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THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON.

THE
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BY
GEORGE F. J. WOOD

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BY

GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS,

AUTHOR OF "PICKWICK ABROAD," "THE MODERN LITERATURE OF FRANCE,"
"ROBERT MACAIRE," ETC.

THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

BY G. STIFF.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

GEORGE VICKERS, 3, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.

MDCCCLXVI.

MYSTRIES OF LONDON

GEORGE W. BRYSON

LONDON :

Printed by J. J. WILKINSON, "Bonner House," Seacoal Lane.

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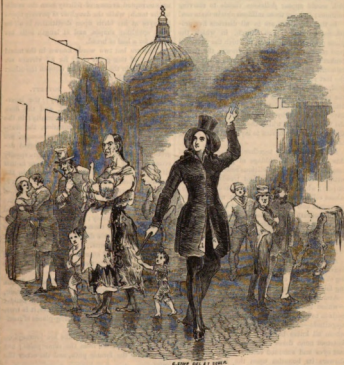
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THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON.



L. BRAY DEL. ET SCUL.

PROLOGUE.

BETWEEN the 10th and 13th centuries Civilisation withdrew from Egypt and Syria, rested for a little space at Constantinople, and then passed away to the western climes of Europe.

From that period these climes have been the grand laboratory in which Civilisation has wrought out refinement in every art and every science, and whence it has diffused its benefits over the earth. It has taught commerce to plough the waves of every sea with the adventurous keel; it has enabled handfuls of disciplined warriors to subdue the mighty armaments of oriental princes; and its daring sons have planted its banners amidst the eternal ice of the poles. It has cut

down the primitive forests of America; carried trade into the interior of Africa; annihilated time and distance by the aid of steam; and now contemplates how to force a passage through Suez and Panama.

The bounties of Civilisation are at present almost everywhere recognised.

Nevertheless, for centuries has Civilisation established, and for centuries will it maintain, its headquarters in the great cities of Western Europe; and with Civilisation does Vice go hand-in-hand.

Amongst these cities there is one in which contrasts of a strange nature exist. The most unbounded wealth is the neighbour of the most hideous poverty; the most gorgeous pomp is

placed in strong relief by the most deplorable squalor; the most seducing luxury is only separated by a narrow wall from the most appalling misery.

The crumbs which fall from the tables of the rich would appear delicious viands to starving millions; and yet those millions obtain them not!

In that city there are in all districts five prominent buildings: the church, in which the pious pray; the gin-palace, to which the wretched poor resort to drown their sorrows; the pawn-broker's, where miserable creatures pledge their raiment, and their children's raiment, even unto the last rag, to obtain the means of purchasing food, and—alas! too often—intoxicating drink; the prison, where the victims of a vitiated condition of society expiate the crimes to which they have been driven by starvation and despair; and the workhouse, to which the destitute, the aged, and the friendless hasten to lay down their aching heads—and die!

And, congregated together in one district of this city, is an assemblage of palaces, whence emanate by night the delicious sounds of music; within whose walls the foot treads upon rich carpets; whose sideboards are covered with plate; whose cellars contain the choicest nectar of the temperate and torrid zones; and whose inmates recline beneath velvet canopies, feast at each meal upon the collated produce of four worlds, and scarcely have to breathe a wish before they find it gratified.

Alas! how appalling are these contrasts!

And, as if to hide its infamy from the face of heaven, this city wears upon its brow an everlasting cloud, which even the fresh fan of the morning fails to disperse for a single hour each day!

And in one delicious spot of that mighty city—whose thousand towers point upwards, from horizon to horizon, as an index of its boundless magnitude—stands the dwelling of one before whom all knees bow, and towards whose royal footstool none dares approach save with downcast eyes and subdued voice. The entire world showers its bounties upon the head of that favoured mortal; a nation of millions does homage to the throne whereon that being is exalted. The dominion of this personage so supremely blest extends over an empire on which the sun never sets—an empire greater than Jenghiz Khan achieved or Mohammed conquered.

This is the parent of a mighty nation; and yet around that parent's seat the children crave for bread!

Women press their little ones to their dried-up breasts in the agonies of despair; young delicate creatures waste their energies in toil from the dawn of day till long past the hour of midnight, perpetuating their unavailing labour from the hour of the brilliant sun to that when the dim candle sheds its light around the attic's naked walls; and even the very pavement groans be-

neath the weight of grief which the poor are doomed to drag over the rough places of this city of sad contrasts.

For in this city the daughter of the peer is nursed in enjoyments, and passes through an uninterrupted avenue of felicity from the cradle to the tomb; while the daughter of poverty opens her eyes at her birth upon destitution in all its most appalling shapes, and at length sells her virtue for a loaf of bread.

There are but two words known in the moral alphabet of this great city; for all virtues are summed up in the one, and all vices in the other: and those words are

WEALTH. | POVERTY.

Crime is abundant in this city: the lazaret-house, the prison, the brothel, and the dark alley, are rife with all kinds of enormity; in the same way as the palace, the mansion, the club-house, the parliament, and the parsonage, are each and all characterised by their different degrees and shades of vice. But therefore specify crime and vice by their real names, since in this city of which we speak they are absorbed in the multi-significant words—WEALTH and POVERTY!

Crimes borrow their comparative shade of enormity from the people who perpetrate them: thus is it that the wealthy may commit all social offences with impunity; while the poor are cast into dungeons and coerced with chains, for only following at a humble distance in the pathway of their lordly precedents.

From this city of strange contrasts branch off two roads, leading to two points totally distinct the one from the other.

One winds its tortuous way through all the noisome dens of crime, chicanery, dissipation, and voluptuousness: the other meanders amidst rugged rocks and wearisome activities, it is true, but on the wayside are the resting-places of rectitude and virtue.

Along those roads two youths are journeying.

They have started from the same point; but one pursues the former path, and the other the latter.

Both come from the city of fearful contrasts; and both follow the wheels of fortune in different directions.

Where is that city of fearful contrasts?

Who are those youths that have thus entered upon paths so opposite the one to the other?

And to what destinies do those separate roads conduct them?

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD HOUSE IN SMITHFIELD.

OUR narrative opens at the commencement of July, 1831.

The night was dark and stormy. The sun had set behind huge piles of dingy purple clouds, which, after losing the golden hue with which

they were for awhile tinged, became sombre and menacing. The blue portions of the sky that here and there had appeared before the sunset, were now rapidly covered over with those murky clouds which are the hiding-places of the storm, and which seemed to roll themselves together in dense and compact masses, ere they commenced the elemental war.

In the same manner do the earthly squadrons of cavalry and mighty columns of infantry form themselves into one collected armament, that the power of their onslaught may be the more terrific and irresistible.

That canopy of dark and threatening clouds was formed over London; and a stifling heat, which there was not a breath of wind to allay or mitigate, pervaded the streets of the great metropolis.

Everything portended an awful storm.

In the palace of the peer and the hovel of the artisan the windows were thrown up; and at many, both men and women stood to contemplate the scene—timid children crowding behind them.

The heat became more and more oppressive.

At length large drops of rain fell, at intervals of two or three inches apart, upon the pavement.

And then a flash of lightning, like the forked tongue of one of those fiery serpents of which we read in oriental tales of magic and enchantment, darted forth from the black clouds overhead.

At an interval of a few seconds the roar of the thunder, reverberating through the arches of heaven—now sinking, now exalting its fearful tone, like the iron wheels of a chariot rolled over a road with patches of uneven pavement here and there—stunned every ear, and struck terror into many a heart—the innocent as well as the guilty.

It died away, like the chariot, in the distance; and then all was solemnly still.

The interval of silence which succeeds the protracted thunder-clap is appalling in the extreme.

A little while—and again the lightning illuminated the entire vault above; and again the thunder, in unequal tones,—amongst which was one resembling the rattling of many vast iron bars together,—aroke every echo of the metropolis from north to south, and from east to west.

This time the dread interval of silence was suddenly interrupted by the torrents of rain that now deluged the streets.

There was not a breath of air; and the rain fell as perpendicularly straight as a line. But with it came a sense of freshness and of a pure atmosphere, which formed an agreeable and cheering contrast to the previously suffocating heat. It was like the spring of the oasis to the wanderer in the burning desert.

But still the lightning played, and the thunder rolled, above.

At the first explosion of the storm, amidst the thousands of men and women and children, who were seen hastening hither and thither, in all directions, as if they were flying from the plague, was one person on whose exterior none could gaze without being inspired with a mingled sentiment of admiration and interest.

He was a youth, apparently not more than sixteen years of age, although taller than boys usually are at that period of life. But the tenderness of his years was divined by the extreme effeminacy and juvenile loveliness of his countenance, which was as fair and delicate as that of a

young girl. His long luxuriant hair, of a beautiful light chestnut colour, and here and there borrowing dark shades from the frequent undulations in which it rolled, flowed not only over the collar of his closely-buttoned blue frock coat, but also upon his shoulders. Its extreme profusion, and the singular manner in which he wore it, were, however, partially concealed by the breadth of the brim of his hat, that was placed as it were entirely upon the back of his head, and, being thus thrown off his countenance, revealed the high, intelligent, and polished forehead above which that rich hair was carefully parted.

His frock coat, which was single-breasted, and buttoned up to the throat, set off his symmetrical and elegant figure to the greatest advantage. His shoulders were broad, but were characterised by that fine fall or slope which is so much admired in the opposite sex. He wore spurs upon the heels of his diminutive polished boots; and in his hand he carried a light riding-whip. But he was upon foot and alone; and, when the first flash of lightning dazzled his expressive hazel eyes, he was hastily traversing the foul and filthy arena of Smithfield-market.

An imagination poetically inspired would suppose a similitude of a beautiful flower upon a fetid manure heap.

He cast a glance, which may almost be termed one of affright, around; and his cheek became flushed. He had evidently lost his way, and was uncertain where to obtain an asylum against the coming storm.

The thunder burst above his head; and a momentary shudder passed over his frame. He accented a man to inquire his way; but the answer he received was rude, and associated with a ribald joke.

He had not courage to demand a second time the information he sought; but, with a species of haughty disdain at the threatening storm, and a proud reliance upon himself, proceeded onwards at random.

He even slackened his pace; a contemptuous smile curled his lips, and the glittering white teeth appeared as it were between two rose-leaves.

His chest, which was very prominent, rose up and down almost convulsively; for it was evident that he endeavoured to master conflicting feelings of vexation, alarm, and disgust—all produced by the position in which he found himself.

To one so young, so delicate, and so frank in appearance, the mere fact of losing his way by night in a disgusting neighbourhood, during an impending storm, and insulted by a low-life ruffian, was not the mere trifle which it would have been considered by the hardy and experienced man of the world.

Not a public conveyance was to be seen; and the doors of all the houses around appeared inhospitably closed; and every moment it seemed to grow darker.

Accident conducted the interesting young stranger into that labyrinth of narrow and dirty streets which lies in the immediate vicinity of the north-western angle of Smithfield-market.

It was in this horrible neighbourhood that the youth was now wandering. He was evidently shocked at the idea that human beings could dwell in such fetid and unwholesome dens; for he gazed with wonder, disgust, and alarm upon the houses on either side. It seemed as if he

had never beheld till now a labyrinth of dwellings whose very aspect appeared to speak of hideous poverty and fearful crime.

Meantime the lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled; and at length the rain poured down in torrents. Obeying a mechanical impulse, the youth rushed up the steps of a house at the end of one of those dark, narrow, and dirty streets the ominous appearance of which was every now and then revealed to him by a light streaming from a narrow window, or the glare of the lightning. The framework of the door projected somewhat, and appeared to offer a partial protection from the rain. The youth drew as closely up to it as possible; but to his surprise it yielded behind him, and burst open. With difficulty he saved himself from falling backwards into the passage with which the door communicated.

Having recovered from the sudden alarm with which this incident had inspired him, his next sentiment was one of pleasure to think that he had thus found a more secure asylum against the tempest. He, however, felt wearied—desperately wearied; and his was not a frame calculated to bear up against the oppressive and crushing feeling of fatigue. He determined to penetrate, amidst the profound darkness by which he was surrounded, into the dwelling; thinking that if there were any inmates they would not refuse him the accommodation of a chair; and if there were none, he might find a seat upon the staircase.

He advanced along the passage, and groped about. His hand encountered the lock of a door: he opened it, and entered a room. All was dark as pitch. At that moment a flash of lightning, more than usually vivid and prolonged, illuminated the entire scene. The glance which he cast around was as rapid as the glare which made objects visible to him for a few moments. He was in a room entirely empty; but in the middle of the floor—only three feet from the spot where he stood—there was a large square of jet blackness.

The lightning passed away; utter darkness again surrounded him; and he was unable to ascertain what that black square, so well defined and apparent upon the dirty floor, could be.

An indescribable sensation of fear crept over him; and the perspiration broke out upon his forehead in large drops. His knees bent beneath him; and, retreating a few steps, he leaned against the door-posts for support.

He was alone—in an uninhabited house, in the midst of a horrible neighbourhood; and all the fearful tales of midnight murders which he had ever heard or read, rushed to his memory: then, by a strange but natural freak of the fancy, those appalling deeds of blood and crime were suddenly associated with that incomprehensible but ominous black square upon the floor.

He was in the midst of this terrible waking dream—this more than ideal nightmare—when hasty steps approached the front door from the street; and, without stopping, entered the passage. The youth crept silently towards the farther end, the perspiration oozing from every pore. He felt the staircase with his hands; the footsteps advanced; and, light as the fawn, he hurried up the stairs. So noiseless were his motions, that his presence was not noticed by the new comers, who in their turns also ascended the staircase.

The youth reached a landing, and hastily felt

for the doors of the rooms with which it communicated. In another moment he was in a chamber, at the back part of the house. He closed the door, and placed himself against it with all his strength—forgetful, poor youth! that his fragile form was unavailing, with all its power, against even the single arm of a man of only ordinary strength.

Meantime the new-comers ascended the stairs.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE OLD HOUSE.

FORTUNATELY for the interesting young stranger, the individuals who had just entered the house did not attempt the door of the room in which he had taken refuge. They proceeded straight—and with a steadiness which seemed to indicate that they knew the locality well—to the front chamber upon the same floor.

In a few moments there was a sharp grating noise along the wall; and then a light suddenly shone into the room where the young stranger was concealed. He cast a terrified glance around, and beheld a small square window in the wall, which separated the two apartments. It was about five feet from the floor—a height which permitted the youth to avail himself of it, in order to reconnoitre the proceedings in the next room.

By means of a candle which had been lighted by the aid of a lucifer-match, and which stood upon a dirty deal table, the young stranger beheld two men, whose outward appearance did not serve to banish his alarm. They were dressed like operatives of the most humble class. One wore a gabardine and coarse leather gaiters, with laced-up boots; the other had on a fustian shooting-jacket and long corduroy trousers. They were both dirty and unshaven. The one with the shooting-jacket had a profusion of hawk about his face, but which was evidently not well acquainted with a comb: the other wore no whiskers, but his beard was of three or four days' growth. Both were powerful, thick-set, and muscular men; and the expression of their countenances was dogged, determined, and ferocious.

The room to which they had betaken themselves was cold, gloomy, and dilapidated. It was furnished with the deal table before mentioned, and three old crazy chairs, upon two of which the men now seated themselves. But they were so placed that they commanded their door being open, a full view of the landing-place; and thus the youthful stranger deemed it impolitic to attempt to take his departure for the moment.

"Now, Bill, out with the bingy," said the man in the gabardine to his companion.

"Oh! you're always for the lush, you are, Dick," answered the latter in a surly tone, producing at the same time a bottle of liquor from the capacious pocket of his fustian coat. "But I wonder how the devil it is that Crankey Jem ain't come yet. Who the deuce could have left that infernal door open?"

"Jem or some of the other blades must have been here and left it so. It don't matter; it lulls suspicion."

"Well, let's make the reglars all square," resumed the man called Bill, after a moment's pause; "we'll then booze a bit, and talk over this here new job of our'n."

"Look alive, then," said Dick; and he forthwith took from beneath his gabardine several small parcels done up in brown paper.

The other man likewise divested the pockets of his fustian coat of divers packages; and all these were piled upon the table.

A strange and mysterious proceeding then took place.

The person in the fustian coat approached the chimney, and applied a small turn-screw, which he took from his pocket, to a screw in the iron frame-work of the rusty grate. In a few moments he was enabled to remove the entire grate with his hands; and a square aperture of considerable dimensions was then revealed. Into this place the two men thrust the parcels which they had taken from their pockets: the grate was replaced, the screws were fastened once more, and the work of concealment was complete.

The one in the gabardine then advanced towards that portion of the wall which was between the two windows; and the youth in the adjoining room now observed for the first time that the shutters of those windows were closed, and that coarse brown paper had been pasted all over the chinks and joints. Dick applied his hand in a peculiar manner to the part of the wall just alluded to, and a sliding panel immediately revealed a capacious cupboard. Thence the two men took food of by no means a coarse description, glasses, pipes, and tobacco; and, having hermetically closed the recess once more, seated themselves at the table to partake of the good cheer thus mysteriously supplied.

The alarm of the poor youth in the next chamber, as he contemplated these extraordinary proceedings, may be better conceived than depicted. His common sense told him that he was in the den of lawless thieves—perhaps murderers; in a house abounding with the secret means of concealing every kind of infamy. His eyes wandered away from the little window that had enabled him to observe the above-described proceedings, and glanced fearfully around the room in which he was concealed. He almost expected to see the very floor open beneath his feet. He looked down mechanically as this idea fitted through his imagination; and to his horror and dismay he beheld a trap-door in the floor. There was no mistaking it: there it was—about three feet long and two broad, and a little sunken beneath the level of its frame-work.

Near the edge of the trap-door lay an object which also attracted the youth's attention and added to his fears. It was a knife with a long blade pointed like a dagger. About three inches of this blade was covered with a peculiar rust: the youth shuddered; could it be human blood that had stained that instrument of death?

Every circumstance, however trivial, aided, in such a place as that, to arouse or confirm the worst fears, the most horrible suspicions.

The voices of the two men in the next room fell upon the youth's ear; and, perceiving that escape was still impracticable, he determined to gratify that curiosity which was commingled with his fears.

"Well, now, about this t'other job, Dick?" said Bill.

"It's Jem as started it," was the reply. "But he told me all about it, and so we may as well talk it over. It's up Islington way—up there between Kentish Town and Lower Holloway."

"Who's crib is it?"

"A swell of the name of Markham. He is an old fellow, and has two sons. One, the eldest, is with his regiment; t'other, the youngest, is only about fifteen, or so—a mere kid."

"Well, there's no danger to be expected from him. But what about the flunkies?"

"Only two man-servants and three vimen. One of the man-servants is the old butler, too fat to do any good; and t'other is a young tiger."

"And that's all?"

"That's all. Now you, and I, and Jem is quite enough to crack that there crib. When is it to be done?"

"Let's say to-morrow night; there is no moon now to speak on, and business in other quarters is slack."

"So be it. Here goes, then, to the success of our new job at old Markham's;" and as the burglar uttered these words he tossed off a bumper of brandy.

This example was followed by his worthy companion; and their conversation then turned upon other topics.

"I say, Bill, this old house has seen some jolly games, hasn't it?"

"I should think it had too. It was Jonathan Wild's favourite crib; and he was no fool at keeping things dark."

"No, surely. I dare say the well-staircase in the next room there, that's covered over with the trap-door, has had many a dead body flung down it into the Fleet."

"Ah! and without telling no tales too. But the trap-door has been nailed over for some years now."

The unfortunate youth in the adjacent chamber was riveted in silent horror to the spot, as these fearful details fell upon his ears.

"Why was the trap-door nailed down?"

"Cos there's no use for *that* now, since the house is uninhabited, and no more travellers comes to lodge here. Besides, if we wanted to make use of such a convenience, there's another—"

A loud clap of thunder prevented the remainder of this sentence from reaching the youth's ears.

"I've heard it said that the City is going to make great alterations in this quarter," observed Dick, after a pause. "If so be they comes near us, we must shift our quarters."

"Well, and don't we know other cribs as good as this—and just under the very nose of the authorities too? The nearer you gets to them the safer you finds yourself. Who'd think now that here, and in Peter-street, and on Saffron-hill too, there was such cribs as this? Lord, how such coves as you and me does laugh when them chaps in the Common Council and the House of Commons gets on their legs and praises the blue-bottles up to the skies as the most astute police in the world, while they wotes away the people's money to maintain 'em!"

"Oh! as for alterations, I don't suppose there'll be any for the next twenty years to come. They always talks of improvements long afore they begins 'em."

"But when they do commence, they won't spare this lovely old crib! It 'ud go to my heart to see them pull it about. I'd much sooner take and shove a dozen stiff uns myself down the trap than see a single rafter of the place ill-treated—that I would."

"Ah! if so be as the masons does come to pull its old carcass about, there'll be some fine things

made known to the world. These cellars down stairs, in which a man might hide for fifty years and never be smelt out by the police, will turn up a bone or two, I rather suspect; and not of a sheep, nor a pig, nor a bull neither."

"Why—half the silly folks in this neighbourhood are afeard to come here even in the daytime, because they say it's haunted," observed Bill, after a brief pause. "But, for my part, I shouldn't be frightened to come here at all hours of the night, and sit here alone too, even if every feller as was scragged at Tyburn or Newgate, and every one wot has been tumbled down these holes into the Fleet, was to start up, and —"

The man stopped short, turned ghastly pale, and fell back stupefied and speechless in his chair. His pipe dropped from between his fingers, and broke to pieces upon the floor.

"What the devil's the matter now?" demanded his companion, casting an anxious glance around.

"There! there! don't you see —," gasped the terrified ruffian, pointing towards the little window looking into the next room.

"It's only some d—d gammon of Crankey Jem," ejaculated Dick, who was more courageous in such matters than his companion. "I'll deuced soon put that to rights!"

Seizing the candle, he was hurrying towards the door, when his comrade rushed after him, crying, "No—I won't be left in the dark! I can't bear it! Damme, if you go, I'll go with you!"

The two villains accordingly proceeded together into the next room.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRAP-DOOR.

THE youthful stranger had listened with ineffable surprise and horror to the conversation of the two ruffians. His nerves had been worked up by all the circumstances of the evening to a tone bordering upon madness—to that pitch, indeed, when it appeared as if there were no alternative left save to fall upon the floor and yield to the *delirious tremors* of violent emotions.

He had restrained his feelings while he heard the burglary at Mr. Markham's dwelling coolly planned and settled; but when the discourse of those two monsters in human shape developed to his imagination all the horrors of the fearful place in which he had sought an asylum,—when he heard that he was actually standing upon the very verge of that staircase down which innumerable victims had been hurled to the depths of the slimy ditch beneath,—and when he thought how probable it was that his bones were doomed to whiten in the dark and hidden caverns below, along with the remains of other human beings who had been barbarously murdered in cold blood,—reason appeared to forsake him. A cold sweat broke forth all over him; and he seemed about to faint under the impression of a hideous nightmare.

He threw his hat upon the floor—for he felt the want of air. That proud forehead, that beautiful countenance were distorted with indescribable horror; and an ashy pallor spread itself over his features.

Death, in all its most hideous forms, appeared to follow—to surround—to hem him in. There

was no escape:—a trap-door here—a well, communicating with the ditch, there—or else the dagger;—no matter in what shape—still Death was before him—behind him—above him—below him—on every side of him.

It was horrible—most horrible!

Then was it that a sudden thought flashed across his brain: he resolved to attempt a desperate effort to escape. He summoned all his courage to his aid, and opened the door so cautiously that, though the hinges were old and rusted, they did not creak.

The crisis was now at hand. If he could clear the landing unperceived, he was safe. It was true that, seen or unseen, he might succeed in escaping from the house by means of his superior agility and nimbleness; but he reflected that these men would capture him again, in a few minutes, in the midst of a labyrinth of streets with which he was utterly unacquainted, but which they knew so well. He remembered that he had overheard their secrets and witnessed their mysterious modes of concealment; and that, should he fall into their power, death must inevitably await him.

These ideas crossed his brain in a moment, and convinced him of the necessity of prudence and extreme caution. He must leave the house unperceived, and dare the pitiless storm and pelting rain; for the tempest still raged without.

He once more approached the window to ascertain if there were any chance of stealing across the landing-place unseen. Unfortunately he drew too near the window; the light of the candle fell full upon his countenance, which horror and alarm had rendered deadly pale and fearfully convulsed.

It was at this moment that the ruffian, in the midst of his unholy vaults, had caught sight of that human face—white as a sheet—and with eyes fixed upon him with a glare which his imagination rendered stony and unearthly.

The youth saw that he was discovered; and a full sense of the desperate peril which hung over him, rushed to his mind. He turned, and endeavoured to fly away from the fatal spot; but, as imagination frequently fetters the limbs in a nightmare, and involves the sleeper in danger from which he vainly attempts to run, so did his legs now refuse to perform their office.

His brain whirled—his eyes grew dim: he grasped at the wall to save himself from falling—but his senses were deserting him—and he sank fainting upon the floor.

He awoke from the trance into which he had fallen, and became aware that he was being moved along. Almost at the same instant his eyes fell upon the sinister countenance of Dick, who was carrying him by the feet. The other ruffian was supporting his head.

They were lifting him down the staircase, upon the top step of which the candle was standing.

All the incidents of the evening immediately returned to the memory of the wretched boy, who now only too well comprehended the desperate perils that surrounded him.

The bottom of the staircase was reached: the villains deposited their burden for a moment in the passage, while Dick retraced his steps to fetch down the candle.

And then a horrible conflict of feelings and inclinations took place in the bosom of the unhappy youth. He shut his eyes; and for an instant debating within himself whether he should

remain silent or cry out. He dreamt of immediate—instantaneous death; and yet he thought that he was young to die—oh! so young—and that men could not be such barbarians—

But when the two ruffians stooped down to take him up again, fear surmounted all other sentiments, feelings, and inclinations; and his deep—his profound—his heartfelt agony was expressed in one long, loud, and piercing shriek!

And then a fearful scene took place.

The two villains carried the youth into the front room upon the ground-floor, and laid him down for a moment.

It was the same room to which he had first found his way upon entering that house.

It was the room in which, by the glare of the evanescent lightning, he had seen that black square upon the dirty floor.

For a few instants all was dark. At length the candle was brought by the man in the fustian coat.

The youth glanced wildly around him, and speedily recognised that room.

He remembered how deep a sensation of horror seized him when that black square upon the floor first caught his eyes.

He raised himself upon his left arm, and once more looked around.

Great God! was it possible!

That ominous blackness—that sinister square was the mouth of a yawning gulf, the trap-door of which was raised.

A fetid smell rose from the depths below, and the gurgling of a current was faintly heard.

The dread truth was in a moment made apparent to that unhappy boy—much more quickly than it occupies to relate or read. He started from his supine posture, and fell upon his knees at the feet of those merciless villains who had borne him thither.

"Mercy, mercy! I implore you! Oh! do not devote me to so horrible a death! Do not—do not murder me!"

"Hold your noisy tom-tom, you fool," ejaculated Bill, brutally. "You have heard and seen too much for our safety; we can't do otherwise."

"No, certainly not," added Dick. "You are now as fit to be faked as any one of us."

"Spare me, spare me, and I will never betray you! Oh! do not send me out of this world, so young—so very young! I have money, I have wealth, I am rich, and I will give you all I possess!" ejaculated the agonized youth; his countenance wearing an expression of horrible despair.

"Come; here's enough. Bill, lend a hand!" and Dick seized the boy by one arm, while his companion took a firm hold of the other.

"Mercy, mercy!" shrieked the youth, struggling violently; but struggling vainly. "You will repent when you know—I am not what I—"

He said no more; his last words were uttered over the mouth of the chasm ere the ruffians loosened their hold;—and then he fell.

The trap-door was closed violently over the aperture, and drowned the scream of agony which burst from his lips.

The two murderers then retraced their steps to the apartment on the first floor.

On the following day, about one o'clock, Mr. Markham, a gentleman of fortune residing in the

northern environs of London, received the following letter:—

"The inscrutable decrees of Providence have enabled the undersigned to warn you, that this night a burglarious attempt will be made upon your dwelling. The wretches who contemplate this infamy are capable of a crime of much blacker die. Beware!

"AN UNKNOWN FRIEND."

This letter was written in a beautiful feminine hand. Due precaution was adopted at Mr. Markham's mansion; but the attempt alluded to in the warning epistle was, for some reason or another, not made.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO TREES.

It was between eight and nine o'clock, on a delicious evening, about a week after the events related in the preceding chapters, that two youths issued from Mr. Markham's handsome, but somewhat secluded dwelling, in the northern part of the environs of London, and slowly ascended the adjacent hill. There was an interval of four years between the ages of these youths, the elder being upwards of nineteen, and the younger about fifteen; but it was easy to perceive by the resemblance which existed between them that they were brothers. They walked at a short distance from each other, and exchanged not a word as they ascended the somewhat steep path which conducted them to the summit of the eminence that overlooked the mansion they had just left. The elder proceeded first; and from time to time he clenched his fists, and knit his brows, and gave other silent but expressive indications of the angry passions which were concentrated in his breast. His brother followed him with downcast eyes, and with a countenance denoting the deep anguish that oppressed him. In this manner they arrived at the top of the hill, where they seated themselves upon a bench, which stood between two young ash saplings.

For a long time the brothers remained silent; but at length the younger of the two suddenly burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Oh! why, dearest Eugene, did we choose this spot to say farewell—perhaps for ever?"

"We could not select a more appropriate one, Richard," returned the elder brother. "Four years ago those trees were planted by our hands; and we have ever since called them by our own names. When we were wont to separate, to repair to our respective schools, we came hither to talk over our plans, to arrange the periods of our correspondence, and to anticipate the pursuits that should engage us during the vacations. And when we returned from our seminaries, we hastened hither, hand-in-hand, to see how our trees flourished; and he was most joyous and proud whose sapling appeared to expand the more luxuriantly. If ever we quarrelled, Richard, it was here that we made our peace again; and, seated upon this bench, we have concerted plans for the future; which, haply, will never now be realised!"

"You are right, my dear brother," said Richard, after a pause, during which he appeared to reflect profoundly upon Eugene's words; "we could not have selected a better spot. Still it is

all those happy days to which you allude that now render this moment the more bitter. Tell me, must you depart? Is there no alternative? Can I not intercede with our father? Surely, surely, he will not discard one so young as you, and whom he has loved—must still love—so tenderly!"

"Intercede with my father!" repeated Eugene, with an irony which seemed extraordinary in one of his tender age; "no, never! He has signified his desire, he has commanded me no longer to pollute his dwelling—those were his very words, and he shall be obeyed."

"Our father was incensed, deeply incensed, when he spoke," urged Richard, whose voice was rendered almost inaudible by his sobs; "and to-morrow he will repent of his harshness towards you."

"Our father had no right to blame me," said Eugene violently; "all that has occurred originated in his own conduct towards me. The behaviour of a parent to his son is the element of that son's ruin or success in after life."

"I know not how you can reproach our father, Eugene," said Richard, somewhat reproachfully, "for he has ever conducted himself with tenderness towards us; and since the death of our dear mother—"

"You are yet too young, Richard," interrupted Eugene impatiently, "to comprehend the nature of the accusation which I bring against my father. I will, however, attempt to enable you to understand my meaning, so that you may not imagine that I am acting with duplicity when I endeavour to find a means of extenuation, if not of justification, for my own conduct. My father lavished his gold upon my education, as he also did upon yours; and he taught us from childhood to consider ourselves the sons of wealthy parents who would enable their children to move with *éclat* in an elevated sphere of life. It was just this day year that I joined my regiment at Knightsbridge. I suddenly found myself thrown amongst gay, dissipated, and wealthy young men—my brother officers. Many of them were old acquaintances, and had been my companions at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. They speedily enlisted me in all their pleasures and debaucheries, and my expenditure soon exceeded my pay and my allowance. I became involved in debts, and was compelled to apply to my father to relieve me from my embarrassments. I wrote a humble and submissive letter, expressing contrition for my faults, and promising to avoid similar pursuits in future. Indeed, I was wearied of the dissipation into which I had plunged, and should have profited well by the experience my short career of pleasure and folly had enabled me to acquire. I trembled upon that verge when my father could either ruin or save me. He did not reply to my letter, and I had not courage to seek an interview with him. Again did I write to him: no answer. I had lost money at private play, and had contracted debts in the same manner. Those, Richard, are called *debts of honour*, and must be paid in full to your creditor, however wealthy he may be, even though your servants and tradesmen should be cheated out of their hard-earned and perhaps much-needed money altogether. I wrote a third time to our father, and still no notice was taken of my appeal. The officers to whom I owed the money lost at play began to look coldly upon me, and I was reduced to a state of desperation.

Still I waited for a few days, and for a fourth time wrote to my father. It appears that he was resolved to make me feel the inconvenience of the position in which I had placed myself by my follies; and he sent me no answer. I then called at the house, and he refused to see me. This you know, Richard. What could I do? Driven mad by constant demands for money which I could not pay, and smarting under the chilling glances and taunting allusions of my brother officers, I sold my commission. You are acquainted with the rest. I came home, threw myself at my father's feet, and he spurned me away from him! Richard, was my crime so very great? and has not the unjust, the extreme severity of my father been the cause of all my afflictions?"

"I dare not judge between you," said Richard mildly.

"But what does common sense suggest?" demanded Eugene.

"Doubtless our father knows best," returned the younger brother.

"Old men are often wrong, in spite of their experience—in spite of their years," persisted Eugene.

"My dear brother," said Richard, "I am afraid to exercise my judgment in a case where I stand a chance of rebelling against my father, or questioning his wisdom; and, at the same time, I am anxious to believe everything in your justification."

"I knew that you would not comprehend me," exclaimed Eugene, impatiently. "It is ridiculous not to dare to have an opinion of one's own! My dear brother," he added, turning suddenly round, "you have been to Eton to little purpose: I thought that nearly as much of the world was to be seen there as at Sandhurst. I find that I was mistaken."

And Eugene felt and looked annoyed at the turn which the conversation had taken.

Richard was unhappy, and remained silent.

In the meantime the sun had set; and the darkness was gradually becoming more intense.

Suddenly Eugene grasped his brother's hand, and exclaimed, "Richard, I shall now depart!"

"Impossible!" cried the warm-hearted youth: "you will not leave me thus—you will not abandon your father also, for a hasty word that he has spoken, and which he will gladly recal to-morrow? Oh! no—Eugene, you will not leave the dwelling in which you were born, and where you have passed so many happy hours! What will become of you? What do you purpose? What plan have you in view?"

"I have a few guineas in my pocket," returned Eugene; "and many a princely fortune has been based upon a more slender foundation."

"Yes," said Richard hastily; "you read of fortunes being easily acquired in novels and romances; and in past times persons may have enriched themselves suddenly; but in the great world of the present day, Eugene, I am afraid that such occurrences are rare and seldom seen."

"You know nothing of the world, Richard," said Eugene, almost contemptuously. "There are thousands of persons in London who live well, and keep up splendid establishments, without any apparent resources; and I am man of the world enough to be well aware that those always thrive the best in the long run who have the least to lose at starting. At all events I shall try my fortune. I will not, cannot succumb to a parent



who has caused my ruin at my very first entrance into life."

"May God prosper your pursuits, and send you the fortune which you appear to aim at!" ejaculated Richard fervently. "But once again—and for the last time, let me implore you—let me entreat you not to put this rash and hasty resolve into execution. Do stay—do not leave me, my dearest, dearest brother!"

"Richard, not all the powers of human persuasion shall induce me to abandon my present determination," cried Eugene emphatically, and rising from the bench as he spoke. "It is growing late, and I must depart. Now listen, my dear boy, to what I have to say to you."

"Speak, speak!" murmured Richard, sobbing as if his heart would break.

"All will be yet well," said Eugene, slightly touched by his brother's profound affliction. "I am resolved not to set foot in my father's house again; you must return thither and pack me up my papers and a few necessaries."

"And you will not leave this spot until my return?" said Richard.

"Solemnly I promise that," answered Eugene. "But stay; on your part you must faithfully pledge yourself not to seek my father, nor in any way interfere between him and me. Nay, do not remonstrate; you must promise."

"I promise you all—anything you require," said Richard mournfully; and, after affectionately embracing his brother, he hurried down the hill towards the mansion, turning back from time to time to catch a glimpse of Eugene's figure through the increasing gloom, to satisfy himself that he was still there between the two saplings.

Richard entered the house, and stole softly up to the bed-room which his brother usually occupied when at home. He began his mournful task of putting together the few things which Eugene had desired him to select; and while he was thus employed the tears rolled down his cheeks in torrents. At one moment he was inclined to hurry to his father, and implore him to interfere in

time to prevent Eugene's departure; but he remembered his solemn promise, and he would not break it. Assuredly this was a sense of honour so extreme, that it might be denominated *fates*; but it was, nevertheless, the sentiment which controlled all the actions of him who cherished it. Tenderly, dearly as he loved his brother—bitterly as he deplored his intended departure, he still would not forfeit his word and take the simple step which would probably have averted the much-dreaded evil. Richard's sense of honour and inflexible integrity triumphed, on all occasions, over every other consideration, feeling, and desire; and of this characteristic of his brother's nature Eugene was well aware.

