

Mrs. Spooner, exhausted by her fears and privations, was in bed. Mrs. Joscelyn was assisting Susan to look over the stores, for it must be two days at least before they could expect a boat to come to them.

The waves were still rolling into the bay mountains high, and it must be that time before the sea would settle down, so as to permit a boat to come with any safety. And, if it should take a longer period, they must be prepared to husband their resources, at all events.

Mrs. Joscelyn looked grave, and Susan aghast, at the little they had left of everything but meat. One loaf of bread, a few handfuls of flour, a reasonable quantity of rice, no vegetables, no tea, no sugar.

Fortunately they had both honey and preserves.

“Now, Susan,” said Mrs. Joscelyn, “what we shall require most is bread. You have some ground rice, and a few potatoes, and arrowroot. Boil the potatoes, run them through the wire sieve, and mix them with all the flour you have, the ground rice and arrowroot. Anything else that you can add, pray do.”

“We hev a tin of paternt floor for rolls, mum.”

“The best thing in the world. Join that with the others, and make as many loaves out of it as you can. It will be odd bread; but it is the best you can make. Any eggs?”

“Not a shell, mum. Mussus Spooner hev been a-heving hof ’em beat hup in wine, mum, most twice a day.”

“Then roast the piece of beef.”

“I hev plenty o’ horse-radish, mum!” interrupted Susan, triumphantly.

“Very good; and give us a milky rice pudding.”

“Where be the shuggar, mum?”

“Honey will do.”

Susan was one of those characters who have certain laws and rules for everything. She was peculiar about her rice puddings, for which she had a name.

“Honey, mum! how be I to know how much honey ool do?”

“You must guess.”

“A tay-spune, may be?”

“Yes—a teaspoonful.”

“Or a tay-coop?”

“No; that is too much.”

“I can’t go for to do it, mum, without I knows dizactly.”

“Nonsense, Susan—don’t tease me with your whims!”

Now, Mrs. Joscelyn had said precisely what Susan desired. She was ripe for a fit of ill-

humour, and only wanted an excuse to indulge in one.

“Tease you, mum! Well, when I teases my missus, hit’s time as my missus and me should part. Tease you, mum!—ho! that’s it!”

“Don’t be foolish, Susan, but go on with your work.”

And Mrs. Joscelyn left the kitchen with a heightened colour, evidently seriously displeased.

And well she might. It was an unlooked for finale of the dreadful storm in the elements that had alarmed, almost appalled them, to have a tea-cup storm in the kitchen. Mrs. Joscelyn was conscious how slender was the safeguard between them and a most pitiable, exposed, dangerous condition; and was still overflowing with gratitude to the Almighty, who had “stilled the winds and the tempest.” She was vexed that anyone under her charge

should forget the feelings proper for such a time, and think only of her own tempers and follies.

But, alas! Mrs. Joscelyn's lament over the ill-timed petulance of one of her subjects was not the only thing to be deplored.

Susan, blind with anger, forgot that crockery is not iron, and crack went the milk-jug, the only one, with the force with which she thumped it on the table.

"Jest as if yer couldn't hae minded yersel better nor that!" she exclaimed to the unconscious fragments, as she picked them up, and threw them, with an angry jerk, into the fire.

They fell into a basin of bread and milk, just boiling up for Miss Bessie's use.

"Ugh! ye baste, coom oot of that!"

And she dashed the contents of the pan into a basin that she saw, too late, contained the ground rice that was to help to eke out their bread. Aware of the consequences of

this disaster, she hastily tried to arrest the progress of the boiling milk, which caused it, in the rebound, to spirkle up into her face, and scald her painfully. In her agony, away went the pan to the other end of the kitchen, and, as evil hap would have it, it alighted on the bag of flour, and poured itself out upon the last hope of bread they had.

Susan, blind with pain, saw not this terrible misfortune, otherwise her susceptible feelings as a cook would have overcome her bodily pangs as a woman. It was only when, attracted by her cries, her mistress ran in to see what could be the matter, that this catastrophe was discovered.

It cured Susan in a minute. She bathed her scalded face with cold water, would not hear of applying the last of the flour as a remedy, begged her mistress's pardon, and set to work to slave like a horse, to make amends. She refused to be comforted and consoled by

the sight of a whole tin of captains' biscuits unopened.

Her mistress had ordered bread, and bread they should have! How she managed it is only known to Susan herself; but at tea there appeared a large and beautiful loaf of new bread. Of course they ate but sparingly of it, taking each just sufficient to "compliment" Susan, as they phrased it, and made biscuits do the rest of the work.

When Mrs. Joscelyn went into the kitchen after tea, to express her approbation of Susan's efforts, she found that penitent individual imitating the storm—the violence of her fit of temper was going off in a good cry.

Knowing the efficacy of the remedy, Mrs. Joscelyn returned to her companions, feeling much comforted in the idea that she had now only one more week to pass at Puff; that the worst that could happen to them was now past, and that, without flattering

herself too much, she had reasonable hopes they should keep the peace towards each other, so nearly touching the goal of their hopes. It was almost beyond the bound of probability that they should now require to raise the flag for help, and it was nearly as impossible that for this short period she and her companions should quarrel and separate.

With a light heart and a buoyant step, her face a true index of the lovely sunset, Mrs. Joscelyn entered the room. She always brought a sort of sunshine with her, but all were attracted by the sweet smile and serene happiness now expressed on it.

“Has the boat come?” asked Clara.

“Or the gentlemen?” murmured Mrs. Spooner, looking very much washed out.

“Or—” began Kate, and stopped abruptly, blushing scarlet.

“No—no—no,” answered Mrs. Joscelyn, turning to each.

“I was merely thinking this was our last week. I am afraid I shall have to record in the Journal that I am glad.”

Mrs. Spooner instantly burst into a flood of tears; Clara coloured with indignation; Kate looked up in dismay; while Miss Bessie openly exclaimed:

“Oh! mamma, how wicked of you!”

“I—I did not th—think after all—all I had tri—tried to do-o-o-o-o,” sobbed Mrs. Spooner, “to-o please you, th—that you—you—you—” here her feelings became too strong for speech.

Now, will it be believed that Mrs. Joscelyn, after one moment’s dismay, began to laugh!

“Do you know,” she said, “I was thus happy because I was felicitating myself that we had passed the worst ill we could have? We were not likely to quarrel and separate the last week, and that, therefore, our trial was virtually over—we had nothing more to

fear. If the boat comes on Wednesday, it is quite impossible we should have any want that would oblige us to hoist the flag for help. Do you not understand? That is why I am glad."

"Did you anticipate that we should hoist the flag?" asked Clara.

"I have had a presentiment that we should do so before we left, which was so strong that I really dreaded it. The reason I laugh now is, that I thought it impossible we should quarrel in this short space, and, before my thoughts had fled, see how I offended you all, how very near we are to having a serious misunderstanding."

"You must allow," began Mrs. Spooner, "we had reason."

"Yes, you had reason—will that content you? I expressed myself badly. I apologise."

The Queen was kissed by all her subjects in

token of forgiveness, and, in a very short time, they were all absolutely expressing the same sentiments as herself, viz. they were glad this was the last week, and not all, I lament to say, from similar feelings. There was an under-current of private wishes and hopes, of which it is just as well to say nothing at present.

“How quickly a quarrel can be hatched and brewed!” observed Clara, as they were all seated round the fire about nine o’clock in the evening, Bessie having retired to bed.

Though they had a fire, the windows were all open. Never was there seen or felt a more lovely and delicious night.

“Yes; and how true is the text, ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath.’”

“And how quickly you said it, Mrs. Jocelyn.”

“If one has to apologise, ’tis best to do it at once, Arabella. All my life I have found the advantage of an immediate frankness, a sort

of tearing aside the motives of a quarrel. They generally have such random beginnings, they will not easily bear investigation."

"I have heard it rumoured," said Clara, "that you and Mr. Joscelyn would not have been married, had it not been for your openness and faith in each other."

"I daresay Mr. Summers told you that. Well, it is entirely against my feelings as a woman to show up another woman, but I will tell you my little tale if you wish it."

"Oh! of all things, nothing we should like better."

"Then, pray do me the favour to imagine I am improvising a story for your amusement, and dismiss it from your minds as reality. In the first place, you will readily agree to this when you hear it, as it is almost impossible to believe such a strange mind should be possessed by a human being. 'Truth is stranger than fiction.' I am only sorry that

it is a woman who is to exemplify this truism in my story."

"Oh! don't say that. I know a woman, a girl at my school, I believe she was capable of anything—murder, even!"

"Let us have your story after Mrs. Joscelyn's?" asked Clara of Mrs. Spooner.

Mrs. Joscelyn's Story.

"I do not intend to treat you with the particulars of my earliest years, because, in the first place, they were pretty much like other people's, I fancy; and, in the second, I cannot recall anything that would in the least, interest you.

"My father married twice. He had two sons by his first wife, the eldest of whom is Kate's father. He had an only daughter by his second wife, which daughter is myself. My father and mother are both alive, and I never see them without thanking God that they are

so. They make one in love with old age.

“No youthful lover, that ever I saw, equals in tender and gallant devotion my dear old father to his dear old wife; and no girl, with devoted heart and womanly goodness, ever loved a man with more ardour and self-abnegation than my old mother loves my old father. They are quite a picture to see, and a lesson to witness. You are not to infer that they are foolishly fond—on the contrary, they shew the high consideration they have for each other by a courtesy and high breeding that subjects offer to sovereigns.

“Each is the sovereign of the other. At the same time, they do not always think alike. My father indulges in political opinions of so strong a liberal tendency, he borders upon Radicalism. My mother is the sweetest little vixen of a Tory you ever met. So, when they have a dispute about the welfare of the country, my father advocates his principles with little sugared deprecations, such as—

“‘My dearest life must forgive the thoughts that will arise when I am so unfortunate as to lose her company for an hour!’

“‘To which my mother would reply :

“‘I forgive the thoughts, dear love, but can scarcely pardon the lips that permitted their expression.’

“‘Then answers my father :

“‘Place your dear finger on them, and they will not open under the soft touch!’

“‘I would rather that you would be convinced by what I say.’

“‘Say on, then. I am glad I am at present unconvinced, so that I may sit and be convinced by you.’

“‘And all this was in real earnest. They never had a dispute, but as to which should give way to the other. Brought up in hearing and seeing such examples, I could not help a natural serenity of mind becoming my chief characteristic. There was nothing to annoy, no

incident to jar the pleasant social feelings of youth. My brothers appeared to think it their highest privilege to have the care of their sister. Never were there people so attached to each other as my brothers and me.

“It was on the occasion of the marriage of my eldest brother that I first met Mr. Joscelyn. He was introduced to me as a gentleman who wished to dance, but who was afraid to venture into the intricacies of a quadrille without a good-natured partner to help him through it.

“‘So I brought him to you, my dear,’ continued the lady who was introducing us, and who was the bride’s mother, ‘because I heard your brother say he had never seen you out of temper in his life!’

“I laughed, and answered:

“‘People cannot lose their temper when there is nothing to provoke them.’

“‘Oh!’ said Mr. Joscelyn, ‘I shall soon do that. I am so awkward, but you may scold

me as much as you like, for I shall always be able to say I was the first person that ever provoked Miss Daintree!

“If that is a matter of consequence, I will do my best to confer the distinction upon you!”

“Let us take our places, then. I am all impatience to win the honour.”

“But we did not dance together, as it happened. A little sister of the bride’s, about twelve or fourteen years of age, came by, exclaiming piteously :

“Oh, dear! how I want to dance, and no one will ask me!”

“My partner and I exchanged looks.

“If I read your eyes rightly, Miss Daintree, they say, go and ask the poor child to dance!”

“Yes, that is what they say. Take her for your partner instead of me.”

“But suppose I say I won’t?”

“Then you will gain your end—I shall be provoked.”

“‘I will put off provoking you to another time, and I will go and ask the child, on one condition, namely, that you remain at hand to coach me through my steps.’

“This I promised, and he soon returned with the child, whose little sad face was now radiant and smiling.

“‘I am sure,’ she whispered to me, ‘nobody has got such a handsome partner as I have. He is so tall, I am obliged to go on tiptoe to reach his hands.’

“While he was equally confidential, coming up to tell me what ‘our child,’ as he called her, said and did. When the dance was over, he whispered,

“‘I don’t regret the sacrifice. We made our child happy. I got through my paces pretty well, thanks to you, and I had you to talk to whenever I pleased, and that, I can tell you, was always.’

“There was something so frank, and out of

the common, in Mr. Joscelyn, I could not help being very much attracted by him; and then he was, as you know, a very fine-looking young man. As I looked at him, grouped among other gentlemen, he always seemed like Saul—a head and shoulders above his fellows.

“And I noticed that everyone liked to have a word with him. But our intercourse stopped here suddenly, for my youngest brother had met with an accident which obliged him to be very careful of his health; and I returned home with him the day after the wedding.

“I could not help thinking of Mr. Joscelyn very often, especially when I was taking long, solitary walks. A girl dying of consumption lived about three miles from our house, and I was in the habit of going to see her constantly. As the time of her release from pain and suffering drew near, she asked me, as a

favour, if I would be with her at the last; and this, I need not say, I promised, though with some dread. No matter at what hour she chose to send for me—I would come.

“It has always seemed strange to me, the event that grew out of that promise. It was the means, and, as far as we could judge, the only means, that brought about a second meeting, with all its consequences, between me and my dear John.

“The poor girl had sent her summons to me; I received it, just as there was beginning to dawn on the earth one of those long summer days, that make one think of Paradise.

“The clock was only striking three as I crept downstairs, anxious not to disturb my father and mother. As I opened the front door, I was reminded of Milton’s description of morning:

‘Now morn, her rosy steps in th’ Eastern clime
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearls.’

“Never was any scene so fair, so fresh, so fragrant, as the newly-awakened earth, rousing herself and her subjects to the duties of the day.

“But few birds had begun to twitter ; a rabbit now and then ran across my path, sitting down on its little white tail, to consider, within its little rabbit brains, what I was ; for never, in all its small experience, had it met with anything like me at that hour of the morning, and it was therefore more astonished than alarmed.

“But I could only notice these things hastily, for I did not dare delay.

“I am not going to enter into the details of a scene so solemn as a deathbed. God gives us our moments for meditation upon a subject that is daily typified to us in sleep ; and we ought therefore each to know what feelings befit such a time. I will only say that death, in the case of this poor girl, came

with such gentle touch, such serene peace and joy, that we, surrounding her when the angels came and bore away her soul, could have said to each other—‘May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like hers.’

“It was not much more than five o’clock still, in the early morning, when I set out from the cottage to return home—for she lived but twenty minutes after my arrival—and I thought I was only in the way of her people, and of no further use to her. I had reached the foot of the mountain, still full of thoughts half solemn, half sorrowful, when I came to a foot-bridge that crossed one of the prettiest mountain streams that ever a painter saw.

“The sight of its sparkling water urged me to stop, and bathe my tear-stained face in it. I had no right to weep for a pure spirit gone home; but at my age a natural feeling of

regret for the sudden closing of a youthful life, drew forth my tears in spite of myself.

“I knew I might linger on my road home—I had ample time before me to perform all my little home duties before my father and mother appeared downstairs. So I sat down and played with the brook as with a plaything, while my thoughts soared after the spirit just gone from earth.

“Our village clock was striking six, when I heard a step coming along the turnpike road. Properly he ought (for it was a man) to have gone straight on, but I heard him coming through the bushes down to the water. I arose to go on my way, and found myself face to face with Mr. Joscelyn. He flushed up to the very roots of his hair, and his eyes sparkled with a great joy.

“‘Do you know,’ he said at once, ‘where I am going? I am going off to Africa, because—because I could not find you.’

“ ‘I have been at home,’ I stammered.

“ ‘But not all the time.’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘I heard you were married—are you married?’

“ ‘No ; but is this the way to Africa?’

“ ‘I shall not go to Africa now—at least, not to-day. I shall walk home with you, if you will permit me.’

“ ‘A much more sensible plan, I think.’

“ ‘I have been very restless ever since I saw you, and I cannot sleep at night, nor settle to anything, unless I take long walks every day. I was persuaded by a friend three weeks ago to join him in an expedition to the Cape to shoot everything we see—Kaffirs included, I suppose. He has gone to London to make all the necessary arrangements ; he went in an orthodox manner, by train. I said I would just stretch my legs a bit about the country, that I might not wholly lose the use of them when

confined to the deck of a ship. I have been through half a dozen counties, and this morning took the fancy to stride across this county in a day, and so started at three in the morning. Hearing the bubbling of the brook, I came down, as is my custom with every fresh spring I meet, to taste it. It was my cousin who told me you were married, or about to marry, and that is why I thought to stride through your county without stopping in it. Do you always walk at this hour?"

"I told him the reason of my being there then.

"Ah! I see; the same thing over again—you were doing a kindness. That is what I admired so much in you, Miss Daintree—I mean about the little girl, you know, that wanted to dance that night. I would rather have danced with you, you know, by a good deal. But I could not stand your look. "Hang me!" said I to myself, "if I like giving up dancing with

this girl, standing by her, taking her hand, twirling her round—all so pleasant—but her eyes say I must do it, so I'll e'en take the child." I hope you are not offended with my frankness, Miss Daintree. For the life of me, I cannot help saying what I feel.'

" 'I like it, if you please. I think only insincere people fear frankness.'

" 'Exactly my opinion ; I don't wish to offend—in fact, I would rather cut my tongue out than offend you, and so I hope you will remember this, whatever I may happen to say.'

" 'You know you engaged to provoke me.'

" 'Ha! you remember that. I am more glad to hear you say you remember the little that passed between us than if I had shot the biggest elephant in Africa. It shows that you have some interest in me. I go a good deal about the world—I have seen a great many girls, and have admired them, and all that, but as for remembering anything about them the

next day, I assure you, they might never have been born for anything I cared. But with you——’

“ ‘Here we are at home, and I suppose I may conclude that you will stay and breakfast with my father and mother.’

“ ‘I shall be only too delighted. In fact, if there is a man in the world I want to see, it is your father.’

“ ‘He will make his appearance down in this study at eight o’clock, so will you take a seat in that comfortable chair, as it wants an hour and a half to that time, and take——’

“ ‘A nap?—of course I will; you see I understand all you wish to say by merely looking in your face.’

“And I really believe he obeyed me so thoroughly, he was asleep in a minute. As for me, I went up-stairs, and sat down in my own room. For the first time I had been face

to face with death. For the first time I felt what makes life so blest.

“You must understand I was not what you call ‘in love.’ But I knew that I should have to ask my heart if I would accept this frank-hearted, handsome young fellow for my husband, and that my heart would certainly say ‘yes.’ I argued with myself why I had this conviction—for it was a conviction—and the only answer I could give myself was, ‘that his own sudden liking for me roused in my heart the same feeling for himself.’ I settled it was Fate.

“You must remember I had so much love given me by my own people, that the ordinary love-making of the present day was never of that ardent, or, I should say, unequivocal kind, to rouse my interest. Whatever of incipient flirtations had hitherto passed between me and my swains, died out for want of the little breeze that was to rustle it into a flame. I

was considered cold-hearted by some, too sensible by others, again too clever, when all the while I was merely an ordinary, lively, matter-of-fact girl, quite ready to give my love when I knew it was valued.

“So this irrepressible fancy for me, of Mr. Joscelyn’s, was just the thing to please me. Moreover, he was, to my taste, so handsome. As he appeared through the bushes, and stood transfixed before me, he was as fine a specimen of the human race as eyes ever lit on. Though merely dressed in a better sort of gamekeeper’s dress, with a knapsack on his shoulder, hot with walking, his neckerchief removed, and his throat open, he was as a king among men. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word, and looked it. He had such a beautiful fresh colour, his cheek was so rosy; his brow so fair; his curls so crisp and picturesque; the sparkle in his eyes so good, so frank, expressive of such health in

body and mind, that it was impossible not to say to oneself—‘Perfect as is the outside of this mortal, the spirit must match it, all seems so healthily pure!’ Thus you will see that though I was something like Juliet,

‘I looked to like—and looking, liking moved!’

I yet could reason.

“My father and mother were greatly taken with his appearance; but before breakfast was half over they could easily see into every corner of his heart. My mother drew me aside, when we arose from the table, and said:

“‘My dear, you have made a sudden conquest, and one that seems as sincere as if grounded on the acquaintance of years. There are some characters that require little announcement—they speak for themselves. I should say Mr. Joscelyn is one of that sort. But all the more because he is so sincere and straightforward, should he be dealt with frankly.’

“‘Yes, mamma,’ I answered, shyly.

“‘I do not think a refusal would kill him, Lizzy, or that he would mourn all his life if it was given at once. But keep him in suspense, and refuse him at last, he will take very ill indeed. He will revenge himself on the whole sex!’

“‘I agree with you, mamma.’

“‘Then, my dear, be prepared for some communication, and let your answer be yea or nay.’

“I thought this rather hard of mamma, though, at the same time, I fancied she was correct in her expectation. I thought it hard, because I fancied I should like to be courted a little before I pledged myself. You see we girls have but a short time to show our power, and we do not like to lose it.”

“Very true, Mrs. Joscelyn. Do you know I am delighted to hear you were just like any other person. I have always had a fear of you, from being so superior to these sorts of trifles.”

“I am not superior at all, and they are not trifles. I am just like any other woman who intends to do her duty in the world as well as she can. You will be just the same, Arabella, when the challenge is over, and we go home.”

Arabella had the grace to shake her head doubtfully, while she answered—

“You have such a good temper !”

“And where is yours? What is to prevent you having one just the same as mine?”

“True,” answered Arabella, without knowing why she vouched thus for the fact; but with an inward conviction that, as she had allowed it, she must act accordingly, and fit herself with a good temper somehow, from somewhere. It would henceforth be expected of her to be sweet-tempered.

“Pray go on, Mrs. Joscelyn !” pleaded Clara. “I have read many love stories, and heard of them, but such an instantaneous one

as yours, with its accompaniments, I never had a glimpse of in all my life."

"I have often thought it was rather odd; but I comforted myself by thinking that the great master painter of life, Shakespeare, gave us an example in 'Romeo and Juliet.' But you are not to understand that Mr. Joscelyn proposed that day, and was accepted by me. No, notwithstanding my mother's opinion of his impetuosity, he did nothing of the sort.

"He told my father that he was greatly smitten with me, and thinking it was a man's duty to marry, who could afford to keep a wife, it was his intention to marry. But that it was a serious and solemn undertaking, and while he would not pronounce marriage vows without faithfully trying to carry them out, yet he would not like to engage any young woman to promise anything for him until she knew all his faults and failings. He had

tried to get an introduction to the family soon after he had met me at the wedding of my eldest brother, but had failed to obtain what he considered an efficient one.

“He had no father and mother, but had been brought up by an uncle, who had an only daughter, which daughter he had taken into his confidence, she being a sort of sister to him. He had employed her to find out some means for obtaining him an opportunity of coming to this county; and just as he thought he had succeeded, this cousin wrote to tell him Miss Daintree was engaged, if not already married, to a Mr. Summers.”

(“Frank!” exclaimed a voice, involuntarily.)

“No, a connexion of his; but the authority was good, as our Frank Summers was always at Tillwen Hall, where lived Mr. Joscelyn’s uncle.

“So, in disgust, he suddenly closed with the African scheme, as, to use his own phrase, he said—

“‘He did not wonder at all the world wanting to marry that girl.’

“This report being now proved false, and he having obtained his introduction in the chance way described, he confided in my father, as I have stated, and begged permission to take up his abode somewhere near our home, that he might devote himself to the task of making Miss Daintree acquainted with all his sins and weaknesses, before he proposed to her.

“My father was highly delighted with this honourable conduct, and my mother loved him at once as a son.

“As for me, I gave him very soon reason to think he would not be refused when he proposed; but having fixed a stated time in his own mind for that purpose, he did not swerve from it by so much as a minute.

“I shall not tell you what that period was, but merely say that having engaged us to walk to the little wooden bridge crossing the brook where we met that morning, he having gone off fishing there, and we bringing his luncheon, we reached it, and saw him perched on a stone busily casting his fly.

“My mother sat down on the step of a little wooden stile; my father proceeded to unpack the basket, for we had brought our luncheon as well as his.

“I went down the brook-side to meet him. He was reeling up his line; and I admired with all my heart the light spring with which he leapt from the stone in the middle of the stream on to the bank, and came towards me.

“‘Lizzy,’ he said, quite in a glow, ‘may I kiss my future wife?’

“‘Yes, John,’ I half whispered.

“And so he did, in the sight of my fa-

ther and mother, if they had chosen to see.

“When we joined them, he was holding my hand, his eyes sparkling, his face still glowing.

“‘Are we to congratulate you?’ said my mother, defining the state of affairs in a moment.

“Then she stood on the step of the stile, to make herself tall enough to give him a motherly kiss.

“How happy we were !

“That is the picture of the wooden bridge and mountain stream that hangs in my boudoir. If I am tempted to be naughty, I always look at it, and recall the day when I meditated upon death, and found life and love.

“I should deserve to be dead if I did not strive to be worthy of the life and the love.

“In the course of that day it was proposed

that I should go with John to Tillwen Hall, my brother acting as my chaperon.

“My father and mother did not like to pay a visit there before the marriage, as it seemed to them like a prying into his family affairs, which with one so frank was unnecessary.

“Besides, they thought the fewer of my people with me, the sooner I should take to his.

“John was obliged to go to Tillwen, to speak with his uncle about settlements and all arrangements previous to his marriage.