Richard had made a small package of the articles which he had selected, and was about to leave the room to return to his brother, when the sound of a footstep in the passage communicating with the chamber, suddenly fell upon his ear.

Scarcely had he time to recover from the alarm into which this circumstance had thrown him, when the door slowly opened, and the butler entered the apartment.

He was a man of about fifty years of age, with a jolly red face, a somewhat bulbous nose, small laughing eyes, short gray hair standing upright in front, whiskers terminating an inch above his white cravat, and in person considerably inclined to corpulency. In height he was about five feet seven inches, and had a peculiar shuffling rapid walk, which he had learnt by some twenty-five years' practice in little journeys from the sideboard in the dining-room to his own pantry, and back again. He was possessed of an excellent heart, and was a good-humoured companion; but pompous, and swelling with importance in the presence of those whom he considered his inferiors. He was particularly addicted to hard words; and as, to use his own expression, he was "self-taught," it is not to be wondered if he occasionally gave those aforesaid hard words a pronunciation and a meaning which militated a little against received rules. In attire, he was unequalled for the whiteness of his cravat, the exuberance of his shirt-frill, the elegance of his waistcoat, the set of his kerseymere tights, and the punctilious neatness of his black silk stockings, and his well-polished shoes.

"Well, Master Richard," said the butler, as he shuffled into the room, with a white napkin under his left arm, "what in the name of everythink indivisible is the matter now?"

"Nothing, nothing, Whittingham," replied the youth. "You had better go down stairs—my father may want you."

"If so be your father wants anythink, Tom will despond to the summits as usual," said the butler, leisurely seating himself upon a chair close by the table whereon Richard had placed his package. "But might I be so familiar as to inquire into the insignification of that bundle of shirts and ankerchers?"

"Whittingham, I implore you to ask me no questions: I am in a hurry—and—"

"Master Richard, Master Richard," cried the butler, shaking his head gravely, "I'm very much afeard that somethink preposterous is going to incur. I could not remain a entire stranger to all that has transpired this day; and now I know what it is," he added, slapping his right hand smartly upon his thigh; "your brother's a-going to amputate it!"

"To what?"

"To cut it, then, if you reprehend that better. But it shan't be done, Master Richard—it shan't be done!"

"Whittingham—"

"That's my nomenklitter, Master Richard," said the old man, doggedly; "and it was one of the fust you ever learned to pernounce. Behold ye, Master Richard, I have a right to speak—for I have knowed you both from your cradles—and loved you too! Who was it, when you come into this subliminary spear—who was it as nussed you—and—"

"Good Whittingham, I know all that, and—"

"I have no overduis curiosity to satisfy, Master Richard," observed the butler; "but my soul's inflicted to think that you and Master Eugene couldn't make a friend of old Whittingham. I feel it here, Master Richard—here, in my buzzim!"—and the worthy old domestic dealt himself a tremendous blow upon the chest as he uttered these words.

"I must leave you now, Whittingham; and I desire you to remain here until my return," said Richard. "Do you hear, Whittingham?"

"Yes, Master Richard; but I don't choose to do as you would wish in this here instance. I shall foller you."

"What, Whittingham?"

"I shall foller you, sir."

"Well—you can do that," said Richard, suddenly remembering that his brother had in no-wise cautioned him against such an intervention as this; "and pray God it may lead to some good."

"Ah! now I see that I am raly wanted," said the butler, a smile of satisfaction playing upon his rubicund countenance.

Richard now led the way from the apartment, the butler following him in a stately manner. They descended the stairs, crossed the garden, and entered the path which led to the top of the hill.

"Two trees, I suppose?" said the old domestic inquiringly.

"Yes—he is there!" answered Richard; "but the reminiscence of the times when we planted those saplings has failed to induce him to abandon a desperate resolution."

"Ah! he ain't got Master Richard's heart—I always knowed that," mused the old man half audibly as he trudged along. "There are them two lads—fine tall youths—both black hair, and intelligible black eyes—admirably formed—straight as arrows—and yet so diversified in disposition!"

Richard and the butler now reached the top of the hill. Eugene was seated upon the bench in a deep reverie; and it was not until his brother and the faithful old domestic stood before him, that he awoke from that fit of abstraction.

"What! is that you, Whittingham?" he exclaimed, the moment he recognised the butler. "Richard, I did not think you would have done this."

"It wasn't Master Richard's fault, sir," said Whittingham; "I was rayther too wide awake not to smell what was a-going on by virtue of my factory nerves; and so—"

"My dear Whittingham," hastily interrupted Eugene, "I know that you are a faithful servant to my father, and very much attached to us: on that very account, pray do not interfere!"

"Interfere!" ejaculated Whittingham, tho-

roughly amazed at being thus addressed, while a tear started into his eye: "not interfere, Master Eugene? Well, I'm—I'm—I'm—regularly flabbergasted!"

"My mind is made up," said Eugene, "and no persuasion shall alter its decision. I am my own master—my father's conduct has emancipated me from all deference to parental authority. Richard, you have brought my things? We must now say adieu."

"My dearest brother—"

"Master Eugene—"

"Whither are you going?"

"I am on the road to fame and fortune!"

"Alas!" said Richard mournfully, "you may perhaps find that this world is not so fruitful in resources as you now imagine."

"All remonstrances—all objections are vain," interrupted Eugene impatiently. "We must say adieu! But one word more," he added,

after an instant's pause, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him; "you doubt the possibility of my success in life, and I feel confident of it. Do you pursue your career under the auspices of that parent in whose wisdom you so blindly repose: I will follow mine, dependent only on mine own resources. This is the 10th of July, 1831; twelve years hence, on the 10th of July, 1843, we will meet again upon this very spot, between the two trees, if they be still standing. Remember the appointment: we will then compare notes relative to our success in life!"

The moment he had uttered these words, Eugene hastily embraced his brother, who struggled in vain to retain him; and, having wrung the hand of the old butler, who was now sobbing like a child, the discarded son threw his little bundle over his shoulder, and hurried away from the spot.

So precipitately did he descend the hill in the direction leading away from the mansion, and towards the multitudinous metropolis at a little distance, that he was out of sight before his brother or Whittingham even thought of pursuing him.

They lingered for some time upon the summit of the hill, without exchanging a word; and then, maintaining the same silence, slowly retraced their steps towards the mansion.

CHAPTER V.

ELSIERE ACQUAINTANCES.

FOUR years passed away.

During that interval no tidings of the discarded son reached the disconsolate father and unhappy brother; and all the exertions of the former to discover some trace of the fugitive were fruitless. Vainly did he lavish considerable sums upon that object: uselessly did he despatch emissaries to all the great manufacturing towns of England, as well as to the principal capitals of Europe, to endeavour to procure some information of him whom he would have received as the prodigal son, and to welcome whose return he would have "killed the fatted calf:"—all his measures to discover his son's retreat were unavailing.

At length, after a lapse of four years, he sank into the tomb—the victim of a broken heart!

A few days previous to his death, he made a will in favour of his remaining son, the guardianship of whom he intrusted to a Mr. Monroe,

who was an opulent City merchant, and an old and sincere friend.

Thus, at the age of nineteen, Richard found himself his own master, with a handsome allowance to meet his present wants, and with a large fortune in the perspective of two years more. Mr. Monroe, feeling the utmost confidence in the young man's discretion and steadiness, permitted him to reside in the old family mansion, and interfered with him and his pursuits as little as possible.

The ancient abode of the family of Markham was a spacious and commodious building, but of heavy and sombre appearance. This gloomy aspect of the architecture was increased by the venerable trees that formed a dense rampart of verdure around the edifice. The grounds belonging to the house were not extensive, but were tastefully laid out; and within the enclosure over which the dominion of Richard Markham extended, was the green hill surmounted by the two ash trees. From the summit of that eminence the mighty metropolis might be seen in all its vastitude—that metropolis whose one single heart was agitated with so many myriads of conflicting passions, warring interests, and opposite feelings.

Perhaps a dozen pages of laboured description will not afford the reader a better idea of the characters and dispositions of the two brothers than that which has already been conveyed by their conversation and conduct detailed in the preceding chapter. Eugene was all selfishness and egotism, Richard all generosity and frankness; the former deceitful, astute, and crafty; the latter honourable even to a fault.

With Eugene, for the present, we have little to do; the course of our narrative follows the fortunes of Richard Markham.

The disposition of this young man was somewhat reserved, although by no means misanthropical nor melancholy. That characteristic resulted only from the domesticated nature of his habits. He was attached to literary pursuits, and frequently passed entire hours together in his study, poring over works of a scientific and instructive nature. When he stirred abroad for the purpose of air and exercise, he preferred a long ramble upon foot, amongst the fields in the vicinity of his dwelling, to a parade of himself and his fine horse amid the busy haunts of wealth and fashion at the West End of London.

It was, nevertheless, upon a beautiful afternoon in the month of August, 1835, that Richard appeared amongst the loungers in Hyde Park. He was on foot, and attired in deep mourning; but his handsome countenance, symmetrical form, and thoroughly genteel and unassuming air attracted attention.

Parliament had been prorogued a fortnight before; and all London was said to be "out of town." Albeit, it was evident that a considerable portion of London was "in town," for there were many gorgeous equipages rolling along "the drive," and the enclosure was pretty well sprinkled with well-dressed groups and dotted with solitary fashionable gentlemen upon foot.

From the carriages that rolled past many bright eyes were for a moment turned upon Richard; and in these equipages there were not wanting young female bosoms which heaved at the contrast afforded by that tall and elegant youth, so full of vigour and health, and whose countenance beamed with intelligence, and the old, emaciated, and semi-childish husbands

seated by their sides, and whose wealth had purchased their hands, but never succeeded in obtaining their hearts.

Richard, wearied with his walk, seated himself upon a bench, and contemplated with some interest the moving pageantry before him. He was thus occupied when he was suddenly accosted by a stranger, who seated himself by his side in an easy manner, and addressed some common-place observation to him.

This individual was a man of about two-and-thirty, elegantly attired, agreeable in his manners, and prepossessing in appearance. Under this superficial turgid of gentility a quicker eye than Richard Markham's would have detected a certain swagger in his gait and a kind of dashing recklessness about him which produced an admirable effect upon the vulgar or the inexperienced, but which were not calculated to inspire immediate confidence in the thorough man of the world. Richard was, however, all frankness and honour himself, and he did not scruple to return such an answer to the stranger's remark as was calculated to encourage farther conversation.

"I see the count is abroad again," observed the stranger, following with his eyes one of the horsemen in "the drive." "Poor fellow! he has been playing at hide-and-seek for a long time."

"Indeed! and wherefore?" exclaimed Richard.

"What! are you a stranger in London, sir?" cried the well-dressed gentleman, transferring his eyes from the horseman to Markham's countenance, on which they were fixed with an expression of surprise and interest.

"Very nearly so, although a resident in its immediate vicinity all my life;" and, with the natural ingenuousness of youth, Richard immediately communicated his entire history, from beginning to end, to his new acquaintance. Of a surety there was not much to relate; but the stranger succeeded in finding out who the young man was, under what circumstances he was now living, and the amount of his present and future resources.

"Of course you mean to see life!" said the stranger.

"Certainly. I have already studied the great world by the means of books."

"But of course you know that there is nothing like experience."

"I can understand how experience is necessary to a man who is anxious to make a fortune, but not to him who has already got one."

"Oh, decidedly! It is frequently more difficult to keep a fortune than it was to obtain one."

"How—if I do not speculate?"

"No; but others will speculate upon you."

"I really cannot comprehend you. As I do not wish to increase my means, having enough, I shall neither speculate with my own nor allow people to speculate with it for me; and thus I can run no risk of losing what I possess."

The stranger gazed half incredulously upon Markham for a minute; and then his countenance expressed a species of sneer.

"You have never played?"

"Played! at —?"

"At cards; for money, I mean."

"Oh! never!"

"So much the better; never do. Unless," added the stranger, "it is entirely amongst friends and men of honour. But will you avail yourself

of my humble vehicle, and take one turn round 'the Drive?'"

The stranger pointed as he spoke to a very handsome phaeton and pair at a little distance, and attended by a dapper-looking servant in light blue livery with silver lace.

"Might I have the honour of being acquainted with the name of a gentleman who exhibits so much kindness —"

"My dear sir, I must really apologise for my sin of omission. You confided your own circumstances so frankly to me that I cannot do otherwise than show you equal confidence in return. Besides, amongst men of honour," he continued, laying particular stress upon a word which is only so frequently used to be abused, "such communications, you know, are necessary. I do not like that system of familiarity based upon no tenable grounds, which is now becoming so prevalent in London. For instance, nothing is more common than for one gentleman to meet another in Bond-street, or the Park, or in Burlington Arcade, for example's sake, and for the one to say to the other—'*My dear friend, how are you?—Quite well, old fellow, thank you; but, by-the-by, I really forget your name!*' However," added the fashionable gentleman with a smile, "here is my card. My town-quarters are Long's Hotel, my country seat is in Berkshire, and my shooting-box is in Scotland, at all of which I shall be most happy to see you."

Richard, who was not only highly satisfied with the candour and openness of his new friend, but also very much pleased and amused with him, returned suitable acknowledgments for this kind invitation; and, glancing his eyes over the card which had been placed in his hands, perceived that he was conversing with the HONOURABLE ARTHUR CHICHESTER.

As they were moving towards the phaeton, a gentleman, elegantly attired, of about the middle age, and particularly fascinating in his manners, accosted Mr. Chichester.

"Ah! who would have thought of meeting you here—when London is actually empty, and I am ashamed of being yet left in it! Our mutual friend the duke assured me that you were gone to Italy!"

"The duke always has some joke at my expense," returned Mr. Chichester. "He was once the cause of a very lovely girl committing suicide. She was the only one I ever loved; and he one day declared in her presence that I had just embarked for America. Poor thing! she went straight up to her room, and—"

"And!" echoed Richard.

"Took poison!" added Mr. Chichester, turning away his head for a moment, and drawing an elegant cambric handkerchief across his eyes.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Markham.

"Let me not trouble you with my private afflictions. Sir Rupert, allow me to introduce my friend Mr. Markham:—Mr. Markham, Sir Rupert Harborough."

The two gentlemen bowed, and the introduction was effected.

"Whither are you bound?" inquired Sir Rupert.

"We were thinking of an hour's drive," leisurely replied Mr. Chichester; "and it was then my intention to have asked my friend Mr. Markham to dine with me at Long's. Will you join us, Sir Rupert?"

"Upon my honour, nothing would give me

greater pleasure; but I am engaged to meet the duke at Tattersall's; and I am then under a solemn promise to dine and pass the evening with Diana."

"Always gallant—always attentive to the ladies!" exclaimed Mr. Chichester.

"You know, my dear fellow, that Diana is so amiable, so talented, so fascinating, so accomplished, and so bewitching, that I can refuse her nothing. It is true her wants and whims are somewhat expensive at times; but—"

"Harborough, I am surprised at you! What! complain of the fantasies of the most beautiful woman in London—if not in England—you a man of seven thousand a year, and who at the death of an uncle—"

"Upon my honour I begrudge her nothing!" interrupted Sir Rupert, complacently stroking his chin with his elegantly-gloved hand. "But, by the way, if you will honour me and Diana with your company this evening—and if Mr. Markham will also condescend—"

"With much pleasure," said Mr. Chichester; "and I am sure that my friend Mr. Markham will avail himself of this opportunity of forming the acquaintance of the most beautiful and fascinating woman in England."

Richard bowed; he dared not attempt an excuse. He had heard himself dubbed the friend of the Honourable Mr. Arthur Chichester; his ears had caught an intimation of a dinner at Long's, which he knew by report to be the headquarters of that section of the fashionable world that consists of single young gentlemen; and he now found himself suddenly engaged to pass the evening with Sir Rupert Harborough and a lady of whom all he knew was that her name was Diana, and that she was the most beautiful and fascinating creature in England.

Truly, all this was enough to dazzle him; and he accordingly resigned himself to Mr. Arthur Chichester's good will and pleasure.

Sir Rupert Harborough now remembered "that he must not keep the duke waiting;" and having kissed the tip of his lemon-coloured glove to Mr. Chichester, and made a semi-ceremonious, semi-gracious bow to Markham—that kind of bow whose formality is tempered by the blandness of the smile accompanying it—he hastened away.

It may be, however, mentioned as a singular circumstance, and as a proof of how little he cared about keeping "the duke" waiting, that, instead of proceeding towards Tattersall's, he departed in the direction of Oxford-street.

This little incident was, however, unnoticed by Richard—for the simple reason, that at this epoch of his life he did not know where Tattersall's was.

"What do you think of my friend the baronet?" inquired Mr. Chichester, as they rolled leisurely along "the Drive" in the elegant phaeton.

"I am quite delighted with him," answered Richard; "and if her ladyship be only as agreeable as her husband—"

"Excuse me, but you must not call her '*Aer ladyship*.' Address her and speak of her simply as Mrs. Arlington."

"I am really at a loss to comprehend—"

"My dear friend," said Chichester, sinking his voice, although there was no danger of being overheard, "Diana is not the wife of Sir Rupert Harborough. The baronet is unmarried; and this lady—"

"Is his mistress," added Markham hastily. "In that case I most certainly shall not accept the kind invitation I received for this evening."

"Nonsense, my dear friend! You must adapt your behaviour to the customs of the sphere in which you move. You belong to the aristocracy—like me—and like the baronet! In the upper class, even supposing you have a wife, she is only an encumbrance. Nothing is so characteristic of want of gentility as to marry early; and as for children, pah! they are the very essence of vulgarity! Then, of course, every man of fashion in London has his mistress, even though he only keeps her for the sake of his friends. This is quite allowable amongst the aristocracy. Remember, I am not advocating the cause of immorality; I would not have every butcher, and tea-dealer, and linen-draper do the same. God forbid! Then it would, indeed, be the height of depravity!"

"Since it is the fashion, and you assure me that there is nothing wrong in this connexion between the baronet and Mrs. Arlington—at least, that the usages of high life admit it—I will not advance any farther scruples," said Richard; although he had a slight suspicion, like the ringing of far-distant bells in the ears, that the doctrine which his companion had just propounded was not based upon the most tenable grounds.

It was now half-past six o'clock in the evening; and, one after the other, the splendid equipages and gay horsemen withdrew in somewhat rapid succession. The weather was nevertheless still exquisitely fine; indeed, it was the most enchanting portion of the entire day. The sky was of a soft and serene azure, upon which appeared here and there thin vapours of snowy white, motionless and still; for not a breath of wind stirred the leaf upon the tree. Never did Naples, nor Albano, nor Sorrentum, boast a more beautiful horizon; and as the sun sank towards the western verge, he bathed all that the eye could embrace—earth and sky, dwelling and grove, garden and field—in a glorious flood of golden light.

At seven o'clock Mr. Chichester and his new acquaintance sat down to dinner in the coffee-room at Long's Hotel. The turtle was unexceptionable; the ice punch faultless. Then came the succulent neck of venison, and the prime Madeira. The dinner passed off pleasantly enough; and Richard was more and more captivated with his friend. He was, however, somewhat astonished at the vast quantities of wine which the Honourable Mr. Chichester swallowed, apparently without the slightest inconvenience to himself.

Mr. Chichester diverted him with amusing anecdotes, lively sallies, and extraordinary narratives; and Richard found that his new friend had not only travelled all over Europe, but was actually the bosom friend of some of the most powerful of its sovereigns. These statements, moreover, rather appeared to slip forth in the course of conversation, than to be made purposely; and thus they were stamped with an additional air of truth and importance.

At about half-past nine the Honourable Mr. Chichester proposed to adjourn to the lodgings of Mrs. Arlington. Richard, who had been induced by the example of his friend and by the excitement of an interesting conversation, to imbibe more wine than he was accustomed to

take, was now delighted with the prospect of passing an agreeable evening; and he readily acceded to Mr. Chichester's proposal.

Mrs. Arlington occupied splendidly furnished apartments on the first and second floors over a music-shop in Bond-street; thither, therefore, did the two gentlemen repair on foot; and in a short time they were introduced into the drawing-room where the baronet and his fair companion were seated.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. ARLINGTON.

THE Honourable Mr. Arthur Chichester had not exaggerated his description of the beauty of the Enchantress—for she was called by the male portion of her admirers. Indeed, she was of exquisite loveliness. Her dark-brown hair was arranged *en bandeau*, and parted over a forehead polished as marble. Her eyes were large, and of that soft dark melting blue which seems to form a heaven of promises and bliss to gladden the beholder.

She was not above the middle height of woman; but her form was modelled to the most exquisite and voluptuous symmetry. Her figure reminded the spectator of the body of the wasp, so taper was the waist, and so exuberant was the swell of the bust.

Her mouth was small and pouting; but, when she smiled, the parting roses of the lips displayed a set of teeth white as the pearls of the East.

Her hand would have made the envy of a queen. And yet, above all these charms, a certain something which could not be exactly denominated boldness nor effrontery, but which was the very reverse of extreme reserve, immediately struck Richard Markham.

He could not define the fault he had to find with this beautiful woman; and still there was something in her manners which seemed to proclaim that she did not possess the tranquillity and ease of a wife. She appeared to be constantly aiming at the display of the accomplishments of her mind, or the graces of her attitudes. She seemed to court admiration by every word and every motion; and to keep alive in the mind of the baronet the passion with which she had inspired him. She possessed not that confidence and contented reliance upon the idea of unalienable affections which characterise the wife. She seemed to be well aware that no legal nor religious ties connected the baronet to her; and she, therefore, kept her imagination perpetually upon the rack to weave new artificial bonds to cast around him. And, as if each action or each word of the baronet severed those bonds of silk and wreathed flowers, she found, Penelope-like, that at short intervals her labours were to be achieved over again.

This constant state of mental anxiety and excitement imparted a corresponding restlessness to her body; and those frequent changes of attitude, which were originally intended to develop the graces of her person, or allow her lover's eye to catch short glimpses of her heaving bosom of snow, became now a settled habit.

Nevertheless, she was a lovely and fascinating woman, and one for whom a young heart would undertake a thousand sacrifices.

By accident Richard was seated next to Mrs. Arlington upon the sofa. He soon perceived

that she was, indeed, as accomplished as the baronet had represented her to be; and her critical opinions upon the current literature, dramatic novelties, and new music of the day were delivered with judgment and good taste.

Richard could not help glancing from time to time in admiration at her beautiful countenance, animated as it now was with the excitement of the topics of discourse; and whenever her large blue eyes met his, a deep blush suffused his countenance, and he knew not what he said or did.

"Well, what shall we do to amuse ourselves?" said Chichester, at the expiration of about an hour, during which coffee had been handed round.

"Upon my honour," exclaimed the baronet, "I am perfectly indifferent. What say you to a game of whist or *écarté*?"

"Just as you choose," said Chichester carelessly.

At this moment the door opened, and a roguish-looking little tiger—a lad of about fourteen, in a chocolate-coloured livery, with three rows of bright-crested buttons down his Prussian jacket—entered to announce another guest.

A short, stout, vulgar-looking man, about forty years of age, with a blue coat and brass buttons, buff waistcoat, and grey trousers, entered the room.

"Halloa, old chap, how are you?" he exclaimed in a tone of most ineffable vulgarity. "Harborough, how are you? Chichester, my tulip, how goes it?"

The baronet hastened to receive this extraordinary visitor, and, as he shook hands with him, whispered something in his ear. The stranger immediately turned towards Richard, to whom he was introduced by the name of Mr. Augustus Talbot.

This gentleman and the baronet then conversed together for a few moments; and Chichester, drawing near Markham, seized the opportunity of observing, "Talbot is an excellent fellow—a regular John Bull—not over polished, but enormously rich and well connected. You will see that he is not more cultivated in mind than in manners; but he would go to the devil to do any one a service; and, somehow or another, you can't help liking the fellow when once you know him."

"Any friend of yours or of the baronet's will be agreeable to me," said Richard; "and, provided he is a man of honour, a little roughness of manner should be readily overlooked."

"You speak like a man of the world, and as a man of honour yourself," said Mr. Chichester.

Meantime the baronet and Mr. Talbot had seated themselves, and the Honourable Mr. Chichester returned to his own chair.

The conversation then became general.

"I didn't know that you were in town, Talbot," said Mr. Chichester.

"And I forgot to mention it," observed the baronet.

"Or rather," said the lady, "you meditated a little surprise for your friend Mr. Chichester."

"I hope you've been well, ma'am, since I saw you last—that is the day before yesterday," said Mr. Talbot. "You was complaining then of a slight cold, and I recommended a treacle-posset and a stocking tied round the throat."

"My dear Talbot, take some liqueur," cried the baronet, rising hastily, and purposely knocking down his chair to drown the remainder of Mr. Talbot's observation.

"But I dare say you didn't follow my advice, ma'am," pursued M. Talbot, with the most imperturbable gravity. "For my part I am suffering dreadfully with a bad foot. I'll tell you how it were, ma'am. I've got a nasty soft corn on my little toe; and so what must I do, but yesterday morning I takes my razor, sharpens it upon the paynted strap, and goes for to cut off master corn. But instead of cutting the corn, I nearly sliced my toe off; and—"

"By the way, Diana, has the young gentleman called yet, whom we met the other evening at the Opera?" said the baronet, abruptly interrupting this vulgar tirade.

"Do you mean the effeminate youth whom we dubbed the *Handsome Unknown*?" said the Enchantress.

"Yes: he who was so very mysterious, but who seemed so excessively anxious to form our acquaintance."

"He promised to call some evening this week," answered Diana, "and play a game of *écarté*. He told me that he was invincible at *écarté*."

"Talking of *écarté*, let us play a game," ejaculated Mr. Chichester, who was sitting upon the sofa lest Mr. Talbot should commence his vulgarities again.

"Well, I'll take a hand with pleasure," said this individual: then turning towards Diana, he added, "I will tell you the rest of the adventure about the soft corn another time, ma'am."

"What a nuisance this is!" whispered Chichester to the baronet. "The young fellow does stare so."

"You must give him some explanation or another," hastily replied the baronet; "or I'll tell Diana to say something presently that will smooth down matters."

The cards were produced, and Mr. Talbot and the Honourable Mr. Chichester sat down to play.

Sir Rupert backed the former, and considerable sums in gold and notes were placed upon the table. Presently the lady turned towards Richard, and said with a smile, "Are you fond of *écarté*?" "I must venture a guinea upon Mr. Chichester. Sir Rupert is betting against him; and I love to oppose Sir Rupert at cards. You will see how I shall treat him presently."

With these words the Enchantress rose and seated herself near Mr. Chichester. Of course Markham did the same; and in a very short time he was induced by the lady to follow her example, and took the same side which she supported.

Mr. Chichester, however, had a continued run of ill luck, and lost every rubber. Richard was thus the loser of about thirty sovereigns; but he was somewhat consoled by having so fair a companion in his bad fortune. He would have suffered himself to be persuaded by her to persist in backing Mr. Chichester, as she positively assured him that the luck must change, had not that gentleman himself suddenly risen, thrown down the cards, and declared that he would play no more.

"Would you, ma'am, like to take Mr. Chichester's place?" said Mr. Talbot.

Mr. Chichester shook his head to the baronet, and the baronet did the same to Diana, and Diana accordingly declined. The card-table was therefore abandoned; and Mrs. Arlington, at the request of Sir Rupert, seated herself at the piano. Without any affectation she sang and accom-

panied herself upon the instrument in a manner that quite ravished the heart of Richard Markham.

Suddenly the entire house echoed with the din of the front-door knocker, and almost simultaneously the bell was rung with violence.

In a few moments the young tiger announced Mr. Walter Sydney.

He was a youth apparently not more than nineteen or twenty, of middle height, and very slim. He wore a tight blue military frock coat buttoned up to the throat; ample black kerseymer trousers, which did not, however, conceal the fact that he was the least thing knock-kneed, and a hat with tolerably broad brims. His feet and hands were small to a fault. His long light chestnut hair flowed in luxuriant undulations over the collar of his coat, even upon his shoulders, and gave him a peculiarly feminine appearance. His delicate complexion, upon the pure red and white of which the dark dyes of no beard had yet infringed, wore a deep blush as he entered the room.

"Mr. Sydney, you are welcome," said Mrs. Arlington, in a manner calculated to reassure the bashful youth. "It was but an hour ago that we were talking of you, and wondering why we had not received the pleasure of a visit."

"Madam, you are too kind," replied Mr. Sydney, in a tone which sounded upon the ear like a silver bell—so soft and beautiful was its cadence. "I am afraid that I am intruding: I had hoped to find you alone—I mean yourself and Sir Rupert Harborough—and I perceive that you have company—"

He stammered—became confounded with excess—and then glanced at his attire, as much as to intimate that he was in a walking dress.

Both the baronet and Diana hastened to welcome him in such a manner as to speedily place him upon comfortable terms with himself once more; and he was then introduced to Mr. Chichester, Mr. Talbot, and Mr. Markham.

The moment the name of Markham was mentioned, the youthful visitor started perceptibly, and then fixed his intelligent hazel eyes upon the countenance of Richard with an expression of the most profound interest mingled with surprise.

Mr. Chichester made an observation at the same moment, and Sydney immediately afterwards entered with ease and apparent pleasure into a conversation which turned upon the most popular topics of the day. Richard was astonished at the extreme modesty, propriety, and good sense with which that effeminate and bashful youth expressed himself; and even the baronet, who was in reality well informed, listened to his interesting visitor with attention and admiration. Still there was a species of extreme delicacy in his tastes, as evidenced by his remarks, which bordered at times upon a fastidiousness, if not an inexperience actually puerile or feminine.

At half-past eleven supper was served up, and the party sat down to that most welcome and sociable of all meals.

It was truly diverting to behold the manner in which Mr. Talbot fell, tooth and nail, upon the delicacies which he heaped upon his plate; and his applications to the wine-bottle were so corresponded. At one time he expressed his regret that it was too vulgar to drink half-and-half; and on another he vented his national prejudices against those who maintained that Perigord pies were

preferable to rump steaks, or that claret was more exquisite than port or sherry. Once, when, it would appear, Mr. Chichester kicked him under the table, he roared out a request that his soft corn might be remembered; and as his friends were by no means anxious for a second edition of that interesting narrative—especially before Mr. Walter Sydney—they adopted the prudent alternative of conveying their remonstrances to him by means of winks instead of kicks.

After supper Mr. Talbot insisted upon making a huge bowl of punch in his own fashion; but he found that Mr. Chichester would alone aid him in disposing of it. As for Mr. Walter Sydney, he never appeared to do more than touch the brim of the wine-glass with his lips.

In a short time Mr. Talbot insisted upon practising his vocal powers by singing a hunting song, and was deeply indignant with his friends because they would not join in the very impressive but somewhat common chorus of "*Fal de la la la, fal de la la.*" It is impossible to say what Mr. Talbot would have done next; but, much to the horror of the baronet, Mr. Chichester, and Diana—and equally to the surprise of Richard Markham and Walter Sydney—he suddenly lost his balance, and fell heavily upon the floor and into a sound sleep simultaneously.

"What a pity," said Mr. Chichester, shaking his head mournfully, and glancing down upon the prostrate gentleman, as if he were pronouncing a funeral oration over his remains; "this is his only fault—and, as it happens every night, it begins materially to disfigure his character. Otherwise, he is an excellent fellow, and immensely rich!"

At this moment the eyes of Richard caught those of Walter Sydney. An ill-concealed expression of superlative contempt and ineffable disgust was visible upon the handsome countenance of the latter; and the proud curl of his lip manifested his opinion of the scene he had just witnessed. In a few moments he rose to depart. To Diana he was only coldly polite; to the baronet and Chichester superbly distant and constrained; but towards Markham, as he took leave of him, there was a cordiality in his manner, and a sincerity in the desire which he expressed "that they should meet again," which formed a remarkable contrast with his behaviour towards the others.

That night slumber seemed to evade the eyes of Richard Markham. The image of Mrs. Arlington, and all that she had said, and the various graceful and voluptuous attitudes into which she had thrown herself, occupied his imagination. At times, however, his thoughts wandered to that charming youth—that mere boy—who seemed to court his friendship, and who was so delicate and so fragile to encounter the storms and vicissitudes of that world in whose dizzy vortex he was already found. Nor less did Richard ever and anon experience a sentiment of profound surprise that the elegant and wealthy Sir Rupert Harborough, the accomplished and lovely Diana, and the fastidious Mr. Arthur Chichester, should tolerate the society of such an unmitigated vulgarian as Mr. Talbot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOUDOIR.

It was the morning after the events related in the last chapter.

The scene changes to a beautiful little villa in the environs of Upper Clapton.

This charming retreat, which consisted of a main building two storeys high, and wings each containing only one apartment, was constructed of yellow bricks that had retained their primitive colour, the dwelling being too far from the metropolis to be affected by its smoky exhalations.

The villa stood in the midst of a small garden, beautifully laid out in the French style of Louis XV.; and around it—interrupted only by the avenue leading to the front door of the dwelling—was a grove of evergreens. This grove formed a complete circle, and bounded the garden; and the entire enclosure was protected by a regular paling, painted white.

This miniature domain, consisting of about four acres, was one of the most beautiful spots in the neighbourhood of London; and behind it—far as the eye could reach—stretched the green fields, smiling and cultivated like those of Tuscany.

In front of the villa was a small grass plot, in the centre of which was a basin of clear and pellucid water, upon whose surface floated two noble swans, and other aquatic birds of a curious species.

Every now and then the silence of the morning was broken by the bay of several sporting-dogs, which occupied, in the rear of the building, kennels more cleanly and more carefully attended upon than the dwellings of many millions of Christians.

And yet the owner of that villa wanted not charity; witness the poor woman and two children who have just emerged from the servants' offices laden with cold provisions, and with a well-filled bundle of other necessaries.

At the door of a stable a groom was seen dismounting from the back of a thorough-bred chestnut mare, which had just returned from an airing, and upon which he cast a glance of mingled pride and affection.

The windows of the villa were embellished with flowers in pots and vases of curious workmanship; and outside the casements of the chambers upon the first floor were suspended cages containing beautiful singing birds.

To the interior of one of those rooms must we direct the attention of the reader. It was an elegant *boudoir*; and yet it could scarcely justify the name; for by a *boudoir* we understand something completely feminine, whereas this contained articles of male and female use and attire strangely commingled—pell-mell—together.

Upon a toilet-table were all the implements necessary for the decoration and embellishment of female beauty; and carelessly thrown over a chair were a coat, waistcoat, and trousers. A diminutive pair of patent-leather Wellington boots kept company with delicate morocco shoes, to which sandals were affixed. A huge press, half-open, disclosed an array of beautiful dresses—silk, satin, and precious stuffs of all kinds; and on a row of pegs were hung a scarlet hunting-coat, a shooting-jacket, a jockey-cap, and other articles of attire connected with field sports and masculine recreations. Parasols,



foils, single-sticks, dandy-canes, and hunting-whips, were huddled together in one corner of that bureau. And yet all the confusion of these various and discrepant objects was so regular in appearance—if the phrase can be understood—that it seemed as if some cunning hand had purposely arranged them all so as to strike the eye in a manner calculated to encourage the impression that this elegant boudoir was inhabited by a man of strange feminine tastes, or a woman of extraordinary masculine ones.

There was no pompous nor gorgeous display of wealth in this boudoir: its interior, like that of the whole villa throughout, denoted competence and ease—elegance and taste, but no useless luxury nor profuse expenditure.

The window of the boudoir was half open. A bowl of chrysal water, containing gold and silver fish, stood upon a table in the recess of the casement. The chirrup of the birds echoed through the room, which was perfumed with the odour of sweet flowers.

By the wall facing the window stood a French bed, on the head and foot of which fell pink satin curtains, flowing from a gilt-headed arrow fixed near the ceiling.

It was now nine o'clock, and the sun shed a flood of golden light through the half-open casement upon that couch which was so voluptuous and so downy.

A female of great beauty, and apparently about five-and-twenty years of age, was reading in that bed. Her head reposed upon her hand, and her elbow upon the pillow: and that hand was buried in a mass of luxuriant light chestnut hair, which flowed down upon her back, her shoulders, and her bosom: but not so as altogether to conceal the polished ivory whiteness of the plump fair flesh.

The admirable slope of the shoulders, the swan-like neck, and the exquisite symmetry of the bust, were desecrated even amidst those masses of luxuriant and shining hair.

A high and ample forehead, hazel eyes, a

nose perfectly straight, small but pouting lips, brilliant teeth, and a well rounded chin, were additional charms to augment the attractions of that delightful picture.

The whole scene was one of soft voluptuousness—the birds, the flowers, the vase of gold and silver fish, the tasteful arrangements of the boudoir, the French bed, and the beautiful creature who reclined in that couch, her head supported upon the well-turned and polished arm, the dazzling whiteness of which no envious sleeve concealed!