“Tillwen, properly speaking, belonged to John, but he permitted his uncle to live in it, as a sort of quittance against the trouble he had looking after the property while John was a minor.

“But he had another house, which I was to look at, and see if I liked as well.

“No girl ever left home in a happier

frame of mind than I did. I went determined to like my John's people, and I felt it impossible that any misfortune could occur to me when he was by.

“You will easily understand that, of the ordinary lover-like ways, John knew very little. Having told me that I was the first woman he ever loved, and, as far as he could judge, should certainly be the last, he never said another word on the subject.

“But it was evident that I was now mixed up with every other thought and affection. He had taken me into his great heart, and there I was until death parted us. You cannot think what a serenity and calm this gave to my mind. I was not more sure of myself than I was of him. He did not alter any of his habits and ways to please me; he did not sit by me and whisper little fond nothings, he did not disguise an abrupt ‘no,’ if it had to be said more to me than any one else, still

I knew that his happiness was bound up in me. He showed this by a certain uncontrollable restlessness if I was not in the room—by never seeming to lose the perception that I belonged to him, by the constant putting my interest before his own, and regarding me as if I was the most precious thing belonging to him, to which all others must give place.

“He doubled all his uncle’s apportionment of settlements, saying pathetically,

“‘Poor Lizzy will have grief enough, losing me—she must not be poor as well. She must be able to keep her carriage and see a few friends, and all that; she will want comforting, I know.’

“People may laugh at this odd way of thinking, but I think there is something very noble in the thought of the dying comforting themselves with making the living mourn only for the loss of their company, and nothing

else. How sad it is to see the sacredness of grief giving way to the necessities of straitened means; and to know that people, having just lost the being they loved best in the world, must put aside the time for mourning because of the urgent need there is to provide for the common wants of the morrow!

“But this has nothing to do with my story.

“We were met at the door of Tillwen Hall by a very pretty lady; I could not call her a girl, because, though young, she had not the manners of a young person. She was very richly dressed, and had a sort of gossamer veil or cap on her head, which added to her age. She was fair, little, with beautiful auburn hair, and eyes that matched it exactly in colour. Her features were small and delicate, and her teeth beautiful.

“I am rather particular in describing to you my first impressions of her, that you may judge of the sequel.

“She welcomed me so cordially, that she put up her face to kiss me, which was an act of courtesy I was not much in the habit of giving and receiving. Owing to that, perhaps, our cheeks touched and nothing more.

“This was John’s cousin, whom he had described to me as sister.

“I must confess I was glad to see they were only on cousinly terms. This custom of kissing was not extended to him.

“Mr. Philip Joscelyn, her father, was a portly, pompous, rather noisy man. He had a laugh that went through one’s head. Everybody has a something that jars with the rest of the world. His laugh was dreadful, and must have jarred every one.

“His wife was an invalid, and never came downstairs. She was a nice, quiet person, evidently afraid of her daughter, and ashamed of her husband.

“So, you may imagine, my anticipations on seeing John’s relations were cruelly damped.

“Mine is not the first instance of such an occurrence, but I had one great satisfaction—John seemed to be handsomer, franker, more loveable among them than before—that is, his peculiar virtues shone with additional effect from the contrast.

“But my brother fell rather in love with Elise. He said he had never seen any one so delicately pretty in his life, or with such engaging manners.

“Men are so soon taken in, or rather they are soon fooled. I did not want Elise to be my sister-in-law, because I soon saw, if she loved no one else, she did not love my brother. She was merely flirting with him.

“I had not been at Tillwen above a few days, when John said to me,

“‘Lizzy, dear, I am sorry you are so unhappy. Let me take you home again, only

don't drive me away from you, as, if I can help it, I do not mean to lose a single day of your society until you are my wife.'

“ ‘Who said I was unhappy, John?’

“ ‘Eliza; not that she said so as a fact—she merely conjectured it, she said, from seeing you often in tears.’

“ ‘I have not shed a tear since I have been here, and do not feel at all likely to do so.’

“ ‘How glad I am, Lizzy! and how nice it is to feel that whatever you say is the truth!’

“ ‘Your cousin is very pretty, John. Why did you not fall in love with her?’

“ ‘Good heavens! no. I would just as soon marry my grandmother. Besides, Eliza and I should never agree. It is not my business to find fault with her, but if you can get a straightforward answer out of her, I will eat a rhinoceros.’

“ ‘Why should she desire to make you think I was unhappy here?’

“ ‘Heaven knows, for I don’t. I tell myself every day of my life to believe nothing she says, and I go on swallowing every word she utters, as if it was gospel. It’s very ridiculous of me, isn’t it, Lizzy?’

“ ‘No, John; you do so because, being truthful yourself, you think everybody else is. But, if you are ever uneasy about me, come to me, and you shall have the truth, and nothing else.’

“ ‘I know it, Lizzie, and I think it a good plan—one that I won’t forget.’

“After this conversation I began to perceive that Elise, or Eliza, as was her proper name, concealed under a quiet, affected air some great unhappiness; and I also saw that, before long, she meant to confide it to me.

“When that moment came, I was astonished to hear that not only did she love her cousin

John to distraction, but that at one time she had actually been engaged to him. And to prove it, she produced a bundle of letters.

“I did not know his handwriting certainly, for in truth I had never seen him write (he dislikes it, as you all know, to this day). But I was not the less determined that, whether he wrote them or not, I should certainly decline reading them.

“You must understand that Elise was gifted with an eloquence and a plausibility that almost persuaded one against the most thorough conviction. I remember feeling the greatest compassion for her, as she sat before me, wringing her hands, and absolutely groaning with anguish.

“She had very ugly hands; they were broad, and the joints were strangely developed; the fingers were flat, especially at the ends, as if they had been sat upon. Also, as the vehemence of her feelings made her forget

herself, I was surprised to see how much of her beauty depended upon the elegance and extreme nicety of her toilette.

“I have seen girls roughly tossed about by a rude wind, looking all the handsomer and brighter for it.

“Now, as for this poor Elise, wringing her ugly hands, with her little lace head-dress all awry, her hair dishevelled, she was quite an object. She did not present to me the appearance of a fair and lovely creature, so much as a fretful, bony, sickly woman.

“Nevertheless, her grief seemed real.

“‘Read!—read!’ she exclaimed.

“I answered her only by placing the letters on the table.

“‘You refuse—you will not give him up; you would rather I died of grief than that you should be disappointed. You, who have only loved him so short a time, while I—I have loved him from my cradle!’

“I think she must have been four or five years older than John, but that we will not trouble ourselves about. I still made no reply, for, in truth my regard for my own sex was much outraged by her conduct. I had such a love for our dignity and high-mindedness, that, with all my pity, I could not help being a good deal shocked.

“As she raved at me exclaiming:

“‘Will you not give him up? Cannot you see that to lose him is to lose my life? Is there no generosity in your heart?’ I answered at last:

“‘I am afraid I have no more than you have. If one is to be sacrificed, why should it not be the one whom he does not love?’

“‘Not love! Oh! cruel girl, is it thus you mock me? Read those letters—if ever a poor creature was loved to idolatry, I was she. Read—read!’

“‘Never!’ I answered, throwing back the letters as she thrust them upon me; ‘I can ask John to choose between us, and shall be contented whatever his reply; but I will never be so base as to read what was not intended for me to see.’

“‘You will ask John? You will expose me to him? I have confided in you as one girl might confide in another, and you will forget the bond of our sex, and proclaim to the world my weakness?’

“‘I shall do no such thing. I love the honour of my own sex dearly, but I am not going to be frightened out of doing what is right by John.’

“‘And am not I actuated by the same motive? Do I wish him to be miserable evermore, as he must be, knowing he is perjured?’

“‘Hush!’ I answered, now becoming angry, for she seemed less an object of pity than of contempt; ‘we have already spoken of you.

Do not attempt to deceive me or yourself. For what purpose you have invented and acted so foolish a part, I know not, but I feel as sure that you never loved John, as I am equally certain he never loved you.'

"For a moment a sort of spasm crossed her face, but almost immediately after she laughed.

"She smoothed her hair, picked up and put on her little lace head-dress, shook out her dress, and stood before me the little fair, gentle, lady-like woman, who had been the first to welcome me to Tillwen Hall.

"'You are a good child,' she said, calmly. 'I shall tell John, in the morning, what a trial I gave your love for him, and how well you came out of it. Kiss me, my dear—I am now satisfied that you really love him!'

"So saying, she put her cheek against mine, and left the room.

"Now you must not suppose she deluded

me into believing this last most extraordinary statement. That she wished to prevent a marriage between John and myself, was as clear to my senses as it was possible. I supposed that she fancied she could so work upon my feelings—being a young, rather romantic girl—that she would induce me to believe she really loved my intended husband, and that I would promise to give him up. Extracting this promise from me, she would so arrange the affair that John and I should have no opportunity for explanation. I gathered this from what she said, as I have not told you half what occurred.

“But my love for my intended husband was by no means of that flimsy character that I could lightly be bullied into sacrificing his happiness as well as my own. When he asked me if he might kiss his intended wife, and I consented, I felt as solemnly bound to him as if we were already married.

“Altogether, the more I thought upon the conduct of Elise, the more indignant I was with her. I could now very well understand why John never loved her. She was not a woman, but a sort of evil spirit—or she permitted herself to be governed by the most malignant of all human sins, Envy.

“When I came downstairs the next morning, she began a sort of bantering, foolish, false account of her scene with me the evening before, saying:

“‘It was all, my dear John, to prove Elizabeth’s love for you!’

“‘Lizzy’s love for me?’ answered my dear, frank-hearted John. ‘Lizzy’s love is like mine for her—it wants no proof!’

“And his good, kind eyes looked into mine with his whole heart in them.

“Shortly after this I perceived my brother was very uneasy. And, after a time, he told me that he must run home for a few days,

to consult his father upon a matter of importance, and would return in less than a week.

“When he came back he brought my father and mother with him. Much as I rejoiced to see them, they both appeared to be oppressed by some misgiving. Harkening to my mother’s advice, my father at last confided to me that they were all seriously uneasy about some reports that had reached them concerning Mr. Joscelyn’s character. When my brother, acting from a sense of duty, went home and told them what he had heard, my father almost, and my mother entirely, disbelieved him.

“So vivid was their impression of the straightforward and honourable conduct of Mr. Joscelyn, they were for telling him at once of the falseness of the reports, and at the same time assuring him of their unbounded trust in him. But my brother was so earnest; he said his authority was so undeniable, that, in fact, love for himself,

and, through him, for his beloved sister, was the sole motive that actuated his informer, that he must beg them to act with the utmost wariness. Let them return with him to Tillwen Hall, and they would have ample proofs given them of the truth of the reports, and all that would be asked by the informer was, that for the sake of the family nothing should be openly said. Mr. and Mrs. Daintree should quietly take their daughter home, and say they had changed their minds on the subject of her marriage.

“When all this was told me, I felt completely astounded by the wickedness of the plot. My dear mother, shocked at the change in my countenance, folded her arms around me, saying :

“‘My darling, I believe nothing—I trust him as I trust you!’

“I turned and looked at my brother as she said this, and he flushed scarlet, looking also most miserable.

“I went and took his hand, saying—

“‘Elise told you—she is the informer.’

“‘She is.’

“‘She wishes to separate me from John—she wishes to marry him herself.’

“‘God forbid, Lizzy! she is engaged to me.’

“‘But she has begged you not to mention the engagement.’

“‘True; her mother’s health is so precarious; when the warm weather comes——’

“‘My dear boy, we are in the dog-days.’

“‘Very true, my dear mother—I never thought of that; I think I must have misunderstood Elise. But she certainly desires our engagement to be kept a secret.’

“‘A thing in itself much against my liking; you never had occasion to keep anything secret from us before.’

“‘No, father; and when I was so happy as to hear she loved me, my first impulse was to share my joy with you all.’

“ ‘As is the custom of my dear children, I thank God.’

“ ‘You must forgive me if I pain you, my dear brother, but Elise’s mother told me she was engaged to Mr. —; she was in love with, and going to marry that young gentleman who went away soon after our arrival.’

“ ‘Oh, no, Lizzy! she told me herself he was only a boy, in whom she was interested.’

“ ‘Mrs. Philip Joscelyn spoke positively of the fact.’

“ ‘I must believe you, Lizzy, though I may doubt her—mothers are so apprehensive.’

“ ‘Will you, at all events, be guided by my advice as regards the reports Elise mentioned to you?’

“ ‘Certainly; my father and mother have already extracted this promise from me, in justice to you.’

“ ‘Then pray tell Elise that my father and mother, finding my happiness depends upon my

marriage with John, decline investigating the reports, but will let bygones be bygones.'

" 'But, Lizzy, that is impossible. They are so infamous.'

" 'Then they are, of course, false. Can you look at my dear John, and couple such a word with his name?'

" 'We cannot,' said my father and mother, simultaneously.

" 'And I cannot,' murmured my brother, as if reluctantly.

" 'I ask you to say those words to Elise, more as an experiment than anything else. I feel sure you will be satisfied when you see the effect upon her.'

" 'I will do as you wish. Though I have asked Elise to be my wife, I love you too well, Lizzy, not to sacrifice my happiness to yours.'

" 'Thank you, brother; I cannot help hoping that you will felicitate yourself upon the result, as much for your own sake as mine.'

“ ‘I know you do not wish to pain me, Lizzy; but if your faith in John proves correct, I must suffer a very serious blow.’

“ ‘I think it will not prove so serious as you expect. Our father and mother have taught us to love Virtue above all things, and there can be no real love unless she is the foundation of it.’

“ ‘Ah! Lizzy, all the talking in the world cannot sooth over a disappointment in love. I have had an aching heart for you all this week, and something tells me I am but anticipating my own case.’

“ ‘Then I will suffer with you, and for you.’

“ ‘As shall we also,’ said my father and mother.

“ ‘Thanks! thanks! I could desire no better sympathisers. It seems to me as if I must trust John to the full as much as you all do. But what am I to think of——’. He could say no more.

“Rejoiced as I was to see that my brother could not resist the conviction of John’s innocence arising out of the force of his own character, I was much concerned at his evident grief.

“I hoped that, on becoming better acquainted with the real nature of Elise, the knowledge would cure him of all love for her. But her duplicity and art, which made her so hateful in my eyes, assumed that plausible, wheedling, coaxing form that men are unable to contend against.

“So astonishing was her power, that instead of betraying herself, as I hoped she would on hearing that my father and mother declined investigating the matter, she turned the whole thing to her own advantage.

“My brother came to us more infatuated than ever, more alarmed for me, more indignant about John, than he had been before.

“He solemnly assured my father that he had been shewn letters that it was a positive disgrace for any gentleman to have written.

“‘How came they into the possession of Elise?’ I asked.

“‘They were sent to her by persons who know and love her. She has not read them, of course, herself.’

“‘But they do not know or love me. Why are they so interested in my welfare?’

“‘Lizzy argues well; what motives have these people to break off the marriage? Have they been injured by Mr. Joscelyn?’

“‘That I cannot tell. I only read two, they were addressed to a woman!’

“‘They were not written by John.’

“‘If they are such as you describe, I agree with Lizzy.’

“My poor brother turned from one to the other, quite in despair.

“‘When I am with Elise, I feel the hottest indignation against John. When I am with you, I think him injured.’

“‘Has Elise consented to your engagement with her being known?’

“‘I told her, of course, that you all knew it.’

“‘Has she told her own father and mother?’

“‘No, she is most urgent that they should not be told at present.’

“‘Waiting for warmer weather, eh? Well, tell her from me, when she comes to claim my fatherly salute, as an intended daughter-in-law, I will listen to what she has to say. Meantime, I think John the best son-in-law any father could desire.’

“‘I need not tell you how I thanked my father.

“‘And now, listen how simply this terrible business was unravelled and blown away like

smoke, and all unconsciously done by John himself.

“It was on the very next day, we being all seated at breakfast, when, earlier than usual, the post came in.

“‘Ha! ha!’ said John, who sometimes, I must confess, laughed almost as loud as his uncle, ‘here is another mysterious letter for me. I always forget to show them to you, Lizzy, that we may laugh at them together. I conclude they are from some poor wretch whom you have rejected. They show you up most uncommonly.’

“‘Anonymous, of course?’ asked my father.

“‘Oh! yes, so I lit my cigar with the first, without reading it. Catching Lizzy’s name in the second, I read it. I only wish the writer had been near, how I roared over it! The fellow had the impudence to say Lizzy was a flirt! I wished he had been within reach of my little finger at that moment. Only his

consummate folly in thinking I should believe him, made me laugh. Now, Lizzy, my dear, come and read this with me, for you may be sure you are shewn up in it.'

"It was, as he said, a tirade against me, warning him, as he valued his future happiness, not to marry me. And it wound up with a solemn peroration as to 'what would be his fate if he did; finally, ending with the declaration that this was the last time the writer should trouble himself on the subject—the last caution that would be sent.

"'Poor fellow!' said John, 'he has taken a deal of trouble for nothing. I wish he had done the proper thing and put his name to the letter; we would have had him down here, uncle, and made him best man!—Ha! ha! good heavens! the folly of people!'

"'Let me look at the letter?' asked my father. 'See,' he continued to my brother, 'the handwriting is much the same.'

“‘It is,’ said my brother.

“‘He has a letter in his pocket purporting to be written by you—’

“‘No, no!’ shrieked Elise; ‘give it me!—give it me!’

“But as for escaping out of John’s hands, once prisoner in them, that was impossible. He not only held her, but read the letter within an inch of her grasp. Then, as he finished it, he gave it her, saying:

“‘Take your letter, and take this, and go up to your mother. One has not the face to be angry with gnats that bite, but’ (here he looked steadily at her) ‘you know what I can tell, so take your warning, and that for the last time.’

“She fled like a ghostly mouse, and we did not see her again; in fact, we went home the next day.”

“What a horrible—what a shameless creature!” said Mrs. Spooner.

“I pity her!” said Clara with her grand air.

“And I wonder what has become of her?”
added Kate.

“She is married,” replied her aunt.

“Married? Gracious heavens! how I pity the man! But how fortunate that you both trusted each other so much!”

“My belief is that half the misunderstandings that occur in the world arise from want of frankness, or trust in each other. But as regards this unfortunate Elise, all her efforts were of so clumsy a sort, I should have been ashamed of myself to be taken in by them. She was not skilful enough. That was a fatal mistake, only having one sort of feigned handwriting. In addition to which, she was not actuated by the finer motive of love, she was only moved by envy, consequently her subtlety and invention were more despicable than great. I am always low whenever I think of her. She was so unwomanly.”

“Did your brother grieve much?”

“Oh! no; it was just as I said, he was so horrified, that his love turned to disgust at once.”

“And what was it Mr. Joscelyn could tell against her?”

“I do not know; he has never told me.”

“What! did you not ask him?”

“No. I would not ask to know that which he did not tell me of his own accord.”

“Well, that was very good of you. She was a shocking creature, doubtless!”

“Pitiful!” said Clara.

“Hateful!” echoed Kate.

“If she had been here with us, what mischief she would have made!”

“We must have hoisted the flag to be rid of her.”

“Thank goodness, no chance of hoisting that flag now!”

“The sea is going down so steadily, that I

think we may look for the boat to-morrow."

"I hear from my friends, in last week's letters, that Rampton is on the *qui vive* for our return. They hope and pray that we shall win, but they think we shall be almost dead with fatigue and privation."

"We must give a ball, to show ourselves off, I think; for I hope we shall look so blooming as to be complimented."

"If it had not been for that dreadful storm, I never should have felt better; but I am sadly pulled down by fright and exhaustion."

"We must nurse you up, Arabella, for the next few days. I cannot have any of my party look ill!"

"Before we go to bed, do, my dear aunt, tell me if I shall ever see Elise?"

"You have seen her often."

"I! how? Is such a creature admitted into society?"

"Yes. Why not? One must not expect all

the world to take up one's private dislikes and quarrels. I know people that think her the most charming woman in existence."

"Oh! Mrs. Joscelyn, you should warn them?"

"It is useless, Arabella. Elise soon warns people herself. She and her husband (he is very like her) go from town to town—from county to county; they meet with kindness, hospitality, and love, which they requite in the only fashion they know—which I leave you to guess. And, if you guess rightly, you will easily imagine they never stay long anywhere."

"Do they ever visit you?"

"Oh! no; John would rather invite a pair of boa-constrictors to dine with him."

CHAPTER II.

PUFF! PUFF!

WE left our dear Puffs rejoicing in the anticipation of having a good cook.

The Squire rose, after an indifferent night passed upon two chairs, in good spirits notwithstanding.

“I regard,” said he to his fellow-sufferer, Spooner, who had bivouacked in a corner of the room, and seemed so comfortable he had no inclination to rise—“I regard that fellow Scruttles as one entire falsehood from head to foot. I doubt even if his name is Scruttles. I hated the sight of him; and why I was

such a blockhead as to give him five shillings, is beyond my comprehension."

"I doubt," mumbled Spooner, from under a mass of great-coats, "if he was well brought up. From his very infancy I fancy his psychological structure was weak in resisting temptation."

"Doubt anything you like—the place has a different aspect to me now he has gone. I am off for my bath, Spooner; and don't forget we want this room for breakfast. I will open the doors and windows at once."

Which was so effectually done by the Squire, Mr. Spooner made a merit of necessity, and rose from his lair. Indeed the saloon was now the Temple of Eolus.

He was gravely consulting his whiskers as to which shooting-coat he should put on, when he heard a shout.

The shout was the shout of the Squire!

Was he taken with the cramp, and drowning?

Mr. Spooner good-naturedly put off the question about his coat, and ran out just as he was to his assistance. He was joined by all the others, as a shout from the Squire was no joke.

They were rejoiced to see he was not only on *terra firma*, but nothing the matter with him, except a fit of excitement.

“The boat!—the boat!” he shouted again, though they were close at hand; “and, by Jove! there is a woman in it!”

“A woman!”

“A female!”

“A lady!”

“I don’t know which—but ’tis something with a bonnet on.”

“Arabella, perhaps, come for me.”

“It is not Elizabeth—the bonnet is too

large. There!—there!—now you can see it!”

“Suppose Muggs has sent us a woman-cook!” observed Frank, calmly.

“By heavens!” said Spooner, who the smaller the circumstance the more largely apostrophised it. “Muggs has sent us a woman cook!”

“She shall not land here!” growled Crab, who this morning had a purple hue over his nob of a nose, and was altogether in a saturnine and gloomy mood.

“We must have a cook!” said the Squire.

“But if she lands here we lose the challenge!”

The Squire stood as if transfixed into stone. In about a minute he rallied sufficiently to walk towards the house.

Presently he returned.

“I must have my bedding out of the boat, whatever happens!”

“I will take care of that, for mine is coming too.”

How the important affair was arranged with the lady in the large bonnet, the Squire never inquired.

He heard shrill tones, that had a sound in them of an appeal for mercy, by which he inferred the digestion of the woman-cook had been much disturbed by her voyage, and she desired to land and die!

This modest request was of course refused by King Crab. If she meant dying, it was quite as easy to do the business on board the boat as on shore.

So, after a brief bobbing up and down on the inexorable waves, while the bedding and stores were landed, the bonnet and its owner departed the way they came, and, as King Crab grimly announced—“The shores of Puff are unpolluted!”

In default of other help, the Squire was

girt with one of Sam's aprons, and sat down to shell peas.

He was very persevering, and in spite of the skipping propensities of the pea tribe on being released from their cells, he contrived to show a good dishful at the end of an hour and a half.

"I shall never eat peas again," said he, "without thinking of the poor kitchen-maid. What hard work it is!" wiping his brow.

Sam made a noise as if he intended to laugh, but strangled the inclination at the same moment, out of respect.

The Squire demanded an explanation,

"The girls be fond of pea-shelling; they sits and chats, and shell a'most as fast as they tongues go. And if they gets a boy to 'elp, why, there is fun!"

The Squire did not see how there could be any fun in it. He went to offer further help, and found Spooner with his eyes nearly

burnt out of his head, and his face like raw beef, stirring some compound over the fire.

“Don’t, Squire, don’t come near me—I am at the crisis!”

“Why, your whiskers are on fire!”

“No!” exclaimed the unhappy Spooner, dropping pan and spoon, and clutching hold of those beloved appendages, and drawing them within range of sight.

The Squire, though mischievous, was alive to any *contretemps* in the cooking line; so he caught pan and spoon just in time.

“Oh!—oh! you are stirring the wrong way, Squire; it will never thicken now.

But it did.

Finding he was more in the way than not, the Squire betook himself to the look-out, and was gratified by perceiving the boat again on its way to them. He strode down to impart the news.

“Any bonnets?” asked King Crab, who was

suffering from rheumatism in the left shoulder (he said), and was nursing it over the fire.

“No, not a bit of ribbon.”

Again the Squire departed, and again returned.

“It appears to me as if two cooks were coming.”

“You see double,” said the Captain, with a feeble smile.

The Squire left without an answer, and in five minutes rushed in, breathless and excited.

“It is that beast Scruttles!—he shall not land!”

“Why should he not?” answered Crabshawe, who suddenly revived on hearing his “excellent convict” was at hand. His rheumatic attack was, after all, only the effect of moping for Scruttles.

“If he lands, I go back in the boat!”

“He has probably only come for his clothes and wages,” interposed Sir George.

“Wages! I gave him five shillings, and that’s just about five shillings more than he is worth. Well, I shall go off with my gun until he has had what he wants, and is gone again. I hate the sight of the fellow!”