From time to time the eyes of that sweet creature were raised from the book, and thrown around the room in a manner that denoted, if not mental anxiety, at least a state of mind not completely at ease. Now and then, too, a cloud passed over that brow which seemed the very throne of innocence and candour; and a sigh agitated the breast which the sunbeams covered as it were with kisses.

Presently the door was opened softly, and an elderly female, well but simply dressed, and of placid and reserved aspect, entered the room.

"Mr. Stephens is below," said the servant; "I told him you had not risen yet, and he says he will await your convenience."

"I know not how it is," exclaimed the lady impatiently, "but I never felt less disposed for the visit of him whom I regard as my benefactor. Ah! Louisa," she added, a cloud overspreading her entire countenance, "I feel as if one of those dreadful attacks of despondency—one of those fearful fits of alarm and foreboding—of presentiment of evil, were coming on; and—"

"Pray calm yourself," interrupted the servant, speaking in a kind and imploring tone. "Remember that the very walls have ears; that a word spoken in too high a tone may betray your secret; and heaven alone knows what would be the result of such an appalling discovery!"

"Yes—it is that horrible mystery," ejaculated the lady, "which fills me with the most acute apprehensions. Compelled to sustain a constant chest—to feel that I am a living, a breathing, a moving falsehood, a walking lie;—forced to crush all the natural amenities—ay, and even the amiable weaknesses of my sex; governed by an imperious necessity against which it is now impossible to rebel,—how can I do otherwise than experience moments of unutterable anguish!"

"You must still have patience—patience only for a few months—three short months,—and the result of all this suspense—the end of all this anxiety, will be no doubt as advantageous—as immensely important and beneficial—as we are led to believe."

"True: we are bound to believe a man who seems so serious in all his actions with regard to me," said the lady, after a short pause, during which she seemed to be wrapped up in a deep reverie. "But why does he keep me in the dark with regard to the true nature of that grand result? Why does he not trust me, who have placed such unbounded, such implicit confidence in him?"

"He is afraid lest an unguarded moment on your part should betray what he assures us to be of the most vital—the last importance," answered the domestic, in a kindly remonstrative tone. "And really, my dearest girl," she added, affectionately,—"pardon me for calling you so—"

"Ah! Louisa, you are my dearest friend!"

said the lady energetically. "You, and you alone, have supported my courage during the four years and a half that this horrible deceit has already lasted; your kindness—"

"I have only done my duty, and acted as my heart dictated," mildly replied the female dependant. "But as I was observing, you are so very imprudent, as it is; and can you expect that Mr. Stephens will reveal to you the minute details of a scheme, which—"

"Imprudent!" hastily exclaimed the lady; "how am I imprudent? Do I not follow all his directions—all your advice? Have I not even learned to talk to the very groom in his own language about the horses and the dogs? and do I not scamper across the country, upon my chestnut mare, with him following upon the bay horse at my heels, as if we were both mad? And then you say that I am imprudent, when I have done all I can to sustain the character which I have assumed? And with the exception of these rides, how seldom do I go abroad! Half-a-dozen names include all my acquaintances; and no one—no one ever comes here! This is, indeed, a hermit's dwelling! How can you say that I am imprudent?"

"Without going out of this very room," began Louisa, with a smile, "I could—"

"Ah! the eternal remonstrances against these habiliments of my sex!" exclaimed the lady, drawing back the satin curtain at the head of the bed with her snow-white arm, and glancing towards the bureau which contained the female dresses: "ever those remonstrances! Alas! I should die—I could not support this appalling deceit—were I not to gratify my woman's feelings from time to time! Do you think that I can altogether rebel against nature, and not experience the effects? And, in occasionally soothing my mind with the occupations natural to my sex, have I ever been imprudent? When I have dressed my hair as it should ever be dressed—when I have put on one of those silk or muslin robes, merely to see myself reflected in my mirror—and, oh! what a pardonable vanity under such circumstances!—have I ever been imprudent enough to set foot outside this retreat—this boudoir, to which you alone are ever admitted? Do I ever dress with the blinds of the windows raised? No: I have done all that human being can do to support my spirits during this sad trial, and sustain the character I have assumed. But if it be desired that I should altogether forget my sex—and cling to the garb of a man; if I may never—not even for an hour in the evening—follow my fantasy, and relieve my mind by resuming the garb which is natural to me—within these four walls—unseen by a soul save you—"

"Yes, yes, you shall have your way," interrupted Louisa soothingly. "But Mr. Stephens waits: will you not rise and see him?"

"It is my duty," said the lady resignedly. "He has surrounded me with every comfort and every luxury which appetite can desire or money procure; and, however he may ultimately benefit by this proceeding, in the meantime my gratitude is due to him."

"The delicacy of his conduct towards you equals his liberality," observed Louisa pointedly.

"Yes; notwithstanding the peculiarity of our relative position, not a word, not a look disrespectful towards me from the first moment of our acquaintance! He faithfully adheres to his

portion of the contract, and I will as religiously observe mine."

"You speak wisely and consistently," said Louisa; "and the result of your honourable conduct towards Mr. Stephens will no doubt be a recompense which will establish your fortunes for life."

"That hope sustains me. Oh! how happy, thrice happy shall I be, when, the period of my emancipation being arrived, I may escape to some distant part of my own native country, or to some foreign clime, resume the garb belonging to my sex, and live in a way consistent with nature, and suitable to my taste. It is in anticipation of those golden moments that I from time to time retire into the impenetrable mystery of this boudoir, and dress myself in the garb which I love, and which is my own. And when that elysian age shall come, oh! how shall I divert my mind with a retrospection upon those long weary weeks and months, during which I have been compelled to study habits opposed to my taste and feeling—to affect a love of horses and dogs, that a manly predilection may avert attention from a feminine countenance,—and to measure each word that falls from my lips, to study each attitude which my form assumes, and to relinquish pursuits and occupations which my mind adores."

The lady threw herself back upon her pillow and gave way to a delicious reverie. Louisa did not attempt to disturb her for some minutes. At length she murmured something about "keeping Mr. Stephens waiting rather longer than usual;" and her mistress, acting by a sudden impulse, rose from her couch.

Then followed the mysterious toilet.

Stays, curiously contrived, gave to that exquisitely modelled form as much as possible the appearance of the figure of a man. The swell of the bosom, slightly compressed, was rendered scarcely apparent by padding skilfully placed, so as to fill up and flatten the undulating bust. The position of the waist was lowered; and all this was effected without causing the subject of so strange a transformation any pain or uneasiness.

The semi-military blue frock coat, buttoned up to the throat, completed the disguise; and as this species of garment is invariably somewhat prominent about the chest, the very fashion of its make materially aided an effectual concealment, by averting surprise at the gentle protuberance of the breast, in the present instance.

Louisa arranged the luxuriant and flowing hair with particular attention, bestowing as much as possible a masculine appearance upon that which would have been a covering worthy of a queen.

The toilet being thus completed, this strange being to whom we have introduced our readers, descended to a parlour on the ground floor.

When Louisa left the boudoir she carefully locked the door and consigned the key to her pocket.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONVERSATION.

THE parlour which that lovely and mysterious creature—who now seemed a youth of about twenty—entered upon the ground floor, was furnished with taste and elegance. Everything was light, airy, and graceful. The windows were

crowded with flowers that imparted a delicious perfume to the atmosphere, and afforded a picture upon which the eye rested with pleasure.

A recess was fitted up with book-shelves, which were supplied with the productions of the best poets and novelists of England and France.

Around the walls were suspended several paintings—chiefly consisting of sporting subjects. Over the mantel, however, were two miniatures, executed in water-colours in the first style of the art, and representing the one a lovely youth of sixteen, the other a beautiful girl of twenty.

And never was resemblance more striking. The same soft and intelligent hazel eyes—the same light hair, luxuriant, silky, and shining—the same straight nose—the same vermilion lips, and well-turned chin. At a glance it was easy to perceive that they were brother and sister; and as the countenance of the former was remarkably feminine and delicate, the likeness between them was the more striking.

Beneath the miniature of the brother, in small gilt letters upon the enamelled frame, was the word WALTER: under the portrait of the sister was the name of ELIZA.

Attired as she now was, the mysterious being whom we have introduced to our readers, perfectly resembled the portrait of Walter: attired as she ought to have been, consistently with her sex, she would have been the living original of the portrait of Eliza.

Upon a sofa in the parlour, some of the leading features of which we have just described, a man, dressed with great neatness, but no ostentatious display, was lounging.

He was in reality not more than three or four and thirty years of age; although a seriousness of countenance—either admirably studied, or else occasioned by habits of business and mental combination—made him appear ten years older. He was handsome, well-formed, and excessively courteous and fascinating in his manners; but, when he was alone, or not engaged in conversation, he seemed plunged in deep thought, as if his brain were working upon numerous plans and schemes of mighty and vital import.

The moment the heroine of the boudoir entered the parlour, Mr. Stephens—for he was the individual whom we have just described—rose and accosted her in a manner expressive of kindness, respect, and patronage.

"My dear Walter," he exclaimed, "it is really an age since I have seen you. Six weeks have elapsed, and I have not been near you. But you received my letter, stating that I was compelled to proceed to Paris upon most particular business!"

"Yes, my dear sir," answered the lady,—or in order that some name may in future characterize her, we will call her Walter, or Mr. Walter Sydney, for that was indeed the appellation by which she was known,—"yes, my dear sir, I received your letter, and the handsome presents and remittances accompanying it. For each and all I return you my sincere thanks: but really, with regard to money, you are far too lavish towards me. Remember that I scarcely have any opportunity of being extravagant," added Walter, with a smile; "for I scarcely ever stir abroad, save to take my daily rides; and you know that I never receive company, that my acquaintances are limited, so limited—"

"I know, my dear Walter, that you follow my advice as closely as can be expected," said Mr

Stephens. "Three short months more and my object will be achieved. We shall then be both of us above the reach of Fortune's caprices and vicissitudes. Oh! how glorious—how grand will be this achievement! how well worth all the sacrifices that I have required you to make."

"Ah! my dear sir," observed Walter, somewhat reproachfully, "you must remember that you are now talking enigmas to me; that I am at present only a blind instrument in your hands—a mere machine—an automaton—"

"Do not press me upon this head, Walter," interrupted Mr. Stephens, hastily. "You must not as yet be led to comprehend the magnitude of my views: you must have patience. Surely I have given you ample proofs of my good feeling and my honourable views towards yourself. Only conceive what would be your present position without me; not a relation, not a friend in the wide world to aid or protect you! I do not say this to vaunt my own conduct: I am merely advancing arguments to prove how confident I am in the success of my plans, and how sincere I am in my friendship towards you. For, remember, Walter—I always forget your sex: I only look upon you as a mere boy—a nephew, or a son, whom I love. Such is my feeling: I am more than a friend; for, I repeat, I feel a paternal attachment towards you!"

"And I entertain feelings of deep—yes, of the deepest gratitude towards you," said Walter. "But the motive of my constant intercession to be admitted more into your confidence, is to be convinced—by my own knowledge—that my present conduct tends to facilitate no dishonest, no dangerous views. Oh! you will pardon me when I say this; for there are times when I am a prey to the most horrible alarms—when fears of an indescribable nature haunt me for hours together—and when I seem to be walking blindfold upon the brink of an abyss!"

"Walter, I am surprised that you should thus give way to suspicious most injurious to my honour," said Mr. Stephens, whose countenance remained perfectly collected and unchanged; "for the hundredth time do I assure you that you have nothing to fear."

"Then wherefore this disguise? why this constant cheat relative to my sex? why this permanent deception?" demanded Walter, in an impassioned tone.

"Cannot the most rigorous honesty be connected with the most profound prudence—the most delicate caution?" said Mr. Stephens, adopting an attitude and manner of persuasion. "Do not judge of motives by their mere superficial aspect; strange devices—but not the less honourable for being singular—are frequently required in the world to defeat designs of infamy and baseness."

"Pardon my scepticism," said Walter, apparently convinced by this reasoning; "I was wrong, very wrong to suspect you. I will not again urge my anxiety to penetrate your secrets. I feel persuaded that you conceal the means by which our mutual prosperity is to be effected, simply for my good."

"Now you speak rationally, my dear, my faithful and confiding Walter," exclaimed Mr. Stephens. "It was just in this vein that I was anxious to find you; for I have an important communication to make this morning."

"Speak: I am ready to follow your instructions or advice."

"I must inform you, Walter, that in order effectually to work out my plans—in order that there should not exist the slightest chance of failure—a third person is required. It will be necessary that he should be conversant with our secret: he must know all; and, of course, he must be taken care of hereafter. To be brief, I have already fallen in with the very individual who will suit me; and I have acquainted him with the entire matter. You will not object to receive him occasionally as a guest?"

"My dear sir, how can I object? Is not this your house? and am not I in your hands? You know that you can command me in all respects."

"I thought that you would meet my views with this readiness and good will," said Mr. Stephens. "To tell you the real truth, then—I have taken the liberty of inviting him to dine with us here this day."

"To-day!"

"Yes. Are you annoyed?"

"Oh! not at all; only, the preparations—"

"Do not alarm yourself. While you were occupied with your toilet, I gave the necessary instructions to the cook. The old woman is almost blind and deaf, still she knows full well how to serve up a tempting repast; and as I am believed by your three servants to be your guardian, my interference in this respect will not have appeared strange."

"How could they think otherwise?" ejaculated Walter. "Did not you provide those dependants who surround me? Do they not look upon you as their master as well as myself? Are they not aware that the villa is your own property? And have they not been led to believe—with the exception of Louisa, who alone of the three knows the secret—that the state of my health compelled you to place me here for the benefit of a purer air than that which your residence in the city affords?"

"Well, since my arrangements meet with your satisfaction," said Mr. Stephens, smiling. "I am satisfied. But I should tell you that I invited my friend hither not only to dine, but also to pass the day, that we might have an opportunity of conversing together at our leisure. Indeed," added Mr. Stephens, looking at his watch, "I expect him here every moment."

Scarcely were the words uttered when a loud knock at the front door echoed through the house.

In a few minutes Louisa appeared, and introduced "Mr. Montague."

CHAPTER IX.

A CITY MAN.—SMITHFIELD SCENER.

GEORGE MONTAGUE was a tall, good-looking young man of about three or four-and-twenty. His hair and eyes were black, his complexion rather dark, and his features perfectly regular.

His manners were certainly polished and agreeable; but there was, nevertheless, a something reserved and mysterious about him—an anxiety to avert the conversation from any topic connected with himself—a studied desire to flatter and gain the good opinions of those about him, by means of compliments at times servile—and an occasional betrayal of a belief in a code of morals not altogether consistent with the well-being of society, which constituted features in his cha-

factor by no means calculated to render him a favourite with all classes of persons. He was, however, well-informed upon most topics; ambitious of creating a sensation in the world, no matter by what means; resolute in his pursuit after wealth, and careless whether the paths leading to the objects which he sought were tortuous or straightforward. He was addicted to pleasure, but never permitted it to interfere with his business or mar his schemes. Love with him was merely the blandishment of beauty; and friendship was simply that bond which connected him with those individuals who were necessary to him. He was utterly and completely selfish; but he was somehow or another possessed of sufficient tact to conceal most of his faults—the existence of which he was well aware. The consequence was that he was usually welcomed as an agreeable companion; some even went so far as to assert that he was a "devilish good fellow;" and all admitted that he was a thorough man of the world. He must have commenced his initiation early, thus to have acquired such a character ere he had completed his four-and-twentieth year!

London abounds with such precocious specimens of thorough heartlessness and worldly-mindedness. The universities and great public schools let loose upon society every half-year a cloud of young men, who think only how soon they can spend their own property in order to prey upon that of others. These are your "young men about town;" as they grow older they become "men upon the town." In their former capacity they graduate in all the degrees of vice, dissipation, extravagance, and debauchery; and in the latter they become the tutors of the novices who are entering in their turn upon the road to ruin. The transition from the young man about town to the man upon the town is as natural as that of a chrysalis to a butterfly. These men upon the town constitute as pestilential a section of male society as the women of the town do of the female portion of the community. They are alike the reptiles produced by the great moral dung-heap.

We cannot, however, exactly class Mr. George Montague with the men upon the town in the true meaning of the phrase, inasmuch as he devoted his attention to commercial speculations of all kinds and under all shapes, and his sphere was chiefly the City; whereas men upon the town seldom entertain an idea half "so vulgar" as mercantile pursuits, and never visit the domains of the Lord Mayor save when they want to get a bill discounted, or to obtain cash for a check of too large an amount to be entrusted to any of their high-born and aristocratic companions.

Mr. George Montague was, therefore, one of that multitudinous class called "City men," who possess no regular offices, but have their letters addressed to the Auction Mart or Garraway's, and who make their appointments at such places as "the front of the Bank," "the Custom-house Wharf," and "under the clock at the Docks."

City men are very extraordinary characters. They all know "a certain speculation that would make a sure fortune, if one had but the capital to work upon;" they never fail to observe, while making this assertion, that they *could* apply to a friend if they chose, but that they do not choose to lay themselves under the obligation; and they invariably affirm that nothing is more easy than to

make a fortune in the City, although the greater portion of them remain without that happy consummation until the day of their deaths. Now and then, however, one of these City men *does* succeed in "making a hit" by some means or other; and then his old friends, the very men who are constantly enunciating the opinion relative to the facility with which fortunes are obtained in the City, look knowing, wink at each other, and declare "that it never could have been done unless he'd had somebody with plenty of money to back him."

Now Mr. Montague was one of those who adopted a better system of logic than the vulgar reasoning. He knew that there was but little merit in producing bread from flour, for instance; but he perceived that there was immense credit due to those who could produce their bread without any flour at all. Upon this principle he acted, and his plan was not unattended with success. He scorned the idea "that money was necessary to beget money;" he began his "City career," as he sometimes observed, without a farthing; and he was seldom without gold in his pocket.

No one knew where he lived. He was sometimes seen getting into a Hackney omnibus at the Flower Pot, a Camberwell one at the Cross Keys; or running furiously after a Hammer-smith one along Cheapside; but as these directions were very opposite, it was difficult to deduce from them any idea of his domiciliary whereabouts.

He was young to be a City man; the class does not often include members under thirty; but of course there are exceptions to all rules; and Mr. George Montague was one.

He was then a City man; but if the reader be anxious to know what sort of business he transacted to obtain his living; whether he dabbled in the funds, sold wines upon commission, effected loans and discounts, speculated in shares, got up joint-stock companies, shipped goods to the colonies, purchased land in Australia at eighteenpence an acre and sold it again at one-and-nine, conducted compromises for insolvent tradesmen, made out the accounts of bankrupts, arbitrated between partners who disagreed, or bought in things in a friendly way at public sales; whether he followed any of these pursuits, or meddled a little with them all, we can no more satisfy our readers than if we attempted the biography of the Man in the Moon,—all we can say is, that he was invariably in the City from eleven to four; that he usually had "an excellent thing in hand just at that moment;" and, in a word, that he belonged to the class denominated *City Men!*

We have taken some pains to describe this gentleman; for reasons which will appear hereafter.

Having been duly introduced to Walter Sydney by Mr. Stephens, and after a few observations of a general nature, Mr. Montague glided almost imperceptibly into topics upon which he conversed with ease and fluency.

Presently a pause ensued; and Mr. Stephens enquired "if there were anything new in the City?"

"Nothing particular," answered Montague. "I have not of course been in town this morning; but I was not away till late last night. I had a splendid thing in hand, which I succeeded in bringing to a favourable termination. By-the-by, there was a rumour on 'Change yesterday

afternoon, just before the close, that Alderman Dumkins is all wrong."

"Indeed," said Stephens; "I thought he was wealthy."

"Oh! no; I knew the contrary eighteen months ago! It appears he has been starting a joint-stock company to work the Ercolat tin-mines in Cornwall—"

"And I suppose the mines do not really exist?"

"Oh! yes; they do—upon his maps! However, he has been exhibiting certain specimens of tin, which he has passed off as Ercolat produce; and it is now pretty generally known that the article was supplied him by a house in Aldgate."

"Then he will be compelled to resign his gown?"

"Not he! On the contrary, he stands next in rotation for the honours of the civic chair; and he intends to go boldly forward as if nothing had happened. You must remember that the aldermen of the City of London have degenerated considerably in respectability during late years; and that none of the really influential and wealthy men in the City will have anything to do with the corporation affairs. You do not see any great banker nor merchant wearing the aldermanic gown. The only alderman who really possessed what may be called a large fortune, and whose pecuniary position was above all doubt, resigned his gown the other day in disgust at the treatment which he received from his brother authorities, in consequence of his connexion with the *Weekly Courier*—the only newspaper that boldly, fearlessly, and effectually advocates the people's cause."

"And Dumkins will not resign, you think?"

"Oh! decidedly not. But for my part," added Montague, "I feel convinced that the sooner some change is made in the City administration the better. Only conceive the immense sums which the corporation receives from various sources, and the uses to which they are applied. Look at the beastly guzzling at Guildhall, while there are in the very heart of the City Augean stables of filth, crime, and debauchery to be cleansed—witness Petticoat-lane, Smithfield—"

A species of groan or stifled exclamation of horror issued from the lips of Walter as Montague uttered these words: her countenance grew deadly pale, and her entire frame appeared to writhe under a most painful reminiscence or emotion.

"Compose yourself, compose yourself," said Stephens, hastily. "Shall I ring for a glass of water, or wine, or anything—"

"No, it is past," interrupted Walter Sydney; "but I never think of that horrible—that appalling adventure without feeling my blood curdle in my veins. The mere mention of the word Smithfield—"

"Could I have been indiscreet enough to give utterance to anything calculated to annoy?" said Montague, who was surprised at this scene.

"You were not aware of the reminiscence you awoke in my mind by your remark," answered Walter, smiling; "but were you acquainted with the particulars of that fearful night, you would readily excuse my weakness."

"You have excited Mr. Montague's curiosity," observed Stephens, "and you have now nothing to do but to gratify it."

"It is an adventure of a most romantic kind—

an adventure which you will scarcely believe—and yet one that will make your hair stand on end."

"I am now most anxious to learn the details of this mysterious occurrence," said Montague, scarcely knowing whether these remarks were made in jest or earnest.

Walter Sydney appeared to reflect for a few moments; and then commenced the narrative in the following manner:—

"It is now a little more than four years ago—very shortly after I first arrived at this house—that I rode into town, attended by the same groom who is in my service now. I knew little or nothing of the City, and felt my curiosity awakened to view the ascription of the world's commerce. I accordingly determined to indulge in a ramble by myself amidst the streets and thoroughfares of a place of which such marvellous accounts reach those who pass their youth in the country. I left the groom with the horses at a livery-stable in Bishopsgate-street, with a promise to return in the course of two or three hours. I then roved about to my heart's content, and never gave the lapse of time a thought. Evening came, and the weather grew threatening. Then commenced my perplexities. I had forgotten the address of the stables where the groom awaited my return; and I discovered the pleasing fact that I had lost my way just at the moment when an awful storm seemed ready to break over the metropolis. When I solicited information concerning the right path which I should pursue, I was insulted by the low churls to whom I applied. To be brief, I was overtaken by darkness and by the storm, in a place which I have since ascertained to be Smithfield market. I could not have conceived that so filthy and horrible a nuisance could have been allowed to exist in the midst of a city of so much wealth. But, oh! the revolting streets which branch off from that Smithfield. It seemed to me that I was wandering amongst all the haunts of crime and appalling penury of which I had read in romances, but which I never could have believed to exist in the very heart of the metropolis of the world. Civilisation appeared to me to have chosen particular places which it condescended to visit, and to have passed others by without even leaving a foot-print to denote its presence."

"But this horrible adventure?" said Montague.

"Oh! forgive my digression. Surrounded by darkness, exposed to the rage of the storm, and actually sinking with fatigue, I took refuge in an old house, which I am sure I could never find again; but which was situated nearly at the end, and on the right-hand side of the way, of one of those vile narrow streets branching off from Smithfield. That house was the den of wild beasts in human shape! I was compelled to hear a conversation of a most appalling nature between two ruffians, who made that place the depot for their plunder. They planned, amongst other atrocious topics, the robbery of a country-seat, somewhere to the north of Islington, and inhabited by a family of the name of Markham."

"Indeed! What—how strange!" ejaculated Montague; then immediately afterwards, he added, "How singular that you should have overheard so vile a scheme!"

"Oh! those villains," continued Walter, "were capable of crimes of a far deeper dye! They discussed horror upon horror, till I thought

that I was going raving mad. I made a desperate attempt to escape, and was perceived. What then immediately followed I know not, for I became insensible: in a word, Mr. Montague, I fainted!"

A deep blush suffused her countenance, as she made this avowal—for it seemed to have a direct relation to her sex; and she was well aware that the secret connected therewith had been revealed by her benefactor to George Montague. On his part, he gazed upon her with mingled interest and admiration.

"I awoke to encounter a scene of horror," she continued, after a short pause, "which you must fancy; but the full extent of which I cannot depict. I can only feel it even now. Those wretches were conveying me to a room upon the ground-floor—a room to which the cells of the Bastille or the Inquisition could have produced no equal. It had a trap-door communicating with the Fleet Ditch! I begged for mercy—I promised wealth—for I knew that my kind benefactor," she added, glancing towards Mr. Stephens, "would have enabled me to fulfil my pledge to them; but all was in vain. The murderers hurled me down the dark and pestiferous hole!"

"Merciful heavens!" ejaculated Montague.

"It would appear that the house in question," proceeded Walter, "stood upon the side of, and not over the Ditch. There can be, however, no doubt that the trap-door was contrived for the horrible purpose of disposing of those victims who fell into the merciless hands of the occupants of the dwelling; for when I had fallen some distance, instead of being immersed in black and filthy mud, I was caught upon a sloping plank which shelved towards a large aperture in the wall of the Ditch. I instinctively clung to this plank, and lay stretched upon it for some moments until I had partially recovered my presence of mind. The circumstance of having thus escaped a dreadful death gave me an amount of courage at which I myself was astonished. At length I began to reason whether it would be better to remain there until morning, and then endeavour to reach the trap-door above my head, or to devise some means of immediate escape. I decided upon the latter proceeding; for I reflected that the morning would not afford light to that subterranean hole to enable me to act with certainty; and I, moreover, dreaded the extreme vengeance of those ruffians who had already given me a sample of their brutality, should I happen to encounter them on emerging from the trap-door. Lastly, I considered that it was also probable that I might not succeed in raising the trap-door at all."

"What a fearful situation!" observed Montague.

"Horrible even to think of," added Stephens, who listened with the deepest attention to this narrative, although he had heard it related on former occasions.

"With my hands and legs I groped about," continued Walter, "and I speedily ascertained my exact position with regard to the locality. My feet were close to a large square aperture in the perpendicular wall overhanging the Ditch; and the floor of the cellar was only a couple of feet below the aperture. I accordingly got cautiously off the board, and stood upon the damp ground. After the lapse of several minutes, during which I nerved myself to adopt the idea

that had struck me, I passed my head through the aperture, and looked out over the Ditch. The stream appeared rapid, to judge by its gurgling sound; and the stench that exhaled from it was pestiferous in the extreme. Turning my head to the left I saw hundreds of lights twinkling in the small narrow windows of two lines of houses that overhung the Ditch. The stern had now completely passed away—the rain had ceased—and the night was clear and beautiful. In a few minutes I was perfectly acquainted with the entire geography of the place. The means of escape were within my reach. About three feet above the aperture through which I was now looking, a plank crossed the Ditch; and on the opposite side—for the Ditch in that part was not above two yards wide from wall to wall—was a narrow ledge running along the side of the house facing the one in which I was, and evidently communicating with some lane or street close by. I can scarcely tell you how I contrived to creep through the aperture and reach the plank overhead. Nevertheless, I attempted the dangerous feat, and I accomplished it. I crossed the plank, and reached the ledge of which I have spoken: it terminated in the very street where stood the terrible den from which I had just so miraculously escaped. Indeed, I emerged upon that street only at a distance of a few yards from the door of that detestable place. To hurry away in a contrary direction was my first and most natural impulse; but I had not proceeded far when the door of a house was suddenly thrown violently open, and out poured a crowd of men and women, among whom I was, as it were, immediately hemmed in."

"What! another adventure?" exclaimed Montague.

"One calculated to inspire feelings of deep disgust, if not of alarm," answered Walter. "It appeared that two women had been quarrelling and had turned out to fight. They fell upon each other like wild cats, or as you would fancy that tigers would fight. A clear and lovely moon lighted this revolting scene. A circle was formed round the ternaigants, and for ten minutes did they lacerate themselves with fists and nails in a fearful manner. Their clothes were torn into ribands—their countenances were horribly disfigured with scratches—the blood poured from their noses—and their hair, hanging all dishevelled over their naked shoulders, gave them a wild, ferocious, and savage appearance, such as I never could have expected to encounter in the metropolis of the civilised world."

"And in the very heart of the City," added Mr. Montague.

"Suddenly a cry of '*The Bluebottles!*' was raised, and the crowd, belligerents and all, rushed pell-mell back again into the house. In spite of all my endeavours to escape I was hurried in with that hideous mob of ferocious-looking men and brazen-faced women. In a few moments I found myself in a large room, in which there were at least thirty wretched beds huddled close together, and so revoltingly dirty that the cold pavement or a hedge-side would have seemed a more preferable couch. And, oh! how can I describe the inmates of that den, many of whom were crowding round a fire cooking provender, which filled the place with a sickening and most fetid odour. There were young girls almost naked, without shoes or stockings, and whose sunken cheeks, dimmed eyes, and miserable attire contrasted

strangely with their boisterous mirth. Some of these unfortunate creatures, nevertheless, retained traces of original beauty prematurely faded. The men were hatless and shoeless; indeed the entire assembly consisted of males and females evidently of the most wretched description. Scarcely had I time to cast a glance around me when I was questioned as to how I came there? what I wanted? and whether I meant to stand anything? 'I tell tell you what it is,' said one to his companions, 'he is a swell who is come to have a look at these kind of cribs, and he must pay his footing.' I immediately comprehended the nature of the impression which my presence had created, and presented the individual who had spoken with a couple of half-crowns. The sight of the money produced an immense feeling in my favour. Heaven only knows how many gallons of beer were fetched from a neighbouring public-house; and when the inmates of that lazar-house—for I can scarcely call it anything else—had all partaken of the liquor, I was overwhelmed with offers of service. One declared, that if I merely came to see the neighbourhood he would take me round to every place in the street; another assured me, that if I had committed a forgery or any other 'genteel crime,' he would either help me to lie secure until the matter had blown over, or to escape from the country; and so on. I suffered the wretches to retain the impression that curiosity had alone led me thither; and as soon as I had made this announcement the mistress of the house was summoned to do the honours of the establishment. A bear-eyed old crone made her appearance, and insisted upon showing me over the house. 'These rooms,' said she, meaning the two upon the ground floor, 'are for those who can afford to pay threepence for their bed and who have supper to cook.' We then ascended to the first floor. 'These are the four-penny beds,' said the old woman, pointing with pride and satisfaction to some thirty or forty couches, a shade cleaner, and the least thing further off from each other than those down stairs. The rooms on the first floor were also filled with lodgers; and another demand was made upon my purse. On the third floor and in the attics were the most horrible scenes of wretchedness which I had yet beheld. Those dens were filled with straw beds, separated from each other only by pieces of plank about eight or ten inches in height. Men, women, and children were all crowded together—sleeping pell-mell. Oh! it was a horrible, horrible spectacle. To be brief, I escaped from that moral plague-house; and in a few moments was traversing Smithfield once more. Even the tainted air of that filthy enclosure was refreshing after the foul atmosphere from which I had just emerged."

Louisa entered the room at this moment to announce that luncheon was prepared in another apartment.

"And you never took any steps to root out that nest of villains in the Old House whence you escaped alive so miraculously?" said Montague, sipping a glass of exquisite wine after his luncheon.

"I wrote two anonymous letters the very next morning," answered Walter: "one to Mr. Markham, warning him of the contemplated burglary at his house; and another to the Lord Mayor of London. It did not altogether suit Mr. Stephens's plans—"

"No—not to make a fuss about an affair which

would have been sure to bring your name into notoriety," added this gentleman hastily.

"That adventure has no doubt given you a distaste for late rambles," said Montague.

"In the City—decidedly so," was the reply. "I seldom go into London, early or late—I have so few inducements—so few acquaintances! By the way, a few evenings ago I treated myself to a visit to the Opera, and there created three me into conversation with a gentleman and lady who sat in the same box as myself. The result was an invitation to the abode of the lady—a Mrs. Arlington—"

"Mrs. Arlington," ejaculated Montague, a slight flush animating his countenance.

"The same. She is the friend of Sir Rupert Harborough. I am anxious to see something of the world now and then—and to avail myself of my present garb for that purpose. I accordingly called upon Mrs. Arlington last evening, and learnt 'a lesson of life.' I saw an elegant woman, a baronet, a fashionable gentleman, and a very interesting young man, associating with a vulgar wretch of the name, I believe, of Talbot, whose manners would have disgraced a groom. I must, however, observe that the interesting young gentleman to whom I allude did not seem to be more pleased with the conversation and conduct of this vulgarian than myself. One coincidence somewhat extraordinary occurred—that same interesting young man was no other than Mr. Richard Markham, one of the sons of—"

"Ah! indeed—how singular!" exclaimed George Montague, not waiting till Walter finished his sentence; "very singular!" he added; then, having tossed off a bumper of Madeira, he walked up to the window, where he affected to inhale with delight the exquisite fragrance of the flowers that adorned the easement.

CHAPTER X.

THE FRAIL ONE'S NARRATIVE.

WE must now return to Richard Markham.

Sir Rupert Harborough and the Honourable Arthur Chichester apparently took a very great fancy to him, for they were constantly making appointments to meet him in town, and hastening to his own house to ferret him out when he did not appear at their usual places of rendezvous. He dined at least three times a week at Mrs. Arlington's, and, to confess the truth, his morning calls were repeated at intervals which gradually grew shorter and shorter.

Richard thus frequently passed hours together alone with Diana. In spite of himself he now and then suffered his eyes to rest tenderly upon her countenance; and by degrees her glances encountered his and were not immediately withdrawn. Those glances were so languishing, and withal so melancholy, that they inspired Richard with a passion amounting almost to a delirium; and he felt at times as if he could have caught that benighted creature in his arms and clasped her rapturously to his bosom.

One morning, as he took leave of her, he fancied that her hand gently pressed his own. The idea filled him with a joy till then unknown, and which he could not describe even to himself.

On the following morning he called a little earlier than usual. Diana was in a delicious *désablée*, which set off her voluptuous person



to its very greatest advantage. Richard was more tender than usual—the Enchantress more enchanting.

They were seated upon the sofa together; and a pause in their conversation ensued. Richard heaved a deep sigh, and suddenly exclaimed, "I am always thinking of the period when I must bid adieu to your charming society."

"Bid adieu!" cried Diana; "and wherefore?"

"It must happen, sooner or later, that our ways in the world will be different."

"Then you are not your own master!" said Diana, enquiringly.

"Certainly I am. But all friends must part some time or another."

"True," said Diana; then, in a subdued tone, she added, "There are certain persons who are attracted towards each other by kindred feelings and emotions, and it is painful—very painful, for them to part!"

"Heavens, Diana!" ejaculated Richard; "you feel as I do!"

She turned her face towards him: her cheeks

were suffused in blushes, and her eyes were filled with tears. But through those tears she cast upon him a glance which ravished his inmost soul. It seemed fraught with love and tenderness, and inspired him with emotions which he had never known before. The words "You feel as I do," contained the ingenuous and unsophisticated avowal of a new passion on the part of a mind that was as yet as unskilled in the ways of this world as the unfledged bird in the nest of its mother is ignorant of the green woods. But those tears which stood in the lady's eyes, and the blushes which dyed her cheeks, and the glance which, like a sunbeam in the midst of an April shower, she darted upon the youth at her side, inspired him with courage, awakened undefined hopes, and filled him with an ecstacy of joy.

"Why do you weep, Diana! why do you weep?"

"You love me, Richard," she replied, turning her melting blue eyes fully upon him, and retaining them for some moments fixed upon his countenance: "you love me; and I feel—I know that I am not worthy of your affection!"

Richard started as if he were suddenly aroused

from a dream—as if he had abruptly awoke to a stern truth from a pleasing vision. He suffered her hand, which he had taken in his, to fall from his grasp; and for some moments he remained buried in a profound reverie.

"Ah! I knew that I should remind you of your duty towards yourself," said Diana, bitterly. "No—I am not worthy of you. But that you may hereafter give me credit for frankness and candour,—that you may be actually warned by myself against myself,—that you may learn to esteem me as a friend, if you will, I shall in a few words relate to you the incidents that made me what I am!"

"Proceed," said Richard, "proceed! Believe me I shall listen with attention,—with the greatest attention!"

"My father was a retired tradesman," began Mrs. Arlington; "and as I was his only child and he enjoyed a competency, he gave me the best education that money could procure. Probably the good old man made up his mind that I should one day espouse a nobleman; and, as my mother had died when I was very young, there was no one near me to correct the vanity with which my father's adulation and ambitious pretensions inspired me. About three years ago I met at the theatre—whither I went with some friends—a young gentleman—tall, handsome, and fascinating like yourself. He contrived to obtain a formal introduction to my father, and was invited to our house, at which he speedily became a constant visitor. He had a happy tact in suiting his humours or tastes to those with whom he came in contact; and he quite won my father's heart by playing chess with him, telling him the news of the City, and reading the evening paper to him. George Montague soon became an established favourite; and my father could do nothing without him. At length Montague proposed to him certain speculations in the funds: my father was allured by the prospect of quadrupling his capital, and consented. I must confess that the young man's handsome person had produced a certain effect upon me—a giddy young girl as I was at that time; and I rather encouraged my father in these schemes than otherwise. At first the speculations were eminently successful; but in a short time they took a turn. Day after day did Montague come to the house to announce fresh losses and the necessity of farther advances. He declared that he should now speculate for a grand stake, which could not fail shortly to turn to his advantage. A species of infatuation seized upon my father; and I was not aware of the ruinous course he was pursuing until it was too late. At length my father was totally ruined; and George came to announce to us the failure of our last chance. My father now repented when it was too late. Eight short months had sufficed to dissipate his whole fortune; he had not even enough left to pay the few debts which he had contracted, and which he had neglected to liquidate, trusting each day to the arrival of the lucky moment when he should find himself the master of millions!"

"Oh! the absurd hope!" exclaimed Richard, deeply interested in this narrative.

"Alas! this event was a fatal blow to my father's health, at the same time that it wrecked his happiness," continued Diana. "He implored Montague not to desert 'his darling child'—for so he called me—in case anything should happen to himself; and that same day—the day on which he saw all his prospects and hopes in this life blasted—he put a period to his existence by means of poison!"

"This was horrible!" cried Markham. "Oh! that villain Montague!"

"My father's creditors came to seize the few effects which remained," said Diana, after a pause; "and I was about to be turned homeless and unprotected into the streets, when Montague arrived. He took gold from his pocket, and satisfied the demands of the creditors. He moreover supplied me with money for my immediate wants. I was totally dependent upon him;—I had no relations—no friends to whom I could apply for succour or comfort. He seemed to commiserate my position——"

"Perhaps," observed Richard, "he was not so very guilty, after all, relative to the loss of your father's property?"

"Judge by the sequel," answered Diana bitterly. "He was as base as he was in reality unfeeling. The transition from that state of dependence upon a young man to a more degraded one still, was to be expected. He no longer talked to me of marriage, as he once had done; but he took advantage of my forlorn situation. I became his mistress."

"Ah! it was base—it was ungenerous—it was unmanly!" ejaculated Richard.

"He seemed to be possessed of ample resources; but he accounted for this circumstance by assuring me that he had found another friend who was backing him in the same speculations in which my poor father had failed. We lived together for four months; and he then coolly informed me that we must part. I found that I had never really entertained any very sincere affection for him; and the little love which I experienced at first, had been quenched in my bosom by his cold cruelty. He seemed unfeeling to a degree. Observations, calculated to wound most acutely, fell from his lips upon all occasions——"

"The dastard!" exclaimed Richard, profoundly touched by this recital.

"If I wept at this cruelty, he treated me with increased brutality. You may, therefore, suppose that I was not deeply distressed to part with him. He gave me twenty guineas, and bade me a chilling farewell. From that moment I have neither seen nor heard of him. A few weeks after our separation my money was exhausted. I resolved to lead a virtuous and honourable life, and atone for my first fault. O God! I did not then know that society will not receive the penitent frail one;—that society excludes poor deceived women from all hopes of reparation, all chances of repentance! I endeavoured to obtain a situation as a governess;—I might as well have attempted to make myself queen of England. Character—references! I had neither. Vainly did I implore one lady to whom I applied to give me a month's trial. She insulted me grossly. To another I candidly confessed my entire history: she patiently heard me to the end, and then ordered her lacquy to turn me out of the house. Oh! society does more than punish: it pursues the unfortunate female who has made one false step, with the most avenging and malignant cruelty;—it hunts her to suicide or to new ways of crime. These are the dread alternatives. At that moment, had some friendly hand been stretched out to aid me,—had I met with one kind heart that would have believed in the possibility of repentance,—had I only been blest with the chance of entering upon a career of virtue, I should have been saved! Yes—I should have redeemed my first fault, as far as redemption was possible;—and to accomplish that aim, I would have worked my nails down to the very quick,—I would have accepted

any position, however menial.—I would have made any sacrifice, enjoyed any lot, so long as I was assured of earning my bread in a manner which need not make me blush. But society treated me with contempt. Why, in this Christian country, do they preach the Christian maxim, that 'there is more joy over one sinner who repenteth, than over ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance?' Why is this maxim preached, when the entire conduct of society expresses in terms which cannot be misunderstood, a bold denial of its truth?"

"Merciful heavens," ejaculated Richard, "can this be true? are you drawing a correct picture, Diana, or inventing a hideous fiction?"

"God knows how true is all I say!" returned Mrs. Arlington, with profound sincerity of tone and manner. "Want soon stared me in the face: what could I do? Chance threw me in the way of Sir Rupert Harborough:—compelled by an imperious necessity, I became his mistress. This is my history."

"And the baronet treats you kindly?" said Richard, inquiringly.

"The terms upon which our connexion is based do not permit him an opportunity of being either very kind or very cruel."

"I must now say farewell for the present," exclaimed Markham, afraid of trusting himself longer with the Syren who had fascinated him with her misfortunes as well as by her charms. "In a day or two I will see you again. Oh! I cannot blame you for what you have done:—I commiserate—I pity you! Could any sacrifice that I am capable of making, restore you to happiness and—"

"Honour, you would say," exclaimed Diana, firmly.

"I would gladly make that sacrifice," added Richard. "From this moment we will be friends—very sincere friends. I will be your brother, dearest Diana—and you shall be my sister!"

The young man rose from the sofa, as he uttered these disjointed sentences in a singularly wild and rapid manner; and Diana, without making any reply, but apparently deeply touched, pressed his hand for some moments between both her own.

Richard then hastily escaped from the presence of that charming and fascinating creature.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE SERVANTS' ARMS."

UPON the same day that this event took place, Mr. Whittingham, the butler of Richard Markham, had solicited and obtained permission to pass the evening with a certain Mr. Thomas Suggett, who occupied the distinguished post of *valet de chambre* about the person of the Honourable Arthur Chester. Whittingham was determined to enjoy himself:—he seemed suddenly to have cast off twenty years from his back, and to walk the more upright for having rid himself of the burthen;—his hat was slightly cocked on one side; and, as he walked along, with Mr. Thomas Suggett tucked under his arm, he struck his silver-headed bamboo, which he always carried with him when he went abroad on Sundays and holidays, very forcibly upon the pavement. Mr. Suggett declared "that, for his part, he was very well disposed for a spree;" and he threw into his gait a most awful swagger, which certainly excited considerable attention, because all the small boys in the streets laughed at him as he swaggered on his way.

"I wonder what them urchins are garping at so," said Whittingham. "It mystifies me in no inconsiderable degree. Raly the lower orders of English is exceedingly imperlite. I feel the most invigorated disgust and the most unboundless contempt for their manners."

"That's jist like me," observed Suggett: "I can't a-bear the lower orders. I hate everythink wulgar.—But, by the bye, Mr. Whittingham, do you smoke?"

"I can't say but what I like a full-flavoured Havannah—a threepenny, mind," added the butler, pompously.

"Just my taste, Mr. Whittingham. If I can't afford threepennies, I won't smoke at all."

Mr. Suggett entered a cigar-shop, purchased half-a-dozen *real Havana's*, (manufactured in St. John-street, Clerkenwell), joked with the young lady who served him, and then presented the one which he considered the best to his companion. The two gentlemen's gentlemen accordingly lighted their cigars, and then continued their walk along the New Road, in the vicinity of which Mr. Whittingham had met Mr. Suggett by appointment upon this memorable afternoon.

In a short time Mr. Suggett stopped suddenly at the door of a large white public-house, not a hundred miles distant from the new church, St. Pancras.

"This is a nice crib," said he. "Excellent company; and to-night there is a supper at eleven."

"The very identified thing," acquiesced Mr. Whittingham; and into the public-house they walked.

Nothing could be more neat and cleanly than the bar of the *Servants' Arms*—no one more obliging nor bustling than the "young lady" behind the bar. The *Servants' Arms* was reported to draw the best liquor in all the neighbourhood; and its landlord prided himself upon the superiority of his establishment over those which sold beer "at three-pence a-pot in your own jugs." And then what a rapid draught the landlord had for all his good things; and how crowded was the space before the bar with customers.

"Glass of ale—mild, Miss, if you please," said one.

"A quartern of gin and three outs, Caroline," cried a second, who was more familiar.

"Pint of half-and-half, here," exclaimed a third.

"Six of brandy, warm, Miss—four of gin, cold, and a pint of ale with the chill off—parlour!" ejaculated the waiter, who now made his appearance at the bar.

"Pot of porter; and master's compliments, and can you lend him yesterday's *Advertiser* for half an hour or so?" said a pretty little servant girl, placing a large yellow jug on the bright lead surface of the bar.

"Pot of ale, and a screw, Miss."

"Pint of gin, for mixing, please."

"Bottle of Cape wine, at eighteen, landlord."

"Four-penn'orth of rum, cold without."

"Half pint of porter, and a pipe, Caroline."

Such were the orders, issued from all quarters at the same moment, and to which Caroline responded with incredible alacrity; finding time to crack a joke with the known frequenters of the house, and to make a pleasant observation upon the weather to those whose faces were strange to her;—while the landlord contented himself with looking on, or every now and then drawing a pot of beer, apparently as a great favour and in a lazy independent manner. Nevertheless, he was a good, civil kind of a m-

only somewhat independent, because he was growing rich. He was never afraid at the end of the month to see Truman and Hanbury's collector, and Nicholas's man, alight from their gigs at his door. They were always sure to find the money ready for them, when they sat down to write their receipts in the little narrow slip of a parlour behind the bar. In fact, the landlord of the *Servants' Arms*, was reported to be doing "a very snug business."—

But, somehow or another, people never will be contented now-a-days; and Talleyrand was right when he said that "language was given to man to enable him to conceal his thoughts."

But to continue.
Messrs. Whittingham and Suggett sauntered leisurely into the parlour of the *Servants' Arms*, and took their seats at the only table which remained unoccupied.

Mr. Suggett glanced a little further around the room, and recognized another old acquaintance.

"Good evening, Sir," said the waiter, addressing Mr. Suggett with a sort of semi-familiarity, which showed that the latter gentleman was in the habit of "using the house."

"Ah! Snoggles, how are you?"
"Very well, thank'ee—how be you?"
"Blooming; but how come you here?"
"I dropped in quite permiscuously," answered Snoggles, "and finding good company, stayed. But it is up'ards o' three years since I see you, Mr. Suggett."

"How are you, William?" cried Mr. Suggett, in a patronising manner. "George been here lately?"

"Not very: I think he's down in the country."
"Oh! Well, what shall we have, Mr. Whittingham—brandy and water?"

"That's my invariable beverage, Mr. Suggett."
"Two sixes, gentlemen?" said the waiter.

"No," answered Mr. Whittingham, solemnly; "two shillings' worth, to begin with."

"The liquor was supplied, and when the two gentlemen had tasted it, and found it to their liking, they glanced around the room to survey the company. It soon appeared that Mr. Suggett was well known to many of the gentlemen present; for, upon making his survey, he acknowledged, with a nod or a short phrase, the bows or salutations of those with whom he was acquainted.

"Ah! Mr. Guffins, always up in the same corner, eh!" said he, addressing a middle-aged man in seedy black: "got a new work in the press, 'spose? You literary men contrive to enjoy yourselves, I know. How do you do, Mr. Mac Chizzle?" looking towards a short, pock-marked man, with a quick grey eye, and black hair combed upright off his forehead: "how get on the clients? Plenty of business, eh? Ah! you lawyers always contrive to do well. Mr. Drummer, your servant, sir. Got a good congregation still, sir?"

"The chapel thriveth well, I thank you—as well as can be expected in these times of heathen abominations," answered a demure-looking middle-aged gentleman, who was clad in deep black and wore a white neck-cloth, which seemed (together with the condition of his shirt and stockings) to denote that although he had gained the confidence of his flock, he had certainly lost that of his washerwoman. After having taken a long draught of a pint of half-and-half which stood before him, he added, "There is a many savoury vessels in my congregation—reputable, pious, and prayer-full people, which pays regular for their sittings and fears the Lord."

"Well, I am glad of that," ejaculated Mr. Suggett. "But, ah!" he cried, observing a thin white-haired old gentleman, with huge silver spectacles hanging half-way down his nose,—"I'm glad to see Mr. Cobbington here. How gets on the circulating library, eh—sir?"

"Pretty well—pretty well, thank'ee," returned the bookseller: "pretty well—considering."

A great many people qualify their observations and answers by the addition of the word "considering," but they seldom vouchsafe an explanation of what it is to be considered. Sometimes they use the phrase "considering all things;" and then the mind

has so much to consider, that it cannot consider any one thing definitively. It would be much more straightforward and satisfactory if persons would remember their friends of all suspense, and say boldly at once, as the case may be, "considering the execution I have got in my house;" or "considering the writ that's out against me;" or even "considering the trifling annoyance of not having a shilling in my pocket, and not knowing where to look for one."

But, somehow or another, people never will be contented now-a-days; and Talleyrand was right when he said that "language was given to man to enable him to conceal his thoughts."

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"About. What grade do you now fill in the profession? Any promotion?"
"I'm sorry to say not," replied Mr. Snoggles, shaking his head mournfully. "I've tumbled off the box down to a level with the oses;" which, being interpreted, means that Mr. Snoggles had fallen from the high estate of coachman to the less elevated rank of ostler. "But what rank do you now hold?"

"I left off the uniform of tiger last month," answered Mr. Suggett, "and received the brevet of walley-de-chambre."

"That gentleman one of the profession?" demanded Snoggles, alluding to Mr. Whittingham.

"Mr. Markham's butler, sir, at your service," said Whittingham, bowing with awe-inspiring stiffness: "and I may say, without exag-gerating, sir, and in no wise compromising my indefatigable character for veracity, that I'm also Mr. Markham's confidential friend. And what's more, gen'rleman," added the butler, glancing proudly around the room, "Mr. Richard Markham is the finest young man about this stupendous city of the whole universe—and that's as true as that this is a hand."

As Mr. Whittingham concluded this sentence, he extended his arm to display the hand relative to which he expressed such confidence; and while he flourished the arm to give weight to his language, the aforesaid hand encountered the right eye of the dissenting parson.

"A case of assault and battery," instantly exclaimed Mr. Mac Chizzle, the lawyer; "and here are upwards of a dozen witnesses for the plaintiff."

"I really beg the gentleman's pardon," said Whittingham.

"Special jury—sittings after term—damages five hundred pounds," exclaimed Mac Chizzle. "No harm was intended," observed Suggett. "Not a bit," added Snoggles.

"Verdict for Plaintiff—enter up judgment—issue execution—ca. ss. in no time," said Mac Chizzle doggedly.

"I am used to flagellations and persecutions at the hands of the ungodly," said the Reverend Mr. Drummer, rubbing his eye with his fist, and thereby succeeding in inflaming it.

"Perhaps the reverend gentleman wouldn't take it amiss if I was to offer him my apologies in a

extra powerful glass of brandy and water!" exclaimed Whittingham.

"Bribery," murmured Mac Chizzle.

"No, let us have a bowl of punch at once," exclaimed Suggett.

"And corruption," added the lawyer.

The bowl of punch was ordered, and the company generally was invited to partake of it. Even Mr. Mac Chizzle did not hesitate; and the dissenting minister, in order to convince Mr. Whittingham that he entirely forgave him, consented to partake of the punch so often that he at length began slapping Mr. Whittingham upon the back, and declaring that he was the best fellow in the world.

The conversation became general; and some of it is worth recording.

"I hope to have your patronage, sir, for my circulating library," said Mr. Cobbington to the butler.

"Depends, sir, upon the specified nature of the books it contains," was the reply.

"I have nothing but moral romances in which vice is always punished and virtue rewarded."

"That conduct of yours is highly credulous to you."

"All books is trash, except one," observed Mr. Drummer, winking his eyes in an extraordinary manner. "They teaches naught but swearing, low conversation, ungodliness, and that worst of all vices—intemperance."

"I beg you to understand, sir," exclaimed Mr. Guffins, who had hitherto remained a silent spectator of the proceedings, although a persevering partaker of the punch; "I beg you to understand, Mr. Drummer, my works, sir, are not the trash you seem to allude to."

"I won't understand nothing nor nobody," answered the reverend gentleman, swaying backwards and forwards in his chair. "Leave me to commune with myself upon the vanities of this wicked world, and—and—drink my punch in quiet."

"Humbog!" exclaimed the literary man, swallowing his resentment and the remainder of his punch simultaneously.

"Ah!" said the bookseller, after a pause; "nothing now succeeds unless it's in the comic line. We have comic Latin grammars, and comic Greek grammars; indeed, I don't know but what English grammar, too, is a comedy altogether. All our tragedies are made into comedies by the way they are performed; and no work sells without comic illustrations to it. I have brought out several new comic works, which have been very successful. For instance, 'The Comic Wealth of Nations'; 'The Comic Parliamentary Speeches'; 'The Comic Report of the Poor-Law Commissioners,' with an Appendix containing the 'Comic Dietary Scale'; and the 'Comic Distresses of the Industrious Population.' I even propose to bring out a 'Comic Whole Duty of Man.' All these books sell well: they do admirably for the nurseries of the children of the aristocracy. In fact they are as good as manuals and text-books."

"This rage for the comic is most unexpressedly remarkable," observed the butler.

"It is indeed!" ejaculated Snoggles; and, in order to illustrate the truth of the statement, he jerked a piece of lemon-peel very cleverly into the dissenting parson's left eye.

"That's right—stone me to death!" murmured the reverend gentleman. "My name is Stephen—

and it is all for righteousness' sake! I know I'm a chosen vessel, and may become a martyr. My name is Stephen, I tell you—Stephen Drum—um—unner!"

He then began an eulogium upon meekness and resignation under injuries, and reiterated his conviction that he was a chosen vessel; but, becoming suddenly excited by a horse-laugh which fell upon his ear, he forgot all about the chosen vessel, and lifted another very savagely from the table. In a word, he seized a pewter pot in his hand, and would have hurled it at Mr. Snoggles' head, had not Mr. Whittingham stopped the dangerous missile in time, and pacified the reverend gentleman by calling for more punch.

"We must certainly have those two men bound over to keep the peace," said Mac Chizzle; "two sureties in fifty, and themselves in a hundred, each."

"I shall dress the whole scene up for one of the *Moschles*," observed Mr. Guffins.

"If you do, you'll be indictable for libel," said Mac Chizzle. "The greater the truth, the greater the libel."

In the meanwhile Suggett and his friend Snoggles drew close to each other, and entered into conversation.

"It must be about three years since I saw you last," said the latter.

"Three year, come January," observed Suggett.

"Ah! I've seed some strange wicissitudes in the interval," continued Snoggles. "I went abroad as coachman, with a dashing young chap of the name of Winchester—"

"The devil you did! how singular! why my present gunner's name is Chichester."

"Well, I des say they're cousins then," said the ostler; "but I hope your'n won't treat you as mine did me. He seemed to have no end of tin for some months, and lived—my eye, how he lived! King's Bench dinners ain't nothin' to what his'n was; and yet I've heard say that the prisoners live there better than their creditors outside. Howsomever—things didn't always go on swimmingly. We went to Baden—called so cos of the baths; and there my gunner got involved in some gambling transactions, as forced him to make his name Walker. Well, he bolted, leaving all his traps behind, and he amongst them, and not a skurrick to pay the hotel bill and find my way back agin to England. The landlord he seized the traps, and I was forced to walk all the way to—I forget the name of the place—"

"Constantinople, perhaps," said Suggett, kindly endeavouring to assist his friend in his little geographical embarrassments.

"No; that ain't it," returned Snoggles. "Howsomever, I had every kind of difficulty to fight up against; and I never see my gunner from that day to this. He owed me eight pound, nineteen, and sixpence for wages; and he was bound by contract to bring me back to England."

"Disgraceful rasked, that he was!" ejaculated Mr. Suggett. "I raly think that we gentlemen ought to establish a society for our protection. The Licensed Writers have their Association; why shouldn't we have the Gentlemen's Gentlemen organized into a society?"

"Why not?" said Snoggles.

The waiter now acquainted the company that supper was ready in an upstairs room for those who liked to partake of it. All the gentlemen whose names have been introduced to the reader in connec-

tion with the parlour of the *Servants' Arms*, removed to the banqueting saloon, where the table was spread with a snow-white cloth and black handled knives and forks. At intervals stood salt-cellars and pepper boxes, the latter resembling in shape the three little domes upon the present National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. A huge round of boiled beef tripe both boiled and fried, and rump steaks, formed the supper. The methodist parson insisted upon being allowed to say grace—or, as he expressed it, "ask a blessing," for which purpose the same neighbours who had kindly helped him up the stairs, now sustained him upon his legs. Dread was the havoc then made upon the various dainties on the table, Mr. Guffins being especially characterised by a good appetite upon this occasion.

The Reverend Mr. Drummer was also far from being behind-hand in this onslaught upon the luxuries supplied by the *Servants' Arms*; and while he bolted huge mouthfuls of boiled beef, he favoured the company with an excellent moral dissertation upon abstemiousness and self-mortification. Mr. Drummer was, however, one of those who content themselves with inculcating morality, and do not consider it necessary to set an example in their own persons; for, after having clearly demonstrated that gluttony and drunkenness lead to blasphemy, ungodliness, and profane swearing, he abruptly turned to the landlord, who presided at the supper-table, and, holding his plate to be filled for the fourth time, exclaimed, "D—n your eyes, don't cut it so infernally thick!"

After supper, "glasses round" of hot brandy and water were introduced, and the conversation was carried on with considerable spirit. It was midnight before the party thought of breaking up, although several of the gentlemen present had already begun to see three or four Dutch clocks glaring them in the face besides the one which graced the wall. As for the Reverend Mr. Drummer, he declared that he was so affected by the ungodly proceedings of those present that he should forthwith endeavour to wash away their guilt with his tears; and it is distressing to be compelled to observe that all the reward this truly pious and deserving man experienced at the hands of the ungrateful company, was the cruel accusation that he was "crying drunk." This disgraceful behaviour produced such an effect upon his naturally nervous temperament, that he fell flat upon the floor, and was compelled to be taken in a wheelbarrow to his own house close by.

We may also add here that on the following day this proceeding was rumoured abroad, so that the much injured minister was necessitated to justify his conduct from the pulpit on the ensuing sabbath. This he did so effectually, that two old ladies, who carried small flasks of brandy in their pockets, were conveyed out of the chapel in a peculiar state—no doubt overpowered by the minister's eloquence. They however recovered at the expiration of some hours, and immediately opened a subscription to present a piece of plate to the Reverend Stephen Drummer, together with a vote of thanks and confidence on the part of the congregation. The vote was respectfully, but gracefully declined by this holy man; but, after some little entreaty, he was prevailed upon to accept the plate. From that time to the present day his congregation has been rapidly increasing; and, although envy and jealousy have declared that he himself helped to augment his numbers in the shape of three innocent little children by different servant-girls, he very properly

disdained to contradict the report, and is considered by his flock to be a chosen and savoury vessel of the Lord.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BANK-NOTES.

WHEN Richard left the presence of Diana, after the full confession of her frailty, he hurried home on horseback at a rate which kept pace with his thoughts.

Upon reaching his dwelling, he retired to his apartment, and sat himself down seriously to consider all that had taken place.

His eyes were now open to two facts:—in the first instance he saw that he had been giving way to a passion which was dishonourable in respect to the relations existing between its object and another individual—the baronet; and, secondly, he perceived that even if that barrier were removed, Diana was not the being whom he ought to make the partner of his fortunes. He was endowed with feelings and notions of the most scrupulous honour; and he deeply regretted that he should ever have been induced to utter a word or manifest a sentiment towards Diana, which he would have been ashamed for the baronet to become acquainted with. To such an extent did he carry his notions of honour, that if, for instance, he had pledged himself to keep a secret, he would sooner have suffered himself to be put to death than have forfeited his word. Even were a crime communicated to him in confidence, he would not have benefited society by handing the perpetrator over to justice. He thus fell into an extreme almost as dangerous and fatal as the total absence of moral rectitude.

If the reader should marvel how a young man possessing such punctilious sentiments, could have so far forgotten himself as to declare his affection to one who stood in the light of a friend's wife,—let it be remembered that he was surprised into a partial avowal of that passion; and that a certain impulse, favoured by a rapid succession of visits, parties, and *tête-à-tête* interviews, in which the object thereof was always present, had hurried him onward up to that point when a word was to decide his fate.

Love is a stream so rapid that he who embarks upon it does not observe that his rude boat crushes the beautiful flowers upon the banks between which it passes:—it is a river whose waters are those of oblivion, in which all other passions, sentiments, and ideas are swallowed up.

O woman, what power hast thou over the heart of man! Thou wast born a creature of grace and fascination; to whatever clime thou dost belong, neither habit nor costume can deface in thee that natural charm of witchery and love which characterises thee in all the relations of life.

Richard had not been long alone, when a knock at his door aroused him from the reverie in which he had been plunged; and Mr. Chichester entered the room.

"My dear Markham," said he, "you must excuse the liberty which I take in thus intruding upon your privacy; but what is the meaning of this? You were to lunch with Harborough to-day, and we were all to dine together in the evening. You called at Diana's; and from what you said upon leaving, she fancied you were coming straight home. So I have galloped all this way after you. You shut yourself up from your friends as if you had a design upon your life."

"I am not well—I am anxious to be alone."

"But I shall not allow you to remain alone," said Chichester. "If you should feel melancholy, what guarantee have I that you will not commit suicide, or do what is nearly as bad—sit down and write sentimental poetry?"

"I am not very likely to do either."

"You must come and join us: the baronet——"

"I would rather——"

"I can take no excuse. Order round your chestnut, and let us be off."

"Well—at all events I must go straight into the City first," said Markham. "I have occasion to call at my guardian's banker."

"Will you join me at seven precisely this evening, at Harborough's own lodgings in Conduit-street? We shall expect you."

"You may rely upon me," answered Markham, who now suddenly experienced an anxiety for society and bustle. "But who will be there?"

"Only the baronet, you, I, and Talbot—a *partie quarrée*. Talbot is really a good fellow at heart, and has taken a great liking to you. Besides, he is the most liberal and generous fellow in existence. He sent a hundred pounds to every hospital in London yesterday morning—his annual donations; and he thinks that no one knows anything about it. He always puts himself down as X. Y. Z. in the lists of charitable subscriptions: he is so unostentatious!"

"Those are admirable traits in his character."

"They are, indeed. Just now, for instance, he heard of a horrid case of distress. Only conceive a poor man, with nine small children and a wife just ready to present him with a tenth, dragged to Whitecross Street Prison, for a paltry hundred pounds! Talbot instantly called me aside, and said, 'Chichester, my dear fellow, I have not time to attend to any business to-day. There is a five hundred pound note; have the kindness to get it changed for me, and devote a hundred pounds to save the unhappy family.' Those were Talbot's own words," added Mr. Chichester, surveying Richard in a peculiar manner from under his eyebrows.

"How liberal! how grand! how noble!" exclaimed Richard, forgetting all Mr. Talbot's vulgarity and coarseness, as he listened to these admirable traits of philanthropy. "To be candid with you, I am myself going to the banker's to draw some money; and when I see you this evening, I shall be happy to place twenty pounds in your hands for the use of that poor family."

"No, my dear fellow, keep your money: the baronet and I shall take care of those poor people."

"Nay—I insist—"

"Well—I am sorry now that I told you of the circumstance."

"And I am very glad."

"There—you shall have your own way then. But, by the by," added Chichester, a sudden thought appearing to strike him, "you are going into the City, and to your banker's?"

"Yes. And you?"

"I am anxious to get back to the West End as hastily as possible," answered Chichester. "You could do me a service, if you would?"

"Name it," said Richard.

"Get this note changed for me in the City," returned Chichester: and as he spoke he drew a Bank of England note for five hundred pounds from his pocket.

"Oh! certainly," cried Markham; and he took charge of the note accordingly.

He and Mr. Chichester then separated. Richard mounted his horse and rode towards the City, while his friend proceeded to the West End.

At seven o'clock Richard was ushered into Sir Rupert Harborough's drawing-room in Conduit-street, Hanover Square.

"There!" exclaimed Chichester, who was lounging upon the sofa; "I knew that my melancholy young gentleman would be punctual."

"Delighted to see you, Markham," said the baronet, pressing his hand with more than usual fervour.

"How are you, my tulip!" shouted Talbot.

"Why, Chichester said you had the blue devils!"

"I really felt unequal to society to-day," returned Richard; "and I fancied that a little rest——"

"A little humbug!" ejaculated Mr. Talbot. "That's all my eye and my elbow, Markham. A d—d good bottle of champagne will soon put you to rights. But when I'm ill, what do you think I always take?"

"I really can't guess."

"Why, going to bed I always take a pint of dog's nose. There's nothing like dog's-nose for getting into the system. You must have it in the pewter, you know—and nice and hot: you will then sweat a bucket-full in the course of the night, and get up in the morning as right as a trivet. I can assure you there's nothing like dog's-nose."

"And pray what is dog's-nose?" enquired Richard.

"Well, may I be hanged! you are jolly green not to know what dog's-nose is! You take half a pint of the best half-and-half—or you may have ale all alone, if you like—a quarter of blue ruin——"

"It is a mixture of gin, beer, and sugar," said Mr. Chichester, impatiently.

"Well, and why couldn't you let me tell the gentleman how to make dog's-nose in my own manner!" asked Talbot, somewhat sulkily. "However, there's nothing better than dog's-nose for the gripes, or wind on the stomach, or the rheumatics. For my part——"

"D—n your part!" cried the Honourable Arthur Chichester, now absolutely losing all patience.

Fortunately for all parties, the door was at that moment thrown open, and a valet announced that dinner was served up. Richard took advantage of the haste with which Mr. Talbot rushed down stairs to the dining-room, to slip a bundle of Bank of England notes and a quantity of gold into Chichester's hand, whispering at the same time

"There is your change, together with my twenty pounds for the poor family."

"Thank you, my boy," said Chichester; and over Markham's shoulder, he exchanged with the baronet a significant glance of satisfaction amounting almost to joy.

Meantime Mr. Talbot had rushed to his place at the dinner-table, declaring that "he was uncommonly peckish," and began sharpening his two knives one against the other. The baronet took his seat at the top of the table; Mr. Chichester at the bottom; and Markham sat opposite to Talbot.

"This soup is unexceptionable," observed Chichester: "I never tasted better save once—and that was at the King of Prussia's table."

"Ah! I once had d—d good pea-soup, I remember, at the Duke of Lambeth's table," ejaculated Mr. Talbot. "But, I say, who the devil's that kicking my unfortunate soft corn?"

"A glass of wine, Markham!" said Chichester.

"I suppose we'd all better join in," suggested Talbot.

"I shall be happy to drink wine with you, Mr. Talbot," said the baronet, with a reproving emphasis upon the pronouns.

"Just as you please," returned the man of charity, who certainly required some virtue or another to cover such a multitude of sins of vulgarity. "I wonder what's coming next. I say, Harborough, you haven't ordered any tripe, have you? I am so fond of tripe. There's nothing like tripe and onions for supper."

The dinner passed away; and the bottle was circulated pretty freely. Richard regained his good spirits, and offered no objection when Chichester proposed a stroll up Regent's-street with a cigar.

The baronet and Talbot went together first; and Markham was about to follow, when Chichester drew him back into the dining-room, and said, "Excuse me: but you went to your banker's to-day, if you have much money about you, it is not safe to carry it about the streets of London at night-time."

"I have fifty-five pounds in gold and fifty pounds in notes," answered Markham.

"Notes are safe enough," returned Chichester; "but gold is dangerous. Some one would be sure to *frisk* your purse. Here—I tell you how we can manage it—give me fifty sovereigns, and I will give you a fifty pound note in exchange. I can then lock up the gold in the baronet's writing-desk, the key of which, I see, he has fortunately left in the lock."

Chichester glanced, as he spoke, to the writing-desk, which stood upon a little table between the windows.

"I am much obliged to you for the thought," said Richard: "it is very considerate of you."

He accordingly handed over his purse of gold to his kind friend, and received in exchange a fifty pound note, which Mr. Chichester selected from a huge roll that he took from his pocket.

The two gentlemen then hastened to rejoin the baronet and Talbot, whom they overtook in Regent-street.

They all walked leisurely along towards the Quadrant; and while Talbot engaged Markham in conversation upon some trivial topic or another, Chichester related in a few words to the baronet the particulars of the little pecuniary arrangement which had just taken place.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HELL.

AFTER having taken a few turns in Regent-street, the baronet observed "that it was devilish slow work;" Mr. Talbot suggested the propriety of "a spree;" and Mr. Chichester declared "that as his friend Markham was anxious to see *his*, the best thing they could all do was to drop in for an hour at No. —, Quadrant."

"What place is that?" demanded Markham.

"Oh; only an establishment for cards and dice, and other innocent diversions," carelessly answered Chichester.

The Quadrant of an evening is crowded with loungers of both sexes. Beneath those arcades walk the daughters of crime, by ones and twos—dressed in the flaunting garb that tells so forcibly the tale of broken hearts, and blighted promise, and crushed affections,—to lose an hour amidst the haunts of pleasure and of vice, and to court the crime by which alone they live. The young men

that saunter arm-in-arm up and down, and the hoary old sinners, whose licentious glances seem to plunge down into the depths of the bodices of those frail but beautiful girls, little think of the amount of mental suffering which is contained beneath those gay satins and rustling silks. They mark the heaving of the voluptuous bosom, but dream not of the worm that gnaws eternally within—they behold smiles upon the red lips, and are far from suspecting that the hearts of those who laugh so joyfully are all but broken!

Thus is it that in the evening the Quadrant has a characteristic set of loungers of its own;—or, at least, it is frequented after dusk by a population whose characters are easily to be defined.

A bright lamp burnt in the fan-light over the door of No. —. Mr. Chichester gave a loud and commanding knock; and a policeman standing by, who doubtless had several golden reasons for not noticing anything connected with that establishment, instantly ran across the road after a small boy whom he suspected to be a thief, because the poor wretch wore an uncommonly shabby hat. The summons given by Mr. Chichester was not immediately answered. Five minutes elapsed ere any attention was paid to it; and then the door was only opened to the small extent allowed by a chain inside. A somewhat repulsive looking countenance was at the same time protruded from behind the door.

"Well!" said the man to whom the countenance belonged.

"All right," returned Chichester.

The chain was withdrawn, and the door was opened to its full extent. The party was thereupon admitted, with some manifestations of impatience on the part of the porter, who no doubt thought that the door was kept open too long, into a passage at the end of which was a staircase covered with a handsome carpet.

Chichester led the way, and his companions followed, up to a suite of rooms on the first floor. These were well furnished, and brilliantly lighted; and red moreen curtains, with heavy and rich fringes, were carefully drawn over the windows. Splendid mirrors stood above the mantels, which were also adorned with French timepieces in *or* *seals*, and candelabra of the same material. On one side of the front room stood a buffet covered with wines and liquors of various descriptions.

In the middle of that same front apartment was the *roge et noir* table. On each side sat a *Croupier*, with a long rake in his hand, and a green shade over his eyes. Before one of them was placed a tin case; this was the *Bank*;—and on each side of that cynosure of all attention, stood little piles of markers, or counters.

Two or three men—well but flashily dressed, and exhibiting a monstrous profusion of Birmingham jewellery about their persons—sat at the table. These were the *Bossnets*—individuals in reality in the pay of the proprietor of the establishment, and whose duties consist in enticing strangers and visitors to play, or in maintaining an appearance of playing deeply when such strangers and visitors first enter the room.

The countenances of the croupiers were cold, passionless, and totally devoid of any animation. They called the game, raked up the winnings, or paid the losings, without changing a muscle of their features. For all that regarded animation or excitement, they might have been easily passed off as automatons.



Not so was it with the Bonnets. These gentlemen were compelled to affect exuberant joy when they won, and profound grief or rage when they lost. From time to time they paid a visit to the sideboard, and helped themselves to wine or spirits, or regaled themselves with cigars. These refreshments were supplied gratuitously to all comers by the proprietor: this apparent liberality was upon the principle of throwing out a sprat to catch a whale.

When none save the Croupiers and Bonnets are present, they throw aside their assumed characters, and laugh, and joke, and chatter, and smoke, and drink; but the moment steps are heard upon the staircase, they all relapse with mechanical exactitude into their business aspect. The Croupiers put on their imperturbable countenances as easily as if they wore masks; and the Bonnets appear to be as intent upon the game, as if its results were to them perspective life or death.