It was truly the “excellent convict,” more abject, more hideous, more beggarly than ever. He “’umbly begged parding,” and tried very hard to be restored to favour.

“Wages were no objec’, leastways, it were a pleasure and a satishfagtion to serve such noble gents for nuffin. He were aware has he were much to blame a-making sich a beastus of hissself, but he were tuk o’ the suddin, and if it were but a drop, it impozed on his ’ed immediate.”

Of course, King Crab would have forgiven him at once, but the others represented that the wrath of the Squire was not a thing to be lightly encountered.

Having promised himself to go home in the

boat if Scruttles remained, he would doubtless keep the promise. The nerve Opinium was in full possession at present of the Squire's physique.

So, greatly to the discomfiture of the repentant Scruttles, he was hustled off back again to the boat. Not, however, without a bundle of clothes that was truly surprising.

Frank was not at hand to investigate its contents; in fact, he was looking everywhere for a couple of chickens that, but a short time before, he had placed on the kitchen-table.

Finding that he really was to go, Scruttles had skipped off pretty nimbly to the boat with his bundle, and was half-way home again before the idea struck Frank that the missing fowls made part of that bundle of clothes.

There was no help for it.

But the troubles of our gentlemen were not at an end.

The new cook, instead of cooking the dinner,

sat down in the midst of his kitchen and tore his hair.

It was at this juncture that the Squire returned to the house.

“What a ’ole!” exclaimed the new cook; “where’s my hoven?—my ’ot closet?—my digester?—my braising pans?—my frying barsket?—’ow ham hi to cook with nothink ’andy?”

Fortunately the Squire knew the man; he had employed him at Deep-Cliffs more than once. Also, formerly, he had lived with Sir George, and was not without hopes of living with him again. So, finding it to be worth his while to make some exertion towards preparing a dinner even out of “nothink,” he ceased tearing his hair, and proceeded to make the best of what he had.

Extremes meeting, by the time dinner was over, and he had been complimented upon his skill, he was now as eager to make the best of

everything as the most confirmed Puffite among them.

“But,” said he confidentially to his masters, who had summoned him to receive their thanks in a body for some first-rate coffee, “hi ’ope you will hallow me, gentlemen, to send fur a few necessaries. The sosses his by no means the sosses has hi patronise. I wants a ’am or two for gravies, some cooking hutensils, larding pins, ha paste cutter, and various trifles as makes cooking a hart, gentlemen.”

“Of course, of my good fellow, you shall have whatever you require,” vouched the Squire.

“What do you mean by that, sir?”

“Crab, my dear fellow, I mean no harm. I mean what I say, he shall have what he wants, it is due to the man.”

“I say he shall not.”

King Crab had been very thirsty all day, and had tried so many ways of quenching that thirst, the rheumatism seemed to have

been drawn from his shoulder into his brain.

The Squire good-naturedly said no more, and, upon sleep taking happy possession of King Crab's wandering wits, word was sent to the new cook to make a list of his requirements, and they should be sent for on the morrow, when the boat was coming with the London post and newspapers.

The gentlemen had had their rubber, they were now indulging in their last pipe. King Crab was still sleeping the sleep of the thirsty, when the list of the new cook's wants was brought in.

It was composed, spelt, and written under the joint amount of learning possessed by the cook and Sam. It was a portentous document, and the very first item posed all the readers.

“Skores! what are skores? I never heard of anything like skores being cooked!”

They sent for an explanation, and were

pleased to find "skores" was an original way of spelling "skewers."

Isinglass was another item totally incomprehensible, and twelve dozen eggs made into one word, with very few of the proper letters, was as mystical to our four gentlemen as High Dutch might be.

"By Jove!" said Spooner, as they toiled down the list, "if we get all these things, it will be a matter of fifty pounds."

"Do you think so?" said the Squire anxiously.

"I will put a sort of price to each thing, and cast it up when we have done. But, hullo! what is this, the end of all?"

They all eagerly looked, and all exclaimed almost with one voice,

"A kitchen-maid!—spelt 'cinching made.'"

"That's impossible, you know," was the next exclamation.

"What a lucky thing Crab is asleep!"

“I am not asleep—I haven’t been asleep at all!”

“That is lucky, as we are all just off to bed.”

Frank having undertaken to curtail the cook’s wants, and to express to him the utter impossibility of obtaining the last item, the “cinching made,” the party separated and went to bed.

The next morning the Squire was busy cleaning his gun, when the news came that the boat had arrived.

“Bring me my letters, please,” said he; “I am too busy to come myself.”

He was just putting the finishing stroke to the operation, highly satisfied with the manner in which he had done it, when there smote upon his ear a sound that made him believe himself bewitched, or, as he described it, “bedeviled.”

“Axing yer parding, sir, yer honour, I

'umbly opes yer honour's well in 'elth, sir."

"Scruttles—you——"

"It be poor Scruttles, sir, yer honour. I missed seeing yer noble honour yesterday, I be cum to hax yer parding, sir, yer honour."

In spite of himself, there was something so forlornly abject and miserable about the "excellent convict," the Squire had not the heart to say a rough word to him

"Did you get your wages yesterday?"

"I didn't go fur to luik for wages, axing yer honour's parding. I 'umbly begs forgiveness. I were so lonely, please yer honour, I were a-feared."

"Make no more excuses; I forgive you. Now get along, and go home with you."

"I will, yer honour; and I 'umbly thanks yer honour. I 'avent a 'ome, or a bite, or a sup, but leastways I thank yer honour for luiking hover my faults, yer——"

“Here, go along, and take these five shillings. Don’t let me see your face again at Puff, or I’ll have you sent off to jail.”

The Squire felt himself under the necessity to use this threat, in order to cover the weakness which made him send another five shillings after the first five.

He had an inward conviction he was doing a foolish thing, consequently he shouldered his newly-cleaned gun, and marched off for a solitary war against the gulls. He felt he could not face his companions with his usual bold front, conscious of having done a silly thing. When he rejoined them, he found the boat was expected again the next morning, with the modified list of the cook’s wants, and a boy to act as kitchen-maid.

The cook again so distinguished himself, that he was again summoned, as before, to receive the public thanks of the Puffites after dinner.

“When hi ’as my maid, vich hi ’ear his to be a boy, then, gentlemen, you shall see what you shall see.”

“Can you make us a cream or two?—something in the confectionary line, I mean?” asked Spooner.

“Ho! yes, sir.”

“And *entrées*?—and *entremets*?”

“Ho! yes, Sir George.”

“A beefsteak-pudding, I fancy?”

“Ho! yes, Squire.”

“I daresay you cannot give me a basin of gruel now?”

“Ho! yes, Capting.”

King Crab was, without any doubt, very unwell. Not only was his complexion of a colour bordering upon shades of green yellow, mixed with neutral tints, but he was incapable of saying a civil word to anyone of his subjects.

• He snarled at the Squire, scoffed at Sir

George, growled at Spooner, and was absolutely rude to Frank.

They were lenient towards him, and only went near him when obliged.

On Wednesday morning, about ten o'clock, the gentlemen being all upstairs making their beds, they heard their King discoursing in so cheerful a voice, they were one and all surprised.

Had he suddenly become so much better that he was enabled to speak cheerfully to Sam, or exchange an amiable sentiment with the cook?—two people whose names he would not suffer over-night to be mentioned in his presence—the hearing them seeming to make his rheumatism worse.

“Who were you talking to just now, Crab?” asked the Squire over the banisters.

“To the new kitchen-maid,” was the surprising answer.

“So the boat has come? Well, I am only going to empty the basin out of the window, and I will be down to see her.”

The unconscious Squire strode down the stairs, across the saloon, through the corridor, and was met face to face at the kitchen door by Scruttles, begirt with an apron.

“I be cum, axing yer honour’s parding, has kitchen-maid!”

The Squire said not a word, but turned on his heel, remarched through the corridor, across the saloon, up to his room, and began to open his drawers, and pull out his portmanteau.

“Gracious heavens! Squire, what is the matter?”

“Scruttles has come back as kitchen-maid—I am going home.”

“But how will you get home?”

“True; where is the boat?—perhaps it is not gone too far.”

He ran for his life, snatching up the first

thing at hand as a signal flag. It was his own night-shirt, consequently of a good size.

The boat, though a mile on its way home, caught the sound of the Squire's shout coming across the water, and, beholding the energetic waving of the night-shirt, obeyed the signal, and returned. Meantime horror and dismay fell upon the rest of the Puffites. They had passed the half, and the worst half, of the important month; they had become accustomed to their lives; they were feeling imbued with the hope of triumph. To have endured so much for nothing, with the prospect of having nothing but pleasure for the rest of the time, was too much to forego.

Even Sir George joined in the chorus, and exclaimed—

“For Heaven's sake, don't let us lose the challenge for a beast like Scruttles!”

King Crab felt, and it entered like iron into his soul, that he must obey the voice of the

multitude. Not that the Squire formed part of that multitude; he was in his own room packing his trunk.

King Crab did not know whether this lofty disdain of any argument, of the common right of speech, was as much to his mind as if the Squire had thundered into him a torrent of invective, which might give the Captain an opportunity of bombarding him with some heavy artillery of upbraiding and satire.

Before he had made up his mind, Scruttles was once more handed into the boat, and Frank hastened with lively steps to assure the Squire he was gone, and personally to assist in restoring his wardrobe to its proper place. The Squire made no outward demonstration of his relief than by the usual sigh out of his capacious breast, which was of such volume, it blew from its perch on the looking-glass Mr. Spooner's Sunday necktie into the Squire's big washing-basin.

But he looked out of the window, and caught

a glimpse of the retreating Scruttles, who, standing upright in the boat, seemed to be apostrophising Puff with defiance and hatred.

“I declare the fellow is angry!” quoth the Squire, quite pleased.

“Oh! yes—he showed his true colours, I can tell you,” answered Frank, “when he found he really was to go. His language was dreadful, and I have no doubt, had he an opportunity, he would no more mind putting us ‘by,’ than I should killing this wasp.”

“What do you mean, Frank, by putting us by?”

“Did you not hear of his handsome offer to me, confidentially made, over some soup we were concocting together? ‘Sir, Mr. Summers,’ says he, ‘I have that respec, sir, Mr. Summers, for yes, that hif so be has you wants hanyone put by, I wull do it handsome.’ That is, if I had an enemy, Scruttles would kindly shoot him for me.”

“The wretch!” but the Squire had no time for more—there were sounds of wailing below.

They were from the cook. Nowhere could he find his larded sweetbreads, all prepared for cooking; not a sign to be discovered of a beautiful dish of cutlets to be served with sauce *à la Tartare!*

Frank thought he had been very clever in seeing that Scruttles had departed without a bundle—empty-handed; but he forgot that he might have pockets!

On Thursday morning the day broke grey and austere; a hollow murmur from the sea spoke of some inward commotion disturbing its lowest depths. The birds flew as if scared or seeking shelter. Nature seemed scarcely to breathe, lest she should awaken some convulsion.

Four of the gentlemen had gone to meet the boat, that was bringing them some more

necessaries—as well as the boy who was to act as kitchen-maid.

If there should chance to be any sign of the ubiquitous Scruttles, they were there all ready to prevent his landing.

Much to their secret surprise, he was not. In his place sat a nice-looking, rosy-faced, good-humoured boy.

They were, however, so far justified in their fears, that Scruttles had made an attempt to come as one of the crew; but the two boatmen had positively refused his offer of taking an oar.

“It is brewing up dirty weather,” said one of them, “so the housekeeper at Deep-Cliffs has sent her master a few extrays. It may be as we can’t get over for a day or two. We told that fellow we darsn’t bring him for our lives.”

So the gentlemen saw the boat depart with feelings much akin to those they experienced

on their first arrival at Puff. Once more they were about to be cut off from intercourse with the world.

But they had this advantage—they knew what they had to expect. They had experienced what it was to be left to themselves—dependent on each other for everything. To their own honour be it recorded, they were not alarmed at the prospect. On the contrary, they returned to their king and their palace, whistling and singing, in the gayest of spirits.

“Let us be off and have an hour or two’s shooting, before the rain comes on,” suggested the Squire.

King Crab, tired of his own company, decided to accompany them, though he shivered and shook as if in an ague.

The day grew darker and more grim—the wind began to blow in great gusts—the sea moaned with a sullen roar. Sharp scuds of

rain came slanting downwards, making our gentlemen turn hastily homewards, and then ceasing, as if by magic, just as they had gone a few yards.

Frank ran up to the look-out, and anxiously gazed at Luff in the distance.

Sir George followed him.

“How like a great evil demon that black cloud lies just over Luff, Frank! He seems lying flat in the sky; his huge shoulders and folded arms encircling that round bit that will do for his head; and two openings in it that are like two demon eyes glowering down.”

“Yes; that cloud has taken a curious, horrid shape. I am a little alarmed for them at Luff. The house is so frail, and these summer storms are often so violent.”

“If it is a bad storm we shall have to go over in the boat, and see if they require assistance.”

“So we must, George—that is a very good idea.”

“Here comes another storm! I think it is as well we cut home, Frank.”

They met the other gentlemen at the door of their palace. King Crab looking bluer and uglier for his wetting.

And now occurred an incident that ought to be recorded, and which the gentlemen, when they read these lines, should blush as they read.

They turned into the kitchen merely to exchange a friendly word with the cook—to smell if they could what was preparing for dinner; and to learn how the new kitchen-maid performed her duties. They were all smoking vigorously.

The cook, the amiable cook, instead of receiving them as usual with a benevolent smile, flew at them, anger flashing from his eye, the basting-pin flourishing in his hand, like the most deadly of weapons.”

“Hout!—hout!” he exclaimed, in a peremptory and disrespectful manner. “Don’t ye cum ’ere a-smoking and segarring, and a-flavouring of my creams and confectionary with yer nasty tibaccar! Hout!—hout! I say!”

And out they went, quickly, meekly, hurriedly, like a parcel of naughty school-boys.

Were they driven in that rude manner from a certain dining-room for smoking?

Were they not asked by a sweet, a beseeching voice, accompanied by a smile that only a brute could behold unmoved, to refrain from smoking in that beautiful and fresh dining-room?

They remembered nothing about it. Indeed, so far from resenting this rude and peremptory prohibition to smoke, the Squire said when out of hearing:

“Now that is a fellow I like; he is particu-

lar. I can fancy the flavour of tobacco, in such delicate things as creams and jellies, not good—in fact, nasty. I am glad he turned us out. I shall take care, now, never to go into the kitchen with my cigar lighted.”

Oh! Squire Joscelyn, did no good spirit whisper in your ear, that an odour of tobacco, of smoked and stale tobacco, in a sweet and elegant room, was as unsuited to it as to creams and jellies? Did nothing prompt you to remember how unjust you were to Mrs. Joscelyn in that matter? No, nothing of the sort seemed to twinge the Squire's conscience. He dressed for dinner, whistling most of the time, and, when he was not whistling, singing. He did not even seem to think of the storm, which now began to rage.

“The house at Puff was not only much better built than that at Luff, but was sheltered by the great cliff that formed part of its chambers and walls. In fact, the flashes

of lightning and the pealing of the thunder alone made them conscious of its violence; and but for the anxiety that began to grow in their minds as to how the ladies were likely to fare, they cared nothing for the storm.

They struggled up to the look-out on Friday, but though drenched to the skin, they were not rewarded for their pains by being permitted the slightest glimpse of Luff.

As mentioned before, it seemed as if the sea had gone up into the clouds, or, at all events, as if ocean and heaven were all massed together.

The time appeared to hang heavily with these amiable "Lords." The journal was scrawled about with every conceivable conceit. There was a picture of the Squire sleeping on a chair. It could almost be said you saw the snore coming out of his open lips in a bodily shape. There was a group of four people at

whist—time marked below as four o'clock in the afternoon. Then this same party was taken again in different places—time marked, "Two o'clock; just had luncheon." Once more were these famous whist-players depicted, and underneath was written, "Eleven o'clock; breakfast just over!" Thus it may be inferred the game of whist formed their chief solace and occupation.

There were many illustrations of the crab tribe in the journal; almost all these having a remarkable likeness to a human face, which face was by no means handsome. Some wore crowns over their bead-like eyes; some had their claws bound up, with the remark, "A crab with the rum-atics!" One larger, more hideous than the rest was so unfortunate as to appear to be suffering from the tooth-ache. Crab though he was, encased in a good stout shell, agony was visible in his expressive stomach—for that did part duty for a face

—and every claw seemed convulsed with pain.

There were many receipts written down of those dishes that pleased them most during this lamentable time. As for adventures, they had none to tell. Even that learned professor, Spooner, had used up all the hard words he possessed, and had interlined, altered, and corrected his sonnet to the moon, so that there was no possibility of making head or tail of it. He is even at a loss, himself, to know what he meant to say in the second and ninth lines.

It may be as well to give, at this time, that excellent receipt for a breakfast pâté, promised to the public, and my dear reader, some little time back, and obtained from the housekeeper at Deep-Cliffs as a prodigious favour :

Breakfast Pâté.

“ A light-coloured calf’s liver cut into pieces about an inch square; cut the same quantity

of fat and lean bacon; a small piece of butter; small quantities of salt, pepper, spice, parsley, and shalot, chopped fine; fry all these together gently over a slow fire, stirring the ingredients constantly.

“When thoroughly done, drain off the fat, and put the foregoing into a mortar, and pound it well; season it highly. Bone and skin the game; cut it into pieces; lay it on the bottom of a stew-pan, with a little butter under it to make it firm; do not let it get brown. When sufficiently done, season with cayenne, salt, a little clove, allspice, and black pepper. Put a layer of the force-meat or pounded mixture on the bottom of a pâté dish, then a layer of game, and so on, until the dish is full. The upper layer must be force-meat. Put the dish into a stew-pan of water on the fire, to steam for two or three hours, according to the size of the dish.

“When done, press it round with a spoon,

and flatten it close; have ready some clarified butter; pour on sufficient to penetrate all through it.

“When cold, run lard over the top.

“Chicken, turkey, rabbit, make this pâté almost, if not quite, as good as game.

“It will keep some time.”

On Saturday, the third day of the storm, the rheumatism that had been flying about King Crab's frame, settling like a swarm of wasps, first on one knee, then on the back of his neck, down to the other knee, up again to the left shoulder-blade, now seemed to have taken entire possession of his whole body.

That disregard for a superfluity of raiment in which he had prided himself on first coming to Puff, was, no doubt, praiseworthy. But it had its inconveniences. He was not able to change his garments as often as prudence required. This, probably, was the real secret of his rheumatic pains, added to which (though

this is confided to the reader in strictest confidence), he really was too old to rough it. Not so much, perhaps, in point of years, as that his blood did not flow in that genial and healthy manner that enables a man to take liberties with his constitution, and yet not injure it.

Captain Crabshawe's temperament was of that bilious, sluggish sort, it was wholly incapable of throwing off a chill by its own efforts. He had no more warmth in him than a moon-beam on a December night.

He thought to remove the chill out of his marrow by constant potations of hot brandy and water. This remedy upset the economy of his liver, so that he really was nearly as ill as he felt.

On this Saturday evening, moved by his complaints, Frank improvised a sofa for him in the saloon.

Though he was too ill to eat any dinner,

Spooner assured him cheerfully that he would be amused seeing them enjoy theirs.

It is our painful duty to record, it afforded him no amusement whatever. On the contrary his pains and aches seemed to increase the more hilarious they became.

Of all the remedies that past generations have invented and immortalised as a cure for melancholy, megrims, dumps, and vapours, none appear so effectual as a good dinner. Our four friends ate and drank, enjoyed every dish, and toasted each other with an utter disregard of the weather, and a most unfeeling indifference to the state of King Crab's bones.

He refrained from demanding too much sympathy while they dined, from an inward conviction it would be useless to ask it. But when they arose from the table of feasting, only to return to the table of whist, it was too aggravating. Not the most ailing woman that ever

existed, with her nerves all vibrating in a state of agonised sensitiveness, ever longed for and demanded sympathy with a keener relish, than this gallant upholder of male superiority.

Thus, not a single deal was played in peace. If his friends did not feel his bodily pains as acutely as himself, at all events they should share the dolour they gave him.

The Squire good-naturedly got up once or twice and attempted the office of nurse, in adjusting his cushions, but his elephantine touches made the sensitive invalid bawl for mercy.

Sir George went upstairs and brought him his pet novel, into the third volume of which he was himself deeply plunged.

Spooner and Frank took it by turns to recommend him all the remedies that ever were heard of.

Failing to ease his pains, mentally or bodily, and the Squire becoming too confused with all

these interruptions to go on playing, they all simultaneously recommended a good dose of bed to the unfortunate Captain.

“Between the blankets, you know, Crab,” suggested Spooner.

“I always sleep between blankets,” was the surly answer.

“A basin of hot gruel when you are in bed.”

“Poison !”

“A dose of physic.”

“Pah !”

“By-the-bye, has anyone got any physic ?”

“Not I,” quoth the Squire. “Elizabeth doses me, if I want dosing.”

“What does she give you ?” asked the Captain eagerly.

“I have no more idea, my dear Crab, than an unborn babe. I take what she gives me, and ask no questions.”

“And does it do you good?”

“Of course, I am always as well as a trout the next day.”

“Query, why trout?” asked Spooner, with his philological eye turned on the Squire.

“Oh! lor, don’t ask me—say salmon, it’s all the same; I don’t understand the difference.”

The next day being Sunday, his subjects strongly recommended King Crab to try the effect of a whole day in bed. He acquiesced.

He was the more amenable to their advice, because he knew it would be a very dull day for them downstairs. The Squire would, probably, suggest some prayers, which, in the present state of the Captain’s nerves, he felt would add to his ailments; there would be alternate hours for literature, eating, and sleep. But as for whist, or any amusement of that sort, of course the day forbade it. So, as his sub-

jects could not enjoy any great hilarity downstairs, the Captain was content that they should indulge their weariness without him. They might be as melancholy as they pleased, but they were not to have any amusement unless he was by to share it as best he could. At first they were all very attentive to him, taking it in turns to run up and tell him all the news.

The Squire informed him what was likely to be for dinner, but his voice was so loud, and his ways so restless, that the invalid declared he made his head ache.

Spooner crept into the sick-room, with creaking shoes and whispering voice, detailing, in murmured tones, how beautifully the clouds were being swept from the vault of heaven by a resistless power, and how delighted they all were to perceive the soft message or token of the ladies' safety after the storm; for, with the help of a glass, they had the satisfaction

of perceiving smoke issuing from every chimney in the Palace of Luff. After one or two of these friendly visits the invalid was moved by his pains and cramps to tell the amiable Spooner he hated the sight of his face, as he always left the door open after him.

Sir George alone declined to go near him, on the plea that he might be sickening of an infectious fever.

Therefore, on Frank, at last, devolved the whole business of nursing this prostrate monarch. He soothed him, condoled with him, brought him broth tea and jelly; never mentioned the good dinner preparing below, shut the door carefully after him, and bore all the little spits of temper with unfailing good humour.

They got through the day pretty well.

Monday, they were enabled to shoot and enjoy themselves out of doors.

The invalid still remained in bed; Frank returned about four o'clock, to see if he required anything, or thought of rising. While he was endeavouring to amuse King Crab with an account of their day's sport, Sam put his nose in at the door, and said,

“Please, Mr. Summers, you're wanted to take a hand until dinner-time, as the gentlemen have comed back.”

“Unfeeling, heartless lot!” murmured King Crab; “you are my only consolation, Frank, and they take you from me! I may be dying—I am dying!”

“No, no; not the slightest fear of that; you are a little low and moped, nothing more.”

“Why don't they come here and play whist?—it might amuse me a little to see them—oh!—oh! my poor bones!—that is, if anything can amuse me.”

“I will ask them, Crabshawe. I feel sure they will do everything to oblige you.”

The amiable Frank was deceived.

The three gentlemen strongly objected to afford Captain Crabshawe even this mild, second-hand sort of amusement.

“I shall not be able to attend to my game, if he keeps groaning all the time,” said the Squire.

“And he distinctly told me to my face he hated the sight of me,” remonstrated Spooner, while he reddened with anger at the recollection.

“We are mad to go near him, until we know what is the matter with him,” said Sir George.

“He cannot be left alone,” demanded Frank of them all.

“Let Sam go and sit with him for an hour,” said the Squire.

“Sam!” exclaimed Sir George; “suppose he catches the infection?”

“You are just as likely, if there is infection,

to catch it from me. So, take Sam for your partner at whist—I will go back to Crabshawe!”

“Upon my word, Frank, you shame us all! I really am disgusted with myself! Come along, I will go and sit an hour with poor Crab myself; but I forget—he says my voice makes his brains hit against his skull, until he does not know what he is about!”

“I think we had better make up his sofa again, and get him downstairs for a while. He is only moped and crabby.”

“Very good; go and get him out of bed, and we will make a couch for him in a warm, snug corner, where he can see and hear all we do and say.”

Frank took up an amiable and soothing message to King Crab from his subjects, which he received graciously, and suffered himself to answer in the affirmative.

He was dressed and conveyed downstairs

with much care by Frank, and experienced a melancholy joy at being warmly received by the other gentlemen.

He felt a great mitigation of his pains, as they vied with each other in helping to settle him in his corner; and was, upon the whole, rather pleasant than otherwise this evening. To be sure, had they been asked, they would, one and all, have confided to each other they should have enjoyed themselves much more had he been away. He would insist upon knowing who had the best hand; what made this one laugh, if it was ever so little of a laugh; why another ruminated gloomily. In fact, he determined to be one of the whist party, whether or no.

This was borne pretty well at first, but on Tuesday evening symptoms of rebellion again broke out. He was so captious, so exacting, so universally unpleasant, that even Frank said :

“Don’t you think, Crabshawe, it is time you were in bed?”

“I am sure,” said the Squire, “you are very foolish to sit up so late; and as for my cards, one would suppose they were influenced by the weather. I never held such rubbish.”

“You think more of your cards than of me?”

“By no means, Crab; I shall be truly glad to know you are safe in bed.”

“Safe in bed! say in my coffin, for that will be the end of it! What a set of heartless fellows you are! A man dying by inches before your very eyes, and you think only of your whist! Oh!—oh! what a twinge—oh! my poor body!—my bones! Whist all day, and not five minutes to bestow on a dying man!”

“My dear Crab, don’t think so dismally as that! I would do anything I could for you, my dear fellow, but you seem quite alarmed whenever I come near you!”

“You are so rough, Squire.”

“I have no doubt of it. I am very rough; I wish I was more tender, for your sake, Crab.”

“You cannot bear the sight of my face you know, Crabshawe, or I am sure I would most willingly assist Frank to nurse you.”

“You shouldn’t heed a fellow when he is dying—in the agonies—he doesn’t know what he says—oh!—oh!—oh! my poor, poor bones!”

“Do you go to bed, Crab; it is tempting Providence to sit up any longer!”

“I won’t go to bed! I shan’t go to bed! My only comfort is seeing you all. Oh! oh!”

“But it is no comfort to us. We cannot do you any good—and you—you——”

“I understand—you may well hesitate—I am in your way—I prevent that everlasting whist. Now, I tell you what—I don’t mind confessing the fact.”

Here King Crab rose up, and confronted his

audience, looking, between ghastliness, want of soap and shaving, together with the loose arrangement of his dress, like an old Indian warrior, badly painted.

“I don’t think,” he continued, with solemn emphasis, “a woman would do it!”

“I don’t think she would, Crab,” answered the Squire, kindly. “If Elizabeth was here, she would nurse you well in a brace of shakes.”

“Go for her,” gasped King Crab, sinking back on to his sofa, as if these words were about to be his last.

They crowded round him.

“We will go,” said one and all.

“But not to-night,” remonstrated Frank. “The ladies will all be gone to bed. The sea is still too high to venture to bring Mrs. Joscelyn without risk.”

“I will go to-morrow, my dear Crab,” added the Squire. “I will start at daybreak, and bring Elizabeth back in no time. If ever

a woman knew how to cure any sort of illness, Elizabeth is that woman. My dear Crab, I honour you for the thought."

And he looked as if about to clap King Crab on the back, but that worthy gentleman seemed to fear the mark of approbation, and shrunk into his cushions with dread.

"So now, think once more whether it would not be as well to go to bed, Crabshawe?"

"I will go, Frank. I would willingly live until morning. I should like to see Mrs. Joscelyn's kind face again. She was always kind to me. Oh! pity me!—pity me! what a pang!"

"Ha! never mind your pangs, Elizabeth will soon cure them. Good night, my dear fellow, good night; depend upon it, I'll be off the first thing."

So King Crab, assisted by Frank, and escorted by Sam, slowly crawled off to bed. As soon as he was safely deposited there-

in, Frank returned, leaving Sam as nurse.

“At what hour shall you start?” asked Sir George, as they sat once more down to whist.

“At dawn,” responded the Squire, shortly.

“I mean to take an oar with you, Squire, as Crab seems so anxious.”

“Very good, Spoon.”

Mr. Spooner did not wince. He felt with the Squire; it was not a time to care for trifles.

“I think I will do Crabshawe that little service too,” observed Sir George. “Naturally I do not like to go near him, for fear of infection; but going for Mrs. Joscelyn is a matter in which I can very well oblige the poor fellow.”

“That will be three oars. I suppose, Frank, you will make the fourth?”

“Only on condition that you start at a more reasonable hour. The ladies ought not to be disturbed out of their morning slumbers, because Crabshawe has, what I see he spells, the ‘rumatism’!”

“Very true, Frank. Suppose we arrange to get there to breakfast?”

“And suppose the ladies are not prepared to receive four hungry fellows to breakfast?”

“Oh! pooh!—pooh! Even if they are not prepared, I will back Elizabeth to improvise a breakfast in no time. But if you are going to make objections, we will take Sam.”

“Take Sam, then. It shall not be said that I lost the challenge only because Crabshawe thinks he is dying.”

“Gracious heavens! the challenge!”

“I had entirely forgotten it.”

“Still I recommend that we should lose it, rather than let Crabshawe die.”

“You are right, George—your kind heart is a credit to you. I decide to lose the challenge rather than lose Crab—I mean, you know, lose him by death.”

“And do you agree with the Squire and George, Spooner?”

“Entirely, my dear Frank. A man with a human heart in his breast, blest with those feelings that alike do honour to his head——”

“And his inclinations,” interrupted Frank—
“I give you all credit, gentlemen, for the most sublime feelings of friendship; but still I think a little laudable curiosity to see the ladies——”

“Well, after such a storm, you know, Frank——”

“Arabella is always ill from a thunder-storm.”

“Is a good deal mixed with this tender care for Crabshawe,” continued Frank. “You can take Sam as the fourth oar—not that I remain behind for fear of losing the challenge, for, mark me, the ladies will cry out against the supposition; they will be the first to say that everything must give way before illness—that it was a case of necessity—that you deserve to win the challenge, and not lose it, for sacrificing everything on the altar of friendship, for

breaking the rules of the challenge, because King Crab has the 'rumatic's.'"

"My dear Frank, you are quite eloquent."

"I have been reading Spooner's share of the journal, and have caught a little of his style, I fancy."

"Are you afraid to meet Miss Severn, that you will not come with us?"

"Far be it from me to insinuate, by any act or deed of mine, that Miss Severn has anything of a formidable nature about her. I merely thought it was not quite respectful to our king for us all to leave him."

"Oh! nonsense—for only a couple of hours!"

"We will see how he is in the morning."

"For my part, I think nothing of his illness at all. He shams a good deal."

"Why trouble Mrs. Joscelyn, then?"

"Why?—because the poor fellow fancies her remedies. We shall have no peace until she doctors him. Sam, what is the matter now?"

“The Capting, sir, he is very bad. He is a-wanting of some party to make his will, sir.”

“Pooh! pooh! tell him to go sleep.”

“That’s jest what I seys to him. ‘Sir,’ seys I, ‘jest ye turn yer face to the wall, sir,’ seys I, ‘and ye’ll be asleep in no time, Capting,’ seys I. But he damns of me, Sir George, seys he: ‘Yer damned fool,’ seys he, and that’s what I carn’t put up with, Sir George, to be a damned fool!”

“Certainly not, Sam—you did quite right to leave him.”

“Yes, Sir George, and I won’t go no more anigh him, let him ’oller ever so.”

“Sam ought to see if our boots are blackened and clothes brushed.”

“By all means, Sam, and air one of those last new shirts of mine—those with cricket bats and balls on. We shall want everything ready by seven; we are going to Luff, and shall take you with us.”

“Thank ye, Sir George.”

And Sam rushed off with such unusual alacrity, and with such an involuntary smirk over his entire face, that Spooner, always alive to these little signs, remarked:

“One would suppose Sam was going to see his sweetheart.”

“Of course; he is deeply enamoured of your Susan, Squire. He has confided to me that there is not such another valuable creature for a poor man’s wife than she is. The catalogue of her virtues appears to me to swell larger and larger every time he speaks of her.”

“He shall not have my good wishes. I cannot spare Susan; she makes the best omelette soufflée I ever tasted.”

“Don’t be alarmed; I believe he proposes to her about once a month, and is as regularly once a month refused. What is that noise?”

“I believe it is Crabshawe hollowing.”

“Don’t go, Frank—it interrupts the game

so; we cannot do him any good. You can hear his lungs are sound enough, whatever may be the matter with the rest of his body.”

“For our own advantage, I had better quiet him—I will be back in a moment.”

Frank’s soothing efforts had the effect he promised. They were not interrupted any more, and if their consciences smote them at all, the pang went off as they heard audible tokens of the invalid’s freedom from all ills, mental and personal.

He was snoring in the most comfortable and approved manner.

The four gentlemen, excited with the prospect of the next day’s adventure, did not feel inclined to go to bed, after they ceased to play whist.

They sat ruminating over the fire, each full of apparently pleasant thoughts—which thoughts, of course, were fumigated with the pipes of independence.

“I wish you would go with us, Frank,” said the Squire at last. “I fancy a certain young lady will look very glum when she sees you are not of the party.”

“I prefer she should look glum at my absence rather than my presence.”

“Now, there you mistake. I am, as Elizabeth says, a complete owl in love matters; but I am not such an owl as to think that young lady insensible to your merits.”

“When we decided to come to Puff, I understood you were partly induced to do so for my unworthy sake—in short, to rescue me from being snared.”

“That was Crabshawe’s idea. Crabshawe has a monomania with regard to women.”

“I should say he had been jilted.”

“Or refused.”

“Does anyone present know anything of Crab’s antecedents? Who was his father? What was his mother? Whether there is any

female specimen of the Crab family living? She cannot be pretty—in short, anything about him?”

“The foreman of the mine I superintend gave me a short history of his ancestors, which I will repeat if you wish it; but as it is not very creditable to our king, I fancy you will prefer to hear nothing about it.”

“On the contrary, Frank, I should like to hear it very much. You may rest assured it will make no difference in our behaviour to him.”

“Surely not.”

“I am anxious to know something about him,” said Spooner, “because his character is one that presents so curious a mixture to my mind of antagonistic particles, that the study of it would prove, to an inquiring disposition, of the most intense interest.”

“Now, that is a matter in which I cannot agree with you, Spooner. I feel certain there

is nothing in Crabshawe's mind worth investigating. So, Frank, let us hear what you know of him."

"Do you ever remember to have heard of a curious old Nabob who settled himself in that large old pagoda-looking house that one sees so conspicuously from every road in the county?"

"Old Bergsdorf! Half a Jew—half an Indian—wholly a maniac—if I remember right."

"Yes; he came from India with so vast a fortune that it was supposed to be absolutely impossible to calculate his real wealth. He bought the estate of Upshot, the name of which he changed to Bergsdorf; and it was said that he spent upwards of one hundred thousand pounds building that palace of pagodas, now crumbling to pieces.

"He brought with him an only daughter, whose dark skin betrayed her mother, and who

received but very little courtesy from the ladies of this county in consequence. Yet the wealth of her father caused him to be greatly courted. There were many ladies, young and old, pretty and ugly, titled and not, who were ready to accept old Bergsdorf as husband, and promise to be a mother to his dark daughter, if he only took the trouble to ask them, which, it is supposed, he did not, for he never married. At the same time, he was a prodigious admirer of pretty women, and was never able to resist any request they might make to him, be it ever so extravagant.

“One foolish, whimmy lady of title took it into her weak brain to desire a summer picnic in the very depth of winter. She was looking dismally out of the window, watching the snow-flakes filling the air and whitening the ground, when she uttered this wish.

“The old Nabob gravely assured her she should be obeyed in a week; and it is

credited now as a real truth, that the lady and her friends mounted palfreys at the foot of the great staircase on that day week, and riding through bowers of evergreens, enlivened with rose trees, and climbing-plants, from which fluttered singing-birds of every hue, and country, reached a beautiful secluded dell in the park, where a sumptuous repast was prepared, after the fashion of a royal pic-nic.

“The air was balmy and soft as summer, innumerable flowers enamelled the lawn, and the lady sat on the roots of a magnificent old oak, that seemed to be in full leaf, and listened to the singing of the nightingales. And yet, it is reported, the snow was falling heavier and thicker than before, the whole time.

“Money will do everything; but such extraordinary feats savoured so much of the marvellous, that the Nabob began to feel himself shunned, as one possessing necromantic powers.

“He was a man of such violent and uncontrollable passion, that he was feared by his servants and dependants as much as if possessed by a demon.

“The only person who seemed to care nothing for his fits of passion was his daughter, Hinda. Much as she was slighted by her own sex, there are many tales still extant of her wonderful goodness and rare sense. She was so plain, that it amounted to positive ugliness, though her figure was lithe, slender and graceful.

“Amongst the household she was adored, as the angel that interposed her own person between them and her father’s fury. She has been known to endure the lashing of his whip, meant for another than her, until, recognising her, the old Nabob has dropped it in an agony of remorse; for he loved her, as much as it was in his nature to love anything.

“There was something so fearless, so resolute, so superhuman in the manner with which she cast herself down the victim for all, that he could not but be influenced by it; for there was always a just cause for interference when she did so. Child as she was, her father knew, as well as those that sought her aid, that she was ready to brave death in the cause of justice, but refused to use her influence where punishment was due.

“As she grew up, it became the sole occupation of her father to marry her well. It was, I believe, pretty well known that she would be her father’s sole heir; and, in case of her marrying to his liking, would be so dowered that few princesses could match the fortune she would bring.

“Among the crowd that thronged to become the possessor of so much wealth, some were disdained by her father, others were hateful to herself; and there can be no doubt of it,

few among the number professed, or, indeed, could profess love to one so singularly deficient in personal advantages. All her goodness, her rare qualities of mind, her wonderful sagaciousness, could not do away with the repulsive feeling caused by her dark skin and negro features.

“By degrees but three candidates remained. One was favoured by her father, one she liked herself, and the third was an amiable, not over-wise, but good-hearted younger son, who felt that Hinda’s fortune gilded her with a beauty he did not see in anyone else.

“The old Nabob commanded Hinda to marry Sir Hugh Gregson.

“‘Father,’ said she, ‘he will leave me at the church door, in the face of all your assembled company.’

“‘Child, he shall not touch money of mine until thou hast my grandchild in thine arms.’

“‘Then, father, will he not wed.’

“She was right; he refused to do so under the circumstances, even though the Nabob curtailed the time to six months after the wedding, when he should have the spending of Hinda’s money.

“Now came the turn of that lover, who was, as it seemed, indeed a lover.

“‘He loved Hinda,’ he said, ‘for her rare virtues.’”

“And they were married.

“The ardent desire of the old Nabob to see a grandchild was gratified, but he did not live long afterwards.

“Hinda loved her little child dearly; it was a girl. She loved it all the more because, after her father’s death, she perceived that her husband either had lost his affection for her, or that, a consummate hypocrite, he had but feigned it while her father lived. Whichever was the cause—and it is too likely it was the latter—the

life this unfortunate young creature began to lead was as painful and humiliating as the most wretched wife ever endured.

“Mr. Bernsdorf—for he had taken his wife’s name—seemed to have been only accomplished in deceit. For the various labours, and the knowledge necessary for the care of so large an estate, together with the clear head and sagacity required for the keeping the accounts of all their moneys, their expenditure, and the long train of troubles that are attached to riches, fell upon Hinda. But the less able he was to comprehend these things, the more he lavished and rioted away, heedless of all his wife’s entreaties and warnings.

“Sensitive in the highest degree, not only to what was due to her as a wife and mother, but as a woman, and one who, however dark her blood, and forbidding her aspect, had a soul as gentle, as pure, as unselfish, as the fairest woman living, Hinda could ill bear the daily insults of

her husband. Her duty bade her bear, as a wife should, all that it was possible.

“One day, walking in that very wood where her father had suddenly created a summer day in the middle of winter, merely to please the whim of a silly woman, Hinda met her husband walking with a person whom she remembered to have seen as a servant in the house of her father. They were laughing and jesting, in a manner that brought a blush to Hinda’s dark cheek.

“They both passed her with bold unabashed airs. When Hinda returned home, she went straight to her looking-glass and contemplated her features.

“‘I cannot even compare myself with that bad woman. Her fair face and rosy cheeks obliterate from my husband’s mind the fact that I am his wife—that I am pure, while she is fallen; that I am the mother of his child, and she can be nothing but a shame to him. Is

beauty so powerful? Is it not possible for me so to act, that I may rival that beauty by deeds that will extract a greater admiration?

“From that moment she ceased to seek her husband’s society; she withdrew altogether from his riotous and disorderly companions; she compelled his and their respect by an unvarying nobility of conduct, that was the more remarkable because all her money was in her own power—he had the control over but a small portion of it.

“Once or twice, when he essayed some insult, as in former times, she sternly rebuked him, and he was cowed by the very force of her character.

“Though the same roof covered them, no two people ever led such different lives. On her side of the house everything was serene, orderly, and beneficent; on his, riot, confusion, and sin.

“Once, as she sat with her little daughter,

now ten years old, in a small boudoir that opened into a garden, Hinda heard on the other side of a laurel hedge, much whispering and laughter, and orders given as to a child. Immediately after, there came toddling up to the window a boy some three years old. Pinned to his little frock was a paper, on which was written : ‘*Mr. Bernsdorf’s son and heir.*’

“Hinda quietly unpinned the paper, and destroyed it. Meantime her girl, pleased with the child, brought it into the room, and began to play with it.

“This child,” said Frank, after a pause, “was the father of Captain Crabshawe.”

“Poor fellow!” murmured the Squire, “he is not answerable for his birth.”

“What became of Hinda?”

“So far from resenting the insult intended for her, she was like a mother to that boy for two years. All that he could have known of good he must have learnt from her. What

wild ideas entered the head of his own wicked mother, no one knows. Hinda's forbearance and extraordinary magnanimity of conduct towards her husband, might have led to the first germ of the horrible plan that entered her head.

“A woman guilty of every possible sin against one of her own sex, may naturally be thought, without injustice, a monster. We need not fear to loathe and abhor her. In fact, there was too much reason to suppose that, fancying Hinda weak enough to love this boy as well as her own child, she made her very virtues and forbearance the plea to herself for what she did. Hinda's child died after a short and suspicious illness. Alone, among enemies, this unhappy creature made no appeal, suffered no investigation. She said,

“‘Will such things bring my child to life again?’

“It may seem strange that such an occurrence should have been suspected, and no inquiry made; but, eighty or a hundred years ago, justice was not so active as now—from whatever cause, no scrutiny followed the loss of her child.

“Hinda utterly upset all the expectations of her wicked rival. She not only would never see the boy again, but, dividing the wreck of her fortune with her husband, she returned to India, and never again left it. He continued to lead this dreadful and abandoned life, until his son, of age, married the daughter of the third of Hinda’s lovers—that younger son who, probably, would have made the best husband for her of the three, even though he carried his love of money so far as to let his daughter marry the base-born son, rather than lose all hope of having some of old Bernsdorf’s wealth. He was, however, disappointed, for there was little left of what Hinda had accorded her

husband. Nevertheless, still trusting to her fine, generous heart, they sent out our friend Crab to India, hoping she would make his fortune there.

“I believe it is not known whether they ever met, or if she was alive, or if she befriended him. Certainly he made no fortune there, and, struggling in India for the best part of his time in the Army, our amiable friend came home, as we all know, some few years ago, and, it is reported, has nothing of old Bernsdorf’s wealth in his possession, but that curious hookah, that he always informs us was his great-grandfather’s. That is all I know.”

Wednesday morning arrived. Notwithstanding the late hour at which they had retired to rest, and the somniferous habits to which they had accustomed themselves at Puff (through the exigency of having to dispose of the hours somehow), they were all stirring betimes.

They each had an anxious confidential soliloquy with themselves as to what they should wear.

Sir George had decided overnight as to the becomingness of a shirt adorned with cricket-bats and balls. A favourite suit of grey tweed, uncontaminated by tobacco fumigation, was to be worn with it. The only subject for indecision was his tie. Should it be mauve or Waterloo blue?

Mauve carried the day—it was the most fashionable, though it might not be the most becoming.

Mr. Spooner consulted his whiskers many times and oft as to the propriety of dividing his hair once more in the middle, and bringing two rounds of hair, well-plastered, to the corners of his eyes.

Whatever might be the advice his whiskers whispered to him, he found his hair refractory. Having been parted now for three weeks on

one side, and become accustomed to the arrangement, every hair steadily rebelled against being ordered on a sudden to be parted anywhere else. If Mr. Spooner and his whiskers persisted in the old parting, abandoned for three weeks, he and they must do so at the risk of a smooth coiffure.

Mr. Spooner, being a neat, rather particular man, preferred a plastic, pliable parting to a ruffled one, and so decided to allow his hair to have its own way, which was fortunate.

As for the Squire, not weighing his Elizabeth's love by the make and value of his garments, he yet had certain difficulties attending his toilet.

We have said that he loved his clothes, that he regarded them as part of himself. In fact, he was known to talk to them, and hold conversations with them, as one dear friend might do with another. He is now, at this moment, excited though he is at the prospect of going

to Luff, holding a colloquy with two pair of boots, which he has arranged, for the convenience of parleying, in a row before him.

Both pair of boots possessed unmistakeable characteristics of belonging to the Squire. They stood straight and firm. They had an air of decision about them that seemed to say :

“March we will, no matter where !”

They were open-hearted, frank boots, disdaining all disguise of being anything else than the Squire's boots. In fact, had any of his friends, by the fortune of Fate, met them in Africa, they must have said at once : “Those are the Squire's boots.” And yet they are very different, one pair from the other.

“Yes,” said the Squire, to the rather dandy pair, with elastic sides, and a dash of the elegant about them—“Yes, I ought to wear you, going in the boat ; but after all this rain it might be wet underfoot, as you say, Patch !”

This word “Patch” alluded, in rather an

unkind manner, to the other pair of boots having a patch on one of them.

“Nails are forbidden on board ship, Patch; it does not do to go and mark the deck all over with pits, like the small-pox. I think I must wear you, Jemmy!”

The name Jemmy, it is presumed, arose out of the “Slang Dictionary,” which accords to the word Jemmy a fine, elegant, fashionable meaning.

“True,” continued the Squire, “there is no deck in a boat, and you are dear old friends of mine, Patch; and, as you say, unless you had been the best of your kind, you would not have been patched. Besides, the nails are very useful to avoid the danger of slipping. So return to your place, Jemmies, and come on, Patch, we will stick by each other to-day, whatever fortune may decide.”

The Squire had reason, as we shall find before the day was over, to rejoice over his

decision, though Patch was called upon to do a duty he little expected.

At last they were all ready, and started for the boat, Frank accompanying them so far. It is to be remarked as a singular fact that not one of them thought of inquiring after the interesting invalid in whose behalf they were so bestirring themselves. Had they really forgotten him?—or were they afraid to inquire, lest they should discover he was so well there was no necessity to go for Mrs. Joscelyn?

So far from thinking of him at all, they had scarcely patience to try and persuade Frank once more to come with them. And he looked so eagerly, so longingly, after them, they could not help saying to each other:

“We ought to have made him come!”

It was half-past seven o'clock as they bade him farewell. When they were within a short distance of Luff, Sir George proposed pausing a little, as it was not quite eight. The Squire

had two oars to himself, Spooner and Sam one each, Sir George steered. The Squire was chuckling at being able to pull with advantage against the other two.

Suddenly Sir George's face, looking eagerly towards the island, flushed scarlet, his eyes seemed darting out of his head. Aghast at this sudden emotion, they all turned to look in the same direction. There, struggling with the branches of a tree, was the ladies' flag, which, even as they looked, was hoisted up, free of all impediment, floating clear and high in the air, while across the water came the shrill, sharp sound of a woman's scream.

CHAPTER III.

LUFF IT IS.

THE ladies had so far been relieved from their apprehensions regarding famine, and, in particular, the failure of that eminently feminine food, bread and butter, by the arrival of the boat on Tuesday evening.

From having to pick up their crumbs as valuable morsels, they now rioted in every sort of luxury. Happy as larks, they rose early on Wednesday morning, and went down to the bathing-cove, to see if the sea was sufficiently calmed down to permit of their having a swim.

Nothing could be more exquisite than the morning. The air was laden with balmy odours; the sea was smooth and calm, and gentle as a mother's heart. There was not a cloud in the whole breadth of heaven. Everything gave promise of one of those lovely summer days wherein, it may be said, to exist is a luxury without any other good.

Susan, still remorseful and penitent, had risen early, that she might have her batch of new bread out of the oven in time for breakfast; and as the ladies came in from their bath, the house was redolent with the perfume of newly-baked bread, than which none can be more appropriate for breakfast-time.

They all ran hastily upstairs to arrange their toilettes, and be ready in good time to do justice to Susan's efforts.

Mrs. Joscelyn began to make the tea at a quarter to eight. Bessie was holding the tea-caddy, when she suddenly uttered a low cry,

and let it drop. Her mother looked up in astonishment, and perceived Bessie, pale as death, staring at the window.

Mrs. Joscelyn followed her gaze, and beheld a most hideous, repulsive-looking beggar-man peering in. Her presence of mind did not forsake her; she said softly in French to Bessie—

“Go, child, send Susan here, and tell the others to lock themselves in their rooms.

Bessie fled like a lapwing, and Susan, brandishing a red-hot poker, was with her mistress in a moment.

They both went out of the window, shutting it after them, and were visibly alarmed to see altogether three men on the lawn.

“What do you want here?” said Mrs. Joscelyn, as calmly as she could. But she acknowledges that, had she done as she liked, she would have sat down and screamed for help.

“We be cum, axing yer parding, mum, for a bit of vital, or charity, or anythink as you may be as hobliging as guv us,” answered the hideous monster who had peered into the window.

“I have nothing for you; and even if I had, I would give you nothing, as you have no right here.”

“Ho! ho! is that yer hanswer. Axing yer parding, mum, ’ave hanother hanswer we wull.”

“Ay, we wull!” said the others.

“We dush’t want for to go for to be on-civil, but we be three on us here, and there be three more in the boat, and we all on us wunts our breckwists, we does.”