The Croupiers are usually trustworthy persons well known to the proprietor, or else shareholders themselves in the establishment. The Bonnets are

young men of education and manners, who have probably lost the ample fortunes wherewith they commenced life, in the very whirlpool to which, for a weekly stipend, they are employed to entice others.

In one of the inner rooms there was a roulette-table; but this was seldom used. A young lad held the almost sinecure office of attending upon it.

The front room was tolerably crowded on the evening when Chichester, Markham, the baronet, and Talbot, honoured the establishment with a visit.

The moment they entered the apartment, Richard instinctively drew back, and, catching hold of Chichester's arm, whispered to him in a hurried and anxious manner, "Tell me, is this a Gambling-House? is it what I have heard called a Hell?"

"It is a Gambling-House, if you will, my dear fellow," was the reply; "but a most respectable one. Besides—you must see life, you know!"

With these words he took Markham's arm, and conducted him up to the *roUGE ET NOIR* table.

A young officer, whose age could not have ex-

ceded twenty, was seated at the further end of the green-baize covered board. A huge pile of notes and gold lay before him; but at rapid intervals one of the Croupiers raked away the stakes which he deposited; and thus his heap of money was gradually growing smaller.

"Well, this is extraordinary!" ejaculated the young officer; "I never saw the luck set so completely in against me. However—I can afford to lose a little; for I broke your bank for you last night, my boys!"

"What does that mean?" demanded Richard in a whisper.

"He won all the money which the proprietor deposited in that tin case, he means," replied Chichester.

"And how much do you suppose that might be?"

"About fifteen hundred to two thousand pounds."

"Here—waiter!" exclaimed the young officer, who had just lost another stake,—"a glass of claret."

The waiter handed him a glass of the wine so demanded. The young officer did not notice him for a moment, but waited to see the result of the next chance.

He lost again.

He turned round to seize the glass of wine; but when his eyes caught sight of it, his countenance became almost livid with rage.

"Fool! idiot!" he ejaculated, starting from his seat: "bring me a tumbler—a large tumbler full of claret; my mouth is as parched as h—l, and my stomach is like a lime-kiln."

The waiter hastened to comply with the wishes of the young gambler. The tumbler of claret was supplied; and the game continued.

Still the officer lost.

"A cigar!" he shouted, in a fearful state of excitement—"bring me a cigar!"

The waiter handed him a box of choice Havannah, that he might make his selection.

"Why the devil don't you bring a light at the same time, you d—d infernal rascal!" cried the gamster; and while the domestic hastened to supply this demand also, he poured a volley of most horrible oaths at the bewildered wretch's head.

Again the play proceeded.

And again the young officer lost.

His pile of gold was gone; the Croupier who kept the bank changed one of his remaining notes.

"That makes three thousand that I have lost already, by G—d!" ejaculated the young officer.

"Including the amount you won last night, I believe," said one of the Bonnets.

"Well, sir, and suppose it is—what the deuce is that to you?" demanded the officer fiercely. "Have I not been here night after night for these six weeks? and have I not lost thousands—thousands? When did I ever get a vein of good luck until last night? But never mind—I'll play on—I'll play till the end: I will either win all back, or lose everything together. And then—in the latter case—"

He stopped: he had just lost again. His countenance grew ghastly pale, and he bit his lips convulsively.

"Claret—more claret!" he exclaimed, throwing away the Havannah: "that cigar only makes me the more thirsty."

And again the play proceeded.

"I am really afraid to contemplate that young man's countenance," whispered Markham to Chichester.

"Why so?"

"I have an idea that if he should prove unsuccessful he will commit suicide. I have a great mind just to mention my fears to these men in the green shades, who seem to be winning all his money."

"Pray be quiet. They will only laugh at you."

"But the life of a fellow-creature?"

"What do they care?"

"Do you mean to say they are such wretches—"

"I mean that they do not care one fig what may happen so long as they get the money."

Markham was struck speechless with horror as he heard this cold-blooded announcement. Chichester had however stated nothing but the truth.

The proceedings were now fearfully interesting. The young officer was worked up to a most horrible state of excitement: his losses continued to be unvaried by a single gleam of good fortune. Still he persisted in his ruinous career: note after note was changed. At length his last was melted into gold. He now became absolutely desperate: his countenance was appalling—the frenzy of gambling and the inflammatory effects of the liquors he had been drinking, rendered his really handsome features positively hideous.

Markham had never beheld such a scene before, and felt afraid. His companions surveyed it with remarkable coolness.

The play proceeded; and in a few moments the officer's last stake was swept away.

Then the croupiers paused, as it were, by common consent; and all eyes were directed towards the object of universal interest.

"Well—I said I would play until I won all or lost all," he said; "and I have done so. Waiter, give me another tumbler of claret; it will compose me."

He laughed bitterly as he uttered these words.

The claret was brought; he drained the tumbler, and threw it upon the table, where it broke into a dozen pieces.

"Clear this away, Thomas," said one of the Croupiers, completely unmoved.

"Yes, sir;" and the fragments of the tumbler disappeared forthwith.

The Bonnets, perceiving the presence of other strangers, were now compelled to withdraw their attention from the ruined gambler, and commence playing.

And so the play again proceeded.

"Where is my hat, waiter?" demanded the young officer, after a pause, during which he had gazed vacantly upon the game.

"In the passage, sir—I believe."

"No—I remember, it is in the inner room. But do not trouble yourself—I will fetch it myself."

"Very good, sir;" and the waiter did not move.

The young officer stammered, in a seeming leisurely manner, into the innermost room of the suite.

"What a shocking scene!" whispered Markham to Chichester. "I am glad I came hither this once; it will be a lesson for me which I can never forget."

At this instant the report of a pistol echoed sharply through the rooms.

There was a simultaneous rush to the inner apartment:—Markham's predicaments were fulfilled—the young officer had committed suicide.

His brains were literally blown out, and he lay upon the carpet weltering in his blood.

A cry of horror burst from the strangers present; and then, with one accord, they hastened to the door. The baronet, Chichester, and Talbot, were amongst

the foremost who made this movement, and were thereby enabled to effect their escape.

Markham stood rivetted to the spot, unaware that his companions had left him, and contemplating with feelings of supreme horror the appalling spectacle before him.

Suddenly the cry of "The police" fell upon his ears; and heavy steps were heard hurrying up the staircase.

"The Bank!" ejaculated one of the Croupiers.

"All right!" cried the other; and in a moment the lights were extinguished, as by magic, throughout the entire suite of rooms.

Obedying a natural impulse, Markham hastened towards the door; but his progress was stopped by a powerful hand, and in an instant the bull's-eye of a lantern glared upon his countenance.

He was in the grasp of a police officer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE STATION-HOUSE.

Of all the persons who were in the gambling-house at the moment when the police, alarmed by the report of the pistol, broke in, Richard Markham was alone captured. The others, aware of the means of egress in emergencies of this kind, had rushed up stairs, entered upon the leads, and thus obtained admittance into the adjacent dwelling, from whose friendly doors they subsequently issued one by one when all was once more quiet in the street.

The police-officer conducted Markham to the nearest station-house. They entered a low dark gloomy apartment, which was divided into two parts by means of a thick wooden bar running across the room, about two feet and a half from the ground. There was a small dull fire in the grate; and in a comfortable arm-chair near it, was seated the inspector—a short, stout, red-faced, consequential-looking man, with a pen stuck behind his left ear. A policeman in uniform was standing at a high desk, turning over the leaves of a large book; and another officer in plain clothes (and very plain and shabby they were too) was lounging before the fire, switching the dust out of his trousers with a cane.

"Well, what now?" said the inspector, gruffly, as Markham was conducted into the office, and led behind the bar, towards the fire.

"Me, and Jones, and Jenkins, broke into No.—, in the Quadrant, as we heard a pistol—or else we should ha' known ourselves better; and this young feller is all we caught. Jones and Jenkins is staying in the house along with the dead body of the man as killed his self."

The inspector indulged in a good long stare at Markham; and, when his curiosity was completely gratified, he said, "Now, Crisp, we'll enter that charge, if you please."

The policeman standing at the desk turned to the proper leaf in the large book before him, and then took down the deposition of the officer who had apprehended Markham.

When this was done, the inspector proceeded, in a very pompous and magisterial manner, to question the prisoner.

"What is your name, young man?"

"Richard Markham."

"Oh! Richard Markham. Put that down, Crisp. Where do you live?"

"At Markham Place, near Holloway."

"Put that down, Crisp. Now, do you want to

let any of your friends know that you are in trouble?"

"First tell me of what I am accused, and why I am detained."

"You are accused of being in an unlawful house for an unlawful purpose—namely, gambling; and a suicide has been committed there, they say. You will be wanted afore the coroner as well as the magistrate."

"Can I be released until to-morrow by giving security for my appearance?"

"No—I can't part with you. It is said that it is suicide—and I believe it; still it might be murder. But you seem a respectable young gentleman, and so you sha'n't be locked up in a cell all night. You may sit here by the fire, if you'll be quiet."

"I am at least obliged to you for this courtesy. But can you give me any idea of the extent of the penalty to which I am liable? I did not gamble myself—I merely accompanied—"

"You needn't criminate anybody, you know," interrupted the Inspector. "The Magistrate will fine you a few pounds, and that will be all."

"Then I should prefer not to acquaint my friends with my position," said Markham, "since I can release myself from my present difficulty without their assistance."

Reassured by this conviction, though still strangely excited by the appalling scene which he had witnessed, Richard seated himself by the fire, and soon fell into conversation with the policemen. These men could talk of nothing but themselves or their pursuits: they appeared to live in a world of policeman; all their ideas were circumscribed to station-houses, magistrates' offices, prisons, and criminal courts of justice. Their discourse was moreover garnished with the slang terms of thieves; they could not utter a sentence without interpolating a swell-mob phrase or a Newgate jest. They seemed to be so familiar with crime (though not criminal themselves) that they could not devote a moment to the contemplation of virtue: they only conversed about persons who were "in trouble," but never condescended to lavish a thought to those who were out of it.

"Cranky Jim has done it brown at last, has'n't he?" said Crisp.

"He has indeed," replied the inspector. "But what could he have done with all the swag?"

"Oh! he's fadded† that safe enough," observed the officer in plain clothes. "My eye! What a slap-up lily benjamin‡ he had on when he was nabbed."

"Yes—and such a swell bandanna fogle§ in the gropus.¶"

"He had'n't any ready tin though; for he wanted to peel,§ and put the white-poodle up the spout** for a drop of max.††"

"And because you would'n't let him be doubled you up with a wallop in your dumpling-depot,‡‡ didn't he?"

"Yes—but I bruised his canister§§ for him though."

"This 'll be the third time he's been up afore the beaks|| at the Old Bailey."

"Consequently he's certain sure to be lagged.¶¶"

"Ah! it must be a clever nob in the fur trade*** who'll get him off."

"Well—talking makes me thirsty," said Crisp. "I wish I'd somest to sluice my ivories††† with."

* Booty, plunder. † Secured. ‡ White Upper Coat; synonymous with "White Poodle." § Handkerchief. ¶ Pocket. † Strip. ** Prawn the coat. †† Gin.

‡‡ Stomach. §§ Head. || Judges. ¶¶ Transcribed. *** Banister. ††† Teeth.

Markham entertained a faint idea that Mr. Crisp was thirsty; he accordingly offered to pay for anything which he and his brother policemen chose to drink.

The officer in plain clothes was commissioned to procure some "heavy-wet"—alias porter; and even the pompous and magisterial inspector condescended to take what he called "a drain," but which in reality appeared to be something more than a pint.

The harmony was disturbed by the entrance of a constable dragging in a poor ragged, half-starved, and emaciated lad, without shoes or stockings.

"What's the charge?" demanded the inspector.

"A rogue and vagabond," answered the constable.

"Oh! very well; put that down, Crisp. How do you know?"

"Because he's wandering about and hasn't nowhere to go to, and no friends to refer to; and I saw him begging."

"Very good; put that down, Crisp. And I suppose he's without food and hungry?"

"I have not tasted food—" began the poor wretch, who stood shivering at the bar.

"Come, no lies," ejaculated the inspector.

"No lies!" echoed the constable, giving the poor wretch a tremendous shake.

"Have you put it all down, Crisp?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let him have a bit of bread, and lock him up. He'll get three months of it on the stepper to-morrow."

The poor creature was supplied with a cubic inch of stale bread, and then thrust into a filthy cell.

"What do you think that unfortunate creature will be done to?" enquired Markham.

"Three months on the stepper—the treadmill, to be sure."

"But what for?"

"Why, for a rogue and vagabond."

"A vagabond he may be," said Markham, "because he has no home to go to; but how do you know he is a rogue?"

"Why—he was found begging, wasn't he?"

"And does that make a man a rogue?"

"Certainly it do—in the eye of the law."

"Ah! and that eye can see without spectacles too," added Mr. Crisp with a laugh.

Markham was reflecting profoundly upon the law's definitions of *rogue* and *vagabond*, when another constable entered, leading in an elderly man, belonging to the humbler class, but very cleanly in appearance.

"Well, what's the charge?" demanded the inspector.

"This fellow will come upon my beat with his apple-cart, and I can't keep him off. So I've sent his cart to the Green Yard, and brought him here."

"Pleaze, sir," said the poor fellow, wiping away a tear from his eye, "I endeavour to earn an honest living by selling a little fruit in the streets. I have a wife and seven children to support, and I only stayed out so long to-night because I had had a bad day of it, and the money is so much wanted at home—it is indeed, sir! I do hope you'll let me go, sir: my poor wife will be ready to break her heart when she finds that I don't come home; and my eldest boy always sits up for me. Poor little fellow! he will cry so if he don't kiss *Father* before he goes to bed."

There was something profoundly touching in this poor man's manner and language; and Markham felt inclined to interfere in his behalf. He, however, remembered that he was only allowed to sit in that

room by sufferance, and that he was at the mercy of the caprice of ignorant, tyrannical, and hard-hearted men; he accordingly held his tongue.

"Come, Crisp—have you got that down?" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, let the man be locked up: the magistrate must decide in the morning."

And the poor fellow, in spite of his remonstrances, was removed to a cell.

"I could not exactly understand what this new prisoner has done," said Markham.

"Obstructed the way and created a nuisance," replied the inspector pompously.

"But he is endeavouring to earn his bread honestly, I think; and the road is open to every one."

"Oh! no such thing. Those little carts frighten the horses in the great folks' carriages, and can't be allowed. He must have a month of it—he's been warned several times, and is incorrigible. I'll tell the magistrate so."

"And what will become of his family?"

"Family! why, go to the workhouse, to be sure!" Presently a third constable made his appearance, accompanied by a poor miserable-looking woman and three small children—all wretchedly clad and careworn.

"What's the charge now?"

"Charge from the workus. This here o'oman was admitted to-night to the Union with them three children; and 'cos the master ordered her to be separated from her children, she kicked up hell's delight. So the master turned 'em all out together, called me up, and give 'em in charge."

"Put that down, Crisp."

"Yes—and it is true too," sobbed the poor woman. "I am not ashamed to own that I love my children; and up to this blessed hour they have never been separated from me. It would break their poor little hearts to be torn away from me—that it would, God bless them! I love them all, poor—miserable as I am!"

"A flood of tears drowned the voice of this wretched mother.

"Inspector," said Markham, touched to the quick by this affecting scene, "you will allow me —"

"Silence, young man. It's a charge from the workus, and the workus is paramount."

"So it appears, indeed!" cried Richard bitterly.

"Silence, I say. Don't interfere, there's a good lad. Crisp, have you got it all down?"

"Yes, sir."

"Lock 'em up, then."

"At least we shall be together!" exclaimed the unfortunate mother, to whom the three little children clung with all the tenacity of sincere affection.

An hour elapsed, when another policeman entered, bringing in a man dressed as an ostler, and whose face was all covered with blood.

"Well—what now?"

"Fighting in the *Blue Dragons*: the landlord turned him out, and so I took him up."

"Put that down, Crisp. What's your name, my fine fellow?"

"John Snoggles."

"Put that down, Crisp. He's a nice bird, isn't he, Mr. Markham?" added the inspector.

"Markham!" ejaculated the new prisoner.

"Yes—that is my name," said Richard: "do you know me?"

"Not that I am awer of sir. Only the name reminded me that I have been this evening in the com-

pany of a gentleman as is in the service of a Mr. Markham. I left the *Servants' dress* at twelve precisely, and walked straight down to this bare vicinity—I ain't been more than half an hour coming—when I gets into a row—”

“Well, well,” said Richard, somewhat impatiently and what is the name of the person with whom you have passed the evening?”

“With several gentlemen—but the one I named was Vittingham.”

“Whittingham! he is my butler. Poor fellow! how anxious he will be about me.”

“He’s too drunk to be anxious,” said Snoggles drily: “I was the only one as come away sober.”

“I tell you what he could do, if you like,” observed the inspector, who now began to entertain an idea of Markham’s standing in society by the mention of the word *butler*: “there is no one here to make any charge against the fellow—the constable will withdraw it, and he can take a note home for you.”

“A thousand thanks!” ejaculated Markham. “But you intimated that he was tipsy?”

“He is certainly elevated,” answered Snoggles.

“Well, can you be at my house to-morrow morning by six or seven o’clock?”

“Of course I can, sir.”

“I need not write; you can say that you have seen me, and that I shall be home in the course of the day. Do not mention where I am: I would not have him coming here to seek me.”

Markham supped half a sovereign into the hands of Snoggles, who took his departure with a faithful promise to execute the commission entrusted to him, and not a little pleased at having so pleasantly escaped a night in the station-house.

It was now past one o’clock; and Markham, feeling rather drowsy, lay down to slumber for a few hours upon a bench, wrapped up in Mr. Crisp’s police-coat.

CHAPTER XV.

THE POLICE-OFFICE.

The morning was rainy, cold, and lowering.

Markham awoke unrefreshed by his sleep, which had been haunted by the ghost of the young officer who had committed suicide at the Hell. He shivered and felt nervous; as if under the impulse of some impending danger whose nature he could not altogether define. By the good offices of Crisp he obtained the means of washing himself and arranging his toilette previous to an appearance at the police-court; and the same intervention procured him a good breakfast. As he, however, could not eat a morsel, Mr. Crisp very kindly and considerately devoured it all for him.

At about half-past nine o’clock the various constables connected with the charges entered in the police-sheet, arrived at the station-house for the purpose of conducting their prisoners to the Police-court. All those persons who were charged with felony were handcuffed; but of this class the most knowing contrived to bring their hands beneath their garments in some way or other, and thus conceal the symbol of ignominy as they passed through the streets.

Richard was astonished at the number of women who were charged with intoxication and disorderly conduct; and the chivalrous admiration of the whole sex which he felt, and which is so natural to youth,

was considerably diminished by the hardened appearance and revolting language of these females.

Markham and the constable who had arrested him proceeded in a cab together to the police-office in Marlborough Street. Upon reaching that establishment, the officer said, “The Magistrate will hear the *drunk* and *assault* charges first; so it may be an hour or more before your business will come on. I ought by rights to lock you up; but if you like, we can stay together in the public-house there; and one of my partners will let us know when the case is coming on.”

This arrangement was very acceptable to Richard; and to the nearest public-house did he and the constable accordingly adjourn. For this handsome accommodation all that he had to pay was half-a-guinea to the officer, besides liquidating the score for as much liquor as the said officer and every one of his “partners” who happened to drop in, could consume.

For the present we must request the reader to accompany us to the interior of the police-office.

In a small, low, badly-lighted room, sat an elderly gentleman at a desk. This was the Magistrate. Near him was the clerk, whom the worthy functionary consulted so often that it almost seemed as if this clerk were a peripatetic law-manual or text-book. In front of the desk were the bar and the dock; and the space between them and the door was filled with policemen and the friends of those “who had got into trouble.”

The first charge was called. A man dressed in the garb of a common labourer was accused of being drunk and incapable of taking care of himself. The Magistrate put on a most awfully severe and frowning countenance, and said in a gruff tone, “Well, my man, what do you say to this charge?”

“Please your worship,” observed the prisoner, scratching his head, “I am out of work, and my wife has pawned all our little bits of things for food for the children, and yesterday morning I was forced to go out to look for work without any breakfast. There was but a little bread left, and that I would not touch for all the world. Well, your worship, I was fortunate enough to get the promise of some work for Monday; and meeting a friend, he asked me to have a glass. Now here upon an empty stomach, your worship—”

The Magistrate, who had been reading a newspaper during this defence, now lifted up his head, and exclaimed, “Well, you do’nt deny the charge: you are fined five shillings. Call the next case.”

“But your worship—”

“Call the next case.”

The poor fellow was dragged away from the bar by two huge policemen; and an elegantly dressed person of about twenty-six years of age was introduced to the notice of the magistrate.

“What is your name?” enquired the clerk.

“Name! Oh—John Jenkins,” was the reply, delivered in a flippant and free-and-easy manner.

The Clerk and the Magistrate whispered together.

A constable then stood forward, and stated the charge. The prisoner at the bar had turned out of a flash tavern in the Haymarket at one in the morning, and commenced crowing like a cock, and ringing at front-door bells, and playing all imaginable kinds of antics. When the constable interfered, the gentleman knocked him down; and had not another policeman come up to the spot at the moment, the said gentleman never would have been taken into custody. The Magistrate cross-questioned the policeman

who gave evidence in this case, with great severity; and then, turning with a bland smile to the prisoner, who was surveying the clerk through his eye glass in as independent a manner as if he were lounging over the front of his box at the opera, the worthy functionary said in a tone of gentle entreaty, "Now really we have reason to suspect that John Jenkins is not your name. In fact, my lord, we know you."

"Well, then," exclaimed the prisoner, turning his eye-glass from the clerk upon the magistrate, "chalk me up as Lord Plymouth, since you are down upon me in this way."

"My lord—my lord," said the Magistrate, with parental urbanity of manner, "these little freaks of yours are really not creditable: upon my honour they are not. I sit here to administer justice to the rich as well as to the poor—"

"Oh! you do, do you?" cried the nobleman. "Now I tell you what it is—if you dare talk any of your nonsense about prisons and houses of correction to me, I'll not stand it. You know as well as I do that whenever a barrister is to be appointed magistrate, the Home Secretary sends for him and tells him to mind his P's and Q's towards the aristocracy. So none of your nonsense; but be quick and let me off with the usual fine."

"My lord," ejaculated the Magistrate, glancing with consternation from the prisoner to the clerk, and from the clerk to the prisoner; "did I not say that I sat here to administer equal justice to the rich and the poor? The fine for drunkenness is five shillings, my lord—and in that sum I fine you. As for the assault upon the policeman, I give you leave to speak to him outside."

The nobleman demanded change for a ten pound note, and threw the five shillings in a contemptuous and insolent manner towards the Clerk, who thanked his lordship as if he had just received an especial favour. The assault was easily settled outside; and the nobleman drove away in an elegant cab, just as the wife of the poor labourer departed in tears from her husband's cell for the purpose of pledging every remaining article of clothing that could possibly be dispensed with, to raise the five shillings wherewith to procure her liberation.

Several other cases of intoxication, disorderly conduct, and "obstruction of the police in the exercise of their duty"—which last embraced the veriest trifles as well as the most daring attempts at rescue—were then disposed of. In all instances the constables endeavoured to exaggerate the conduct of the accused, and never once attempted to palliate it; and as the Magistrate seemed to place implicit confidence in every word the police uttered (although one or two cases of gross perjury were proved against them), convictions were much more frequent than acquittals.

The cases of the poor starving emaciated beggar, the apple-cart man, and the affectionate mother, who had all three so powerfully excited Markham's attention at the station-house, were called on one after another consecutively. Fortunately the inspector was not present at the time to use his influence against the two first, and the master of the workhouse did not appear to press the charge against the last. They were all three accordingly discharged, with a severe admonition—the first against begging and being houseless—the second against earning an honest livelihood by selling fruit in the streets—and the third against clamouring in a workhouse for the mere trifle of being separated from her children.

As these three individuals emerged from the police-

office, they were accosted by Mr. Crisp, who informed them that they were "wanted" by a gentleman at a public-house in the neighbourhood. Thither did the trio of unfortunates, accompanied by the poor woman's children, proceed; and great was their surprise when Mr. Crisp officiously introduced them into a private room which Markham had engaged.

Richard and the police-officer in whose charge he remained, were there; and the moment the poor creatures were shown in, they were accosted by that young man whose ingenuous countenance inspired them with confidence and hope.

"My good friends," said he, "I was in the station-house last night when you arrived; and your sad tales touched me to the quick. Now, with regard to you, my poor lad," he continued, addressing himself to the rogue and vagabond, "what prospect have you before you? In what way could a friend aid you?"

"My brother, sir, is well off, and would assist me," replied the poor creature, "if I could but get to him. He lives in Edinburgh, and is well to do as a wheelwright."

"Here are two guineas for you, my friend," said Richard. "They will take you home; and then may your reception be as favourable as you seem to think. There—I do not want you to thank me: go—and commence your journey at once."

The poor fellow pressed Markham's hand with the most enthusiastic gratitude, and took his departure with tears in his eyes and gladness in his heart.

"And now, my good man," said Richard to the owner of the apple-cart, "what do you propose to do?"

"To speak the truth, sir, I don't know. The police seem determined that I shan't earn an honest livelihood: and as I am equally resolved not to see my children starve before me, I have nothing left to do but to become a thief. I shan't be the first whom the police have driven to that last resource in this city."

"You speak bitterly," said Markham.

"Yes—because I tell the truth, sir. My cart is to be returned to me; but of what use is it, or the stock that is in it, since I don't dare go about to sell fruit?"

"Could you not open a little shop?"

"Ah! sir—that requires money!"

"How much?"

"A matter of four or five pounds, sir," replied the man; "and where could a poor devil like me—"

"I will give you five pounds for the purpose," interrupted Markham; and taking from his pocket-book a bank note, he handed it to the poor man.

We will not attempt to depict his gratitude: words would completely fail to convey an idea of the exuberant joy which filled the heart of that good and affectionate father, who would rather have become a thief than seen his children starve!

"And now, my good woman, what can I do for you?" said Markham, turning to the third object of his charity. "How in the name of heaven, came you reduced, with three children, to such a state of want and destitution?"

"My husband, sir, is in prison," answered the poor creature, bursting into tears, while her children clung the more closely around her.

"In prison! and for what crime?"

"Oh! crime, sir—it is only a crime in the eye of the law, but not in the eye of either man or heaven."

"My good woman, this is absurd. Is there any

offence of which the law alone takes cognisance, and which is not reprehensible in the eye of God!"

"On the contrary, sir—God has given us for our general use and benefit the very thing which the law has forbidden us to take."

"This is trifling!" exclaimed Richard impatiently. "Can you, whom I behold so affectionate to your children, be hardened in guilt?"

"Do not think so, sir! My husband was a hard working man—never spent an hour at the public-house—never deprived his family of a farthing of his wages. He was a pattern to all married men—and his pride was to see his children well-dressed and happy. Alas, sir—we were too happy not to meet with some sad reverse! My husband in an evil hour went out shooting one afternoon, when there was a holiday at the factory where he worked; and he killed a hare upon a nobleman's grounds near Richmond. He was taken up and tried for poisoning, and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment with hard labour! This term expires in six weeks; but in the meantime—O God! what have we not suffered!"

"Ah! forgive me," ejaculated Markham, deeply touched by this recital; "I spoke harshly to you, because I did not remember that the law could be guilty of a deed of such inhuman atrocity. And yet I have heard of many—many such cases ere now! Merciful heavens! is it possible that the law, which with the right hand protects the privileges of the aristocracy, can with the left plunge whole families into despair!"

"Alas! it is too true!" responded the poor woman, pointing towards her pale and shivering offspring.

"Well—cher up—your husband will be restored to you in six weeks," said Markham. "In the meantime here is wherewith to provide for your family."

Another five-pound note was taken from the pocket-book, and transferred to the hand of the poor but tender-hearted mother. The children clung to Richard's knees, and poured forth their gratitude in tears: their parent loaded him with blessings which came from the very bottom of his heart, and called him the saviour of herself and furnished little ones. Never until that day had Richard so entirely appreciated the luxury of possessing wealth!

Scarcely was this last matter disposed of, when information arrived that Markham's case would be heard in about ten minutes. To the police-court did he and the constable who had charge of him, proceed accordingly; and in due time the young man found himself standing at the bar in the presence of a magistrate.

The usual questions were put relative to name, age, and residence, to all of which Richard answered in a candid and respectful manner. The constable then stated the nature of the charge, with which the reader is already acquainted. Evidence was also gone into to show that the officer, whose death had led to the irruption into the gambling-house on the part of the police, had died by his own hand, and not in consequence of any violence. This point was sufficiently proved by a medical man.

Markham, in his defence, stated he had accompanied some friends, whose names he declined mentioning, to the gaming-house on the preceding evening; that he had not played himself, nor had he intended to play; and that he had been led into the establishment without previously being acquainted with the exact nature of the place he was about to visit.

The Magistrate remonstrated with him upon the

impropriety of being seen in such houses, and inflicted a fine of five pounds, which was of course immediately paid.

As he was leaving the police-court, Markham was informed by a beadle who accosted him, that his presence would be required at the gambling-house that same afternoon, at four o'clock, to give evidence at the coroner's inquest concerning the means by which the deceased officer came by his death.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BEGINNING OF MISFORTUNES.

At eight o'clock in the morning after the scene at the Hell, and while Richard was still in the custody of the police, Sir Rupert Harborough and the Honourable Arthur Chichester were hastening, in a handsome cabriolet, belonging to the former, to Markham Place.

The conversation of these gentlemen during the drive will tend to throw some light upon one or two preceding incidents that may have appeared a little mysterious to the reader.

"I wonder what became of him last night," said Chichester.

"Upon my honour at the moment I did not care," returned the baronet.

"Nor I either. I was only intent upon getting off myself."

"He will not be pleased at our having left him in that unceremonious manner."

"Oh! trust to me—any explanation will do. He is so exceedingly green."

"And so marvellously particular in his conduct. If it had not been for us, he would have remained quite a saint."

"I am not afraid," observed Chichester, "of being able to manage him and of turning him to immense advantage in our plans. But that vulgar beast Talbot will most certainly spoil all. Even the idea of the fellow's wealth and charities will not always induce Markham to put up with his vulgarities. Besides, the wretch has such execrable bad taste. Last evening, for instance, when I casually dropped a nest little lie about the soup at the King of Prussia's table, Talbot instantly paraded the Duke of Lambeth's pea-soup. Only fancy a Duke and pea-soup united together!"

"And then his dog's nose, and sore feet, and boiled tripe," said the baronet. "After all the drilling we gave him in the first instance, when he stipulated upon associating with us in order to see how we worked the thing, he is still incorrigible. Then, when I think of all the money I have already laid out in buying the materials—in getting the proper paper—and in keeping him in feather all the time he was at work, my blood boils to see that he hangs like a millstone round our necks, and threatens by his vulgarity to spoil all."

"But what could we do?" cried Chichester. "You told me in the first instance to find an engraver on whom we could rely; and I was compelled to enlist the fellow Pooock in our cause. He was the very man, so far as knowledge went, having been employed all his life in working for Bankers. But his atrocious vulgarity is his bane; and even his aristocratic name of Talbot which I made him assume, does not help him to pass himself off as a gentleman. It was a pity he could not listen to reason and take the sum of ready money down, which you offered him in the first instance. But, no—he must needs cry *déjà*, and insist upon going about with us to see *fair play*."

"And get his share," added the baronet.

"Yes. Even the very first night that he ever saw Markham," continued Chichester, "his greediness would have induced him to risk the ruin of everything by winning a few paltry pounds of the young fellow at Diana's lodgings. But I d—d soon stopped that. I didn't even want to take the twenty pounds yesterday, which Markham offered for the poor family concerning whom I lavished so capital a story."

"No—it is not a few pounds that will do us any good, or remunerate me for my large outlay," said the baronet. "We want thousands—and this Markham is the very instrument we require. The first trial was made yesterday, and succeeded admirably. The note has actually been changed at a banker's: no one can expect a better test than that. Now if this Talbot is to ruin us with Markham—the very person we want—the most excellent medium we could require—himself being above all suspicion, and entertaining no suspicion—"

"It would be enough to break one's heart," added Chichester.

"Besides, my creditors are so clamorous, settle with them I must," continued the baronet. "And then Diana costs me a fortune. I must get rid of her without delay; for I expect that she is getting sentimental on this youth, and will not interest herself in our affair for fear of letting him into a scrape."

"Why, it is very certain," observed Chichester, "that according to the admirable way in which we have arranged our plans, if an explosion took place, we could not possibly be implicated. However—we must make haste and work London, and then off to Paris. We might get rid of four or five thousand pounds worth amongst the money-changers in the Palais-Royal. Then off to Germany in due rotation—Italy next—touch at Spain—and home to England."

"Upon my honour, it is a noble scheme—a grand, a princely scheme!" cried the baronet, elated with the idea. "My God! if it were spoilt in its infancy by any fault of ours or our associates!"

"And Talbot is such a drunken beast, that we can scarcely rely upon him," said Chichester. "He will one day commit himself and us too: the fellow does not know how to get tipsy like a gentleman."

"We will tell him the candid truth and see what he says," pursued the baronet. "When he finds that we are determined not to tolerate him with us, and that we will quash the whole thing at once if he insists upon remaining, he must yield. There was that young Walter Sydney who seemed at first to have taken a fancy to Diana. I thought of making use of him too;—but he never called again after that drunken display of Mr. Talbot's. He was evidently disgusted with him for his conduct, and with us for associating with him."

"Well," said Chichester, "let us resolve, then, to have an explanation with Talbot in the sense you have mentioned; and you must also speak seriously to Diana and get her to make use of young Markham."

"And if she will not," added the baronet, "I shall get rid of her without delay. What is the use of having an expensive mistress, unless you can use her either as a *blond* or a *plait*?"

The delectable conversation terminated here, because those who had carried it on, were now arrived at their destination.

The baronet's tiger knocked at the front door, and Mr. Whittingham speedily made his appearance.

"Is your master at home?" demanded Chichester.

"No sir; he has not domesticated himself in his own abode since he went out shortly after you yesterday. But a person of my acquaintance—a man of perfect credulity—has just come to ensure me that my young master will be here again in the currency of the day."

"Where did this person see your master?" enquired Chichester, struck by the absence of Markham the entire night.

"His responses are evasive and dissatisfactory," said Whittingham.

"This is very remarkable!" ejaculated Chichester: then, after a pause, he added, "But we will await Mr. Markham's return; and I will just see this man and interrogate him alone—alone, do you hear, Whittingham."

"I hear, sir, because my acoustic propensities is good. I will send this person to you into the library."

Mr. Chichester alighted from the vehicle and hastened to the library, while the baronet repaired to the stables to see that his horse (concerning which he was very particular) was properly cared for.

Mr. Chichester walked up and down the library, reflecting upon the probable causes of Richard's absence. At the moment he fancied that he might have fallen into the hands of the police; but then he thought that, had this been the case, Markham would have sent for himself or the baronet. He did not imagine that the noble nature of the young man whom he was conducting heading to his ruin, would scorn to take any steps calculated to compromise his friends.

The door of the library opened, and a man entered. "What? John!" ejaculated Mr. Chichester, turning very pale and manifesting much confusion.

"Mr. Winchester!" cried Snoggles—for it was he. "Hush, my good fellow—don't say a word!"

said Chichester, recovering his presence of mind. "I am really glad to see you—I have often thought of you since that unpleasant affair. I hope it put you to no inconvenience. At all events, I will make matters all right now."

"Better late than never," said Snoggles.

"Well—and you must promise me faithfully not to mention this affair to any one, and I will always stand your friend. And, remember—my name is Chichester now—not Winchester. Pray do not forget that."

"No—no: I'm fly enough—I'm down to trap," replied Snoggles, with a leer of insolent familiarity.

"Here is a twenty-pound note—that will cover all your losses, and recompense you into the bargain."

"That'll do."

"It would be better that you should not say that you ever knew me before."

"Just as you like."

"I prefer that course. But now to another point. Where did you see Mr. Richard Markham?"

"At the station-house, in ——— street."

"The station-house! And for what?"

"Ah! there you beat me. I can't say! All that I know is that he gave me half-a-sovereign to come and tell his old butler this morning that he should be home in the course of the day."

"And that is all you know?"

"Everything."

"Now can I rely upon you in respect to keeping the other matter secret?" demanded Chichester.

"I have already told you so," answered Snoggles.

"And you need not tell old Whittingham that his master is at the station-house."



Snoggles withdrew; and Mr. Chichester was immediately afterwards joined by the baronet.

"Markham is at the station-house in ——— street."

"The deuce he is! and for what?"

"I cannot learn. Do you not think it is odd that he did not send for either of us?"

"Yes. We will return to town this moment," said the baronet, "and send some one unknown to him to hear the case at the police-office. We shall then learn whether anything concerning the notes transpires, and what to say to him when we see him."

"Yes; there is not a moment to lose," returned Chichester.