“And we wull have it!”

“We knows, mum, as there be no gents; but we ’ont be oncivil, if so be as ’ow you’ll just let us ’ave a luik through the ’ouse. We ’ave heerd as there be mortal

foine things 'i the 'ouse—goold and silver, and watches, and sich like. Oh! don't fear, but we 'ull be mighty civil, axing yer parding, mum!"

At the moment, with a low growl, Runa sprang upon one of the men, and Clara, erect and disdainful, stood by Mrs. Joscelyn and Susan.

The man caught the dog dexterously by the throat, and his companions rushed to help him, drawing out their knives.

"If you hurt my dog, I will shoot you," said Clara, presenting a pistol.

Struck by her commanding and resolute gesture, the men hesitated.

"Call yer dowg, Miss, or I'll cut his throat,"

"Runa, come here!"

Loth to do so, Runa obeyed, and stood snarling and bristling by her mistress's side,

"I repeat it again," said Mrs. Joscelyn, "I

am not to be intimidated into giving you anything. There may be six of you, or there may be but you three, of whom I have no fear. I would advise you to go off at once."

"Ho! ho! you shows fight, does yer? And the young lady—pray, Miss, is yer pistol loaded?"

"It is a revolver," answered Clara, and without shrinking, in as calm and brave a manner as if she was a noted duellest, she pointed the pistol, and sent a bullet with unflinching hand whizzing between the heads of the three miscreants.

They looked, for the instant, abjectly afraid.

At that moment shrill screams smote their ears :

"Ho!—ho! them be t'other chaps with t'other ladies!"

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Joscelyn, it is only Mrs. Spooner screaming with fright. I feel

sure there are but these three, and with Runa we can easily manage them."

"Not so heasy as you think, mum," said one of the ruffians, seizing her by the arm, and wrenching the pistol from her.

Now, had Clara only to struggle with one of her own sex, or a clean gentleman, she would probably have had a tussle for a pistol; but the near approach of the disgusting creature, the touch of his hand on her arm so revolted her, she left the pistol in his grasp, and ran behind Susan, who was making lunges at them all with her red-hot poker.

This was a weapon that posed them; they could neither grasp it, nor secure Susan, whose agility would have done honour to an acrobat.

Clara did not dare to bid Runa fly at them, which the noble dog was whining and trembling with excitement to do. She felt sure they would not scruple to cut her throat before her eyes.

Thus, though Mrs. Joscelyn, Clara, and Susan acted with the greatest bravery in the world, they felt how useless was the display—how powerless they were; even with a dog, a revolver, and a red-hot poker, which latter, of course, was losing its virtue every minute.

Clara felt if one of them offered to touch her again, she must take to screaming quite as loudly as Mrs. Spooner; while Mrs. Joscelyn, still resolved not to give way in appearance, was yet ready to faint in her heart.

At this moment Kate and Bessie joined them, each armed with another hot poker, the latter passing hers to Susan, and running off with the cold one.

“Aunt,” whispered Kate, “we have hoisted the flag.”

“My child!” said the other with anguish, “it will be too late!”

“Not for the Coastguard. If they are looking out, they may be here in a quarter of an hour.”

“Too late!—too late!”

“Cum, marm, be reasonable. Go you to hany rum yer fancy, and lock yersels hup, and we wunnot be oncivil. We’ll joost tak a bit of breekwist, and each on us tak a little keepsake or so, of such butiful ladies; axing yer parding, marm—this here watch, now, ’ood be the werry thing for me. I’d a-wear it for yer sake, I ’ood indeed, marm.”

“You scoundrel!” thundered a voice behind him, and though the wretch turned livid with fear at the sound of a well-known voice, he had no time to speak. He was hoisted up in the air by a strength that was at all times powerful, but, in the present instance, backed by passion and indignation, was wholly irresistible.

“You beast! you vagabond! did I twice give you five shillings, only that you should dare to come and alarm my wife! Take that, and that, and that! Blessed be the fate that counselled the putting on my nailed boots!”

Up to this moment our glorious Squire, in his shirt sleeves, perspiring at every pore, without a hat, and no necktie, was the sole army that appeared for the rescue, but he was quite sufficient. Even if his presence and his voice had not appalled the three miscreants enough, he took breath for a moment, and knocked both the others down, while he still tightly grasped our ancient friend, our “excellent convict!”

Runa, with a bound of delight, rushed upon the prostrate bodies, and kept guard.

“Don’t be alarmed, Lizzy, my dear!” gasped the Squire, surveying the enemy with a glow of triumph. “I shall not leave go of this villain, this scoundrel, this cur, until—I say, Scruttles, look at me. ‘With that I went.’ Do you remember that, you hound! With that you shall go; and if ever you get out of prison again, I’ll hang myself!”

The “excellent convict” roared for mercy,

as he felt what it was to have an enemy shod with nailed boots.

For upwards of six weeks after this passage at arms between him and Scruttles, the Squire would be observed to smile to himself. When asked the reason, he would say—

“I think somebody still feels what superb weapons are nailed boots !”

The Patch boots were kept by the Squire evermore as gems, in a glass case.

And now came, panting and puffing, the other gentlemen.

“Where—where is my Arabella ?” exclaimed her affectionate husband.

“Up in her room. I will show you,” said Kate.

And this loving spouse dashed off to assure his wife of love and safety, under his manly protection.

Meantime, the Squire, assisted stoutly by Susan,

and delicately by Sir George, was handcuffing his prisoners with the best manacles he could procure. Between doing it effectually, and kicking them at intervals, he had not finished before Mr. Spooner rushed back to Mrs. Joscelyn, exclaiming—

“Oh! come—come and calm my Arabella! she thinks I am a robber, and she will not let me into her room!”

“Stay here, while I go and reassure her; for as long as she hears a man’s voice, which voice, as she very well knows, ought not to be heard here, she will not open the door.”

“Darling creature!” murmured the husband.

Mrs. Joscelyn had some difficulty in gaining admittance herself.

“It is I—Elizabeth Joscelyn!” she called through the keyhole.

“The voice is the voice of Mrs. Joscelyn ;

but I know it is a blind. You are bound and fettered, and with a robber on each side, their daggers uplifted to stab you if you do not obey them, they order you to deliver up one victim more."

This is what Mrs. Spooner answered through the door.

"But the robbers are secured; your husband is here! Open, Arabella; you do not think that even to save my life I would risk yours?"

"Ah! you are a mother—they are perhaps torturing your Bessie; and what is my life in your eyes reckoned against hers?"

"Then will you look out of the window."

"They will shoot me."

After some further trouble and persuasion at last she peeped out, and saw her beloved Augustus gesticulating with arms, and legs, and whole body, towards her window. Where-

upon she shrieked wildly, and, it is supposed, thought of fainting; but some intuition murmuring to her that she had better unlock the door first, she did so, and then had the inexpressible happiness of swooning away in the arms of her Augustus!

When Mrs. Joscelyn returned downstairs she was amazed to find the sacred seclusion of Luff swarming with bearded men.

There were the three robbers, still prostrate; there was her Squire, wiping his still teeming brows, and still making a sort of irresistible use of his Patch boots. There was Sir George looking on; but in addition, were the Lieutenant of the Coastguard, and half a dozen of his men.

He raised his hat to Mrs. Joscelyn, saying, with a smile—

“I beg your pardon, madam, for intruding upon ground so sacred, but before he left the country, I received an order from Colonel Erne

to keep a look-out on the island of Luff, and if I saw any strange boat approaching it, to put off and examine her. Early this morning, as soon as it was light, I noticed a boat, badly manned, struggling across the bay, and apparently making for Luff. It appeared to me that inexperienced fellows must be in her, as the drift of the current swept them down. They landed at Ribble, and remained there, either resting or sleeping, in a little cove just opposite Luff. I was at my breakfast, when the lookout-man reported the boat again afloat, and that it was making for Luff. I immediately manned my boat, and arrived, not in such good time as I could wish, but, at all events, I can relieve you of the prisoners."

"Only on one condition, that you take them straight to jail. 'With that I went,' Scruttles," using the Patch boots.

It is needless to say the Squire spoke.

"Of course, Mr. Joscelyn. I have a police-

man with me, and the three pair of handcuffs I fancied would be necessary. The Superintendent lives close to my house, and I can safely promise they shall be in jail to-night."

"I shall come and see you hanged, Scruttles."

"Axing yer honour's parding, might I be so bould as to arsk for a bite of bread?"

The Squire answered this petition in the usual manner, which called forth a howl of agony. But Kate and Bessie, it is believed, ran to Susan, and stole from her one of the newly-made loaves of bread, and took it to them.

The lieutenant of the Coastguard refused Mrs. Joscelyn's hospitality, saying he was impatient to return. He took his leave, and, carrying off the prisoners, in a short time Luff was restored to peace and quiet.

"Lizzy," said the Squire, returning from seeing the Coastguard-boat off, into which

Scruttles was assisted by his last and most energetic kick, "how do you do, my dear?" and he bestowed upon her, unabashed by surrounding eyes, a satisfactory and loud-sounding salute.

Mrs. Joscelyn blushed like a young girl, and altogether looked so pretty, the Squire seemed half-inclined to kiss her again.

"I am sure you must be hungry," said his wife, prudently turning his thoughts into another channel.

"Hungry! good heavens! I now begin to feel the sensation of having ten wolves in my interior!"

"Ah! papa," said Bessie, springing on to his knee, "that is just what Susan said. 'Now that we hav' conkeered them pirates, if master haven't had his breakwist, he will be a-devouring of us all!' So it is all ready, papa, dear."

"Bring it in, Bessie, my pet!"

“But where is your coat and hat, and all those sorts of things, papa?”

“In the boat, I believe, my darling!”

“I will run for them, while you wash your hands and face in our room.”

“Very good. But I say, Lizzy, shall we incommode you by breakfasting here?”

“Not at all, John, we shall be delighted. We were just going to prayers,” she continued half in a whisper.

“By all means, Lizzy—nothing would be more to my mind.”

So prayers were read, and the Squire's amen echoed through the room. Immediately afterwards the three girls followed Susan, and presently returned, each laden with dishes. Susan, while the above matters were being detailed, had no sooner heard her master's voice, than she knew her mistress required no further help, and thought she was best fulfilling her wishes by preparing a super-excellent and abundant breakfast.

Mr. and Mrs. Spooner simultaneously appeared with it—she half tears, half smiles, and he like a respectable Dorking cock, who has just thrashed a rival.

Never was such a breakfast. In addition to that best sauce, hunger, everything was so excellent, so fresh, so appetising ! And it was such a pleasure to see the table not only graced by many elegancies, that they now felt added so much to the pleasure of eating, but it was so delightful to see the pretty female faces, to be waited on so deftly and gracefully, to bandy words with such delicious, darling creatures !

As for Sir George, it might be supposed he had assumed Frank's character for the nonce. He helped the girls to help the Squire ; he ran in and out of the kitchen, as if he was Susan's only son ; he was quite benign to Mrs. Spooner, quite affectionate to Mrs. Joscelyn, and as merry as a boy with Bessie. The Squire had just cracked

the shell of his fourth egg, when that little damsel inquired:

“Pray, papa, did you fly over here? for Clara and Kate only hoisted the flag ten minutes before you came.”

“Hoisted the flag!” repeated Mr. Spooner, a little, just a little, of triumph in his tone.

“Hoisted the flag!” echoed Sir George, and, smiling, he whispered, “you see, Miss Daintree, you could not do without us.”

“Hoisted the flag!” exclaimed the Squire; and, compelled to speak the truth, he added: “you need not have hoisted the flag, we were on our—by-the-bye, Spooner, George, we have forgotten all about poor Crab!”

Down went all their knives and forks—the smiling and the triumph changed to misgiving and confusion. Mrs. Joscelyn was not slow to perceive there was a loophole somewhere through which the ladies, if they could manage it, might slip.

Still trembling in her heart at their narrow escape from robbery and insolence, all the woman rose in her at the hope that, though the ladies had hoisted their flag, the gentlemen must have started to ask their assistance, at least an hour before it floated in the air. With a happy countenance, she gaily asked—

“Anything the matter with Captain Crabshawe?”

Now here occurs one of those strange anomalies in the human heart, for which there is no accounting.

The Squire, though he had utterly forgotten all about the unfortunate King Crab until this minute, was a little indignant at his wife's easy air, and careless question; under the influence of which feeling he uttered the nearest approach to a falsehood that his lips ever achieved.

“Poor fellow! he is dying,” immediately qualifying the statement by adding—“at least, he thinks so.”

“He is very, very ill, poor fellow—almost delirious; he could not bear the sight of me, Arabella, when the fever was high.”

“Gracious! Augustus—and you looking so well! That style of doing your hair is so becoming!”

“Darling!” whispered the male A. S.

“We are afraid his fever is infectious. Frank stayed behind to nurse him,” said Sir George.

“All his cry is for you, Lizzy; he says, ‘Go for her!—go for Mrs. Joscelyn!—let me see her kind face before I die!’”

“Surely he must be quite delirious to go on in that fashion.”

“On the contrary, Lizzy, I thought him extremely sensible in his wish; and as it was too late last night to come for you, I promised him to fetch you back after breakfast.”

“Fetch me back, my dear John?—is a woman allowed on Puff? Shall you not lose the challenge?”

“Well, Lizzy, if you insist upon it we must; we agreed last night that anything was better than that poor Crab should die for want of your assistance.”

“That was very kind of you, and I am certain I speak the sentiments of all the ladies when I say, that you have not lost the challenge by such an act.”

“That is just what Frank said. He said, the ladies will be the first to say the challenge is yours still.”

“We will all thank Mr. Summers when we see him for his kind judgment of us. Meantime, do you consider that we have lost our chance by hoisting the flag?”

“No, certainly not; but don't remind me of that beast Scruttles, or I shall not be able to eat any more breakfast. It was a perfect providence my putting on these boots!”

“I agree with you, Squire; the ladies, under the extraordinary circumstances of

the case, were quite right to hoist the flag."

"Go—o—od heavens! my dearest Arabella, I never should have forgiven you, had you not summoned me as you did."

"Darling!" she whispered.

"This being amicably settled, do let me hear about Captain Crabshawe. Ought we not to go to him immediately?"

"Well, I believe we ought. I have made a very good breakfast, thank God, and I am ready to set out if you are, Lizzy?"

"Oh! Augustus, don't—don't leave me; they may come back, those horrid wretches!"

"I won't, my dearest love; I will remain,—that is, if I may. I do think, Squire, it would be only prudent if one of us remained behind to take care of the ladies. Mrs. Joscelyn must return here, you know, this evening, and then we can go home."

"I am quite of Spooner's opinion, Squire;

and if you have Sam, you and he will easily take Mrs. Joscelyn to Puff, and bring her back."

"I can pull Sam round in a circle."

"Hif you please, Sir George, Suesin has a deal of washin'-hup, with hall this hunexpected company—I was a-thinking I ought to 'elp her."

Sam was in the act of coming in with more toast when the Squire made his remark,

"Lizzy, my dear, put on your things, and I will row you over by myself."

"May not I come?" whimpered Bessie.

"No, no; Crab's fever may be catching. I am coming back, my darling, with your mother."

"Suppose, John, you dine with us when you return?"

"I should like it very much, Lizzy; but can you——"

Here the Squire stopped short. The remembrance of the difficulties as to giving a dinner at Puff, before they had a cook and a kitchen-maid, made him hesitate about troubling the Luffs, who had only Susan.

“Bring back our cook, and our dinner with you,” said Sir George.

“Well, it all depends on poor Crab; we must not forget that, if he dies, we ought not to be thinking of our dinners.”

“I hope he is not so bad as that,” murmured the little rose-bud, whose voice, usually like the voice of a little joyful lark, was, to Sir George’s astonishment, as low as the cooing of a dove.

“I hope not either, Katie; so good-bye to you all for the present. There is something so extraordinary about that beast Scruttles, that, though I manacled him with my own hands, and know that he is in the custody not only of the Coastguard, but the police,

who have promised to see him safe into prison, I should not be surprised to find him here again when I bring my wife back, therefore I am glad you remain. If he comes, kick him for me, whatever you do."

Mr. and Mrs. Joscelyn set off together to return to Puff, quite like Darby and Joan. We have no doubt they enjoyed themselves very much, for the Squire, spite of poor Crabshawe's danger, took the rowing very leisurely.

Frank met them at the landing-place, and, in detailing all that had happened, the Squire wholly forgot the invalid again.

Frank, too, was so shocked, he turned pale and trembled, so that he also remembered nothing about his patient. Mrs. Joscelyn, therefore, made her way alone to the Palace of the Puffs, and, guided by strange groans and cries, reached the room where lay the forlorn and dying Crabshawe. She knocked at the door.

“Come in,” said a feeble voice.

“Oh! dear Mrs. Joscelyn, have you come at last?—only to hear my last words and receive my last sigh.”

“Upon my word, I do not think I shall do either, Captain Crabshawe. Let me feel your pulse. It is certainly not the pulse of a dying man. You have caught a bad cold, and you are a little bilious. If you had taken a good dose of physic, and afterwards one or two long walks, you would have recovered both ills in a short time. Instead of which, I should say, you have been nursing yourself into a fever with doses of hot brandy and water, and coddling over the fire, until every breath of air seemed to give you a pang.”

“Oh! Mrs. Joscelyn, what an angel you are! You have just hit it!—how clever of you! I will do everything you command me.”

“Then I shall order you to take a certain

dose that I will prepare for you; and I should advise your having a warm bath, and putting on clean clothes, well aired. You will find yourself much refreshed by so doing."

"Anything—anything, dear, kind Mrs. Joscelyn!"

When that lady left the invalid to go and give her orders, she was obliged to sit upon the stairs for a few moments and laugh.

Such a picture as Captain Crabshawe, ill in bed, was never seen before by mortal eyes.

In the first place, his usually plain physiognomy was rendered simply hideous by a beard of three days' growth, and a face that had certainly not been washed for the same time.

He had huddled over him, for warmth's sake, all his wearing clothes, as well as his bed-clothes. He wore a red night-cap, with a tassel, but over it he had tied a coloured cotton handkerchief, which gave him the ap-

pearance of being a very wicked, old grimy-bearded woman.

Alack! if he was ever to hear of that simile.

However, he presented a very different appearance in an hour's time. Cleanly-shaved, renovated and freshened by his bath, clothed in a thick, handsome, shooting-suit of the Squire's—for his own clothes, Mrs. Joscelyn said, were damp and wholly useless from constant wear and tear—he really almost looked like a gentleman.

And when Mrs. Joscelyn brought him a basin of hot soup, and allowed him a couple of glasses of sherry, he seemed as renovated in spirits as body.

The good Squire, pleased to see the effect of his wife's nursing, did not begrudge King Crab the suit of clothes.

“He may have them, Lizzy,” he said when she asked him for them, “and he may keep

them. They are nearly new, so I have not got well-acquainted with them as yet, and I don't mind parting with them."

The next thing that Mrs. Joscelyn did was to tidy the house.

Acting under her orders, the Squire and Frank moved furniture, routed out corners, arranged books, and placed everything in so comfortable and pleasant a form, they were quite delighted with their hitherto desolate saloon.

"This place is dreadfully unwholesome," observed she; "you cannot have had it cleaned since you have been here, or the windows opened?"

"We had no one to clean it, Lizzy, and Crab could not bear the least bit of air."

"Take him into the sunshine now; his illness is nothing, but that he has become a little mouldy."

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Squire, "mouldy!

that is a new disease; but no doubt 'tis true as regards Crab."

"You may add some ill-temper to the mouldiness. I should not wonder if he fretted inwardly at seeing he had made no proselytes, that you were all anxious for the month to be over."

"How do you make that out, Elizabeth?" a slight severity in the Squire's tones.

"Because I am, John."

"Well, Lizzy, that is frankly said. Between you and me, we shall enjoy talking over this month much more than the reality of it now."

"True," said Frank, "the remembrance of it will tend to make some of us more contented. Have I polished this enough, Mrs. Joscelyn?"

"Yes; it looks wonderfully improved—don't you think so?"

"How odd it is that women should know

how to place furniture so as not only to be more comfortable, but to look prettier!"

"I do not think it at all odd—the oddness would be the other way."

"I must say, Frank, you are loyal to the back-bone; and so am I, whenever I give myself time to think about it."

"I hope, gentlemen, you will suffer me to offer this taper to light your cigars. I am going to mend some of your things, John, and will sit and chat to Captain Crabshawe while I do it."

Mrs. Joscelyn ran upstairs for her work, and the two gentlemen, after lighting their cigars, the first they had had that day, put on their hats to take a stroll while they did so.

"Frank, she is the best wife in Christendom. I presume upon her sweet temper very often."

"Then don't do so any more, Squire;

she feels it, though she may say nothing about it.”

“I dare say she does—she was such a merry girl !”

“I would never rest until she was a merry girl again.”

“Humph! Frank. I dont see how that may be. We have, I suppose, our proper feelings for our proper age. I think to see Elizabeth acting like a girl would not be quite to my mind. I am no deep thinker, but I am great at facts.”

Thus did this famous challenge lead to the Squire becoming a philosopher, and reasoning on matters with a great deal more sense, though not so many hard words as Spooner.

When the gentlemen returned from their stroll it was two o'clock. Peeping into the saloon, they were struck with its comfortable and cheerful air.

There was a little lively fire, though it was

June, and by it lay the invalid, in a pleasant doze. Not far from him sat his nurse, the pretty feminine head crowned with a glory of hair, bending over her work, and looking quite domestic. On the table was spread their luncheon, which was arranged with as much elegance as if they were at home.

The Captain awoke on hearing their voices, and expressed himself as decidedly better; so much so, that he did not disdain a slice of cold chicken, which was followed by some jelly; after which he achieved the feat of walking up and down the saloon several times, apparently without fatigue.

Luncheon over, Mrs. Joscelyn said—

“I now think I ought to return to my kingdom. I will leave a few directions for Mr. Summers, which will, I hope, complete the cure now begun.”

Extraordinary to relate, the Captain put on a face like a petted child.

“Oh! don’t—don’t leave me, Mrs. Joscelyn! I shall be as bad as ever if you go!”

“But absolutely I must return. I may wait another hour, especially as my husband is going to dine with us at Luff; but not longer.”

And now another extraordinary circumstance takes place, which makes the Squire open his eyes in amazement, and Frank exclaim—

“A miracle!—a miracle!”

Said Captain Crabshawe—

“Let me go and dine at Luff too!”

“We shall be very glad of your company; and I feel sure, if you wrap up warmly, you will take no harm. Fresh air and plenty of water are God’s own physicks; and therefore I prescribe them on every occasion; but you must not be late in coming home.”

Cushions were put in the boat, and a comfortable place arranged for him.

Mrs. Joscelyn ordered Frank to come too.

If one might judge by the expression of his face, it was an order he delighted to obey.

“We ought to take the cook, and his kickshaws, and the boy, Frank, for we are so many.”

“But how will the boat bring us all back?”

“It can go twice, and even if not, there is the boat of that beast Scruttles, which I have taken possession of, as I feel certain he stole it!”

Mrs. Joscelyn was right in fancying the little voyage and the fresh air would do the Captain good. He enjoyed it vastly.

Never was there seen a prettier sight than the groups that awaited their arrival at Luff. And when they discovered the invalid was with them, the hearty greetings and warm congratulations poured upon him, made a sort of an odd lump come in his throat. For the first time in his life, he discovered where-

abouts that neglected, ill-used thing, his heart, had hidden itself in his frame. He felt it thrill and beat with pleasure.

He was almost tearfully grateful, as Kate ran to prepare a sofa for him; Clara carried his wraps; Mrs. Spooner declared—"She was so surprised and delighted to see him;" while little Bessie allowed him to put a hand on her shoulder, as he stepped feebly out of the boat.

"Oh! Miss Daintree!" cried he, as he sunk upon the cushions prepared for him by her; "how kind you are to such a—to such a——"

"Hush! sir; we allow no one to call names in our island."

Now, it must be told of the ladies, that, shortly before dinner, they hastened upstairs to hold a consultation upon their toilettes, at Mrs. Spooner's express desire.

"But," as Clara said, "why hold a consul-

tation, when we have nothing smarter than white muslin?"

"Good gracious! my dears, did you not provide yourselves with a dinner-dress in case of accidents?"

"No, Mrs. Spooner."

"And I did not bring one either," said Mrs. Joscelyn.

"What a pity! for if I wear mine, I shall be so much too smart," and she pulled out to view a brocaded silk, elaborately trimmed with lace and ribbon.

"It is such an auspicious occasion, you know," she added, as she pulled out the bows, shook it out, and displayed all its beauties.

"Pray wear it then, and we will make ourselves as smart as we can."

"I have some flowers," said Kate, half hesitating, and then producing a basket full of the most lovely fresh flowers ever seen.

"Oh! how beautiful! But what a pity they

are not artificial; you could then wear them in your hair."

"We can wear them as they are!"

"Gossip, where did you get them?" whispered Clara.

"Where did you get your revolver?" answered her gossip, saucily.

"Goodness me! what it is to go to the Crimea!"

"Why, my dear Clara, why?" asked Mrs. Spooner eagerly.

"Because one becomes such a judge of flowers."

Too intent upon her toilette, Mrs. Spooner did not see the drift of Clara's remark. But Kate and Clara had a scrimmage—amicable, of course.

When Mrs. Spooner made her appearance in her brocaded dress, nothing could exceed the admiration of her beloved Augustus. He was one of those men who have an amiable

weakness for wishing to see his wife the finest of the fine; and to be able to say to himself—"That is a ten-guinea dress, as all the world must see; no wishey-washy muslin or mohair!"

Mrs. Joscelyn was already seated in her chair, dressed in muslin—white; and opposite her sat the Squire, who was hardly able to refrain from telling her how pretty he thought her.

To tone down the youthfulness of her muslin dress, she had taken down her coronet of hair, and wore a little lace cap, which was run with ribbons of the loveliest blue colour, and to match the colour she had a little dainty apron of blue silk, which gave a finish to her demi-toilette that was quite ravishing. To say nothing of two exquisite roses, acting as ornaments, which gave out a delicious fragrance whenever she moved.

In a few minutes the whole room seemed beautified and adorned by the appearance of

Miss Severn and Miss Daintree, also in white muslin, but ornamented with natural flowers, placed with so much art and skill, Mrs. Spooner was obliged to wish secretly she had left her brocaded silk at home.

There was quite a flutter of admiration in the room.

“Lizzy, you seem to have very pretty flowers here,” remarks the innocent Squire.

“Oh! very pretty,” answers that subtle lady.

The gentlemen had to make apologies for their appearance, being so very inferior to the ladies, which was of course excused. Captain Crabshawe alone looked more gentlemanly than he had ever done before, which circumstance was either owing to that air the Squire’s clothes possessed, or from the effects of Mrs. Joscelyn’s specifics of fresh air and water.

Under the combined influence of Susan, Sam, the cook, the cook’s kitchen-maid, it is needless to say, they dined royally.

After dinner the ladies were about to withdraw, but the gentlemen unanimously entreated them to remain.

“You will wish to smoke,” replied Mrs. Joscelyn, smiling.

“No, no!—oh! no,” exclaimed several voices.

“We have no cigars or tobacco left,” said Frank, calmly.

The Squire looked at Frank with the greatest amazement. That this amiable young man should deliberately take the trouble of telling, for nothing, such (a d—d l-e, as the Squire said in his thoughts) an untruth (as we say), was the most inconceivable thing in the world. He was so puzzled—not to say abashed—that he could only stare at him without uttering a word.

“Some more wine, Squire?” said Frank, as gay as a linnet.

“More wine!” murmured the Squire, looking at him severely.

“Yes, we ought to do justice to the dinner

—it shows, you see, how proper it is that all things should be amalgamated. The Puff dinner, added to that prepared at Luff, have together left us nothing to desire.”

Frank was not the only Puffite that astonished the Squire. Though Captain Crabshawe did not sit at the dinner-table, but reclined elegantly (that is, as elegantly as nature permitted) on his sofa, softly cushioned by Miss Daintree, he yet ate of everything that Mrs. Joscelyn allowed him, with exceeding “relish,” to use his own phrase. He also imbibed two bumpers of champagne, provided by the Squire, with so much good effect, as to prove no tonic could suit him better.

In fact, until the hour of nine approached, he was almost himself—no, not himself, but a sort of newly polished-up Crabshawe—a lively, good-tempered, mildly-jovial Crabshawe. A Crabshawe that might be styled quite a new species—amiable, sweetly grateful, and absolutely

given to small compliments. Though, by-the-bye, they were not small; when a man takes a sudden turn, such as King Crab had experienced bodily and mentally, he goes, as the proverb says, "the whole hog" at once.

As Miss Daintree confided to her gossip, under cover of night and the bedclothes—

"I thought the old thing would propose before the whole company!"

But to explain wherefore he astonished the Squire. Just about nine o'clock he appeared to experience a renewal of the pains in his bones. But his nurse and doctor was not to be deceived or cajoled.

"Wrap up Captain Crabshawe," quoth she, "and take him to the boat; he is now in want of a little more fresh air."

"Crab, you are a humbug," remarked the Squire, as the Captain pleaded, with a certain abject likeness to Scruttles, to remain where he was.

“I will be no trouble, kind Mrs. Joscelyn. I will lie here all night, and not be in anybody’s way!”

“I assure you that is impossible.”

“But all my pains have returned. I am worse than ever—surely you would not turn a dying man out at this time of night?”

Thus it appeared as if the miracle Mrs. Joscelyn had performed was a miracle no longer.

He moaned, he groaned, the corners of his mouth went down, the ends of his eyes went up! He contrived to look bilious, and all the blood he could collect he sent up into the nob of his nose.

The “Lords” and “Ladies” were alike puzzled and perplexed. All eyes were turned on Mrs. Joscelyn. She rose equal to the occasion.

“Gentlemen,” she said, “order your servants to wrap up Captain Crabshawe, and take him to

the boat. As Queen of Luff, so long as I reign, I permit no one to remain here after sunset, but my own subjects."

"But, Mrs. Joscelyn, suppose Luff is again invaded by robbers?" said Sir George.

"Yes, Elizabeth; we may not be so handy another time."

"For heaven's sake, don't be persuaded to risk such another adventure! In fact, I cannot—I will not leave my Arabella!"

("Darling!")

"Let us give up the challenge," said Sir George.

"Especially as we have lost it," remarked Frank.

"How!—how!" exclaimed all the Puffs in angry excitement.

"Because you are here."

"But we have agreed not to consider the doings of this day as anything. The ladies are not to forfeit their chance from raising their

flag, because it was a most extraordinary and untoward thing that made them do it. And we are not to lose our chance, for it was only common humanity to come and ask my wife to save Crab's life."

"Why not go to Rampton for a doctor, instead of troubling Mrs. Joscelyn?"

"My dear Frank, what is the matter with you? What has soured you? Why make all this bother?"

"Because I wish distinctly to understand, if we have lived in this most odious and uncomfortable way for more than three weeks, for the sake of the challenge, why are we to give it up just for a whim of Crab's?"

"My dear fellow, I am dying!"

"It is not so much on Crab's account, Frank, as the ladies. We give it up on their account."

"I'll be sworn they do not wish to give it up."

“We don’t!” said three female voices distinctly.

And Mrs. Joscelyn continued—

“My dear John, it was, as you say, an extraordinary and unforeseen circumstance our being visited by those robbers. But I do not in the least fear it will occur again. Your convict came here as much to revenge himself, as to rob us. But if that is not sufficient to ease your mind, remember the Coastguard look-out; they were here, ready to aid us, within a very few minutes of your own arrival.”

“That is true; and, Lizzy, you really don’t fear being again left alone? You would rather we fulfilled the time?”

“I would—and I hope my companions think the same.”

A sob from Mrs. Spooner.

“You know, Arabella, how much we shall be laughed at by our Rampton friends if we all return home within a few days

of the end of the trial, apparently for nothing."

"True," said Arabella, wiping her eyes. "There is Mrs. Ensnob, Augustus, and Lady Bunting, and that odious Major and Mrs. Jones."

"Yes, dearest Belle, I agree with you, they will always have the laugh against us. We must part, love!"

"Oh! Augustus!"

"Well, Lizzy, I think you have decided rightly. Though if you were at all nervous, or had any fears, a fig for the challenge, and all the Rampton people!"

"I have no fears, though I do not care for the Rampton people."

"But I promised them a dance, or a something of that sort, Lizzy, when we came home."

"When did you see them?"

The good Squire was non-plussed.

“Oh!” said that incorrigible Frank, “he wrote to them.”

This was too much for the Squire.

“I did not do anything of the sort; I—
I——”

Here he was hustled, and his voice drowned by a chorus of all sorts of noises, in the midst of which, by a sign from Mrs. Joscelyn, the Captain was forcibly enclosed in a great-coat, a large red worsted comforter tied over his head, a plaid encased his limbs, and he was borne off by Sam and Frank, as if he had been a mummy, to the boat.

The ladies walked with the gentlemen to see them embark.

The Captain made one more feeble remonstrance.

“Mrs. Joscelyn, let me be one of your subjects—your slave!”

“Pardon me,” she answered, “you are incapacitated for the privilege, by your sex.

Good night, gentlemen, and many thanks for a very pleasant evening."

So the gentlemen said farewell.

In the gloaming of that summer night there were sundry leave-takings that would not have taken place, it is presumed, in the broad daylight.

In fact, Sir George stepped into the boat with a sort of resigned feeling.

"I have gone and done it now! I shall hate myself if I don't follow up that squeeze of the hand with a proper proposal."

It did not appear that Mr. Summers and Miss Severn had so much interest in each other, as to make their parting in any way remarkable.

But as for the two A. S.'s, they kissed and parted, and fell into each others' arms a dozen times before the actual "tearing away" took place.

The Squire so far felt the influence of the

hour and the occasion, that he tucked his Lizzy's arm under his all the way to the boat, and, finding a convenient shadow under a slanting tree, thought to steal a kiss without anybody perceiving—this same Lizzy being averse to public demonstrations. He was correct in thinking no one saw, but, at the same time, everybody heard, which amounts to the same thing in the end.

“Lizzy,” said he, after perpetrating the deed, “I have left you three bottles of champagne !”

At last they were off, Frank in the Scruttles boat (at which the Squire had gazed with a gloomy look of disgust, that it was of no use kicking it), and the three servants.

The invalid was rowed home by three of his subjects.

But this eventful day is not entirely over.

When Frank arrived at Puff, he found Sir George waiting his landing.

“Frank, do come and have a quiet cigar and chat with me.”

“Let us put King Crab to bed first, and then I will chat with you all night.”

King Crab was very pretty behaved, and went to bed like a good child, taking solemnly, as it was prescribed by Mrs. Joscelyn, a glass of weak brandy and water.

But before he went, the Squire happened to say,

“Frank, what induced you to tell—to say—to perpetrate that horrid fib to my wife about our having no cigars or tobacco?”

“You came to Puff in consequence of being forbidden to smoke at home. That the ladies should have an inkling that you refrained from smoking all the way to Luff, that you never thought of having even one whiff on their island, that, in fact, you were ready to

give up smoking altogether if they wished it (which you are), was to my mind such an 'eating of humble pie,' such an admission of your miserable month, such a triumph to them, that really I felt I could do no less than sacrifice my principles to defend your dignities—your rights as men."

"It was very kind of you, I am sure, my dear Frank," said Spooner.

"I don't think it kind at all; he made me very uncomfortable; we certainly came here in a pet, but I do not think it was altogether about the smoking."

"It was not, Squire," answered King Crab; "it was to save Frank from the arts of Miss Severn. And do know, Frank, I think she is a nice gurl? She is much improved."

"Go—o—od heavens! Crabshawe!"

"Don't 'good heavens me,' Spooner, it makes me nervous to have a person articulating in one's ear like a woman. I have changed my

mind—why should I not change my mind? Miss Severn is a nice gurl.”

“Then, Frank, you may now marry her, if you like,” said Sir George.

“And we have had all the bother of coming here for nothing, as far as regards you, Frank?”

Mr. Summers made each of these gentlemen a low bow, as if he assented to their remarks.

“Not that she mentioned your name, or made a single inquiry as to where you were, Frank, this morning.”

“Naturally, she was thinking of Scruttles.”

“Don’t mention that beast.”

“No, for she was sufficiently collected to tell me a great deal about Colonel Erne.”

“Do not heed George, Frank; propose to her the first opportunity.”

“Ah!” murmured Frank, “too late! too late!”

“Don’t sigh so, my good fellow, you have almost blown me off my chair. Never give up! Fight the fine hero!”

“But I feel very friendly towards him.”

“The deuce, you do! Surely you will not let him carry off Miss Severn from under your very nose?”

“He is welcome to do so if he can; she must weigh about nine stone.”

“Frank,” broke in the Squire, “you are a hypocrite.”

“I was always truthful, until I came to Puff. I believe you were so good as to come here partly for my advantage, I hope you are satisfied with the result.”

“My dear Frank,” said the Squire, his kind heart quite touched, “if we have interfered with your happiness, if in any way this expedition has cost you a pang, let me bear the

blame—let me explain it all. I will say how unwilling you were to accompany us—how diligent you have been always looking out for the flag—how——”

“We will all do that; yes, indeed, Frank, rely upon it, you shall have every assistance we can give. Miss Severn will not be worth having, if she can resist the tales we can tell of you.”

“Thanks, thanks, gentlemen; I feel—I know ’tis useless. So, Crabshawe, let me assist you to bed. While I am absent, my kind friends, pray moralise a little upon the inconsistencies of the male sex. I do not think any woman of my acquaintance ever showed more than you have done, and each time actuated by the worthiest motives of humanity for my unworthy self.”

“Poor Frank,” said the Squire, when he was gone, “what he says is true; we dragged him here to save him from Miss Severn, and

now we are encouraging him to offer to her. How queer we are, Spooner!"

"True, Squire, the regulative faculty of the human mind sometimes gets out of order. The conservative principle of memory becomes absorbed in the productiveness of suggestion, and thus we lose the corrective principle of reason or common sense."

The Squire was in bed and snoring before Mr. Spooner had finished his metaphysical definition of the reason why human beings were "queer," as propounded by the Squire.

When Frank and Sir George met to smoke that cigar, and have that chat, they were the only persons still out of bed at Puff.

"Frank, I have had such a happy, such a delicious day, and yet it was not wholly without alloy."

"How?"

"Do you not see a change in Kate—Miss Daintree, I mean?"

“I thought her looking prettier than ever.”

“Yes, she did; positively, she has the loveliest colour—oh! Frank, if she had been more severely burnt or scarred by that accident, what a thousand pities it would have been!”

“A million! As it is, she is not in the least injured!”

“Do you think it was this narrow escape from a frightful death that has altered her so much?”

“You mean she was nervous and subdued?”

“Yes, instead of laughing and chatting, and being, as you know, a little saucy sometimes,—all merriness of heart, Frank, she overflowed with exuberance of spirits,—not at all too much—it was all most feminine and lovely. Now, to-day she appeared so shy, so subdued, she blushed and paled at every word. And, Frank, do you know, though I tried as much as it was possible to get her alone, she would not see or understand my wishes.”

“I should think not; the truest, dearest, sweetest natures shrink from the inevitable moment of a confession of love!”

“You think she loves me?”

“I really cannot, dare not say. She gives me the impression of having lost her girlish freedom of heart. Something, I fancy, has opened to her a glimpse of that feeling which governs us all more or less, George; and the deeper the perception, the more strongly will she feel.”

“Do you think so? Ah! Frank, if I thought, if I was sure—but at all events, one thing is indisputable—I have discovered the state of my own heart. At the moment when I heard of her narrow escape from a fearful death, I felt how insupportable this world would be to me without her.”

“That is the true state to be in, George, when thinking seriously of matrimony. Let me congratulate you, not so much on the

prospect of marriage, as that in a real, true fit of love, one loses the consciousness of self. We feel that we cannot ourselves make our own happiness, and we therefore trust another with it."

"I understand you; at present, had I only been able first to say one word to her, just to secure her, just to feel I had only to speak to clench the matter, I should be full of happy, elevated, pure feelings—feelings which, though but slightly developed, seem to promise me extraordinary happiness."

"A little suspense, George, will serve to test those feelings."

"I am not accustomed to suspense; the fact is, Frank, do you know how Kate—Miss Daintree, got her burns?"

"Yes, through her desire to rescue some paper from the fire written by her friend."

"Miss Severn—you do not seem to like mentioning her name, Frank. But don't be

down-hearted, my dear fellow. She has a good deal of spirit, and may perhaps be offended that you did not come with us ; but she is a sensible girl, and must know what a good fellow you are."

"And you think Miss Daintree loves Miss Severn more than you, because she risked her life to save her paper?"

"No, Frank, not at all ; but do you know what the paper was about? The Arctic regions, Frank!"

"Why should that make you unhappy?"

"Because—because he admired her so ; girls, you know, are easily smitten with a sudden admiration."

"But the Admiral is married, my dear George!"

"Nonsense, Frank ; I am speaking of his friend!"

"Oh! Colonel Erne ; what has he to do with the Arctic regions? Was not I to be angry at his attention to Miss Severn?"

“I know nothing about that; I only know this, that when the paper, that paper, was brought out for us to see and read, she blushed and trembled the whole time we were talking of those people.”

“Perhaps she was still nervous at her escape!”

“Not at all; when they were reading it aloud, and describing how they suffered, and starved, and ate nasty things, I almost thought there were tears in her eyes.”

“She is naturally tender-hearted, and she blushes with every thought.”

“But she need not blush about whales, and walrusses, and blubber!”

“Certainly not, considering she is not likely to be asked to dine on them.”

“I have a mind to go over to Luff to-morrow, Frank. If that fellow comes back I shall be certain to quarrel with him, unless——”

“Unless Miss Daintree was pledged to be the future Lady Follett.”

“You are right, Frank. I do not care a farthing for the challenge. I think I shall go and confide my wishes to Mrs. Joscelyn.”

“But you thereby endanger our chance of winning. No; be patient, George. Monday evening will soon be here.”

“I suppose I must acquiesce, though it is a confounded bore. I am nervously anxious to get the matter settled.”

“It is a very good feeling, and will, I hope, increase.”

“If it does, it will be utterly impossible for me to wait.”

“Well, since your sufferings are so severe, suppose we propose to the others to go to Exe church on Sunday? You may get an opportunity then, without endangering the loss of the challenge.”

“A capital idea! If the others will not

go, you and I can row over, by starting pretty early."

"I am not very keen about going myself; but if you cannot get one of the others to chaperon you I will do violence to my feelings and accompany you."

"Thanks, Frank; I will say you are the truest friend; and if your love matters don't go as smoothly as mine, I shall pity Miss Severn—not you. She will never have such a chance again."

"You do me honour," answered the polite but imperturbable Frank. "Good-night."

"Good-night, though I feel as if I was utterly incapable of sleeping."

"Determine to dream of Miss Daintree—and the thing is done."

From the above conversation it will be seen that our two young bachelors are much changed since we first had the pleasure of making their acquaintance. Sir George is

absolutely smitten with something like the pangs of jealousy, while that chivalrous and devoted Frank has become indifferent, cynical, demoralized!

It would require the brains of a Spooner to investigate and lay bare the peculiar construction of the hearts of these two young gentlemen. He would no doubt inform us whether it was the smoking, the want of a cook, the companionship of Scruttles, the air of the island, or all combined, that turned Sir George into an ardent jealous lover, and Mr. Summers into a cold, austere, fibbing, hypocritical sort of mild bear.

It is probable that Mr. Spooner would put aside any mundane causes as the effect of this extraordinary change; he would doubtless attribute all to the metaphysical laws of the mind and brain. To himself the matter would be no doubt clear enough; but to us, or rather, let me say, to the writer, alas! I am

unable, through ignorance, even to hint at so sublime a subject. I can but state the fact, that they were changed.

But Sir George was not the only person on the island of Puff suffering from the pangs of jealousy.

Sam, after assisting Mr. Summers to put King Crab to bed, returned to the kitchen, but paused as he heard voices.

Sam's ideas of honour did not extend to that branch which enjoins the propriety of not listening to a private conference; perhaps he had never heard the proverb bearing on the matter.

On the contrary, he was stimulated to put his ear to the keyhole by hearing his own name, having previously peeped in, and seen the cook seated upon an empty barrel of beer, "raposiding to hisself," as Sam said to himself.

"Ha! ha! Samuel, my fine plush fellow, hu

thinks has she have a hi to yer briches, but hi vill cock my cook's cap agin you. Ho! Seusin, Seusin, you fust-rate critter! You has a hi for dishing hof a dinner, has I never see hequaled! Ho! Seusin, what a cleaner!—what a washer-up!—what a 'and for pastry!—what a convidence with heggs, hand a hangel hat seasening! If Seusin and me were jined in whon, we 'ood set hup a heating shop. My faiks! what a hunion hit 'ood be! We 'ood make a repertation, Seusin; we'd go to Lunnon, Seusin—none hof yer Rampton rubbigsh, wi'hout a single hidea of hart; we'd be sent fur to coort, Seusin, to send hup her Madjesty's privert dinners! What a fortin we'd make! I'd come Sworway, and 'ave the haristocrisy a-running hafter me and Seusin. We'd keep our carridge, Seusin, and 'ave a little willa hout of town; hu should 'ave a sating gownd, Seusin, and hi 'ood take yer to the hopera!"

“You take yourself hoff, you pertater-peeler ;

and, mark me, if hi catches yer so much as winking at that theyre young woman, as his likely enough to be Mrs. Sam, I'll pound yer with yer own mortar!"

"You be blowed!" answered cook, valiantly; "do yer think yer have a chance agin me?"

"Chance or none, come on, I'll fight yer!"

"I doesn't fight wi' menials! Hi ham ha hartist. Yu knows hu haint Sir George's walet—yu his the hundermust feller. Sir George's walet 'oodn't demean his-self a-coming 'ere! Do yer think has Mistress Seusin wull luik hat the loikes of yer?"

"Hi 'ave knowed Seusan a precious sight longer than you. I were brought hup with her hat Squire Joscelyn's, and hif so be as Sir George did chose me to come with him, it were a honour, I tell ye. Sir George is a koind master. He haint likely fur to furgot has hi cumed with 'im when his own walet refused! Talk of yer beggarly heating shop, hi shall 'ave

a farm hunder Sir George, and Seusin shall be a farmer's wife."

"Ho! that's yer game, his it?—a pretty deal you knows of farming! Hall yer knollidge lies in the calf line, hi ham thinking!"

"A pretty fool you'll look at the hopera!"

Thus did they recriminate, and for aught we know to the contrary, went on all night.

It is no more than due to the ladies that this day, on which the gentlemen had met the ladies, under peculiar circumstances, after so long a separation, should be followed by a night, during which the "Lords" paid the "Ladies" the compliment of being unable to sleep for thinking of them.

CHAPTER IV.

LUFF IT IS.

YOU are not to suppose, my dear reader, that this eventful day was closed without the ladies also indulging themselves with a *repertoire* of all that had passed. No sooner were the gentlemen gone, than the "talkee talkee," as the Chinese call it, began.

Mrs. Spooner called upon all her companions to declare that they had never seen Augustus look so well.

"The dear, manly fellow!" she babbled; "what splendid whiskers he has!—and the new

style of doing his hair is so becoming! Oh! Mrs. Joscelyn, when I think of all I have thought, when I remember all I have said, I am thoroughly disgusted with myself! He says he has not had a single happy moment since he left me."

"I hope you told him the same."

"Oh! yes. I told him how I had desired to hoist the flag the very first day—how I had been so moped, making myself quite ill with anxiety about him, for fear he should wet his feet, or forget his flannel waistcoats; and I showed him my stocking—the stocking I am knitting for him—and he was so surprised! 'Did you, did you indeed, my darling Belle, knit all this yourself?' I thought you would not mind, dear Mrs. Joscelyn, my not telling him of the purling and plaining, and the taking in, and the heel?"

"Oh! no, especially as now you must learn to do these parts of a stocking yourself, that

Augustus may not be disappointed afterwards."

"I will. I feel capable of making any exertion for him. We were both sorry you would keep to the whole month; it seems such a weary time from now until Monday."

"We must be very busy."

"And besides, he was so alarmed by the fear of more pirates coming."

"Mrs. Joscelyn," interrupted Clara, "I shall never again boast that a woman can defend herself. I have been quite alarmed at the strength of the two feelings that prevented me from using our two weapons of defence. I could not bear to see my dog hurt, and I shuddered so at the touch of that horrid man, I let go my revolver rather than endure it."

"I can very well fancy both feelings; but, by-the-bye, who gave you your revolver?"

“I did !” said Miss Kate, unblushingly.

“And how came you possessed of such a weapon ?”

“Gossip,” said Clara, severely, though her face was suffused with blushes, “unsay that fib immediately ! Friendship no doubt demands it, but honour forbids the sacrilege.”

“We got it,” replied the little fibber, temporising in the matter, “from the same person who gave us the flag.”

“Oh !” answered Mrs. Joscelyn ; and “oh !” was all she said.

Here we might enter into a dissertation upon the vast number of meanings that can be expressed by that smallest of all monosyllables. The greatest fear, the most tender affection, the deepest irony, and the most confiding sympathy ; the utmost indifference, and the greatest cordiality ; can all be conveyed by merely the tone in which people say “oh !”

We shall not divulge the manner in which Mrs. Joscelyn said her "oh;" it was simply most expressive.

"But it is all very well having a present of a revolver; how did you know the way it is fired off, Clara?" asked Mrs. Spooner.

"I was taught by Mr. Summers."

"Oh!" (another oh!) "I suppose some time ago, as I hardly saw you speak to him yesterday."

"We are on friendly terms; you were so occupied with Mr. Spooner——"

"And who can wonder? Dear—dear fellow! There is no one like him in the world! And so clever, too! Nobody knows what hoards of learning he conceals in his brain."

"'Tis a pity he conceals it."

"Only because he so seldom finds a mind sufficiently clever to understand his—that is all. With me he will talk by the hour, and always on some new subject."

“I cannot help wondering how the gentlemen endured as a servant so dreadful a wretch as the head of those robbers; they must have been very good-natured.”

“Augustus told me the man came to rob us out of revenge, because they would not permit him to land at Puff. He waited until the boat came with stores, and then followed it very early the next morning. But he and his companions rowed so badly, they got to Ribble first. There they landed and rested, and, not thinking of the Coastguard, or that they should be interrupted by any one, took their time to come across to us, the distance being short.”

“We had a most narrow escape. Half an hour earlier for the robbers, and half an hour later for the rescue, would have made all the difference.”

“Susan’s poker was delightful; it gave me more confidence than anything else, for by

it I perceived that in reality these men were cowards at heart."

"All people in the wrong are cowards, I think—they have to fight against right as well as might; only desperate villains care for neither. Thus, this creature they call Scrutles was no man at all. He was an abject miserable thief, and his chief weapon against us was our repugnance to his presence, while ours against him was Susan's poker. He could not bear the common sting of a burn."