The cabriolet was brought round to the door again in a few minutes, during which interval Chichester assured Whittingham that he had learned nothing concerning his master, and that he and the baronet were only returning to town for the purpose of looking after him.

As soon as the vehicle was out of sight, Mr.

Whittingham returned in a disconsolate manner to his pantry, where Mr. Snoggles was occupied with a cold pasty and a jug of good old ale.

"Well, I've learnt someth' to-day, I have," observed Snoggles, who could not keep a secret for the life of him.

"What's that?" demanded Whittingham.

"Why that Winchester is Chichester, and Chichester is Winchester."

"They are two irrelevant cities," observed the butler; "and not by no manner of means identical."

"The cities is different, but the men is the same," said Snoggles.

"I can't apprehend your meaning."

"Well—I will speak plain. Did you hear me tell Suggett the story about my old master, last night at the *Servants' Arms*?"

"No—I was engaged in a colloquial discourse at the time."

"Then I will tell you the adventur' over agin'!"—and Mr. Snoggles related the incident accordingly.

Mr. Whittingham was quite astounded; and he

delivered himself of many impressive observations upon the affair, but which we shall not be cruel enough to inflict upon our readers.

It was about half-past twelve o'clock when Richard returned home. His countenance was pale and anxious; and he vainly endeavoured to smile as he encountered his faithful old dependant.

"Ah! Master Richard, I was sadly afraid that you had fallen into some trepidation!"

"A very unpleasant adventure, Whittingham—which I will relate to you another time—kept me away from home. I was with Sir Rapert Harborough and Mr. Chichester——"

"Mr. Chichester ain't no good, sir," interrupted the butler emphatically.

"What do you mean, Whittingham?"

"I mean exactly what I say, Master Richard,—and nothing more nor less. Both the baronet and Mr. Chichester have been here this morning."

Then, with a considerable amount of circumlocution and elaborate comment, the butler related the conduct of Chichester towards Snuggles, and their accidental meeting that morning.

"This is very extraordinary," said Richard, musing.

"I can't say I ever regularly admired this Mr. Chichester," observed Whittingham. "He seems too dashing, too out-and-out, and too—too—circumventing in his discourse, to be anything exceeding and excessive good. Now I like the baronet much better; he isn't so familiar in his manners. Whenever he speaks to me he always says '*Mr. Whittingham*;' but Mr. Chichester calls me plain '*Whittingham*.' As for that vulgar fellow Talbot, who has called here once or twice, he slaps me on the shoulder, and bawls out, '*Well, Whittingham, my tulip, how are you?*' Now, you know, Master Richard, it's not conformant to perceived notions to call a butler a tulip."

"I have been deceived in my acquaintances—no doubt I have been deceived," said Richard, musing audibly, and pacing the library, with agitated steps. "There is something suspicious in the connexion of that man Talbot—however rich he may be—with so elegant a gentleman as the baronet;—then this conduct of Chichester's towards his servant—their taking me to a common gambling-house—their deserting me in the moment of need,—yes, I have been deceived! And then, Diana—I ought never more to see her: her influence, her fascination are too dangerous!"

"A gambling-house!" ejaculated Whittingham, whose ears caught fragments of these reflections.

"My old friend," said Richard, turning suddenly towards the butler, "I am afraid I have been enticed—invited into society which is not creditable to me or my position. I will repair my fault. Mr. Monroe, my guardian, advised me some weeks ago to indulge in a tour upon the continent: I will avail myself of this permission. At four o'clock I have an appointment—a pressing appointment to keep in town; by seven at latest I shall return. Have a post-chaise at the door and all things in readiness: we will proceed to Dover to-night. You alone shall accompany me."

"Let's do it, sir—let's do it," exclaimed the faithful old dependant: "it will separate you from them flash fellows which lead young men into scrapes, and from them vulgar persons which call butlers tulips."

Whittingham retired to make the preparations for the contemplated journey, and Richard seated himself at the table to write a couple of letters.

The first was to Mrs. Arlington, and ran thus:—

"Circumstances of a very peculiar nature, and which I cannot at present explain to you, compel me to quit London thus abruptly. I hope you will not imagine that I leave you agreeable society without many regrets. We shall probably meet again, when I may perhaps coincide to your the motives of this sudden departure; and you will then understand that I could not have remained in London another minute with safety to myself. I scarcely know what I write—I am so agitated and uneasy. Forgive this scrawl.

"RICHARD MARKHAM."

The second letter was to Mr. Monroe, and was couched in the following terms:—

"You will be surprised, my dear sir, to find that I am immediately about to avail myself of your kind recommendation and permission to visit the continent. I conceive it to be my duty—in consequence of rumours or reports which may shortly reach your ears concerning me—to inform you that I have this moment only availed to the fearful period of the career in which I have for some weeks past been blindly hurrying along, till at length yesterday—; but I dare not write any more. I am patient—deeply patient: let this statement induce you to defend and protect my reputation.

"Ever your sincerely obliged,
"R. MARKHAM."

Having hastily folded, addressed, and sealed these letters, Markham hurried up to his bed-room to select certain articles of clothing and other necessaries which he should require upon his journey.

He was interrupted in the middle of this occupation, by the entrance of Whittingham, who came to announce that two persons of somewhat strange and suspicious appearance desired an immediate interview with him.

Scarcely was this message delivered, when the two men, who had followed Whittingham upstairs, walked very unceremoniously into the bed-room.

"This is Richard Markham, 'spose?" said one, advancing towards the young man.

"Yes—my name is Markham: but what means this insolent and unpardonable intrusion?"

"Intrusion indeed!" repeated the foremost of the ill-looking strangers. "However, not to keep you waiting, my young friend, I must inform you that me and this man here are officers; and we've a warrant to take you."

"A warrant!" ejaculated both Richard and Whittingham at the same moment.

"Come, come, now—I des say you haven't been without your misgivings since yesterday;—but if young gentlemen will play such pranks, why, they must expect some time or another to be wanted—that's all!"

"But what have I done?" demanded Richard. "There must be some mistake. I cannot be the person whom you require."

"Did you not call at a certain bankers' in the City yesterday?" demanded the officer.

"Certainly—I had some money to receive, which Mr. Monroe my guardian had paid into their hands for my use."

"And you changed a five hundred pound note? The clerk did it for your accommodation."

"I do not deny it; I required change. But how is all this connected with your visit?"

"That five hundred pound note was a forgery!"

"A forgery! Impossible!" cried Richard.

"A forgery!" said Whittingham: "this is really impudence of too consummating a nature!"

"Come, there's no mistake, and all this gammon won't do. Me and my partner came in a hackney-coach, which stands at the corner of the lane; so if you're ready, we'll be off to Bow Street at once."

"I am prepared to accompany you," said R.

ward, "because I am well aware that I shall not be detained many minutes at the magistrate's office."

"That's no business of mine," returned the principal officer; then, addressing his companion, he said, "Jem, you'll stay here and take a survey of the premises; while I get off with the prisoner. You can follow as soon as you've satisfied yourself whether there's any evidence upon the premises."

It was with great difficulty that Richard overruled the desire of Whittingham to accompany him; but at length the faithful old man was induced to comprehend the necessity of staying behind, as an officer was about to exercise a strict search throughout the house, and Markham did not choose to leave his property to the mercy of a stranger.

This point having been settled, Richard took his departure with the officer in whose custody he found himself. They entered the hackney-coach, which was waiting at a little distance, and immediately proceeded by the shortest cuts towards the chief office in Bow Street.

Upon their arrival at that ominous establishment, Richard's pocket-book and purse were taken away from him; and he himself was thrust into a cell until the charge at that moment before the magistrate was disposed of.

Here must we leave him for the present; as during the night which followed his arrest, scenes of a terrible nature passed elsewhere.

CHAPTER XVII.

A DEN OF HORRORS.

HOWEVER filthy, unhealthy, and repulsive the entire neighbourhood of West Street (Smithfield), Field Lane, and Saffron Hill, may appear at the present day, it was far worse some years ago. There were then but few cesspools; and scarcely any of those which did exist possessed any drains. The knackers' yards of Cow Cross, and the establishments in Castle Street where horses' flesh is boiled down to supply food for the dogs and cats of the metropolis, send forth now, as they did then, a fetid and sickening odour which could not possibly be borne by a delicate stomach. At the windows of those establishments the bones of the animals are hung to bleach, and offend the eye as much as the horrible stench of the flesh acts repugnantly to the nerves. Upwards of sixty horses a day are frequently slaughtered in each yard; and many of them are in the last stage of disease when sent to their "long house." Should there not be a rapid demand for the "meat" on the part of the itinerant purveyors of that article for canine and feline favourites, it speedily becomes putrid; and a smell, which would alone appear sufficient to create a pestilence, pervades the neighbourhood.

As if nothing should be wanting to render that district as filthy and unhealthy as possible, water is scarce. There is in this absence of a plentiful supply of that wholesome article, an actual apology for dirt. Some of the houses have small back yards, in which the inhabitants keep pigs. A short time ago, an infant belonging to a poor widow, who occupied a back room on the ground-floor of one of these hovels, died, and was laid upon the sacking of the bed while the mother went out to make arrangements for its interment. During her absence a pig entered the room from the yard, and feasted upon the dead child's face!

In that densely populated neighbourhood that we are describing, hundreds of families each live and

sleep in one room. When a member of one of these families happens to die, the corpse is kept in the close room where the rest still continue to live and sleep. Poverty frequently compels the unhappy relatives to keep the body for days—ays, and weeks. Rapid decomposition takes place;—animal life generates quickly; and in four-and-twenty hours myriads of loathsome animalcules are seen crawling about. The very undertakers' men fall sick at these disgusting—these revolting spectacles.

The wealthy classes of society are far too ready to reproach the miserable poor for things which are really misfortunes and not faults. The habit of whole families sleeping together in one room destroys all sense of shame in the daughters; and what guardian then remains for their virtue? But, alas! a horrible—an odious crime often results from that poverty which thus huddles brothers and sisters, aunts and nephews, all together in one narrow room—the crime of incest!

When a disease—such as the small-pox or scarlatina—breaks out in one of those crowded houses, and in a densely populated neighbourhood, the consequences are frightful: the mortality is as rapid as that which follows the footsteps of the plague!

These are the fearful mysteries of that hideous district which exists in the very heart of this great metropolis. From St. John-street to Saffron Hill—from West-street to Clerkenwell Green, is a maze of narrow lanes, choked up with dirt, pestiferous with noxious odours, and swarming with a population that is born, lives, and dies, amidst squalor, penury, wretchedness, and crime.

Leading out of Holborn, between Field Lane and Ely Place, is Upper Union Court—a narrow lane forming a thoroughfare for only foot passengers. The houses in this court are dingy and gloomy; the sunbeams never linger long there; and should an Italian-boy pass through the place, he does not stop to waste his music upon the inhabitants. The dwellings are chiefly let out in lodgings; and through the open windows upon the ground-floor may occasionally be seen the half-starved families of mechanics crowding round the scantily-supplied table. A few of the lower casements are filled with children's book, pictures of actors and highwaymen glaringly coloured, and lucifer-matches, twine, sweet-stuff, cotton, &c. At one door there stands an oyster-stall, when the comestible itself is in season; over another hangs a small board with a mangle painted upon it. Most of the windows on the ground-floors announce rooms to let, or lodgings for single men; and perhaps a notice may be seen better written than the rest, that artificial-flower makers are required at that address.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening when two little children—a boy of seven and a girl of five—walked slowly up this court, hand in hand, and crying bitterly. They were both clothed in rags, and had neither shoes nor stockings upon their feet. Every now and then they stopped, and the boy turned towards his little sister, and endeavoured to console her with kind words and kisses.

"Don't cry so, dear," he said; "I'll tell mother that it was all my fault that we couldn't bring home any more money; and so she'll beat-me worst. Don't cry—there's a good girl—pray don't!"

And the poor little fellow endeavoured to calm his own grief in order to appease the fears of his sister.

Those children had now reached the door of the house in which their mother occupied an attic; but they passed upon the step, evincing a mortal repugnance to proceed any farther. At length the little

boy contrived by promises and caresses to hush the violence of his sister's grief; and they entered the house, the door of which stood open for the accommodation of the lodgers.

Hand in hand these poor children ascended the dark and steep staircase, the boy whispering consolation in the girl's ears. At length they reached the door of the attic: and there they stood for a few moments.

"Now, Fanny dear, don't cry, there's a good girl; pray don't now—and I'll buy you some nice pears to-morrow with the first halfpenny I get, even if I shouldn't get another, and if mother beats me till I'm dead when we come home."

The boy kissed his sister once more, and then opened the attic-door.

A man in a shabby black coat, and with an immense profusion of hair about his bang-dog countenance, was sitting on one side of a good fire, smoking a pipe. A thin, emaciated, but vixenish looking woman was arranging some food upon the table for supper. The entire furniture of the room consisted of that table, three broken chairs, and a filthy mattress in one corner.

As soon as the boy opened the door, he seemed for a moment quite surprised to behold that man at the fireside: then, in another instant, he clapped his little hands joyously together, and exclaimed, "Oh! how glad I am: here's father come home again!"

"Father's come home again!" echoed the girl; and the two children rushed up to their parent with the most pure—the most unfeigned delight.

"Curse your stupidity, you fools," cried the man, brutally repulsing his children; "you've nearly broke my pipe."

The boy fell back, abashed and dismayed: the little girl burst into tears.

"Come, none of this humbug," assumed the man; "let's know what luck you've had to-day, since your mother says that she's been obliged to send you out on the tramp since I've been laid up for this last six months in the jug."

"Yes, and speak out pretty plain, too, Master Harry," said the mother in a shrill menacing tone; "and none of your excuses, or you'll know what you have got to expect."

"Please, mother," said the boy, slowly taking some halfpence from his pocket, "poor little Fanny got all this. I was so cold and hungry I couldn't ask a soul; so if it ain't enough, mother, you must beat me—and not poor little Fanny."

As the boy uttered these words in a tremulous tone, and with tears trickling down his face, he got before his sister, in order to shield her, as it were, from his mother's wrath.

"Give it here, you fool!" cried the woman, darting forward, and seizing hold of the boy's hand containing the halfpence: then, having hastily glanced over the amount, she exclaimed, "You vile young dog! I'll teach you to come home here with your excuses! I'll cut your liver out of ye, I will!"

"How much has he brought?" demanded the man.

"How much! Why not more than enough to pay for the beer," answered the woman indignantly. "Eightpence-halfpenny—and that's every farthing! But won't I take it out in his hide, that's all?"

The woman caught hold of the boy, and dealt him a tremendous blow upon the back with her thin bony fist. He fell upon his knees, and begged for mercy. His unnatural parent levelled a volley of abuse at

him, mingled with oaths and filthy expressions, and then beat him—dashed him upon the floor—kicked him—all but stamped upon his poor body as he whimpered at her feet.

His screams were appalling.

Then came the turn of the girl. The difference in the years of the children did not cause any with regard to their chastisement; but while the unnatural mother dealt her heavy blows upon the head, neck, breast, and back of the poor little creature, the boy clasped his hands together, exclaiming, "O mother! it was all my fault—pray don't beat little Fanny—pray don't!" Then forgetting his own pain, he threw himself before his sister to protect her—a noble act of self-devotion in so young a boy, and for which he only received additional punishment.

At length the mother sat down exhausted; and the poor lad drew his little sister into a corner, and endeavoured to soothe her.

The husband of that vile woman had remained unmoved in his seat, quietly smoking his pipe, while this horrible scene took place; and if he did not actually enjoy it, he was very far from disapproving of it.

"There," said the woman, gasping for breath, "that'll teach them to mind how they come home another time with less than eighteenpence in their pockets. One would actually think it was the people's fault, and not the children's: but it ain't—for people grows more charitable every day. The more humbug, the more charity."

"Right enough there," growled the man. "A reg'lar knowing beggar can make his five bob a day. He can walk through a matter of sixty streets; and in each street he can get a penny. He's sure o' that. Well, there's his five bob."

"To be sure," cried the woman: "and therefore such nice-looking little children as our'n couldn't help getting eighteen-pence if they was to try, the lazy vagabonds! What would ha' become of me all the time that you was in the Jug this last bout, if they hadn't have worked better than they do now? As it is, every thing's up the spout—all made away with —"

"Well, we'll devilish soon have 'em all down again," interrupted the man. "Dick will be here presently; and he and I shall soon settle some job or another. But hadn't you better give them kids their supper, and make 'em leave off snivelling afore Dick comes?"

"So I will, Bill," answered the woman; and throwing the children each a piece of bread, she added, in a cross tone, "And now tumble into bed, and make haste about it; and if you don't hold that blubbering row I'll take the poker to you this time."

The little boy gave the larger piece of bread to his sister; and, having divested her of her rags, he made her as comfortable as he could on the filthy mattress, covering her over not only with her clothes but also with his own. He kissed her affectionately, but without making any noise with his lips, for fear that that should irritate his mother; and then lay down beside her.

Clasped in each other's arms, those two children of poverty—the victims of horrible and daily cruelties—repulsed by a father whose neck they had longed to encircle with their little arms, and whose hand they had vainly sought to cover with kisses; trembling even at the looks of a mother whom they loved in spite of all her harshness towards them, and from whose lips one word—one single word of kind-

ness would have gladdened their poor hearts;—under such circumstances, we say, did these persecuted but affectionate infants, still smarting with the pain of cruel blows, and with tears upon their cheeks,—thus did they sink into slumber in each other's arms!

Merciful God! It makes the blood boil to think that this is no over-drawn picture—that there is no exaggeration in these details; but that there really exist monsters in a human form—wearing often, too, the female shape—who make the infancy and early youth of their offspring one continued hell—one perpetual scene of blows, curses, and cruelties! Oh! for how many of our fellow-creatures have we to blush:—how many demons are there who have assumed our mortal appearance, who dwell amongst us, and who set us examples the most hideous—the most appalling!

As soon as the children were in bed, the woman went out, and returned in a few minutes with two pots of strong beer—purchased with the alms that day bestowed by the charitable upon her suffering offspring.

She and her husband then partook of some cold meat, of which there was a plentiful provision—enough to have allowed the boy and the girl each a good slice of bread.

And the bread which this man and this woman ate was new and good; but the morsels thrown to the children were stale and mouldy.

"I tell you what," said the woman, whispering in a mysterious tone to her husband, "I have thought of an excellent plan to make Fanny useful."

"Well, Polly, and what's that?" demanded the man.

"Why," returned his wife, her countenance wearing an expression of demonic cruelty and cunning, "I've been thinking that Harry will soon be of use to you in your line. He'll be so handy to shove through a window, or to sneak down a area and hide himself all day in a cellar to open the door at night,—or a thousand things."

"In course he will," said Bill, with an approving nod.

"Well, but then there's Fanny. What good can she do for us for years and years to come? She won't beg—I know she won't. It's all that boy's lies when he says she does: he is very fond of her, and only tells us that to screen her. Now I've a very great mind to do something that will make her beg—*eye*, and be glad to beg—and beg too in spite of herself."

"What the hell do you mean?"

"Why, doing that to her which will put her entirely at our mercy, and at the same time render her an object of such interest that the people *must* give her money. I'd wager that with my plan she'd get her five bob a day; and what a blessing that would be."

"But how?" said Bill impatiently.

"And then," continued the woman, without heeding this question, "she wouldn't want Henry with her; and you might begin to make him useful some how or another. All we should have to do would be to take Fanny every day to some good thoroughfare, put her down there of a mornin', and go and fetch her agen at night; and I'll warrant she'd keep us in beer—*eye*, and in brandy too."

"What the devil are you driving at?" demanded the man.

"Can't you guess?"

"No—'low me if I can."

"Do you fancy the scheme?"

"Am I a fool? Why, of course I do; but how

the deuce is all this to be done? You never could learn Fanny to be so fit as that!"

"I don't want to learn her anything at all. What I propose is to force it on her."

"And how is that?" asked the man.

"By putting her eyes out," returned the woman.

Her husband was a robber—yes, and a murderer: but he started when this proposal met his ear.

"There's nothin' like a blind child to excite compassion," added the woman coolly. "I know it for a fact," she continued, after a pause, seeing that her husband did not answer her. "There's old Kate Betts, who got all her money by travelling about the country with two blind girls; and she made 'em blind herself too—she's often told me how she did it; and that has put the idea into my head."

"And how did she do it?" asked the man, lighting his pipe, but not glancing towards his wife; for although her words had made a deep impression upon him, he was yet struggling with the remnant of a parental feeling, which remained in his heart in spite of himself.

"She covered the eyes over with cockle shells, the eye-lids, recollect, being wide open; and in each shell there was a large black beetle. A bandage tied tight round the head, kept the shells in their place; and the shells kept the eyelids open. In a few days the eyes got quite blind, and the pupils had a dull white appearance."

"And you're serious, are you?" demanded the man.

"Quite," returned the woman, boldly: "why not?"

"Why not indeed?" echoed Bill, who approved of the horrible scheme, but shuddered at the cruelty of it, villain as he was.

"Ah! why not?" pursued the female: "one must make one's children useful somehow or another. So, if you don't mind, I'll send Harry out alone to-morrow morning and keep Fanny at home. The moment the boy's out of the way, I'll try my hand at Kate Betts's plan."

The conversation was interrupted by a low knock at the attic-door.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BOOZING-KEN.

"Come in," exclaimed Bill: "I des say it's Dick Flairer."

"Well, Bill Bolter, odd fellow—here you are at last," cried the new comer. "I s'pose you knowed I should come here this evenin'. If you hadn't sent me that message t'other day by the young argu-sneak* what got his discharge out o' Coldbath Jug,† I should ha' come all the same. I remembered very well that you was sentenced to six months on it; and I'd calculated days and weeks right enough."

"Sit down, Dick, and blow a cloud. Wet news since I see you last?"

"None. You know that Crankey Jen is nabbed. He and the Resurrection Man did a panic; together somewhere up Soho way. They got off safe with the swag; and the Resurrection Man went on to the Mint. Jen took to the Old House in Chick Lane,‡ and let me in for my reglars.§ But after a week or ten days the Resurrection Man nosed¶ upon him, and will turn King's Evidence about the banks. So Jen was handed over to the dubsman,** and this time he'll get lagged for life."

* A thief who sneaks down areas to see what he can steal in kitchens.

† Prison. ‡ Burglary. § West-street, Smithfield.

‡ Gave him a share. ¶ Informer. ** Turnkey.

"In course he will. He has been twice to the floating academy.* There ain't no chance this time."

"But as for business," said Dick Flairer, after a pause, during which he lighted his pipe and paid his respects to the beer, "my gropus is as empty as a barrister's bag the day after sessions. I have but one bob left in my cly;† and that we'll spend in brandy presently. My mawley‡ is reg'larly litching for a job."

"Someot must be done—and that soon too," returned Bill Bolter. "By-the-by, s'pose we try that crib which we meant to crack four year or so ago, when you got nabbed the very next mornin' for faking a blowen's flag from her natty arm.‡§"

What—you mean Markham's up between Kentish Town and Lower Holloway?‡¶ said Dick.

"The same. Don't you recollect—we settled it all the very night as we threw that young fellow down the trap in Chick Lane? But, by goles—Dick—what the deuce is the matter with you?"

Dick Flairer had turned deadly pale at the mention of this circumstance; his knees shook; and he cast an uneasy and rapid glance around him.

"Come, Dick—don't be a fool," said the woman; "a don't think there is any ghosts here, do you?"

"Ghosts!" he exclaimed, with a convulsive start; then, after a moment's silence, during which his two companions surveyed him with curiosity and fear, he added in a low and subdued tone, "Bill, you know there wasn't a man in all the neighbourhood bolder than me up to the time when you got into trouble; you know that I didn't care for ghosts or churchyards, or dark rooms, or anything of that kind. Now it's quite altered. If even a man seed speret of a persons, that man was me about two months ago!"

"What the devil does this mean?" cried Bolter, looking uneasily around him in his turn.

"Two months ago," continued Dick Flairer, "I was up Hackney way, expecting to do a little business with Tom the Cracksmán,‡ which didn't come off; for Tom had been at the boozing-ken‡§ all the night before, and had blowed his hand up in a lark with some davy's-dust.¶ Well, I was coming home again, infernal sulky at the affair's breaking down, when just as I got to Cambridge-Heath-gate I heard the galkopin' of horses. I looks round, not'rally enough;—but who should I see upon a lovely chestnut mare——"

"Who?" said Bill anxiously.

"The speret of that wery same young feller as you and I threw down the trap at the old house in Chick Lane four year and some months ago!"

"Might n't it have been a mistake, Dick?" demanded Bill.

"Why, of course it was," exclaimed the woman.

"No, it warn't," said Dick very seriously. "I never tell a lie to a pal,†† Bill—and that you knows well enough. I seed that young man as plain as I can now see you, Bill—as plain as I see you, Polly Bolter. I thought I should have dropped; I fell right against a post in the footpath; but I took another good long look. There he was—the same face—the same hair—the same dress—everything the same! I couldn't be mistaken: I'd swear to it."

"And would you tell this story to the parish-prig,‡‡ if so as you was going to Tuck-up Fair‡§§ to-morrow morning?" demanded Bill.

* The Hulks. † Walstrot-pocket. ‡ Hands.
§ Straling a lady's rescule from her pretty arm.
¶ The Bugler. † Public-house. ‡ Gunpowder.
†† A company. ‡‡ Chaplain. ‡‡‡ The Gallows.

"I would, by G—d!" cried Dick solemnly, striking his hand upon the table at the same time.

There was a long pause. Even the woman, who was perhaps more hardened in vice and more inaccessible to anything in the shape of sentiment than her male companions, seemed impressed by the positive manner in which the man told his story.

"Well—come, this won't do!" ejaculated Dick, after the lapse of some minutes. "Ghost or no ghost, we can't afford to be honest."

"No—we must be up to someot," returned Bill; "if we went and offered ourselves to the parish prig he wouldn't take us as his clerk and sexton; so if he won't give us a lift, who the devil will? But, about that Markham's place?"

"The old fellow died a few months ago, I heard," said Dick; "the eldest son run away; and that brought about the father's death. As for the young 'un, he was grabbed this afternoon for smashing queer screens.¶"

"The devil he was! Well, there ain't no good to be done in that quarter, then? Do you know any other spekulation?"

"Tom the Cracksmán and me was going to do a pansie in a neat little crib up by Clapton, that time when he blowed his hand nearly off, larking with his ben-culls.† I don't see why it shouldn't be done now. Tom told me about it. A young swell, fond of horses and dogs—lives exceeding quiet—never so company scarcely—but plenty of tin.¶"

"Servants!" said Bill, interrogatively.

"One man—an old groon; and two women—three in all," replied Dick.

"That'll do," observed the woman, approvingly.

"Must we speak to the Cracksmán first?" demanded Bill.

"Yes—fair play's a jewel. I don't believe the Resurrection Man would ever have chirped‡ if he had been treated properly. But if this thing is to be done, let it be done to-morrow night; and now let us go to the boozing-ken and speak to the Cracksmán."

"I'm your man," said Bill; and the two thieves left the room together.

At the top of Union Court is Bleeding Hart Yard, leading to Kirby Street, at right angles to which is a narrow alley terminating on Great Saffron Hill. This was the road the burglars took.

It was now eleven o'clock, and a thick fog—so dense that it seemed as if it could be cut with a knife—prevailed. The men kept close together, for they could not see a yard before them. Here and there lights glimmered in the miserable caements; and the fog, thus faintly illuminated at intervals, appeared of a dingy copper colour.

The burglars proceeded along Saffron Hill.

The streets were nearly empty; but now and then the pale, squalid, and nameless forms of vice were heard at the door-ways of a few houses, endeavouring to lure the passers-by into their noisome abodes. A great portion of the unwholesome life of that district had sought relief from the pangs of misery and the remorse of crime, in sleep. Alas! the slumbers of the poor and of the guilty are haunted by the lean, lank, and gaunt visages of penury, and all the fearful escort of turpitude!

Through the broken shutters of several windows came the sounds of horrible revelry—ribald and revolting; and from others issued cries, shrieks, oaths, and the sounds of heavy blows—a sad evidence of

* Passing forged notes. † Friends. ‡ Infamed.

the brutality of drunken quarrels. Numerous Irish families are crowded together in the small back rooms of the houses on Saffron Hill; and the husbands and fathers gorge themselves, at the expense of broken-hearted wives and famishing children, with the horrible compound of spirit and vitriol, sold at the low gin-shops in the neighbourhood. Hosts of "Italian masters" also congregate in that locality; and the screams of the unfortunate boys, who writhe beneath the lash of their furious employers on their return home after an unsuccessful day with their organs, monkeys, white mice, or chalk images, mingle with the other appalling or disgusting sounds, which make night in that district truly hideous.

Even at the late hour at which the two burglars were wending their way over Saffron Hill, boys of ages ranging from seven to fifteen, were lurking in the courts and alleys, watching for any decently dressed persons, who might happen to pass that way. These boys had for the most part been seduced from the control of their parents by the receivers of stolen goods in Field Lane, or else had been sent into the streets to thieve by those vile parents themselves.

Thus, as the hulks, the convict-ships, the penitentiaries, and the gallows, relieve society of one generation of villains, another is springing up to occupy the vacancy.

And this will always be the case so long as laws tend only to punish—and aim not to reform.

Dick Flairer and Bill Bolter proceeded, without exchanging many words together, through the dense fog, until they reached a low public-house, which they entered.

Nothing could be more filthy nor revolting than the interior of this "boozing-ken." Sweeps, costermongers, Jews, Irish bricklayers, and women of the town were crowding round the bar, drinking various malt and spirituous liquors fearfully adulterated. The beer, having been originally deluged with water to increase the quantity, had been strengthened by drugs of most deleterious qualities—such as tobacco-juice and *cocculus-indicus*. The former is a poison as subtle as that of a viper; the latter is a berry of such venomous properties, that if thrown into a pond, it will speedily send the fish up to the surface to gasp and die. The gin was mixed with vitriol, as hinted above; and the whiskey, called "Paddy's Eye-Water," with spirits of turpentine. The pots and glasses in which the various beverages were served up, were all stood upon double trays, with a cavity between, and numerous holes in the upper surface. The overflowings and drainings were thus caught and saved; and the landlord dispensed the precious compound, which bore the name of "all sorts," at a halfpenny a glass.

The two burglars nodded familiarly to the landlord and his wife, as they passed the bar, and entered a little, low, smoky room, denominated "the parlour." A tremendous fire burnt in the grate, at which a short, thin, dark man, with a most forbidding countenance, was sitting, aggressively occupied in toasting a sausage. The right hand of this man had lost the two middle fingers, the stumps of which were still covered with plaster, as if the injury had been recent. He was dressed in a complete suit of corduroy: the sleeves of his jacket, the lower part of his waistcoat, and the front of his trousers, were covered with grease. On the table near him stood a large-piece of bread and a pot of beer.

This individual was Tom the Cracksmen—the most adroit and noted burglar in the metropolis.

He kept a complete list of all the gentlemen's houses in the environs of London, with the numbers of servants and male inhabitants in each. He never attempted any dwelling within a circuit of three miles of the General Post Office: his avocation was invariably exercised in the suburbs of London, where the interference of the police was less probable.

At the moment when we introduce him to our readers, he was somewhat "down in his luck," as he himself expressed it, the accident which had happened to his hand, through playing with gunpowder, having completely disabled him for the preceding two months, and the landlord of the "boozing-ken" having made it an invariable rule never to give credit. Thus, though the Cracksmen had spent hundreds of pounds in that house, he could not obtain so much as a glass of "all sorts" without the money.

The Cracksmen was alone in the parlour when Dick Flairer and Bill Bolter entered. Having toasted his sausage, the renowned burglar placed it upon the bread, and began eating his supper by means of a formidable clasp-knife, without deigning to cast a glance around.

At length Bill Bolter burst out into a loud laugh, and exclaimed, "Why, Tom, you're getting proud all on a sudden: you won't speak to your friends."

"Halloo, Bill, is that you?" ejaculated the burglar. "When did they turn you out of the jug?"

"This mornin' at twelve; and with never a brown in my pocket. Luckily the old woman had turned the children to some use during the time I was at the stepper, or else I don't know what would have become of us."

"And I'm as completely stitched up as a man could be if he'd just come out of the works," said Tom. "I just now spent my last tanner* for this here grub. Ah! it's a d—d hard thing for a man like me to be brought down to cag-mag,†—he added, glancing sulkily at the sausage, which he was eating half raw.

"We all sees ups and downs," observed Dick Flairer. "My opinion is that we are too free when we have the blunt."

"And there's them as is too close when we haven't it," returned the Cracksmen bitterly. "There's the landlord of this crib won't give a gen'lman like me tick not for one blessed farlen. But things can't go on so: I'm blowed if I won't do a crack that shall be worth while; and then I'll open a ken in opposition to this. You'd see whether I'd refuse a pal tick in the hour of need."

"Well, you don't suppose that we are here just to amuse ourselves," said Dick: "we come to see you."

"Is anythink to be done?" demanded the Cracksmen.

"First answer me this," cried Dick: "has that crib at Upper Clapton been cracked yet?"

"What, where there's a young swell—"

"I don't know nothing more about it than you told me," interrupted Dick. "Me and you was to have done it; and then you went larking with the davy's dust—"

"I know the crib you mean," said the Cracksmen hastily: "that job is yet to be done. Are you the chaps to have a hand in it?"

"That's the very business that we're come for," answered Bill.

"Well," resumed the Cracksmen, "it seems we've

* Sixpence.

† Bad Mast.

all stumped up, and can't hold out no longer. We won't put this thing off—it shall be done to-morrow night. Eleven's the hour. I will go Dalston way—you two can arrange about the roads you'll take, so long as you don't go together; and we'll all three meet at the gate of Ben Price's field at eleven o'clock."

"So far, so good," said Dick Flairer. "I've got a darkey,* but we want the kifers† and tools."

"And a sock," added Bill.

"We must get all these things of old Moses Hart, the fence;‡ and give him a share of the swag," explained the Cracksmen. "Don't bother yourselves about that; I'll make it all right."

"Well, now that's settled," said Dick. "I've got a bob in my pocket, and we'll have a rinse of the bingó."

The burglar went out to the bar, and returned with some brandy, which he and his companions drank pure.

"So Crankey Jem's in quod?" observed the Cracksmen, after a pause.

"Yes—and the Resurrection Man too; but he has chirped, and will be let out after sessions."

"You have heard of his freak over in the Borough I s'pose," said the Cracksmen.

"No I haven't," answered Bill. "What was it?"

"Oh! a capital joke. The story's rather long; but it will bear telling. There's a young fellow of the name of Sam Chisney; and his father died about two year ago leaving two thousand pounds in the funds. The widdler was to enjoy the interest during her life; and then it was to come, principal and interest both, to Sam. Well, the old woman gets into debt, and is arrested. She goes over to the Bench, takes the Rules, and hires a nice lodging on the ground floor in Belvidere Place. The young fellow wants his money very bad, and doesn't seem at all disposed to wait for the old lady's death, particlular as she might live another ten years. Well, he comes across the Resurrection Man, and tells him just how he's situated. The Resurrection Man thinks over the matter; and, being a bit of a scholar, understands the business. Off they go and consults a lawyer named Mac Chizzle, who lives up in the New Road, somewhere near the *Screvents' Arms* there."

"I know that crib well," observed Bill. "It's a were tidy and respectable one."

"So Mac Chizzle, Sam Chisney, and the Resurrection Man lay their heads together, and settle the whole business. The young chap then goes over to the old woman, and tells her what is to be done. She consents; and all's right. Well, that very day the old lady is taken so bad—so very bad, she thinks she's a gwin' to die. She won't no doctor; but she sends for a nurse as she knows—an old creatur' up 'ands of seventy and nearly in her dotage. Then Sam comes; and he's so sorry to see his poor dear mother so ill; and she begins to talk very pious, and to bless him, and tell him as how she feels that she can't live four-and-twenty hours. Sam cries dreadful, and swears he won't leave his poor dear mother—no, not for all the world. He sits up with her all night, and is so excedin' kind; and he goes out and gets a bottle of medicine—which arter all wern't nockin but gin and peppermint. The old nurse is quite pleased to think that the old woman has got such a attentive son; and he sends out to get a little rum; and the old nurse goes to bed blind drunk."

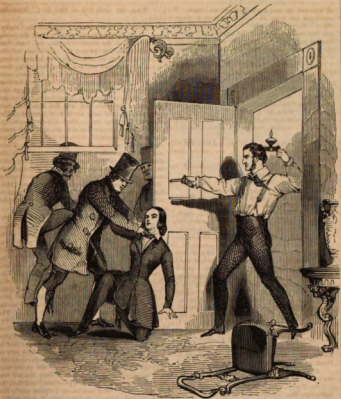
* Dark lantern. † Implements used by burglars.
‡ Receiver of Stolen Goods.

"What the devil was all that for?" demanded Dick.