"Fortunately we never said the world could do without men; we only argued that, for a specified time, we could live very well without them."

So thus the ladies discoursed. No pangs of jealousy seemed to afflict them; on the contrary, watched by the Coastguard, conscious of the pleasure the gentlemen felt at being restored to their society, pleased with the different incidents of the day, which had re-

dounded most to their credit and welfare, the ladies were in high good humour.

Even Susan, alone in her kitchen, discoursed Miss Daintree's kitten upon the events of the day, with a sweet temper and forbearance that would have surprised her acquaintance.

“Thon aint a bad cook, puss, by no manes. And Sam isn't over-much airified considerin'. He is a'most ready to jump out of his skin, as the time is a-coming for us to be going. I mostly think, cat, as it's best to bear wi' men, that one munnot be overborne wi' such critters. It's a most uncommon curous thing, pussie, that jealousy—cook was a'most forgetting of his stuffin', all along o' that fellow Samivel. Men is allers jealous of one another; they is like one dog a-choking wi' puddin', grabbing another dog's bone; he doesn't want it, but tother chap shannet hev it.

“But they may snigger and fight. I respects master, and if he be ever so hot, he niver

goes from his promise! 'Tis binding as a law on him, pussie, whether for guid or bad, and that's a comfort, when one is a-dishing for dinner. But fur the rest of yer men-folk, puss, I doesn't care the whisk of yer tail; though I'll not deny as cook has a genius for seasining has most folk takes no regard on. He's particklar, puss, to a pinch, and a-weighs his little consarns to a grain, and that's a thing has desarns a good wurd, if one can say noffin more of 'im! It's past me, puss, the hodd ways of men—allers thinking of their loove matters, which mostly is a state for fullish folks, and thim as haven't a varsel thing to do. Hum!—hum! we know a think or two, cat, but we knows manners tew; let me git home to my own kitching, and then we'll see whose master!"

A great deal more was confided to puss, which it was a pity she could not convey to the island of Puff, and so put an end to the

deep tragedy of love and jealousy, going on for 'Seusin's' sake.

Nobody sat up very late at Luff. Runa was released from her kennel, and the doors and windows more carefully examined before they retired to rest. Everybody resorted to the expedient of leaving her bedroom door open, under the fallacious idea that it seemed as if they all slept together in one room.

On Thursday morning they awoke, still full of excitement, which was not allayed by hearing voices calling them. Running out to see whom it could be, they found Sir George and Mr. Spooner at the landing-place, who came, as they said, as a matter of duty, to inquire after the health of the ladies. They were anxious to know if they had suffered at all from the frights and excitements of the day before.

The Queen of the island was under the necessity of being very severe, arbitrarily order-

ing these two encroachers to depart to their own dominions, which they did at last without landing, but much grumbling.

About three o'clock again they heard shouts—this time it was the Squire and King Crab.

Nothing would satisfy that amiable invalid but that he must have a row on the water; Mrs. Joscelyn had ordered him to have as much fresh air as possible, and by some unaccountable means they had found themselves so near Luff, they thought it only their duty to call and say how fast King Crab was recovering.

There was no difficulty in getting rid of them, the Squire being of the same opinion as his wife, that they had no business there.

On Friday no great event happened, but that Mrs. Spooner, hearing Bessie her lessons while Mrs. Joscelyn was assisting Susan to make a sponge-cake, was overheard by Clara

and Kate imparting knowledge to Bessie of a peculiar kind.

The word "trigonometry" chancing in one of Bessie's lessons, that innocent young lady begged to be enlightened as to its meaning.

"Oh! Bessie, you must not ask—it is a shocking word!"

"But if it is shocking how came it in my lesson book?"

"I cannot tell indeed, Bessie, my dear."

"Is it shocking because it is long and hard? Or shocking, because it is naughty and bad?"

"It means a most horrible thing, Bessie; and I will tell it to you, that you may never ask anyone else. It means a man marrying three wives; and bigamy, another word almost as shocking, means a man marrying two wives."

"Oh! is that all!"

“All! Mind, Bessie, you never mention such a word to anyone.”

Which advice Miss Bessie followed to the extent of asking Clara, as soon as she saw her, and gaining thereby a rather clearer account of the word “trigonometry” than Mrs. Spooner could give her.

On Saturday they steadily packed up all day.

On Sunday the boatmen came to say that once every month a clergyman did duty at Ribble, for the sake of the lighthouse people. The service was generally in the open air, if fine. Would the ladies like to go?

The ladies fancied it much, and went, and were not disappointed in having done so.

The day was beautifully bright and soft. There was something inexpressibly grand in hearing the solemn service of the Church, with no lower vault than that of Heaven

itself; and the human voice, preaching the words of life, had no limit to its sound. It seemed to penetrate like a warning to the most distant ear, distinct above the murmur of the sea, unconfused by the echo of walls.

That evening there fell upon the ladies a sort of silence—a gentle melancholy. Mrs. Spooner alone was a little fussy. She was continually packing the things she wanted at the last moment. But she was not without some perception of this evening being the last scene of a drama they should never act again.

In her restlessness she wandered into the kitchen, and found Susan in the same species of melancholy.

“Susan, you are crying.”

“I be, mum.”

“And for what, Susan?”

“After to-night, mum, there bean’t no more peace for me, not nowheres.”

“How do you mean, Susan?”

“Well, mum, it’s not missuses as I complains on, or young missuses, or master, or the parlour company; it’s sarvints theysels as aggrawates me.”

“Poor Susan! Do tell Mrs. Joscelyn, and she will discharge them all, and get better ones.”

“There ain’t no better to be had. Sarvints is a ruined race; they is a set of individdles as is the provokinest of critters. You carn’t please ’em—no, not if you was to roast and bile yerself to a hatony. They must live like theyre masters, and dress like theyre missuses, and ’ave the imperance of the hold fella as lives down below the cellars, with a tail he has; one Muster Nicholas, as it ain’t manners for wommen folk to say his right neame. But dinno mind me, Mrs. Spooner, mum; I’ll ’ave my bit cry, and then I’ll be a sight better.”

“Only think!” exclaimed Mrs. Spooner, re-

turning to the saloon, "Susan is crying because we are going to leave Luff! But you all look rather melancholy."

"I do not know that we are so melancholy, as that women are rather like limpets, they get attached to places of which they have made a home. We may, perhaps, be thinking of what change fate has next in store for us."

As Mrs. Joscelyn said this, a quick gush of tears blinded Kate's eyes, though an irrepressible smile and blush accompanied them; she hid all on her aunt's shoulder, under pretence of kissing her; while over Clara's face there stole a serene glow of happiness, that lighted her fair face with a beautiful hue and expression. As for Bessie, she was a little sulky.

It has never been denied in this truthful story that Bessie was the least in the world spoiled. Thus, when in the doldrums, the effect of this spoiling came out. All the day she had been holding arguments with her mother

as to the propriety and expediency of not going home to-morrow.

“Will you write to pa, and ask to stay another month?”

“No.”

“Would she ask pa to let them all come back?”

“No.”

“Would not some of them return, and let one of those some be Bessie?”

“No.”

Finally Bessie went off to Susan, as the only congenial soul on the island, and they comforted each other.

Meantime the Queen of Luff thus addressed her subjects on the last evening of her reign. It was not after the usual fashion of a Queen's speech, for it began—

“My dears!—I do not like our party to break up without tendering you my best thanks for your happy companionship. (Here

there was a little chorus of exclamations, purporting that they were all indebted to her.) I have been vastly happy (another chorus), and I owe it in a great measure to you. (Chorus.) I should not be worthy of being believed in this instance, if I did not allow that sometimes we have been a little dull. (Chorus indulged in small groans.) Do not deceive yourselves—we have been dull, all of us, in our several ways. But you never embarrassed me by complaints, or troubled me with murmurs. You fought your *ennui* with the best weapons at hand—work and determination. From the first I conjectured this would be our chief trial; for our natures are not bad ones (chorus), we will hope, now that we have tested each other's merits and foibles, by living together for a whole month. Though I have said we were dull, we have had adventures of so startling a nature, that it is

probable we should never have met them had we staid at home.

“Witness the coming of the ‘Cannibal,’ and the delightful consequences that followed, in our becoming acquainted with two distinguished heroes; of other consequences, perhaps (here a member of the chorus so vehemently clasped the speaker in an embrace, that for a moment there was a pause in the Queen’s speech) ’tis best to say nothing at present.

“Then we had our little amusements—of stories, and history acting. We must not forget how God delivered us from a peril by fire, in which I am certain, had He permitted it to extend its ravages, it would have caused the destruction of more than one life, and destroyed the happiness of numbers!

“We must not forget the storm. We must not forget those dreadful robbers, out of whose clutches we discovered we had no means to free ourselves, brave though we were for

women, and had only just realized the pangs of our weakness, when we were delivered. It is fortunate that we did not separate ourselves from our natural protectors on the plea that we were independent of them. We merely said, as became women, that we could better endure the loss of their society than they could ours. Thus we shall not be twitted on our utter helplessness—all but Susan's red-hot poker on that occasion!

“Also let us remember the lessons of human woe, of suffering, of heroic virtue, of noble fortitude, taught us in the churchyard of Exe.
(Chorus.)

“And now I will revert, just for a moment, to the real origin, to the primary cause that made me accept the gentlemen's challenge. You will remember it arose out of a desire I had to put an end to certain attentions that coupled the names of two ‘Lords’ with two ‘Ladies.’ I hope you understand me. I

am not often disturbed in mind, but a habit is growing among young men of the present day, to signal out a young lady, to mark her to the world by his attentions, and then to withdraw, saying he meant nothing but friendship. I feared this fate for two of my subjects!

“In thinking over the probable effect of my scheme for our seclusion, I can only say that the freaks of fortune are endless. Time alone will show if I did right, but at present I can dream of nothing but wedding-cake—I appear always to be inhaling the perfume of orange flowers; I see rings and favours growing out of the flames of the fire, and I am even fearful lest my little Bessie should come to me and say she was going to be married. (Chorus of laughter, with an assortment of the most approved blushes.)

“And now, my dears, for a little advice. If my dreams, my omens, my convictions come

true, don't presume upon the wealth of love offered for your acceptance. Remember Luff, and how we were only dull there because the zest for our usual employments was wanting—women do not like working for themselves only. Also do not forget how it was proved to us that we must have some one on whom to lean, to trust. Strong-minded women there are, who may scoff at us, but to me there is no sight more lovely than the graceful ivy clinging to the mighty oak. And one last word about the challenge. If we win it, do not let us forget that we were very fortunate in the company of each other. No queen had ever more obedient subjects. May I hope she merited that obedience? (Chorus.) So now, having reviewed our position, and considered everything that has occurred to us, let me once more thank you for your love and amiability.”

Thus spoke the Queen of Luff to her subjects on their last evening of their stay there.

They kissed and thanked her a thousand times, and responded to all her kind words fourfold. As for Mrs. Spooner, in the excitement of the moment, and the consciousness of Mrs. Joscelyn's worth, she forgot herself altogether, except saying that was she ever inclined to be discontented, angry, foolish, she would remember how their queen beguiled her to be happy, industrious, contented, and sensible.

Of this latter virtue Mrs. Spooner would have benefited by receiving a large dose. But nature interferes in doling out this commodity to the human race. Nevertheless, Experience is sometimes good enough to repair nature's partiality. It is fair to presume that the female A. S. was so fortunate as to make Experience her friend. At least, from what she is now saying to the girls, we may infer so.

“You have no idea what a difference it makes, girls, to one's comfort having a husband.

All his goings and comings, his ins and his outs, his pains and his pleasures, are as interesting to you as to him. Then it is so nice always to have some one to refer to—to confide in, to run to, to be interested in all you do and say. That is what made me so dull here—I missed all this so much—I was almost, as it were, single again. I do not express myself very well, but I thank the Almighty that since I came here I have learnt what a wife is, or ought to be, to her husband.”

Now, during all this speechifying, and confiding, and repenting, never one word said Clara. She pulled Runa first by one ear, and then the other. Once or twice she took the same little liberty with Runa's tail. Mrs. Joscelyn looked at her often, but obtained neither look nor sign.

And now we must for ever bid farewell to the “Ladies”; when next we see them, they will be the ordinary mortals found in every

part of her Majesty's dominions, whose acquaintance we made just one month ago.

Thursday, as we know, the "Lords" passed a good deal of their time rowing about on the water. Friday, they began to pack up, and the Squire performed his part so thoroughly, that he was obliged to unpack his Sunday suit, for our gentlemen had all made up their minds to go to Exe church.

They had a very natural curiosity regarding its tombs and grave-stones. Even Captain Crabshawe said he would not miss seeing that church and churchyard for anything. This worthy gentleman's health was so fully re-established, that he never looked better in his life.

To be sure, that is not saying much, for under no circumstances could he have ever looked so that people might regard him with complacency. On the contrary, it was the habit of even those friends who knew him, sometimes to confide to each other—

“Crab looks more ugly to-day than usual.”

However, now he is looking better than usual. There is a sparkle in his eye, an eagerness in his manner, that quite amaze his subjects.

Moreover, he has written three letters—one addressed to a tailor, another to a bootmaker, and a third to the person who is supposed to do the duty of mother to him; and he was most particular in sending these by the Thursday boat.

It was on Saturday evening, that, finding himself alone with Frank, that the following conversation took place:

“Miss Severn is a nice gurl, Frank.”

“So I think you said before.”

“It is a pity you have quarrelled with her.”

“It would be a pity if I had.”

“Now, Frank, my dear boy, I have a

regard for you. I told you before that I did not think Miss Severn would suit you; she has a spirit—she would be too much for you.”

“Really!”

“Yes, you ought to have a nice little quiet gurl. Now, Miss Severn should be wed to a man of pluck and resolution, and good age; a man who knows how to govern. Has she any money?”

“In her purse, now——”

“Tut!—in the bank; any fortune, I mean.”

“I do not know.”

“And yet you thought of marrying her!”

“Crab! you monster! a faint hope crossed my mind, as to whether she would permit me to ask her to marry me.”

“It’s all the same thing in the end, but surely you were prudent enough to make

inquiries as to whether she had enough of her own, to pay her own expenses."

"No. When I am so fortunate as to have a wife, I hope to be able to provide her with all she fancies."

"That may be all very well for you, who have a fortin' of your own; but you see, unless she brings something to a poor man, she is a very expensive luxury."

"Of what luxury are you talking?" asked Sir George, just coming in.

"Crab is talking of the luxury of a wife."

"No! how much do you rate her at, Crab?"

"I am only advising Frank—he is so thoughtless! I tell him he ought to take care his wife has one or two hundred a year, to pay her own expenses."

"One or two hundred a year!—I doubt if that is enough for my wife's dress," responded Sir George.

"Then she is a fool!" retorted the Captain.

"Who?"

"Your wife."

"Captain Crabshawe, you shall answer to me for this insult."

"Stop, stop, my dear George, do not be angry; you have no wife yet," interposed Frank.

"He has insulted her—all the same as if I had."

"This is too ridiculous! I have a mind to let you fight it out; only pray recollect that Lady Follett would naturally dress very differently to Mrs. Crabshawe. The latter would do her marketing in a cotton dress, while the former would be rolling by in her carriage, clothed in satin and ermine. Mrs. Crabshawe would be cheapening alpacas, while Lady Follett was selecting her velvets."

"Very true, Frank; I was a fool to notice the fellow's words."

“Fellow indeed! Sir George Follett.”

“I beg your pardon, Captain Crabshawe; let us have no more words.”

King Crab accepted the apology with a clumsy grace. It was fortunate there were but two days more for these two to spend together at Puff. As it was, they only kept the peace by speaking no more to each other, beyond the barest words.

Saturday was the dullest and most uncomfortable day they each had ever experienced. They all seemed possessed by the Demon of Unrest.

On Sunday they were all lively again, and started betimes for Exe church. But they were longer going across the bay than they expected, and heard the church bells ringing some time before they arrived; and they altogether ceased just as they were within a hundred yards of the shore.

But they reached the strangers' pew in Exe

church in the middle of the Psalms, thanks to the manner in which the Exe psalmists sang the morning hymn.

They were some minutes in church before the fact presented itself clearly to the minds of one or two who looked for them, that there were no ladies in church!

The Squire, of course, was not one of these; he was properly saying his prayers. Only on coming out of church did he remark—

“Where did my wife sit?”

“They are not in church, Squire; they may be ill,” said Spooner.

“It may be as well that we should go and inquire,” continued King Crab. “As Mrs. Joscelyn cured me of my illness, it is no more than right that I should attend to her, if she is ill.”

King Crab, as a nurse, did not present to their mental vision a single qualification for

the post; on the contrary, had they not been in the churchyard, the notion would have been received with bursts of laughter.

“I am not in the least anxious about her health,” said the Squire; “as she would naturally send to me at once, if she was ill.”

“But some of the others may be so.”

“Of course they would send also, Spooner. Now that I am here, I mean to look at the tombstones.”

The Squire had not gone half the round of the churchyard, before Sir George came eagerly to him, and said—

“The ladies are gone to Ribble! One Sunday in every month a clergyman goes there to do duty. I propose that we go there too.”

“Very good; I am your man—but, George, what a melancholy place this is! My heart is quite sore for all these poor people.”

“I never allow myself to be melancholy, Squire, if I can help it.”

“I believe it is very good for one to be made to feel. I am a sad, hasty fellow, and always speak before I think. I never reflect on all the sorrow and misery that is going on in the world, as long as everything is pretty right with myself.”

“Why should you, Squire? Everybody has his own worries and troubles.”

“But I have none in comparison of these; and I am no better than they were. See here, now—read this stone. A wife and seven children, the youngest a baby six weeks old—all drowned! and the husband was saved, and puts up the tablet to their memory—why, George, where is that man? He must have died of grief.”

“I do not think so; I daresay he is alive and merry, and married again.”

“I believe some people are very heartless.

I am sure I am; but I would not do that. Ha! I am right. See, George, here is his name, on the cross at the foot of the grave. He did not survive them six months. I am glad of that. They are all now in heaven together, please God."

The Squire's ideas of a future life were founded solely upon the instincts of his own kind heart. So absorbed was he in examining the records of the graves, that they had some difficulty in getting him away.

"It is a drive of eleven miles from Ramp-ton round by the bay to Exe—I shall bring Elizabeth over now and then; I think it will be good for me."

When the gentlemen arrived at Ribble, they found the ladies had gone home!

There was a little dispute as to whether they should pass by Luff and hail them, or whether they should go straight home to Puff.

“The ladies are all well, and we are within three miles of Puff; whereas, if we go the way round to Luff, it will make it six.”

Common sense carried the day; they went home.

No feelings oppressed the gentlemen on this their last evening, as had oppressed the ladies. They experienced nothing but a strong fit of fidgets.

An excellent dinner and the last bottles of champagne opened their hearts a little.

“I don’t regret coming to Puff,” quoth the Squire, “though I cannot help feeling glad this is our last evening here.”

“I am sick of the place,” exclaimed Sir George.

“I must say an absence from a happy domestic hearth, only urges one to rush back to it more eagerly.”

Now, there is no denying that, upon hear-

ing these several sentiments expressed by his subjects, King Crab had a right to grumble, just a little. It was not altogether quite civil to the monarch of the Puff realms.

Perhaps a slight remonstrance, a courteous sort of deprecating apology, would have turned these different opinions into a genial flow of kindly remarks, regarding the trouble their king had taken to govern them well and pleasantly.

But that personage was possessed of neither tact nor wisdom. He said at once, and boldly,

“If I had had a different set of fellows to deal with, matters would have turned out very differently. I should have been asked to remain another month.”

“I think your observation unjust. I desire to be told why you think so.”

The words of the Squire were no great things, but the manner in which they were

uttered was simply stupendous. No lion of the forest ever growled in deeper wrath.

King Crab was not dismayed.

“None of you has ever had any heart in the life. You are all too fine. One was always thinking of his dinner, another of his clothes—all wanting his own particular whims and fancies to be done, just as if you were a parcel of—of——”

“Of women,” suggested Frank.

“I might say women, but, upon my soul, I don’t think it is doing them justice to say so.”

“Since when have you made this notable discovery?”

“That evening we spent at Luff; they were all so merry, and happy, and contented.”

“I wish to know,” broke in the Squire, whose sense of justice was becoming every moment more outraged, “why you made that

uncalled-for remark about us? What have we—what have I done to merit it?”

Never had Mrs. Joscelyn aroused the nerve Opiniatum into such startling energy as King Crab had achieved by that ungracious speech of his.

“Tut! tut! don’t let us quarrel the last evening.”

“I have no intention that way, but I will have an answer.”

And the Squire regarded the Captain with the stern and unwavering gaze that is supposed to belong to the British lion, and which has the quality of awing the enemy at once.

“I meant nothing, Squire—nothing, more than that you are not exactly the right sort of people to rough it—to lead this life, you know.”

“Have I complained more than yourself?”

“Well, no, Squire—certainly not.”

“I have blacked my own shoes, cleaned my own gun, made my own bed, and helped to cook the dinner.”

“Very true, Squire—all very true; no one could do more, I am sure.”

“And Spooner?”

“Spooner has been very good too—Spooner has roughed it better than I expected!”

“And George?”

“Do not fight for me, Squire, pray; or Sam. I rather glory in hating the whole thing. If Crabshawe has a mind to say I and my servant spoilt the whole party, he is very welcome.”

“I do not say anything of the sort. I merely contrasted my lot of people with Mrs. Joscelyn’s—that is all. I never saw a more happy and contented set than hers. And, Frank! now, I acknowledge at once, Squire, that Frank is a fellow——”

“Pardon me, for interrupting you,” said

Frank, "I feel like the Squire, very sore on the matter of your accusation. Nothing that you can say to me now in praise will do away with the impression in my mind—which is, that you would have been happier had the 'Ladies' been your subjects, rather than the 'Lords.'"

"My dear fellow, probably there I should not have had my illness."

"Had the ladies been your companions, and not the gentlemen, you would have been contented."

"I don't deny, Frank—"

"Make him say it, Squire."

"Say at once," said that lion, "you would rather have governed them than us."

"I have no doubt I should have got on very well with them. They seemed, you know, so—so——"

"I do not care what they seemed to you, but if you meant nothing by your insulting

speech to us, except to compliment my wife and party, I will forgive you. But as for forgetting, that is quite another thing. I am for doing my duty as well as I can, but if the Almighty has given me a memory, it is not my fault if it recollects who made a fool of me."

"Good lord! how hot you are, Squire. I have no intention of making fools of any of you. I am still a little nervous from my illness, and my mind has been greatly upset by the end of all my endeavours to reclaim that unfortunate Scruttles."

"Unfortunate—" here follows language, on the part of the Squire that may not be written down; but he wound up with an excellent peroration, which shall be recorded to his credit.

"God forgive me putting myself into this passion, and to-day of all days, when I have been taking myself to task for my many sins;

ashamed that I should be so unworthy of all the gifts God has bestowed on me, with such freedom from the sorrows of which I read so many records to-day. But that fellow haunts me like a nightmare. By-the-bye, when his trial comes on, we shall know his right name. That is something.”

And consoled with this idea, the Squire cooled down.

Thus the last evening of the “Lords” did not resemble the last evening of the “Ladies.”

There was no speech from the throne, received with cheers, and endorsed with cordial acclamation. History has recorded many instances of the disorganisation, ruin, and devastation of a kingdom badly governed.

Without contrasting the ruler of Puff with Charles the First, James the Second, and other worthies of that stamp, it is but fair to his subjects to own, that if they loose the challenge—if they are triumphed over by the

ladies—if they have to eat “humble pie”—they owe their defeat entirely to the unconstitutional conduct of their King Crab.

CHAPTER V.

PUFF AND LUFF!

THE morning broke as mornings will, regardless of any other laws than those of nature, gloomy and weeping.

But it did not appear that either "Lords" or "Ladies" were going to be controlled by the weather, whatever freaks it choose to enact.

Writers and readers are both gifted with double sight; or, in other words, they are allowed peeps behind the curtain, by which means they can see all the villainy hatching in the villain's heart, while to every one else he appears a miracle of goodness! Thus, you

and I, my dear reader, are enabled, through this power, to cast our eyes at one and the same moment on both Puff and Luff. On both are to be seen all the signs of a busy, nay, happy time. There is not a sad face on either island!

The Squire is making a vast deal of row at Puff. Mrs. Spooner is in no end of a bustle at Luff. Captain Crabshawe is enunciating his final orders, with all the importance belonging to the last effort of power.

Mrs. Joscelyn is bringing to light all sorts of forgets, and recommending all kinds of ways of packing. For, most astonishing to relate, either hurried, or indifferent, or that they really have increased, the same packages that brought their things will not take them back!

Thanks to the "excellent convict," the gentlemen are in no such predicament. Notwithstanding the constant locking of their doors,

it is remarkable the prodigious gaps in their wardrobes, now they are collecting their things. Fortunately they stumbled upon one of the amiable creature's hiding places, by which means Sam recovered two of his master's shirts, some of his own private property, a waistcoat of the Squire's, who would not touch it, the missing sweetbreads, once so beautifully larded, with sundry other eatables, the odour of which led to the discovery of all.

Sir George, not having much to do, sauntered down to the sea-shore to watch for the boat coming to Puff.

Miss Daintree, having entrusted her packing to Clara (we see), also strolls down, apparently to watch the waves; but she is looking far away, even to the most distant horizon, where there certainly is a puffing of smoke.

At precisely the same moment the Puffs and Luffs go to breakfast on their respective islands.

Just as the Squire says—"We will be off as soon as the boat comes," Mrs. Joscelyn remarks—"That she would wish to be early at home, to see that everything was nicely arranged for the evening's entertainment."

Mr. Frank Summers propounds he had better wait until the last boat, in order to see that everything is brought away. At that moment Miss Severn asks Mrs. Joscelyn if she shall remain with Susan to do the same thing.

The Squire gives a sort of fillip to his tea-spoon, as he says—"I shall have my darling little Bessie again," just as Bessie says to her mother—"Won't pa be glad to see us!"

Bessie's ideas of the importance of the female sex are boundless—the consequence of her papa's spoiling, and the deference of her two brothers.

Breakfast being over, an extraordinary circumstance occurs to both islands. Sir George rushes in to say a boat is coming—not their boat, but another, and there is a policeman on board. It arrives with summonses for Messrs. Joscelyn and Spooner, together with Sir George Follett, Bart., and Samuel Meekes, his footman, to appear as witnesses against James Scuffy, Jonah Scuffy, and James Scuffy, Junior.

“God bless my soul!” exclaimed the Squire, who only used this exclamation on extraordinary occasions; “he is Jem himself—I protest Scruttles is his own Jem; look here—look here, there can be no mistake!”

While they eagerly looked and scanned the papers, the policeman, imperturbably conscious of his own dignity, regards none of these things, but touches his hat to Sir George, and says,

“The witnesses his to return with me, Sir

George; the magistrates takes the case in hand—twelve o'clock."

"To-day!—this very day? I am ready—all ready! Come, George—come, Spoon—no more time, we must not keep the magistrates waiting! When I see that rascal, won't I shout in his ear, Jem!—Jem! Scurry!"

"James Scuffy," repeated the dignified policeman, touching his hat to the Squire.

The Squire was half-way down to the boat, when he bethought him of all the amiable ideas that he had had in his head while dressing—how he would be ready at the little dock to greet his Lizzy; how he would welcome her home; how he would tell her no place was home to him without her, &c., &c. He ran back to charge Frank with all sorts of messages to her, which that good fellow, he was sure, would faithfully deliver.

"But," said Frank, "will not she be summoned also?"

“God bless my soul!” exclaimed the Squire, for the second time in less than ten minutes, “of course!”

He ran back to the boat, and asked the question.

“The ladies, Mr. Joscelyn,” replied the dignified policeman, touching his hat, “are not summoned to-day. The magistrates,” he continued, “mean to make out a case for conviction upon the testimony of the gentlemen. If it is necessary to summon the ladies, they will be summoned.”

“I take that very kind of old Barker—he wishes to spare the ladies, if possible. I shall send old Barker the next salmon I hook.”

“Provided you land him, Squire.”

Thus the law, so powerful, interfered, and prevented on the part of the Puffs, that triumphant and jocund landing, which they had pictured to themselves as the finale of the month of probation.

The day had recovered from its early fit of sulks, and was now condescending to bless the world with blue sky and cheery sunshine.

“What vessel is that?” said Sir George, as they landed, and were about getting into the carriage that was to take them to the court.

Nobody knew. But we do, dear reader. This is the vessel that is about to create the extraordinary sensation at Luff. At least, Miss Daintree is running for her life up to the house, exclaiming, “She comes!—she comes!” Then, as was fitting, every Luffite runs out to see with her own eyes, and assure herself, and say to herself, “She comes!”

Now don't imagine this is the great two-funneled “Cannibal”—it is nothing of the sort. As it approaches, it presents the beautiful appearance of a pleasure yacht—a screw.

She steams into the bay like a swan, and sweeps round to her anchorage with the ease and grace of a racehorse. Before she was well

settled in her place, a boat was lowered, and made its way straight to Luff. There was no policeman on board.

What took place on the island of Luff, upon the landing of that boat, has never been recorded.

Meantime, King Crab, now within a short space of being shorn of his crown, as he is already shorn of half his subjects, makes a prosaic landing with Frank, with the cook, with the cook's kitchen-maid, and all their worldly goods, at the little dock, about twelve o'clock.

"Othello's occupation gone," he feels a little depressed.

"We had better go somewhere and get a snack, Frank, as I suppose no one is at home at Deep-Cliffs."

"I intend staying here to deliver the Squire's messages," answered Frank.

"What, here!—at the dock?"

"Yes; we all meet again, you know, at dinner."

“True—that reminds me I must be off.”

“Drop my things as you go by, will you, at my house?”

Without a farewell or other word, the whilome King and his last subject parted.

No sooner was Captain Crabshawe out of sight, the cart packed with all the things, and sent off to Deep-Cliffs, to return again for the ladies' things, than Mr. Frank takes off his coat, loosens his braces, steps into the Squire's private little sculling boat, and departs over the water.

Had anyone been sufficiently interested in his movements to watch him, they would have seen him making his way to Luff.

And now we approach the time when once more, as at the opening of our story, Mrs. Joscelyn's drawing-room is filled with the same people assembled for dinner. The Squire, radiant and jovial, was a sight to see. What with being once more at home—king over himself and all around him, conscious that he might

say and do anything he pleased, overflowing with hospitable feelings, pleased with himself, delighted with his wife, and doting on little Bessie—he hardly knew how to contain himself.

As for Mr. Spooner, hanging over the chair of his Arabella, inspiration seemed at last to have condescended to visit him—he was so animated, so happy in his remarks, so energetic, so full of *bon hommie*—one might have supposed a bit of the Squire's exuberance of spirit had got into his brain.

His Arabella, beautifully dressed in white, almost bridal, looked at him, and admired with all the fondness of their bridal days.

Sir George had an anxious, fidgety air.

Frank was altogether in that sort of state that may be expressed by the word sublime.

It was Spooner's word; he had clapped Frank on the back, overcome with joviality, and had said, "Frank, you look sublime!"

Whether a countenance glowing with supremest happiness bordered upon the sublime, is not for us to say.

But how are we to do justice to the appearance of Captain Crabshawe? We have used up the word sublime, and must go and seek for others to express the dazzling effect he produced.

Captain Crabshawe was arrayed in an evening suit of black, cut after the fashion, and with all the improvements of the latest build of evening dress. His waistcoat was white, and his tie was white, and excellently tied. What was seen of his shirt, proved that it was a first-rate shirt, delicately embroidered, and was fastened with studs. His continuations were so admirably arranged, that they gave him quite a pair of gentlemanly legs, which were terminated by black silk stockings and patent leather pumps. Had any one failed to notice these two elegant articles of

dress, the admiration of the Captain for them could not fail to draw the look of the inattentive to them. He was perpetually thrusting out first one foot and then the other, surveying them in every possible attitude, and apparently delighted with the effect of each.

In addition to being so beautifully dressed, the few hairs that Time had left him, seemed to have taken umbrage at their hitherto straight walk of life, and absolutely reposed on his cranium in circular attitudes, elegantly disposed in careless grace. His hands were remarkably clean, and as if proud of the unusual occurrence, he flourished, first in one and then in the other, a large pocket-handkerchief, plentifully diluted with Bouquet de Jockey Club.

There are men of weak organization who, in permitting their psychological structure to overpower their corporeal frame, have felt nervous, perhaps bashful, in assuming all

at once, without preparing their friends, a character wholly opposite to that they have always borne.

But Captain Crabshawe had a mind as strong as the Egyptian sphinx, who has remained for so many ages calmly gazing at nothing.

It had hitherto been his pleasure to enact the part, and appear in the dress of a game-keeper; it was now his pleasure to be a Beau; and in clothing himself in beau garments, he also adopted beau manners.

He entered the room with a jaunty air; he bowed over Mrs. Joscelyn's hand as if he was Sir Charles Grandison, and he flung himself into a chair by Miss Severn with the ardent eagerness of a lover, assuming a supercilious air of pity for "Poor Frank," as he mentally said.

The Squire, having already told almost everybody by themselves, is now narrating to the

whole company together the interesting particulars of the trial of Scruttles.

“I do not know why I fancied he was his own Jem, but something possessed me with the idea that he was so. I would have paid anybody ten pounds for the news, I was so glad. And that is his mother—your old friend, Crab” (here Mrs. Joscelyn turned pale with fright, lest the Squire, off his balance with an intoxication of happiness, should reveal a secret that he had told her—namely, that Scruttles’ mother was Captain Crabshawe’s foster-mother. Nobody had ventured, even in a whisper, to suppose they were foster-brothers. It was charitably concluded there was ten years between them. But the Squire was to be trusted;) “and James Scuffy, junior, Esq., is his son and heir, and Jonah Scurry—Scuffy, I mean—is uncle, or father, or brother—I did not care to find out.

“How the fellow lied, and how it came out that all his life he lied, and how that even his

own family were frightened of him! ‘Our Jem,’ says Mrs. Scurry—Scuffy, I mean—‘our Jem never stops hat nothink. I be glad to think he be a-prison.’”

“‘With that I went, Scruttles,’ says I, and the fellow shook his fist at me in first-rate style. ‘You will never get out again, Jem Scruttles,’ said I—‘this is your last turn.’ Upon my word, the fellow rather pleased me—he showed himself such a true villain, I felt inclined——”

“To give him another five shillings, Squire.”

“No, Spooner—I felt inclined to tell him I respected him a great deal more in his true colours than when he was that odious, fawning, beastly hypocrite. He would have had a free pardon in Australia for betraying his companions, had it not been for the attempt to murder old Dad—not that it was Dad at all—it was a convict with whom he had quarrelled over some little trifle on board ship. I could not hear

anything of Jude and Sal, which, I suppose, is just as well. And Jem, the younger, was not altogether sure that Scruttles was his father. 'His mother told him so, but indeed he didn't know his-self.'

"I asked his mother's name. 'He worn't sure at all; he called her mother, and sometimes the neighbours called her big Bet.' Same name as you, Lizzy," continued the Squire, glancing at his wife with high admiration. "But here is dinner—sort yourselves, my good friends; don't think me rude, ladies, but I must take my wife."

The A. S's. followed, happy as love-birds. The Captain seized upon Miss Severn, as by the right of a conqueror. Kate put her arm within Frank's, whether he would or no, so Sir George was fain to content himself with Bessie. The dinner was excellent and noisy.

"Do let us enjoy ourselves," remonstrated the Squire, as some one spoke about the challenge

be—"we will settle that affair afterwards."

So they ate and drank, laughed and chattered, with the highest delight.

The Squire contradicted everything Crab said, and Crab exercised the same courtesy towards the Squire, and neither lost their good-humour—the latter entertaining Miss Severn with all sorts of Crab jokes between whiles.

Sir George contrived to sit next to Kate, but as it was absolutely impossible to propose to her at the dinner-table, he only gave her to understand, in every other way, that she might expect him to do so the first opportunity.

That she was gentle, bashful, and blushing, only made him the more eager for the happy moment.

The dinner over, the servants withdrawn, the hour of reckoning, if it might so be called, came on.

"Which had won the challenge?"

Of the gentlemen, it may be said they allowed

and disallowed; they confessed and retracted; they gave in and took back—at one moment they all agreed they had never been so happy—the next it was a miracle how they they bore it.

It was evident that the gentlemen were anxious to be the winners.

“I conclude,” said Mrs. Joscelyn, “from all you have said, that, on the whole, you have spent this month pretty much as if we had all been at home. You have had a mixture of good and bad; you have had sunshine and shade; your dull times and happy times—all this might have occurred here. But without reference to the challenge, I wish to know one thing. Has your sojourn at Puff so far softened your feelings towards me that I may request you not to smoke in my dining-room, without running the chance of offending you?”

“You may—we were wrong; we acknowledge that, in this matter, you had more reason to

angry than we had. In fact," added the truthful Squire, "I do not know what possessed me to turn my dining-room into a pot-house."

"I thank you most sincerely, gentlemen, for your assurances; and to show you that the ladies are neither bigotted nor arbitrary in the matter of smoking itself (only the place, my good friends), pray accept a present from each of us—I need not say they are the work of our own hands, and sufficed to while away some of the hours that passed a little heavily, wanting your society."

As Mrs. Joscelyn uttered these kindly words, Bessie presented a cigar-case to her father, Mrs. Joscelyn one to Sir George, Kate to Captain Crabshawe, Clara to Frank, the female A. S. to the male A. S. They were all beautifully worked, and embroidered with the names of the different gentlemen.

It is not to be told the effect of this graceful act of the "Ladies" upon the "Lords." They were

overwhelmed with gratitude, with admiration, with remorse, one after another, in very strong fits. Having allowed a certain time to elapse for the expression of all these feelings, once more Mrs. Joscelyn said,

“But who has won the challenge?”

“There are the journals,” said Mr. Spooner.

“But who is to judge the journals?”

“Will you allow me to do so?” said a voice at the door.

Every gentleman turned round. There was the famous Admiral, accompanied by Colonel Erne.

“Here are our cards of invitation, Squire, permitting us to come a little before the Ramp-ton world.”

“I am delighted!” roared the Squire—“delighted! Yours is the screw yacht, Admiral, that came into the bay this morning. Sit down!—sit down!—welcome, welcome, Colonel! I could not think who she was. I was so occu-

pied with the trial of that beast Scruttles, I forgot to ask. This is the happiest event of the whole day. Judge!—of course you shall be judge. None of us would desire a better.”

It is needless to say, that the Admiral and his friend met with as hearty a reception as if they had just emerged out of a four years' imprisonment in an iceberg. Though why the little rose-bud should have blushed so violently at an elderly little Admiral (however famous) shaking hands with her so warmly, and sitting down by her in such a comfortable, fatherly manner, is a thing we must leave to philosophers, such as Spooner, to explain.

“We have dined, thank you,” answered the Admiral to the Squire's hospitable offers; “we have brought white gloves and dancing-shoes—we mean to distinguish ourselves; but meanwhile, ‘Who has won the challenge?’”

“That we cannot settle. It is agreed that our visit to Luff, on Crabshawe's account, is to

be set against the hoisting of the ladies' flag when attacked by robbers."

"But did not you start first for assistance?"

"For that matter, we agreed to go to Luff the night before."

"Then perhaps you will be gallant enough to give the ladies this advantage."

"But," said Mr. Spooner, rising and forgetting altogether the cigar-cases and all his gratitude, fearing for nothing but the loss of the challenge, "I have heard—a rumour has reached me" (Mrs. S. began to pull his coat-tails, and blushed deeply at the prospect of being proved a traitor in the female camp), "in justice to my friends, Arabella, you must allow me to state, that though the ladies suffered no gentleman to land at Luff, they permitted themselves to be rowed about for many days together by a gentleman."

"No! no! really! that was too bad! Of course the ladies will lose the challenge, if it is true."

“It is true,” answered Mrs. Joscelyn to all these exclamations; “but silence for one moment. Have I your permission, John, to divulge?”

“Oh! hang it, yes, Lizzy; divulge whatever you like.”

But a slight blush also rose to the Squire’s cheek.

“It is true, for a few days a gentleman called at Luff and took some of us out in his boat, but then, gentlemen, did you not spend a whole Sunday at Rampton, dining at Muggs’s?”

There was a dead silence, broken at last by the Admiral.

“You must again compromise—put the one thing against the other.”

“But who has won the challenge?”

“Nobody.”

“It is clear,” said the Admiral, “that this famous challenge is what sportsmen call a

dead heat. The only thing to be done is, to run it over again."

"No! oh! no! no! never!"

It was curious the chorus of emphatic negatives and protests that followed this remark.

"I shall have to examine each witness separately," said the Admiral, laughing until the tears ran from his eyes. "Or rather," continued he, "those that are for another trial, hold up their hands."

Not even a little finger was visible.

"Those that are satisfied neither to win nor lose, hold up their hands."

There was an instantaneous display, the A. S.'s each holding up both, and, strange to say, so did the whilom King of Puff.

"Then let it be so," said the Admiral, "and a very proper conclusion to the challenge. I hope the gentlemen will not forget the amiability of the ladies in allowing that they

missed them; as for the gentlemen, I should be ashamed of my countrymen if they did not, and glory in the admission, too."

"We saved Frank!" exclaimed Captain Crabshawe, emphatically.

In fact, just as the Admiral was speaking, the Captain caught a glance that Frank sent straight to Miss Severn—a glance so full of love, of happiness, of triumph, that, amazed at the audacity of it, knowing, as Frank must know by this time, Captain Crabshawe's private intentions, he was irresistibly impelled to say what he did.

"From what, my dear Crab?" replied Frank, with the most imperturbable countenance.

"From marrying!"

Here the Admiral burst into such fits of laughter, he nearly rolled off his chair.

Frank rose up, steadfastly regarding the Puffites with a charming and benign smile.

"If, my dear Puffs," said he, "you

banished yourselves from the society of the ladies for my sake, it was labour lost. I went with you, already engaged to be married."

The hubbub was tremendous—part upbraiding, part commending. As soon as the noise ceased he continued:

"Having the permission of my *fiancée* (glancing at Clara, who frankly gave him her hand) to proclaim our engagement, I only waited a favourable moment to demand from you those hearty congratulations, without which I scarcely feel my bliss complete. I have to thank you, my dear Crabshawe, for affording me this opportunity."

"Frank, you are a hypocrite!" growled that worthy in his ear.

"Try Miss Daintree," whispered Frank back again.

Before the felicitations were over, the hint was taken.

“Frank,” said the Squire, “how close you kept your secret! If I remember right, you told a—you said it was too late!”

“You will allow, Squire, that when a thing is already done, it is too late to do it.”

“A subterfuge, Frank, which, in my opinion, is more than——”

“Hush, John, let Frank finish what he has to say.”

“Go on, Frank.”

“Admiral—Squire—gentlemen—when a man sees opening before him a glimpse of that paradise our much-respected forefather Adam lived in, it is not likely that he will lose the chance of securing an entrance into it. Adam, as we know, lost paradise through devotion to his companion. The angels, melted by the nobleness of the deed, brought ever and ever constant petitions to the Footstool of the Throne of Heaven for permission for Adam’s descendants to create their own paradise. In virtue of

this grace, seeing the opening of a paradise before me, I essayed to win the gate. Just one month, four days, thirteen hours, and so many minutes, at the moment when you, Crabshawe, were flirting with Miss Daintree on the settee, I placed my heart, my hopes, my happiness in the hands of my dearest Clara. She accepted all, giving me her love in return, and her promise that, within a month after our trial, we should summon Puffs and Luffs to our wedding. We agreed to keep the matter secret from all but one person; and it was through fear lest I should betray myself that I refused to accompany you to Luff on that memorable morning. To you, dear Mrs. Joscelyn, I owe more than I can express, not only for your warm sympathy, your love and fondness for my intended wife (though who can help loving her?), but because I feel sure that it is to your example as a wife, that I owe Clara's

willing consent to be mine. The beautiful and lovely character of wife and mother, shone with such radiance in the house of Squire Joscelyn, that few girls could witness the sight without longing to imitate it. As for me, when possessed of my paradise, I know it will be my own fault if I lose it. During the long hours that we spent at Puff, none felt either weary or dull to me, for I spent the time in endeavouring to make myself worthy to have an angel for my wife; and life itself will be scarcely long enough for me to thank God for the gift of her."

Frank sat down, glowing with love and happiness, by his intended bride, overwhelmed with plaudits and congratulations.

Mrs. Spooner sobbed aloud, her feelings deeply moved.

The Admiral felt it necessary to shake hands with everybody near him.

But the company were arriving.

Fast and furious was heard the rattling of the carriages; loud and sonorous the announcement of the visitors. Everybody that had the slightest pretence to come, came.

Dancing began at once. Between whiles was incessant talking, incessant congratulations, and an infinitude of questions regarding the challenge, which subject lost a good deal of its interest when it was found to be a "drawn battle."

As for saying that the Admiral had spent his best days in the Arctic circle, and had worked so hard there he had no more work left in him, they should have seen him dance, they should have seen him making everybody else dance. He enjoyed himself with an enthusiasm that was quite admirable. Famous as he had been battling against ice and snow, bears and famine, he was making himself equally famous, dancing, laughing, and joking, at Squire Joscelyn's ball.

“Frank! Frank,” murmured a sad voice in his ear, “do you see that?”

“I do,” answered Frank, his happy face turning as grave as it could, for the sake of his friend George.

“She will not dance with me, though she allows she is not engaged.”

“She is wise, George—it is for your good; cannot you see this yourself?”

“It is impossible—I will not believe it. I merely wish her to know that I am only waiting the opportunity to ask her to accept everything I possess! Will you tell her?”

“No, my dear George, I dare not. Dismiss all thoughts of her from your mind; she has a younger sister—prettier, more like Mrs. Joscelyn!”

“Oh! Frank, in your own happiness you forget my misery!”

“Frank!—Frank!” said another voice; “do come here!”

“Well, Crab, what is it?”

“I can’t think what has got over the wimmen; when one wants to be civil, they won’t let one!”

“Who has offended you?”

“Miss Daintree won’t even look at me, and that fellow, that Colonel Erne, is always whispering in her ear. I have a mind to eat his head off!”

“Do, Crab, and see what will become of it.”

“Frank, you are all right yourself, and you don’t care for other folks’ feelings!”

“Pray excuse me, but you do not mean to say you are thinking of offering to Miss Daintree?”

“Why not?”

“Then it is useless my having any feeling for you; I was only in joke when I said, ‘Try Miss Daintree!’”

“Why should it be a joke?”

“Because you would do for her grandfather, rather than her husband!”

Aware of the audacity of this speech, Frank fled for his life after saying it, and took refuge behind Miss Severn's crinoline.

From that fortification he saw the forlorn Sir George holding a colloquy with an equally forlorn Sam; he felt sure George was ordering his carriage, and Sam was somehow delighted it was ordered.

Meantime, the Admiral, finding this was the last dance before supper, went to secure his favourite partner, Miss Bessie.

“Oh, yes, Sir Admiral!” exclaimed Bessie, delighted.

“And yet, Bessie, you refused me,” said a languishing voice.

“Because you only asked me, for no one else would dance with you!”

And Miss Bessie skipped away, as if a gorilla was about to claim her for a partner.

“It did not seem to me, little Bessie,” said the Admiral, as they took their places, “that you were very civil to the Captain.”

“Oh! Sir Admiral, he had made me very angry. He asked me how old I was; and when I told him, he gave a great sort of sigh like a frog would, and said—‘Eight long years, Bessie, before I can offer you my hand and heart.’ ‘I do not want either,’ I said. ‘Oh! you will think very differently at that age, pretty Bessie!’ and I answered—‘Don’t call me names, Captain Crabshawe, because mamma does not allow people to do so!’ ‘People! my dear Bessie, I am very different!’ ‘I won’t be deared by you, sir!’ I said; and then luckily, Sir Admiral, you came and rescued me!”

“Well, Bessie, as far as I can see, you appear to have had an offer. He paid you a great compliment!”

“A compliment! Oh! no, he was very

insulting, I thought, asking a lady's age!"

"But he offered you his hand and his heart?"

"I would not touch his hand for anything; and as for his heart, Kate says he has none! Oh! Sir Admiral, if you will please to forgive my saying so, I hate him!"

"I suppose I must excuse you, especially as we are now all going in to supper. I have a little business to do after supper, Bessie, so let us make haste and get good places!"

And this was the Admiral's business:

The healths of the engaged couple having been proposed and drank with the greatest enthusiasm, and Frank, having returned thanks in a manner worthy of the occasion and his prospects, the Admiral now rose up, and charged them to fill their glasses again.

Now, the Rampton world not only delighted to see so famous an Admiral in the same room, but, highly gratified at his dancing and

amusing himself just as if he was a mere mortal like themselves, were so overcome at his condescension in rising to make a speech, and giving them such a cheery order to fill their glasses, that they rapped the table and made such vocal demonstrations of approbation, that there was no possibility of a single word of what he said being heard, unless he had been privately gifted with the screech of a railway engine.

So he prudently waited until there was a lull.

Of course the moment he opened his 'mouth they began; but at last, roared into silence by the Squire, a calm ensued.

“Gentlemen and Ladies,—I desire to take this opportunity of thanking the Puffs and Luffs for affording me a vast deal of amusement; laughing is good physic for all diseases, and though, thank God, I have none, a hearty laugh does me a world of good.”

Here the Admiral paused for a moment; it seemed, by the expression of his countenance, as if there had been times with him when death met him face to face daily, and laughter was unseemly. It appeared as if he paused to thank God that such trial was over.

“You may think, ladies and gentlemen, that, being a sailor, I have no experience in the female character; but I have so much that, had no robbers attacked their island—robbers of two sorts, you will please to remember, robbers of purses, and robbers of hearts—they would certainly have gained the victory. And is there a man amongst us who would have done otherwise than rejoice? (Cheers.)

“But, in truth, my good friends, though this challenge was apparently a frolic, it was the means of a good end. Our Puffs and Luffs, doubtless, thought the whole affair a lark, as we sailors love to call it; but all the time it was Fate—it was pre-ordained. The

Almighty looks down upon us all, and arranges our affairs with unerring wisdom. He saw two hearts so formed for each other, that He issued the command, 'Let them meet!' They did meet. The famous challenge introduced them to each other.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, you have drank the healths of Mr. Summers and his intended bride; I now call upon you to drink the health of my dear friend, Colonel Erne, and his future wife. Miss Daintree, your health, and a thousand good wishes;—Erne, yours. Squire, give the time for a good British cheer, an accomplishment that no other nation but England can perform—a hearty cheer—because this famous challenge, though caused by, has not ended in

SMOKE!"

THE END.

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