"You'll see in a moment," resumed the Cracksmen. "Next night at about ten o'clock the young fellow says to the nurse—'Nurse, my poor dear mother is wasting away; she can't last out the night. I do feel so miserable; and I fancy a drop of the rum that they sell at a flartickler public, close up by Westminster Bridge.' 'Well, my dear,' says the nurse, 'I'll go and get a bottle there; for I feel that we shall both want some to cheer us through this blessed night.' So the old nurse toddles off to get the rum at the place Sam told her. He had sent her away to a good long distance on purpose. The moment she was gone, Mrs. Chisney gets up, dresses herself as quick as she can, and is all ready just as a hackney-coach drives up to the door. Sam runs down; all was as right as the wall. There was the Resurrection Man in the coach, with the dead body of a old woman that had only been buried the day before, and that he'd had up again during the night. So Sam and the Resurrection Man they gets the stiff 'un up stairs, and Mrs. Chisney she jumps into the coach and drives away to a comfortable lodging which Mac Chizzle had got for her up in Somers Town."

"Now I begin to twig," exclaimed Dick Flairer.

"Presently the old nurse comes back; and Sam meets her on the stairs, whimpering as hard as he could; and says, 'Oh! nurse—your poor dear mistress is gone; your poor dear mistress is gone!' So she was; no mistake about that. Well, the nurse begins to cry; but Sam gets her up stairs, and gives her so heartily with the rum that she got blind drunk once more, without ever thinking of laying the body out; so she didn't find out it was quite cold. Next day she washed it, and laid it out properly; and as she was nearly blind, she didn't notice that the features wasn't altogether the same. The body, too, was a remarkable fresh un; and so everything went on as well as could be wished. Sam then stepped over to the Marshal of the Bench, and give him notice of his mother's death; and as she died in the Rules, there must be an inquest. So a jury of prisoners was called; and the old nurse was examined; and she said how excedin' attentive the young man had been, and all that; and then Sam himself was called. Off course he told a good tale; and then the Coroner says, 'Well, gentlemen, I s'pose you'll like to look at the body.' So over they all goes to Belvidere Place, and the foreman of the Jury just pokes his nose in at the door of the room where the corpse was lying; and no one else even went more than half up the staircase. After this, the jury is quite satisfied, and return a verdict of '*Died from Natural Causes, accelerated by confinement in the Rules of the King's Bench Prison!*' and to this—as they were prisoners themselves—they added some very severe remarks upon '*the deceased's affecting and remorseless creditors.*' Then comes the funeral, which was very respectable; and Sam Chisney was chief mourner; and he cried a good deal. All the people who saw it said they never saw a young man so dreadful cut up. In this way they killed the old woman; the son proved her death, got the money, and sold it out every farden; and he and his mother is keeping a public-house together somewhere up Spitalfields way. The Resurrection Man and Mac Chizzle each got a hundred for their share in the business; and the thing passed off as comfortable as possible."



"Well, I'm blown if that isn't the best lark I ever heard," ejaculated Dick, when the Cracksmen had brought his tale to an end.

"So it is," added Bill.

The parlour of the "boozing-ken" now received some additional guests—all belonging to the profession of roguery, though not all following precisely the same line. Thus there were Cracksmen, Maggmen,* Area-Sneaks, Public Patrollers,† Buzgloaks,‡ Dummy-Hunters,§ Compter-Prigs,|| Smashers,¶

* Swell-mobites.

† Swell-mobites who affect to be dissenting ministers, and preach in the open air in order to collect crowds, upon whose pockets their confederates work.

‡ Common thieves.

§ Thieves who steal pocket-handkerchiefs.

¶ Swell-mobites, who steal from the compters in shops, while their confederates make some trifling purchase. These thieves often conspire to empty the till.

|| Persons who pass false money.

Filmsy-Kiddies,* Macers,† Coiners, Begging-Letter Impostors, &c., &c.

The orgies of that motley crew soon became uproarious and revolting. Those who had money lavished it with the most reckless profusion; and thus those who had none were far from being in want of liquor.

The Cracksmen was evidently a great man amongst this horrible fraternity; his stories and songs invariably commanded attention.

It is not our purpose to detain the reader much longer in the parlour of the "boozing-ken." we have doubtless narrated enough in this and the preceding chapter to give him a faint idea of some of the horrors of London. We cannot, however, allow the morning scene to pass unnoticed.

* Persons who pass forged bank notes at racas, fair, &c.

† Common Cheats.

CHAPTER XIX.

MORNING.

THE orgie lasted throughout the night in the "boozing-ken." There were plenty of kind guests who, being flush of money, treated those that had none; and thus Tom the Crackman, Dick Flairer, and Bill Bolter, were enabled to indulge, to their heart's content, in the adulterated liquors sold at the establishment.

The cold raw November morning was ushered in with a fine mizzling rain. The gas-lights were extinguished in the parlour; and the dawn of day fell upon countenances inflamed with debauchery, and rendered hideous by dirt and dark bristling beards.

That was a busy hour for the landlady and landlady of the "boozing-ken." The neighbours who "used the house," came in, one after another—male and female, to take their "morning." This signified their first dram.

Then was it that the "all sorts" was in great demand. Old clothesmen, sweeps, dustmen, knackers, crimps, and women of the town, crowded round the bar, inhaling the strange but potent compound. Even young boys and girls of tender age seemed as a matter of course to require the morning stimulant ere they commenced the avocations or business of the day. Matted hair, blood-eyes, grimy faces, pestiferous breaths, and hollow cheeks, combined with rags and tatters, were the characteristics of the wretches that thronged about the bar of that lowest of low drinking-dens.

Nothing is more revolting to the eye than the unwashed aspect of dissipation by the dingy light of the early dawn. The women had evidently jumped from their beds and huddled on their miserable attire without the slightest regard to decency, in order to lose no time in obtaining their morning dram. The men appeared as if they had slept in their clothes all night; and the pieces of straw in the coarse matted hair of many of them, plainly denoted of what materials their beds were made.

They all entered shivering, cold, depressed, and sullen. The dram immediately produced an extraordinary change in each. Artificial gaiety—a gaiety which developed itself in ribald jokes, profane oaths, and obscene talk—was diffused around. Those who could afford it indulged in a second and a third glass; and some tossed for pots of beer. The men lighted their pipes; and the place was impregnated with the narcotic fumes of the strongest and worst tobacco—that bastard opium of the poor.

Presently the policeman "upon that beat" lounged in, and was complimented by the landlady with a glass of her "best cordial gin." He seemed well acquainted with many of the individuals there, and laughed heartily at the jokes uttered in his presence. When he was gone, the inmates of the "boozing-ken" all declared, with one accord, "that he was the most sibilike* bliss-bottle in the entire force."

In the parlour there were several men occupied in warming beer, toasting herrings, and frying sausages. The tables were smeared over with a rag as black as a hat, by a dirty slipshod drab of a girl; and with the same cloth she dusted the frame of wire-work which protected the dingy face of the huge Dutch clock. Totally regardless of her presence, the men continued their obscene and filthy discourse; and she proceeded with her work as coolly as if nothing offensive met her ears.

* Gentlemanly—agreeable.

There are, thank God! thousands of British women who constitute the glory of their sex—chaste, virtuous, delicate-minded, and pure in thought and action,—beings who are but one remove from angels now, but who will be angels hereafter when they succeed to their inheritance of immortality. It must be to such as these that the eyes of the poet are turned when he eulogises, in glowing and impassioned language, the entire sex comprehended under the bewitching name of WOMAN! For, oh! how would his mind be shocked, were he to wander for a few hours amidst those haunts of vice and sinks of depravity which we have just described;—his spirit, towering on eagle-wing up into the sunny skies of poetry, would flutter back again to the earth, at the aspect of those foul and loathsome wretches, who, in the female shape, are found in the dwelling-places of poverty and crime!

But to continue.

Bill Bolter took leave of his companions at about eight o'clock in the morning, after a night of boisterous revelry; and rapidly retraced his steps homewards.

Field Lane was now swarming with life. The miserable little shops were all open; and their proprietors were busy in displaying their commodities to the best advantage. Here Jewesses were occupied in suspending innumerable silk handkerchiefs to wires and poles over their doors: there the "translators" of old shoes were employed in spreading their stock upon the shelves that filled the place where the windows ought to have been. In one or two low dark shops women were engaged in arranging herrings, stock-fish, and dried haddock; in another, coals, vegetables, and oysters were exposed for sale; and not a few were hung with "old clothes as good as new." To this we may add that in the centre of the great metropolis of the mightiest empire in the world—in a city possessing a police which annually costs the nation thousands of pounds—and in a country whose laws are vaunted as being adapted to reach and baffle all degrees of crime—numbers of receivers of stolen goods were boldly, safely, and tranquilly exposing for sale the articles which their agents had "picked up" during the preceding night.

There was, however, nothing in the aspect of Field Lane at all new to the eyes of Bill Bolter. Indeed he merely went down that Jew's bazaar, in his way homewards, because he was anxious to purchase certain luxuries in the shape of red-herrings for his breakfast, he having borrowed a trifle of a friend at the "boozing-ken" to supply his immediate necessities.

When he arrived at his lodgings in Lower Union Court, he was assailed by a storm of reproaches, menaces, and curses, on the part of his wife, for having stayed all night at the "boozing-ken." At first that cruel and remorseless man trembled—actually turned pale and trembled in the presence of the virgin who thus attacked him. But at length his passion was aroused by her taunts and threats; and, after bandying some horrible abuse and foul epithets with the infernal woman, he was provoked to blows. With one stroke of his enormous fist, he felled her to the ground, and then brutally kicked her as she lay almost senseless at his feet.

He then coolly sat down by the fire to cook his own breakfast, without paying the least attention to the two poor children, who were crying bitterly in that corner of the room where they had slept.

In a few minutes the woman rose painfully from

the floor. Her features were distorted and her lips were livid with rage. She dared not, however, attempt to irritate her furious husband any farther; still her passion required a vent. She looked round, and seemed to reflect for a moment.

Then, in the next instant, all her concentrated rage burst upon the heads of her unhappy offspring.

With a horrible curse at their squalling, the woman leapt, like a tiger-cat, upon the poor little boy and girl. Harry, as usual, covered his sister with his own thin and emaciated form as well as he could; and a torrent of blows rained down upon his naked flesh. The punishment which that maddened wretch thus inflicted upon him, was horrible in the extreme.

A thousand times before that day had Polly Bolter treated her children with demoniac cruelty; and her husband had not attempted to interfere. On the present occasion, however, he took it into his head to meddle in the matter—for the simple reason that, having quarrelled with his wife, he hated her at the moment, and greedily availed himself of any opportunity to thwart or oppose her.

Starting from his chair, he exclaimed, "Come, now—I say, leave those children alone. They haven't done nothing to you."

"You mind your own business," returned the woman, desisting for an instant from her attack upon the boy, and casting a look of mingled defiance and contempt at her husband.

That woman's countenance, naturally ugly and revolting, was now absolutely frightful.

"I say, leave them children alone," cried Bill. "If you touch 'em again, I'll drop down on you."

"Oh, you coward! to hit a woman! I wish I was a man, I'd pay you off for this: and if I was, you wouldn't dare strike me."

"Mind what you say, Poll; I'm in no humour to be teased this morning. Keep your maxwells* off the kids, or I'm blessed if I don't do for you."

"Ugh—coward! This is the way I dare you;" and she dealt a tremendous blow upon her boy's shoulder.

The poor lad screamed piteously: the hand of his mother had fallen with the weight of a sledge hammer upon his naked flesh.

But that ferocious blow was echoed by another, at scarcely a moment's interval. The latter was dealt by the fist of Bill Bolter, and fell upon the back part of the ruthless mother's head with stunning force.

The woman fell forward, and struck her face violently against the corner of the deal table.

Her left eye came in contact with the angle of the board, and was literally crushed in its socket—an awful retribution upon her who only a few hours before was planning how to plunge her innocent and helpless daughter into the eternal night of blindness.

She fell upon the floor, and a low moan escaped her lips. She endeavoured to carry her right hand to her now sightless eye; but her strength failed her, and her arm fell lifeless by her side. She was dying.

The man was now alarmed, and hastened to raise her up. The children were struck dumb with unknown fears, and clasped each other in their little arms.

The woman recovered sufficient consciousness, during the two or three seconds which preceded the exhalation of her last breath, to glance with her remaining eye up into her husband's face. She could not, however, utter an articulate sound—not even another moan.

But no pen could depict, and no words describe,

* Maxwells.

the deadly—the malignant—the fiendish hatred which animated her countenance as she thus met her husband's gaze.

The tigress, enveloped in the folds of the bo-constrictor, never darted such a glance of impotent but profound and concentrated rage upon the serpent that held it powerless in its fatal clasp.

She expired with her features still distorted by that horrible expression of vindictive spite.

A few moments elapsed before the man was aware that his wife was dead—that he had murdered her!

He supported her mechanically, as it were; for he was dismayed and appalled by the savage aspect which her countenance had assumed—that countenance which was rendered the more hideous by the bleeding eye-ball crushed in its socket.

At length he perceived that she was no more; and, with a terrible oath, he let her head drop upon the floor.

For a minute he stood and contemplated the corpse:—a whirlwind was in his brain.

The voices of his children aroused him from his reverie.

"Father, what's the matter with mother!" asked the boy, in a timid and subdued tone.

"Mother's hurt herself," said Fanny: "poor mother!"

"Look at mother's eye, father," added the boy: "do look at it! I'm sure something dreadful is the matter."

"Damnation!" ejaculated the murderer: and, after another minute's hesitation, he hurried to the door.

"O, father, father, don't leave us—don't go away from us!" cried the little boy, bursting into an agony of tears: "pray don't go away, father! I think mother's dead," added he with a glance of horror and apprehension towards the corpse: "so don't leave us, father—and I and Fanny will go out and beg, and do anything you like; only pray don't leave us; don't, don't, leave us!"

With profound anguish in his heart, the little fellow clung to his father's knees, and proffered his prayer in a manner the most ingenious—the most touching.

The man paused, as if he knew not what to do.

His hesitation lasted but a moment. Disengaging himself from the arms of his child, he said in as kind a tone as he could assume—and that tone was kinder than any he had ever used before—"Don't be foolish, boy; I shall be back directly. I'm only going to fetch a doctor—I shan't be a minute."

"Oh, pray don't be long, father!" returned the boy, clasping his little hands imploringly together.

In another moment the two children were alone with the corpse of their mother; while the murderer was rapidly descending the stairs to escape from the contemplation of that scene of horror.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VILLA.

AGAIN the scene changes. Our readers must accompany us once more to the villa in the neighbourhood of Upper Clapton.

It was the evening of the day on which was perpetrated the dreadful deed related in the preceding chapter. The curtains were drawn over the dining-room windows; a cheerful fire burned in the grate; and a lamp, placed in the middle of the table, diffused a pleasant and mellowed light around. A

sir of comfort, almost amounting to luxury, pervaded that apartment; and its general temperature was the better appreciated, as the wind whistled without, and the rain pattered against the windows.

At the table, on which stood a dessert of delicious fruits, conserves, cakes, and wines, sat Walter Sydney and George Montague.

They had now been acquainted nearly three months; and during that period they had met often. Montague had, however, seldom called at the villa, save when expressly invited by his friend Stephens; still, upon those occasions, he and Walter were frequently alone for some time together. Thus, while Stephens was examining into the economy of the stables, or superintending improvements in the garden, Montague and that mysterious lady in man's attire, were thrown upon their own resources to entertain each other.

The reader cannot be surprised if an attachment sprang up between them. So far as that lovely woman was concerned, we can vouch that her predilection towards George Montague was the sincere and pure sentiment of a generous and affectionate heart. How worthy of such a passion his own feelings on the subject might have been, must appear hereafter.

The masculine attire and habits which the lady had assumed, had not destroyed the fine and endearing characteristics of her woman's heart. She was at first struck by Montague's handsome person;—then his varied conversation delighted her;—and, as he soon exerted all his powers to render himself agreeable to the heroine of the villa, it was not long before he completely won her heart.

The peculiarity of her position had taught her—and necessarily so—to exercise an almost complete command over the expression of her feelings. Thus, though an explanation had taken place between herself and Montague, and a mutual avowal of affection made, Stephens remained without a suspicion upon the subject.

On the evening when we again introduce our readers to the villa, Montague was there by the express desire of Mr. Stephens; but this latter individual had been detained by particular business elsewhere. Walter—for so we must continue to call that mysterious being—and Montague had therefore dined *tête-à-tête*; and they were now enjoying together the two or three pleasant hours which succeed the most important meal of the day.

The plans of the lovers will be comprehended by means of the ensuing conversation, better than if drily detailed in our own narrative style:—

"Another fortnight—two short weeks only," said the lady, "and the end of this deception will have arrived."

"Yes—another fortnight," echoed Montague; "and everything will then be favourable to our wishes. The 26th of November——"

"My poor brother, were he alive, would be of age on the 25th," observed the lady, mournfully.

"Of course—precisely!" ejaculated Montague. "On the 26th, as I was saying, Stephens's plans will be realized; and you will be worth ten thousand pounds."

"Oh! it is not so much for the money that I shall welcome that day: but chiefly because it will be the last on which I shall be doomed to wear this detestable disguise."

"And shall not I be supremely happy to leave this land with you—to call you my own dear beloved

wife—and to bear you away to the sunny climes of the south of Europe, where we may live in peace, happiness, and tranquillity to the end of our days!"

"What a charming—what a delicious picture!" ejaculated the lady, her bosom heaving with pleasurable emotions beneath the tight frock which confined it. "But—oh! if the plans of Mr. Stephens should fail;—and that they might fail, I am well assured, for he has often said to me, 'Pray be circumspect, Walter; you know not how much depends upon your discretion!'"

"Those plans will not—cannot fail!" cried Montague emphatically. "He has told me all—and everything is so well arranged, so admirably provided for!"

"He has told you everything," said the lady, reproachfully; "and he has told me nothing."

"And I dare not enlighten you."

"Oh! I would not hear the secret from your lips. I have a confidence the most blind—the most devoted in Mr. Stephens; and I feel convinced that he must have sound reasons for keeping me thus in the dark with reference to the principal motives of the deception which I am sustaining. I know, moreover—at least, he has declared most solemnly to me, and I believe his word—that no portion of his plan militates against honour and integrity. He is compelled to meet intrigue with intrigue; but all his proceedings are justifiable. There can be no loss of character—no danger from the laws of the country. In all this I am satisfied—because a man who has done so much for me and my poor deceased mother, would not lead me astray, nor involve me either in disgrace or peril."

"You are right," said Montague. "Stephens is incapable of deceiving you."

"And more than all that I have just said," continued Walter, "I am aware that there is an immense fortune at stake; and that should the plans of Mr. Stephens fully succeed, I shall receive ten thousand pounds as a means of comfortable subsistence for the remainder of my life."

"And that sum, joined to what I possess, and to what I shall have," added Montague, "will enable us to live in luxury in a foreign land. Oh! how happy shall I be when the time arrives for me to clasp you in my arms—to behold you attired in the garb which suits your sex, and in which I never yet have seen you dressed—and to call you by the sacred and endearing name of WIFE! How beautiful must you appear in those garments which——"

"Hush, George—no compliments!" cried the lady, with a smile and a blush. "Wait until you see me dressed as you desire; and, perhaps, then—then, you may whisper to me the soft and delicious language of love."

The time-piece upon the mantel struck eleven; and Montague rose to depart.

It was an awful night. The violence of the wind had increased during the last hour; and the rain poured in torrents against the windows.

"George, it is impossible that you can venture out in such weather as this," said the lady, in a frank and ingenuous manner; "one would not allow a dog to pass the door on such a night. Fortunately there is a spare room in my humble abode; and that chamber is at your service."

Walter rang the bell, and gave Louisa the necessary instructions.

In another half-hour Montague was conducted to the apartment provided for him, and Walter retired

to the luxurious and elegant boudoir which we have before described.

The satin curtains were drawn over the casement against which the rain beat with increasing fury: a cheerful fire actually roared in the grate; and the thick carpet upon the floor, the inviting lounging-chair close by the hearth, and the downy couch with its snow-white sheets and warm clothing, completed the air of comfort which prevailed in that delicious retreat. The vases of sweet flowers were no longer there, it was true; but a fragrant odour of bergamot and lavender filled the boudoir. Nothing could be more charming than this warm, perfumed, and voluptuous chamber—worthy of the lovely and mysterious being who seemed the presiding divinity of that elysian bower.

Walter threw herself into the easy-chair, and dismissed her attendant, saying, "You may retire, Louisa,—I will undress myself without your aid to-night; for as yet I do not feel inclined to sleep. I shall sit here, before this cheerful fire, and indulge in the luxury of hopes and future prospects, ere I retire to rest."

Louisa withdrew, and Walter then plunged into a delicious reverie. The approaching emancipation from the thralldom of an assumed sex—her affection for George Montague—and the anticipated possession of an ample fortune to guard against the future, were golden visions not the less dazzling for being waking ones.

Half an hour had passed away in this manner, when a strange noise startled Walter in the midst of her meditations. She thought that she heard a shutter close violently and a pane of glass smash to pieces almost at the same moment. Alarm was for an instant depicted upon her countenance: she then smiled, and, ashamed of the evanescent fear to which she had yielded, said to herself, "It must be one of shutters of the dining-room or parlour down stairs, that has blown open."

Tying the lamp in her hand she issued from the boudoir, and hastily descended the stairs leading to the ground floor. In her way thither she could hear, even amidst the howling of the wind, the loud barking of the dogs in the rear of the villa.

The hall, as she crossed it, struck piercing cold, after the genial warmth of the boudoir which she had just left. She cautiously entered the parlour on the left hand of the front door: all was safe. Having satisfied herself that the shutters in that apartment were securely closed and fastened, she proceeded to the dining-room.

She opened the door, and was about to cross the threshold, when—at that moment—the lamp was dashed from her hand by some one inside the room; and she herself was instantly seized by two powerful arms, and dragged into the apartment.

A piercing cry issued from her lips; and then a coarse and hard hand was pressed violently on her mouth. Further utterance was thus stopped.

"Here—Bill—Dick," said a gruff voice; "give me a knife—I must settle this feller's hash—or I'm blessed if he won't alarm the house."

"No more blood—no more blood!" returned another voice, hastily, and with an accent of horror. "I had enough of that this mornin'. Gag him, and tie him up in a heap."

"D—n him, do for him!" cried a third voice. "Don't be such a cursed coward, Bill."

"Hold your jaw, will ye—and give me a knife, Dick," said the first speaker, who was no other than

Tom the Cracksmen. "The fellow struggles furious—but I've got hold on him by the throat."

Scarcely had these words issued from the lips of the burglar, when the door was thrown open, and Montague entered the room.

He held a lamp in one hand, and a pistol in the other; and it was easy to perceive that he had been alarmed in the midst of his repose, for he had nothing on save his trousers and his shirt.

On the sudden appearance of an individual thus armed, Tom the Cracksmen exclaimed, "At him—down with him! We must make a fight of it."

The light of the lamp, which Montague held in his hand, streamed full upon the countenance and person of Walter Sydney, who was struggling violently in the suffocating grasp of the Cracksmen.

"Hell and furies!" ejaculated Dick Fleirer, dropping his dark lantern and a bunch of skeleton keys upon the floor, while his face was suddenly distorted with an expression of indescribable horror; then, in obedience to the natural impulse of his alarm, he rushed towards the window, the shutters and casement of which had been forced open, leapt through it, and disappeared amidst the darkness of the night.

Astonished by this strange event, Bill Bolter instantly turned his eyes from Montague, whom he was at that moment about to attack, towards the Cracksmen and Walter Sydney.

The colour fled from the murderer's cheeks, as if a sudden spell had fallen upon him: his teeth clattered—his knees trembled—and he leant against the table for support.

There was the identical being whom four years and five months before, they had hurled down the trap-door of the old house in Chick Lane—and who, that had ever met that fate as yet, had survived to tell the tale?

For an instant the entire frame of the murderer was convulsed with alarm: the apparition before him—the vision of his assassinated wife—and the reminiscences of other deeds of the darkest dye, came upon him with the force of a whirlwind. For an instant, we say, was he convulsed with alarm;—in another moment he yielded to his fears, and, proffering by his companion's example, disappeared like an arrow through the window.

Amongst persons engaged in criminal pursuits, a panic-terror is very catching. The Cracksmen—formidable and daring as he was—suddenly experienced an unknown and vague fear, when he perceived the horror and unassumed alarm which had taken possession of his comrades. He loosened his grasp upon his intended victim: Walter made a last desperate effort, and released himself from the burglar's power.

"Approach me, and I will blow your brains out," cried Montague, pointing his pistol at the Cracksmen.

Scarcely were these words uttered, when the burglar darted forward, dashed the lamp from the hands of Montague, and effected his escape by the window.

Montague rushed to the casement, and snapped the pistol after him: the weapon only flashed in the pan.

Montague closed the window and fastened the shutters. He then called Walter by name; and, receiving no answer, groped his way in the dark towards the door.

His feet encountered an obstacle upon the carpet: he stooped down and felt with his hands;—Walter Sydney had fainted.

Scarcely two minutes had elapsed since Montague had entered the room; for the confusion and flight of the burglars had not occupied near so much time to enact as to describe. The entire scene had moreover passed without any noise calculated to disturb the household.

There were consequently no servants at hand to afford Walter the succour which he required.

For a moment Montague hesitated what course to pursue; but, after one instant's reflection, he took her in his arms, and carried her up into her own enchanting and delicious boudoir.

CHAPTER XXI.

ATROCITY.

GEORGE MONTAGUE placed his precious burden upon the bed, and for a moment contemplated her pale but beautiful countenance with mingled feelings of admiration, interest, and desire. The lips were apart, and two rows of pearl glittered beneath. The luxuriant light chestnut hair rolled over his arm, on which he still supported that head of perfect loveliness: his hand thus played with those silken, shining tresses.

Still she remained motionless—lifeless.

Gently withdrawing his arm, Montague hastened to sprinkle her countenance with water. The colour returned faintly, very faintly to her cheeks; and her lips moved gently; but she opened not her eyes.

For a moment he thought of summoning Louisa to her assistance; then, obedient to a second impulse, he hastily loosened the hooks of her semi-military frock-coat.

Scarcely had his hand thus invaded the treasures of her bosom, when she moved, and unclosed the lids of her large melting hazel-eyes.

"Where am I?" she exclaimed, instinctively closing her coat over her breast.

"Fear not, dearest," whispered Montague; "it is I—I who love you."

The scene with the burglars instantly flashed to the mind of the lady; and she cried in a tone rendered tremulous by fear—"And those horrible men—are they all three gone?"

"They are gone—and you are safe."

"Oh! you will pardon me this weakness," continued Walter, hastily moving from the bed to a chair; "but two of those villains—I recognised them but too well—were the men who threw me down the trap-door in the old house near Smithfield."

"Hence their alarm—their panic, when they saw you," exclaimed Montague; "they fancied that they beheld a spirit instead of a reality. This accounts for their sudden and precipitate flight, till this moment unaccountable to me."

"And you, George," said the lady, glancing tenderly toward the young man—"you are my saviour from a horrible death! Another moment, and it would have been too late—they were going to murder me! Oh! how can I sufficiently express my gratitude."

She tendered him her hand, which he pressed rapturously to his lips—and she did not withdraw it.

"I heard a noise of a shutter closing violently, and of a pane of glass breaking," said Montague; "I started from my bed and listened. In a few moments afterwards I heard footsteps on the stairs—"

"Those were mine, as I descended," interrupted Walter; "for I was alarmed by the same disturbance."

"And, then, while I was hastily slipping on my clothes," added Montague, "I heard a scream. Not another moment did I wait; but—"

"—You came in time, I repeat, to save my life. Never—never shall I sufficiently repay you."

Again did Montague press the fair hand of that enchanting woman to his lips; and then, as he leant over her, their eyes met, and they exchanged glances of love—hers pure and chaste, his ardent and brimful of desire. He was maddened—he was emboldened by those innocent tokens of affection upon her part; and, throwing his arms around her, he imprinted hot and burning kisses upon her lips.

With difficulty did she disengage herself from his embrace; and she cast upon him a look of reproach mingled with melancholy.

"Pardon me, dearest one," he exclaimed, seizing her hand once more and pressing it to his lips; "is it a crime to love you so tenderly—so well?"

"No, George—to: you are my saviour—you soon will be my husband—you need not ask for my forgiveness. But now leave me—retire to your own room as noiselessly as you can; and to-morrow—to-morrow," she added with a blush, "it is not necessary that Louisa should know that you were here."

"I understand you, dearest," returned Montague; "your wishes shall ever be my commands. Good night, beloved one!"

"Good night, dear George," said the lady;—and in another moment she was again alone in the boudoir.

Montague returned to his apartment, full of the bliss which he had derived from the caresses enjoyed in a chamber that seemed sacred to mystery and love. He paced his own room with hasty and agitated steps: his brain was on fire.

His own loose ideas of morality induced him to put but little faith in the reality of female virtue. He moreover persuaded himself that the principles of rectitude—supposing that they had ever existed—in the bosom of the enchanting creature he had just left, had been undermined or destroyed by the chest which she was practising with regard to her sex. And, lastly, he fancied that her affections were too firmly rivetted on him to refuse him anything.

Miserable wretch! he was blinded by his own mad desires. He knew not that woman's virtue is as real, as pure, and as precious as the diamond; he remembered not that the object of his licentious passion was innocent of aught criminal in the disguise which she had assumed;—he reflected not that the caresses which she had ere now permitted him to snatch, were those which the most spotless virgin may honourably award to her lover.

He paced his room in a frenzied manner—allowing his imagination to picture scenes and enjoyments of the most voluptuous kind. By degrees his passion became ungovernable; he was no longer the cool, calculating man he hitherto had been;—a new chord appeared to have been touched in his heart.

At that moment he would have signed a bond, yielding up all hopes of eternal salvation to the Evil One, for a single hour of love in the arms of that woman whom he had left in the boudoir!

His passion had become a delirium;—he would have plunged into the crater of Vesuvius, or thrown himself from the ridge of the Alpine mountain into the boiling torrent beneath, had she gone before him.

An hour thus passed away, and he attempted not to subdue his feelings; he rather encouraged their wild and wayward course by recalling to his imagi-

nation the charms of her whose beauty had thus strangely affected him,—the endearing words which she had uttered,—the thrilling effect of the delicious kisses he had received from her moist vermilion lips,—and the voluptuous contours of that snowy bosom which had been for a moment revealed to his eyes.

An hour passed: he opened the door of his chamber and listened.

A dead silence prevailed throughout the house.

He stole softly along the passage and through the anteroom which led to the boudoir.

When he reached the door of that chamber he paused for a moment. What was he about to do? He waited not to answer the question, nor to reason within himself: he only chose to remember that a thin partition was all that separated him from one of the most beautiful creatures upon whom the sun ever shone in this world.

His fingers grasped the handle of the door: he turned it gently;—the door was not locked!

He entered the boudoir as unobserved as a spectre. The lamp was extinguished; but the fire still burnt in the grate; and its flickering light played tremulously on the various objects around, bathing in a rich red glare the downy bed whereon reposed the heroine of the villa.

The atmosphere was warm and perfumed.

The head of the sleeper was supported upon one naked arm, which was round, polished, and of exquisite whiteness. The other lay outside the clothes, upon the coverlid. Her long hair flowed in undulations upon the snowy pillows. The fire shone with Rembrandt effect upon her countenance, one side of which was completely irradiated, while the other caught not its mellow light. Thus the perfect regularity of the profile was fully revealed to him who now dared to intrude upon those sacred slumbers.

"She shall be mine! she shall be mine!" murmured Montague; and he advanced toward the bed.

At that moment—whether aroused by a dream, or startled by the almost noiseless tread of feet upon the carpet, we cannot say—the lady awoke.

She opened her large hazel eyes; and they fell upon a figure to whom her imagination, thus suddenly surprised, and the flickering light of the fire, gave a giant stature.

Her fears in one respect were, however, immediately relieved; for the voice of Montague fell upon her ears almost as soon as her eyes caught sight of him.

"Pardon—pardon, dearest one!" he said in a hurried and subdued tone.

"Ah! is it so?" quickly ejaculated the lady, who in a moment comprehended how her privacy had been outraged; and passing her arm beneath the pillow, she drew forth a long, sharp, shining dagger.

Montague started back in dismay.

"Villain, that you are—approach this bed, and, without a moment's hesitation, I will plunge this dagger into your heart!"

"Oh! forgive me—forgive me!" ejaculated the young man, cruelly embarrassed. "Dazzled by your beauty—driven mad by your carresses—intoxicated, blinded with passion—I could not command myself—I had no power over my actions."

"Attempt no apology!" said the lady, with a calm and tranquil bitterness of accent that showed how profoundly she felt the outrage—the atrocity, that he, whom she loved so tenderly, had dared to meditate against her: "attempt no apology—but leave this room without an instant's delay, and with-

out another word. Within my reach is a bell-rope—one touch of my finger and I can call my servants to my assistance. Save me that exposure—save yourself that disgrace. To-morrow I will tell you my opinion of your conduct."

There was something so determined—so cool—so resolute in the manner and the matter of this address, that Montague felt abashed—humbled—beaten down to the very dust. Even his grovelling soul at that moment comprehended the Roman mind of the woman whom he would have disgraced: a coward when burglars menaced her life, she was suddenly endowed with lion-daring in defence of her virtue.

The crest-fallen young man again attempted to palliate his intrusion: with superb scorn she waved her hand imperiously, as a signal to leave the room.

Tears of vexation, shame, and rage, started into his eyes, as he obeyed that silent mandate which he now dared no longer to dispute.

The moment the wretch had left the boudoir, the lady sprang from the bed and double-locked the door.

She then returned to her couch, buried her head in the pillow, and burst into an agony of tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

A WOMAN'S MIND.

WHEN Louisa entered the boudoir on the morning which succeeded this eventful night, nothing in Walter's countenance denoted the painful emotions that filled her bosom. She narrated the particulars of the burglarious entry of the dwelling, and Montague's opportune arrival upon the scene of action, with a calmness which surprised her faithful attendant. The truth was, that the attempt of the robbers upon the house, and even the danger in which her own life had been placed, had dwindled, in her own estimation, into events of secondary importance, when compared with that one atrocity which had suddenly wrecked all her hopes of love and happiness for ever.

The usual mysterious toilet was speedily performed; and, with a firm step and a countenance expressive of a stern decision, she descended to the breakfast-parlour.

Montague was already there—pale, haggard, abashed, and trembling. He knew that the chance of possessing a lovely woman and ten thousand pounds was then at stake; and, in addition to this perilous predicament of his nearest and dearest hopes, his position was embarrassing and unpleasant in the extreme. Had he succeeded in his base attempt, he would have been a victor flushed with conquest, and prepared to dictate terms to a woman entirely at his mercy;—but he had been foiled, and he himself was the dejected and baffled being who would be compelled to crave for pardon.

As Louisa entered the room close upon the heels of Walter, the latter greeted George Montague with a most affable morning's welcome, and conversed with him in a manner which seemed to say that she had totally forgotten the occurrence of the night.

But the moment that Louisa had completed the arrangements of the breakfast table, and had left the room, Walter's tone and manner underwent an entire and sudden change.

"You must not think, sir," she said, with a proud smile of scorn and bitterness curled her lips, "that I have this morning tasted of the waters of oblivion. To save you, rather than myself, the shame of being exposed in the presence of my servant, I assumed that friendly and familiar air which appears to have deceived you."

"What! then you have not forgiven me?" exclaimed Montague, profoundly surprised.

"Forgive you!" repeated the lady, almost indignantly; "do you suppose that I think so little of myself, or would give you such scope to think so little of me, as to pass by in silence a crime which was atrocious in a hundred ways? I loved you sincerely—tenderly—oh! God only knows how I loved you; and you would have taken advantage of my sincere and heartfelt affection. The dream in which I had indulged is now dispelled; the vision is over; the illusion is dissipated. Never would I accompany to the altar a man whom I could not esteem; and I can no longer esteem you. Then again, I offered you the hospitality of my abode; and that sacred rite you would have infamously violated. I cannot, therefore, even retain you as a friend. In another sense, too, your conduct was odious. You saved my life—and for that I shall ever remember you with gratitude; but you nevertheless sought to avail yourself of that service as a means of robbing me of my honour. Oh! all this was abominable—detestable on your part; and what is the result? My love can never avail you now; I will crush it—extinguish it in my bosom first. My friendship cannot be awarded; my gratitude alone remains. That shall accompany you; for we must now separate—and for ever."

"Separate—and for ever!" ejaculated Montague, who had listened with deep interest and various conflicting emotions to this strange address: "no—you cannot mean it! you will not be thus relentless!"

"Mr. Montague," returned the lady, with great apparent coolness—though in reality she was inflicting excruciating tortures upon her own heart; "no power on earth can alter my resolves. We shall part—here—now—and for ever; and may happiness and prosperity attend you."

"But Mr. Stephens?" cried Montague: "what can you say to him? what will he think?"

"He shall never know the truth from me," answered Walter solemnly.

"This is absurd!" ejaculated Montague, in despair at the imminent ruin of all his hopes. "Will not my humblest apology—my sincerest excuses—my future conduct,—will nothing atone for one false step, committed under the influence of generous wines and of a passion which obtained a complete mastery over me? will nothing move your forgiveness?"

"Nothing," answered Walter, with unvaried coolness and determination. "Were I a young girl of sixteen or seventeen, it might be different: then I might be deceived by your sophistry. Now it is impossible! I am five and twenty years old; and circumstances," she added, glancing over her male attire, "have also tended to augment my experience in the sinuosities of human designs and the phases of the human heart."

"Yes—you are twenty-five, it is true," cried Montague; "but that age has not robbed your charms of any of the grace and freshness of youth. Oh! then let your mind be cautious how it adopts the severe notions of riper years!"

"I thank you for the compliment which you pay me," said Walter, satirically; "and I can assure you that it does not prove a welcome preface to the argument which you would found upon it. Old or young—experienced or ignorant in the ways of the world—a woman were a fool to marry where she could not entertain respect for her husband. I may

be wrong; but this is my conviction;—and upon it will I act."

"This is but an excuse to break with me," said Montague: "you no longer love me."

"No—not as I did twelve hours ago."

"You never loved me! It is impossible to divest oneself of that passion so suddenly as this."

"Love in my mind is a species of worship or adoration, and can be damaged by the evil suspicions that may suddenly be thrown upon its object."

"No—that is not love," exclaimed Montague, passionately: "true love will make a woman follow her lover or her husband through all the most hideous paths of crime—even to the scaffold."

"The woman who truly loves, will follow her husband as a duty, but not her lover to countenance him in his crimes. We are not, however, going to argue this point;—for my part, I am not acting according to the prescribed notions of romances or a false sentimentality, but strictly in accordance with my own idea of what is suitable to my happiness and proper to my condition. I repeat, I am not the heroine of a novel in her teens—I am a woman of a certain age, and can reflect calmly in order to act decidedly."

Montague made no reply, but walked towards the window. Strange and conflicting sentiments were agitating in his brain.

'Twas thus he reasoned within himself.

"If I use threats and menaces, I shall merely open her eyes to the real objects which Stephens has in view; and she will shrink from the fearful dangers she is about to encounter. Whether she changes her mind or not with regard to me, and whether I proceed farther in the business or not, the secret is in my hands; and Stephens will pay me handsomely to keep it. Perhaps I had even better stop short where I am: I am still in a position to demand hush-money, and avoid the extreme peril which must accrue to all who appear prominently in the affair on the 26th of the month."

The selfish mind of George Montague thus revolved the various phases of his present position: and in a few moments he was determined how to act.

Turning towards Walter Sydney, he exclaimed, "You are decided not to forgive me!"

"I have made known to you my resolution—that we should now part, for ever."

"How can we part for ever, when your friend and benefactor, Mr. Stephens, requires my services?"

"Mr. Stephens informed me 'that a third person was necessary to the complete success of his designs, and that he had fixed upon you.' Consequently, another friend may fill the place which he intended you to occupy."

"You seem to have well weighed the results of your resolution to see me no more," said Montague bitterly.

"There is time for thought throughout the live-long night, when sleep is banished from the pillow," returned the lady proudly.

"I can scarcely comprehend your conduct," said Montague, after another pause. "You do not choose that your servants should know what occurred last night: is it your intention to acquaint Mr. Stephens with the real truth?"

"That depends entirely upon yourself. To speak candidly, I do not wish to come to any explanation with Mr. Stephens upon the subject. He will blame me for having concealed from him the attachment which has subsisted between us; and he will imagine



that some levity on my part must have encouraged you to violate the sanctity of my chamber. If you, sir, are a man of honour," added the lady emphatically,—"and if you have a spark of feeling and generosity left, you will take measures with Mr. Stephens to spare me that last mortification."

"I will do as you require," returned Montague, well pleased with this arrangement. "This very day will I communicate to Mr. Stephens my desire to withdraw from any further interference in his affairs; and I will allege the pressing nature of my own concerns as an excuse."

"Act as you will," said the lady; "but let there remain behind no motive which can lead you to repeat your visits to this house. You comprehend me?"

"Perfectly," replied Montague. "But once more let me implore you—"

"Enough—enough!" exclaimed Walter. "You know not the firmness of the female mind: perhaps I have this morning taught you a lesson in that

respect. We must now part, Mr. Montague; a believe me—believe me, that, although no power on earth can alter the resolution to which I came during the long and painful vigil of the past night, I still wish you well;—and, remember, my gratitude accompanies you!"

Walter hesitated for a moment, as if another observation were trembling upon her tongue; then stifling her emotions with a powerful effort, she waved her hand to the delinquent, and abruptly left the room.

"Is this a loftiness of mind of which not even the greatest of men often afford example? or is it the miserable caprice of a vacillating woman?" said Montague to himself, as he prepared to take his departure from the villa in which he had spent some happy hours. "I must candidly admit that this time I am at fault. All appears to be lost in this quarter—and that, too, through my own confounded folly. But Stephens's secret still remains to me; and that

secret shall be as good as an annuity for years to come. Let me see—I must have money now to insure my silence, upon breaking off all further connexion with the business. Then I must keep an eye upon him; and should he succeed on the 26th of this month—and he *must* succeed, if this punctilious lady does not see through his designs in the meantime—then can I step forward and demand another sum under a threat of exposing the entire scheme. And then, too," he added, while his countenance wore an expression of mingled revenge and triumph,—“then, too, can I appear before this vain, this scrupulous, this haughty woman, and with one word send her on her knees before me! Then will she stoop her proud brow, and her prayers and intercessions upon that occasion shall be expressed as humbly as her reproaches and her taunts were tyrannically levelled at me to-day! Yes—I will keep my eye upon Walter Sydney and her benefactor Stephens,” he said, with an ironical chuckle: “they may obtain their princely fortune, but a *due share* shall find its way into my pocket!”

These or similar reflections continued to occupy the mind of George Montague, after he had left the villa, and while he was on his way to the nearest point where he could obtain a conveyance to take him into the City.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OLD HOUSE IN SMITHFIELD AGAIN.

The visitor to the Polytechnic Institution or the Adelaide Gallery, has doubtless seen the exhibition of the microscope. A drop of the purest water, magnified by that instrument some thousands of times, appears filled with horrible reptiles and monsters of revolting forms.

Such is London.

Fair and attractive as the mighty metropolis may appear to the superficial observer, it swarms with disgusting, loathsome, and venomous objects, wearing human shapes.

Oh! London is a city of strange contrasts!

The bustle of business, and the smile of pleasure,—the peaceful citizen, and the gay soldier,—the splendid shop, and the itinerant pastry-stall,—the gorgeous equipage, and the humble market-cart,—the palaces of nobles, and the hovels of the poor,—the psalm from the chapel, and the shout of laughter from the tavern,—the dandies lounging in the west-end streets, and the paupers cleansing away the mud,—the funeral procession, and the bridal cavalcade,—the wealthy and high-born lady whose reputation is above all evil, and the lost girl whose shame is below all notice,—the adventurer who defends his honour with a duel, and the poor tradesman whom unavoidable bankruptcy has branded as a rogue,—the elegantly-clad banker whose insolvency must soon transpire, and the ragged old miser whose wealth is not suspected,—the monuments of glory, and the hospitals of the poor,—the temples where men adore a God with affection, and the shrines at which they lose their gold to a deity whom they adore without affection,—in a word, grandeur and squalor, wealth and misery, virtue and vice,—honesty which has never been tried, and crime which yielded to the force of irresistible circumstances,—all the features, all the characteristics, all the morals, of a great city, must occupy the attention of him who surveys London with microscopic eye.

And what a splendid subject for the contemplation

of the moralist is a mighty city which, at every succeeding hour, presents a new phase of interest to the view;—in the morning, when only the industrious and the thrifty are abroad, and while the wealthy and the great are sleeping off the night's pleasure and dissipation;—at noon, when the streets are swarming with life, as if some secret source without the walls poured at that hour myriads of animated streams into the countless arteries and thoroughfares;—in the evening, when the men of pleasure again venture forth, and music, and dancing, and revelry prevail around;—and at night, when every lazar-house vomits forth its filth, every den lets loose its horrors, and every foul court and alley echoes to the footsteps of crime!

It was about two o'clock in the morning, (three hours after the burglarious attempt upon the villa,) that a man, drenched by the rain which continued to pour in torrents, with his hat drawn over his eyes, and his hands thrust in his pockets to protect them against the cold, crept cautiously down West Street, from Smithfield, dodged past the policeman, and entered the old house which we have described at the opening of our narrative.

Having closed and carefully bolted the front door, he hastily ascended to the room on the first floor where Walter Sydney had seen him and his companion conceal their plunder four years and three months previously.

This man—so wet, so cold, and so miserable—was Bill Bolter, the murderer.

Having groped about for a few moments, he found a match, struck it, and obtained a light. One of the secret recesses furnished a candle; and the flickering glare fell upon the haggard, unshaven, and dirty countenance of the ruffian.

Scarcely had he lighted the candle, when a peculiar whistle was heard in the street, just under the window. The features of Bolter became suddenly animated with joy; and, as he hastily descended the stairs, he muttered to himself, “Well, at all events here's one on ‘em.”

The individual to whom he opened the door was Dick Flairer—in no better plight, mentally and bodily, than himself.

“Is there any bingo, Bill?” demanded Dick, the moment he set foot in the up-stairs room.

“Not a drain,” answered Bolter, after a close inspection of the cupboard in the wall between the windows; “and not a morsel of grub neither.”

“Blow the grub,” said Dick. “I ain't in no humour for eating; but I could drink a gallon. I've been thinking as I come along, and after the first shock was over, wot cursed fools you and me was to be lumbugged in this here affair. Either that young fellow was the brother of the one which we threw down the trap——”

“No; I could swear that he is the same,” interrupted Bill.

“Well—then he must have made his escape—and that's all,” added Dick Flairer.

“That must be it,” observed Bolter, after a long pause. “But it was so sudden upon us—and then without no time to think—and all that——”

“You may say what you like, Bill—but I shall never forgive myself. I was the first to bolt; and I was a coward. How shall I ever be able to look the Cracksmen in the face again, or go to the parlour of the boozing-ken?”

“It's no use complaining like this, Dick. You was used to be the bold 'un—and now it seems as if

it was me that must say 'Cheer up.' The fact is, amnest must be done without delay. I told you and Tom what had happened at my crib; and so, lay up for some time I must. Come, now—Dick, you won't desert a pal in trouble?"

"There's my hand, Bill. On'y say wot you want done, and I'm your man."

"In the first place, do you think it's safe for me to stay here? Won't that young feller give the alarm, and say as how his house was attempted by the same crackmen that wanted to make a stiff 'un of him between four and five years ago at this old crib; and then won't the blue-bottles come and search the place from chimney-pot down to foundation-stone?"

"Let 'em search it," ejaculated Flairer: "they'll on'y do it once; and who cares for that? You can lie as snug down stairs for a week or so as if you was a thousand miles off. Besides, who'd think for an instant that you'd hide yourself in the wery spot that the young feller could point out as one of our haunts? Mark me, Bill—if yer goes up to Rat's Castle in Saint Giles's, you would find too many tongues among them cursed Irishers to ask 'If he is he?' and 'If that is he?' If you goes over to the Mint, you'll be sure to be twigged by a lot o' them low bugloaks and broken-down magmen as swarms there; and they'll nose upon you for a penny. Whitechapel back-slums isn't safe; for the broom-gals, the blacks, and the ballad singers which occupies all that district, is always a quarrelling; and the blue-bottles is constantly poking their nose in every crib in consequence. Here you are snug; and I can bring you your grub and tell you the news of an evenin' arter dark."

"But to be penned up in that infernal hole for a fortnit or three weeks, till the storm's blowed over, is horrible to think on," said Bill.

"And scragging* more horrible still," said Dick, significantly.

Bill Bolter shuddered; and a convulsive motion agitated his neck, as if he already felt the cord around it. His countenance became ashy pale; and, as he glanced fearfully around, he exclaimed, "Yes, you're right, Dick: I'll take myself to the hiding-crib, and you can give me the officet† at any moment, if things goes wrong. To-morrow you must try and find out whether there's much of a row about the affair in the Court."

The ruffian never expressed the least anxiety relative to the fate of his children.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed Dick: "to-day you mean—for it can't be far off from three o'clock. And now talking about grub is all very easy; but getting it is quite another thing. Neither you nor me hasn't got a scurrick; and where to get a penny loaf on tick I don't know."

"By hell, I shall starve, Dick!" cried the murderer, casting a glance of alarm and horror upon his companion.

"Whatever I get shall be for you first, Bill; and to get anythink at all I must be wide awake. The grass musn't grow under my feet."

At that moment a whistle, similar to the sound by which Dick Flairer had notified his approach to Bill Bolter, emanated from the street and fell upon the ears of those worthies.

Dick hastened to respond to this summons, and in a short time introduced the Crackman.

The moment this individual entered the room, he demanded if there were anything to eat or to drink upon the premises. He of course received a melancholy negative; but, instead of being disheartened, his countenance appeared to wear a smile of pleasure.

"Now, you see, I never desert a friend in distress," he exclaimed; and, with these words, he produced from his pocket a quantity of cold victuals and a large flask of brandy.

Without waiting to ask questions or give explanations, the three thieves fell tooth and nail upon the provender.

"I knowed you'd come to this here crib, because Bill don't dare go to the boozing-ken till the affair of the Court's blowed over," said the Crackman, when his meal was terminated; "and so I thought I'd jine you. Arter I left the place out by Clapton-jine."

"And how the devil did you get away?" demanded Dick.

"Just the same as you did. It would have served you right if I'd never spoke to you agin, and blowed you at the ken into the bargain; but I thought to myself, thinks I, 'It must be somey very strange that made the Flairer and the Bolter cut their lucky and leave their pal in the hurch; so let's hear wot they has to say for themselves fast.' Then, as I come along, I found a parse in a gentleman's pocket just opposite Bethnal Green New Church; and that put me into good humour. So I looked in at the ken, got the grub and the blingo, and come on here."

"You're a reg'lar tramp, Tom!" ejaculated Dick Flairer; "and I'll stick to you like bricks from this moment till I die. The fact is—me and Bill has told you about that young feller which we throwed down the trap some four or five year back."

"Yes—I remember."

"Well—we seed him to-night."

"To-night! What—at the crib up there?"

"The swell that you got a grip on in the dark, was the very self-same one."

"Then he must have got clear off—that's all!" cried the Crackman. "It was no ghost—but rale plump flesh and hot blood, I'll swear."

"So we both think now, to be sure," said Dick: "but you don't bear any ill-will, Tom?"

"Not a atom. Here's fifteen couters* which was in the purse of the swell which I met at Bethnal-Green; and half that's yours. But, about Bill there—wot's he a-going to do?"

Dick pointed with his finger downwards: Tom comprehended the signal, and nodded approvingly.

The brandy produced a cheering effect upon the three ruffians: and pipes and tobacco augmented their joviality. Their discourse gradually became coarsely humorous; and their mirth boisterous. At length Bill Bolter, who required every possible means of artificial stimulant and excitement to sustain his spirits in the fearful predicament in which he was placed, called upon the Crackman for a song.

Tom was famous amongst his companions for his vocal qualifications; and he was not a little proud of the reputation he had acquired in the parlours of the various "boozing-kens" and "patter-cribs"† which he was in the habit of frequenting. He was not, therefore, backward in complying with his friend's request; and, in a somewhat subdued tone, (for fear of making too much noise—a complaint not

* Hazing. † Inform, give warning.

* Sovereigns. † Flash houses

often heard in Chick Lane), he sang the following lines:—

THE THIEVES' ALPHABET.

A was an Area-sneak leary and sly;
B was a Buzzsack, with fingers so fly;
C was a Crackman, that forked all the plate;
D was a Dubsman, who kept the Jug-gate.
For we are rollicking chaps,
All smoking, singing, boasting;
We care not for the traps,
But pass the night carousing!

K was an Effer,* that went to the play;
F was a Fogle he knapped on his way;
G was a Gag, which he told to the book;
H was a Hum-box,† where parish-priests speak.
CHORUS.

I was an Ikey,‡ with swag all encumbered;
J was a Jug, in whose cell he was lumbered;
K was a Kye-boah,‡ that paid for his treat;
L was a Leaf ¥ that fell under his feet.
CHORUS.

M was a Magman, frequenting Pall-Mall;
N was a Nose that turned chirp on his pal;
O was an Onion,** turned by a swell;
P was a Pannie, done nibbles and well.
CHORUS.

Q was a Quaver-screen, that served as a billet;††
R was a Reader,‡‡ with similes well lined;
S was a Smasher, so nutty and spry;
T was a Ticker,§§ just faked from a city.
CHORUS.

U was an Up-tucker,|| fly with the cord;
V was a Varsisher,¶¶ dressed like a lord;
Y was a Yoxter*** that set caper sauce:†††
Z was a Ziff||| who was fashed on the horse.‡‡‡
For we are rollicking chaps,
All smoking, singing, boasting;
We care not for the traps,
But pass the night carousing!|||

In this manner did the three thieves pass the first hours of morning at the old house in Chick Lane.

At length the heavy and sonorous voice of Saint Paul's proclaimed six o'clock. It still wanted an hour to sun-rise; but they now thought it prudent to separate.

Tom the Crackman and Dick Flairer arranged together a "little piece of business" for the ensuing night, which they hoped would prove more fortunate than their attempt on the villa at Upper Clapton; but Dick faithfully promised Bill Bolter to return to him in the evening before he set out on the new expedition.

Matters being thus agreed upon, the moment for the murderer's concealment arrived. We have before stated that the entire grate in the room which the villains frequented, could be removed; and that, when taken out of its setting, it revealed an aperture of considerable dimensions. At the bottom of this square recess was a trap-door, communicating with a narrow and spiral staircase, that led into a vault adjoining and upon the same level with the very cellar from which Walter Sydney had so miraculously escaped.

The possibility of such an architectural arrangement being fully carried out, with a view to provide a perfect means of concealment, will be apparent to our readers, when we state that the side of the house farthest from the Fleet Ditch was constructed with a double brick wall, and that the spiral staircase consequently stood between those two partitions.

* A thief who frequents theatres. † Peipit

‡ A Jew from: a receiver of stolen goods. † Is. 6d.
¥ The drop. ** A watch seal. †† Served to deceive the
urinary. ‡‡ Pocket book. §§ Watch. || Jack Ketch.
¶¶ Utterer of false sovereigns. *** A convict returned
from transportation before his time. ††† Hanged.
||| A juvenile thief. §§ Privately whipped in prison.
||| This song is entirely original.

The mode in which the huge chimneys were built, also tended to ensure the complete safety of that strange hiding-place, and to avert any suspicion that might for a moment be entertained of the existence of such a retreat in that old house.

Even in case the secret of the moveable grate should be discovered, the eye of the most acute thief-taker would scarcely detect the trap-door at the bottom of the recess, so admirably was it made to correspond with the brick-work that formed its frame.

The vault with which the spiral staircase corresponded, was about fourteen feet long by two-and-a-half wide. An iron grating of eight inches square, overlooking the Fleet Ditch, was all the means provided to supply that living tomb with fresh—we cannot say pure—air. If the atmosphere of the hiding-place were thus neither wholesome nor pleasant, it did not at least menace existence; and a residence in that vault for even weeks and weeks together was deemed preferable to the less "cribbed, cabined, and confined" sojourn of Newgate.

But connected with the security of this vault was one fearful condition. The individual who sought its dark solitude, could not emancipate himself at will. He was entirely at the mercy of those confederates who were entrusted with his secret. Should anything happen to these men,—should they be suddenly overtaken by the hand of death, then starvation must be the portion of the inmate of that horrible vault: and should they fall into the hands of justice, then the only service they could render their companion in the living tomb, would be to reveal the secret of his hiding-place.

Up to the time of which we are writing, since the formation of that strange lurking-hole in the days of the famous Jonathan Wild, three or four persons had alone availed themselves of the vault as a means of personal concealment. In the first place, the secret existed but with a very few; and secondly, it was only in cases where life and death were concerned that a refuge was sought in so fearful an abode.

When the grate was removed and the trap-door was opened, the entire frame of Bill Bolter became suddenly convulsed with horror. He dreaded to be left to the mercy of his own reflections!

"It's infernally damp," said Bill, his teeth chattering as much with fear as with the cold.

Fearful, however, of exciting the disgust and contempt of his companions at what might be termed his pusillanimous conduct, he mastered up all his courage, shook hands with the Crackman and Flairer, and then insinuated his person through the aperture.

"You may as well take the pipes and baccy along with you, old feller," returned Dick.

"And here's a thimble-full of brandy left in the flask," added the Crackman.

"This evenin' I'll bring you a jolly wack of the bingy," said Flairer.

Provided with the little comforts just specified, the murderer descended the spiral staircase into the vault.

The trap-door closed above his head; and the grate was replaced with more than usual care and caution.

The Crackman and Dick Flairer then took their departure from the old house, in the foundation of which a fellow-creature was thus strangely entombed alive!

CHAPTER XXIV.
CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

LET US NOW return to Mr. Whittingham, whom we left in serious and unfeigned tribulation at the moment when his young master was taken into custody upon the charge of passing a forged note.

The Bow Street runner whom the officer had left behind to search the house, first possessed himself of the two letters which were lying upon the table in Markham's library, and which were addressed respectively to Mrs. Arlington and Mr. Monroe. The functionary then commenced a strict investigation of the entire premises; and, at the end, appeared marvellously surprised that he had not found a complete apparatus for printing forged notes, together with a quantity of the false articles themselves. This search, nevertheless, occupied three hours; and, when it was over, he took his departure, quite sulky because he had nothing to offer as evidence save the two sealed letters, which might be valuable in that point of view, or might not.

The moment this unwelcome guest had quitted the house, the butler, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour—for it was now dusk—ordered the market cart to be got ready; and, with the least possible delay, he proceeded into town.

Upon his arrival in Bow Street, he found the police-office closed: but upon enquiry he learnt that the investigation of Richard Markham's case had been postponed until the following morning at eleven o'clock, the prisoner having declared that he could produce a witness who would satisfactorily show his (the prisoner's) entire innocence in the transaction. In the meantime, he had been removed to Clerkenwell Prison.

Without asking another question, Whittingham mounted his cart once more, and drove away at a rattling pace to Clerkenwell Prison. There he began to thunder like a madman at the knocker of the governor's private entrance, and could hardly believe his senses when a servant-girl informed him that it was past the hours to see the prisoners. Whittingham would have remonstrated; but the girl slammed the door in his face. He accordingly had no alternative save to drive direct home again.

The very next morning at nine o'clock Mr. Whittingham entered the *Servants' Arms Tavern*; and with but little of his usual circumlocution and verbosity, enquired the address of Mr. Mac Chizale, the lawyer, who had been one of the party at that house the evening but one before.

"Here is his card," said the landlord. "He uses my house regular, and is a out-and-out practitioner."

Whittingham did not wait to hear any further eulogium upon the attorney. It had struck him that his young master might require a "professional adviser;" and having the supreme felicity of being totally unacquainted with the entire fraternity, he had felt himself somewhat puzzled how to supply the desideratum. In this dilemma, he had suddenly bethought himself of Mac Chizale; and, without waiting to ponder upon the propriety of the step he was taking, he rushed off in the manner described to procure that individual's address.

"Well, what do you want?" cried the lawyer, who was astonished at the unceremonious manner in which Whittingham suddenly rushed into his office: "what do you want?"

"Law," was the laconic answer.

"Well, you can have plenty of that here," said

Mr. Mac Chizale. "But—I think you are the gentleman with whom I had the pleasure of passing a pleasant evening at the *Servants' Arms*, a day or two ago."

"The identical same," returned Whittingham, flinging his hat upon the floor and himself into a chair.

"Take time to breathe, sir," said the lawyer. "If you're come for advice you couldn't have selected a better shop; but I must tell you before-hand that mine is quite a ready money business."

"Very good, sir. I'll tell you my story first and foremost; and you can then explain the most legible means of proceeding. I want law and justice."

"Law you can have in welcome; but whether you will obtain justice is another consideration."

"I'm bewildered in a labyrinth of mazes, sir," said the butler. "I always opined that law and justice was the same thing."

"Quite the reverse, I can assure you. Law is a human invention; justice is a divine inspiration. What is law to-day, is not law to-morrow; and yet everything is still denominated justice. A creditor asks for justice when he appeals to a tribunal against his debtor; and how is that justice awarded? Why—if a man can't pay five pounds, the law immediately makes his debt ten pounds; and if he can't live out of doors, the law immediately shuts him up in prison by way of helping him out of his difficulties. That is law, sir; but it is not justice."

"Right, sir—very right."

"Law, you see, sir," continued Mac Chizale, who was particularly fond of hearing himself talk.—"law is omnipotent, and beats justice to such an extreme, that justice would be justified in bringing an action of assault and battery against law. Law even makes religion, sir; and gives the attributes of the Deity; for no one dares assert that God possesses a quality or a characteristic, unless in conformity with the law. And as these laws are always changing, so of course does the nature of the deity, as established by the law, vary too; so that men may be said to go to heaven or to another place by the turnpike-roads laid down by the law."

"I like your reasonable powers amazingly," said the butler, somewhat impatiently; "and I will now proceed to unfold the momentary object of my visit."

"Give yourself breathing time, my dear sir. As I was observing, Law is more powerful than even Justice and Religion; and I could now show that it exercises the same predominating influence over Morality also. For instance, Law, and not Conscience, defines virtues and vices. If I murder you, I commit a crime; but the executioner who puts me to death for the action, does not commit a crime. Neither does the soldier who kills his fellow-creature in battle. Thus, murder is only a crime when it is not legalised by human statutes,—or, in plain terms, when it is not according to law."

"I comprehend, sir," said Whittingham; and, seeing that Mr. Mac Chizale now paused at length, he narrated the particulars of his master's arrest upon an accusation of passing a forged note for five hundred pounds.

"This is an ugly case, Mr. Whittingham."

"You must go down to him at Bow-Street: his case comes on at eleven o'clock."

"Well, there is plenty of time: it is only half-past nine o'clock. I think we had better instruct counsel."

"Construct counsel!" ejaculated Whittingham; "I want you to get him liberated at once."

"Ah! I dare say you do," said the lawyer, coolly. "That is often more easily said than done. From what you have told me I should not wonder if your master was committed for trial."

"But he is innocent, sir—he is innocent—as the young lamb in the meadows which is unborn!" cried Whittingham. "Master Richard would no more pass a fictitious note than I should endeavour to pass a race-horse if I was mounted on a donkey."

Mr. Mac Chizzle smiled, and summoned his clerk by the euphonious name of "Simcox." Mr. Simcox was somewhat slow in making his appearance; and when he did, a very comical one it was—for his hair was red, his eyes were green, his countenance was studded with freckles, and his eye-lashes were white.

"Simcox," said Mr. Mac Chizzle, "I am going out for a few hours. If the gentleman calls about the thousand pound bill, tell him that I can get it discounted for him, for fifty pounds in money and eight hundred in wine—which allows a hundred and fifty for discount and my commission. If the lady calls whose husband has run away from her, tell her that I've sent to Paris to make enquiries after him, and that if she'll leave another fifty pounds, I'll send to Vienna. By-the-bye, that boisterous fellow Smith is certain to call: tell him I'm gone into the country, and shall be away for a fortnight. If Jenkins calls, tell him I shall be home at five and he must wait, as I want to see him."

"Very well, sir," said Simcox. "And if the gentleman calls about the loan."

"Why, that I shall see a party about it this evening. The first party declines; but I have another party in view."

Somehow or another, men of business have always got a particular "party" in view to accomplish a particular purpose, and they are always being disappointed by their "parties"—whom, by-the-bye, they never condescended to name. To be "deceived by a party," or "having a party to meet," or "being engaged so long with a particular party," are excuses which will last as long as business itself shall exist, and will continue to be received as apologies as long as any apologies are received at all. They will wear out every other lie.

Whittingham was too much occupied by the affairs of his master, to pay any attention to the orders which the solicitor gave his clerk; and he was considerably relieved when he found himself by the side of his professional adviser, rolling along the streets in a cabriolet.

At length the lawyer and the faithful domestic were set down at the Police-Office in Bow Street; and in a few moments they were admitted, in the presence of a policeman, to an interview with Markham in one of the cells attached to the establishment.

Richard's countenance was pale and care-worn; his hair was dishevelled; and his attire seemed put on slovenly. But these circumstances scarcely attracted the eyes of Whittingham:—a more appalling and monstrous spectacle engrossed all the attention of that faithful old dependant; and this was the manacle which confined his reverend master's hands together.

Whittingham wept.

"Oh! Master Richard," he exclaimed in a voice broken by sobs, "what an unforeseen and perfidious adventure is this! You surely never could—no, I know you didn't!"

"Do not grieve yourself, my faithful friend," said Richard, deeply affected: "my innocence will soon be proved. I have sent for Mr. Chichester, who will be here presently: and he can shew in one moment how I became possessed of the two notes."

"Two notes!" cried Whittingham.

"Yes—I had another of fifty pounds' value in my purse, which I also received from Chichester, and which has turned out to be a spurious one. Doubtless he has been deceived himself—"

"Oh! that ere Winchester, or Kidderminster—or whatever his name may be," interrupted the butler, a strange misgiving oppressing his mind: "I'm afraid he won't do the thing that's right. But here is a profound adviser, Master Richard, that I've brought with me; and he'll see law done, he says—and I believe him too."

Markham and Mac Chizzle then entered into conversation together; but scarcely had the unfortunate young man commenced his account of the peculiar circumstances in which he was involved, when the jailer entered to conduct him into the presence of the magistrate.

Markham was placed in the felon's dock; and Mr. Mac Chizzle intimated to the sitting magistrate, in a simpering tone, that he appeared for the prisoner.

Now we must inform our readers that Mac Chizzle was one of those low pettifoggers, who, without being absolutely the black sheep of the profession, act upon the principle "that all are fish that come to their net," and practise indiscriminately in the civil and the criminal courts—conduct a man's insolvency, or defend him before the magistrate—discount bills and issue no end of writs—act for loan societies and tally shops—in a word, undertake anything that happens to fall in their way, so long as it brings grist to the mill.

Mr. Mac Chizzle was not, therefore, what is termed "a respectable solicitor;" and the magistrate's countenance assumed an appearance of austerity—for he had previously been possessed in Markham's favour—when that individual announced that he appeared for the prisoner. Thus poor Whittingham, in his anxiety to do his beloved master a great deal of good, actually prejudiced his case materially at its outset.

Though unhappy and care-worn, Richard was not downcast. Conscious innocence supported him. Accordingly when he beheld Mr. Chichester enter the witness-box, he bowed to him in a friendly and even grateful manner; but, to his ineffable surprise, that very fashionable gentleman affected not to notice the salutation.

It is not necessary to enter into details. The nature of the evidence against Markham was that he had called at his guardian's banker's the day but one previously, to receive a sum of money; that he requested the cashier to change a five hundred pound Bank of England note; that, although an unusual proceeding, the demand was complied with; that the prisoner wrote his name at the back of the note, and that in the course of the ensuing morning it was discovered that the said note was a forgery. The prisoner was arrested; and upon his person was found a second note, of fifty pounds' value, which was also a forgery. Two letters were also produced—one to Mrs. Arlington, and another to Mr. Monroe, which not only proved that the prisoner had intended to leave the country with strange abruptness, but the contents of which actually appeared to point at the

crime now alleged against him, as the motive of his flight.

Markham was certainly astounded when he heard the stress laid upon those letters by the solicitor for the prosecution, and the manner in which their real meaning was made to tell against him.

The Magistrate called upon him for his defence; and Markham, forgetful that Mac Chizle was there to represent him, addressed himself in an earnest tone to Mr. Chichester, exclaiming, "You can now set me right in the eyes of the magistrate, and in the opinion of even the prosecuting counsel, who seems so anxious to distort every circumstance to my disadvantage."

"I really am not aware," said Mr. Chichester, caressing his chin in a very *sensational* manner, "that I can throw any light upon this subject."

"All I require is the truth," ejaculated Richard, surprised at the tone and manner of his late friend. "Did you not give me that note for five hundred pounds to change for you? and did I not receive the second note from you in exchange for fifty sovereigns?"

Mr. Chichester replied in an indignant negative.

The magistrate shook his head: the prosecuting solicitor took snuff significantly;—Mac Chizle made a memorandum;—and Whittingham murmured, "Ah! that mitigated villain Axminster."

"What do I hear!" exclaimed Richard: "Mr. Chichester your memory must fail you sadly. I suppose you recollect the occasion upon which Mr. Talbot gave you the five hundred pound note?"

"Mr. Talbot never gave me any note at all," answered Chichester, in a measured and determined manner.

"It is false—false as hell!" cried Markham, more enraged than alarmed; and he forthwith detailed to the magistrate the manner in which he had been induced to change the one note, and had become possessed of the other.

"This is a very lame story, indeed," said the magistrate; "and you must try and see if you can get a jury to believe it. You stand committed."

Before Richard could make any reply, he was lugged out of the dock by the jailer; the next case was called on; and he was hurried back to his cell, whither Mac Chizle and the butler were permitted to follow him.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ENCHANTRESS.

"Oh! how can I prove my innocence now?" exclaimed Richard, wringing his hands, and walking hastily up and down the cell: "how shall I convince the world that a fearful combination of circumstances has so entangled me in this net, that never was man so wronged before? how can I communicate my dread position to Monroe? how ever again look society in the face? how live after this exposure—this disgrace?"

"Master Richard, Master Richard," cried the poor old butler, "don't take on so—don't now! Your innocence must conspire on the day of trial, and the jury will do you justice. Now, don't take on so, Master Richard—pray don't!"

As the faithful domestic uttered these words, the tears chased each other so rapidly down his cheeks that he seemed to need consolation quite as much as his master.

"Oh! that villain Chichester—the wretch—the

cheat!" continued Richard; "and no doubt his vulgar companion Talbot is as bad. And the baronet—perhaps he also—"

Markham stopped short, and seated himself upon the bench. He suddenly became very faint and turned ashy pale. Whittingham hastened to loosen his shirt-collar, and the policeman present humanely procured a glass of water.

In a few minutes he recovered; and he then endeavoured to contemplate with calmness the full extent of the perils which environed him. His opinion of Chichester and Talbot was already formed; but the baronet—could he have been a party to their scheme of villainy? After a moment's reflection, he answered the question to himself in an affirmative.

He had, then, fallen into a nest of adventurers and swindlers. But Diana—oh! no, she could not have been cognizant of the treacherous designs practised against him; she was doubtless made use of as an instrument to further the plans of the conspirators!

Such were his convictions. Should he, then, give her due warning in time, and afford her an opportunity of abandoning, ere it might be too late, an individual who would doubtless involve her, in the long run, in infamy and peril?

To pen a hasty note to Mrs. Arlington was now a duty which he conceived entailed upon him, and which he immediately performed. He then wrote a letter to Mr. Monroe, detailing the particulars of his unfortunate position, and beseeching him not to be prejudiced against him by the report which he might read in the newspapers the following day.

"Whittingham, my old friend," said Markham, when he had disposed of these matters; "we must now separate for the present. This letter for Mr. Monroe you will forward by post; the other, to Mrs. Arlington, you will take yourself to Bond Street, and deliver into her own hand." Then, addressing himself to Mac Chizle, he observed, "I thank you, sir, for your attendance here to-day. Whittingham will give you the address of my guardian, Mr. Monroe; and that gentleman will consult with you upon the proper course to be pursued. He will also answer any pecuniary demands you may have occasion to make upon him."

Richard had preserved an unnatural degree of calmness as he uttered these words; and Whittingham was himself astonished at the coolness with which his young master delivered his instructions. The old butler wept bitterly when he took leave of "Master Richard," and it cost the young man himself no inconsiderable effort to restrain his own tears.

"What is raly your inferential opinion in this matter?" demanded the butler of the lawyer, as they issued from the door of the police-office together.

"Why, that it was a capital scheme to raise the wind, and a very great pity that it did not succeed to a far greater extent," cried the professional adviser.

"Well, if you put that opinion down in your bill and charge six-and-eightpence for it," said Whittingham, with a very serious countenance, "I shall certainly dispute the item, and compute it, when I audit the accounts."

"I am really at a loss to comprehend you," said the lawyer. "Of course there are no secrets between you and me: indeed, you had much better tell me the whole truth—"

"Truth!" ejaculated Whittingham: "of course I shall tell you the truth."

"Allow me to ask a question or two, then," re-

sumed the lawyer. "I suppose that you were in the plant, and divided the swag?"

Mr. Whittingham stared at the professional man with the most unfeigned astonishment, which, indeed, was so great that it checked all reply,

"Well," proceeded the shrewd Mr. Mac Chizale, "it wasn't a bad dodge either. And I suppose that this Monroe is a party to the whole concern?"

"Is it possible, Mr. Mac Chizale," exclaimed the butler, "that —"

"But the business is awkward—very awkward," added the solicitor, shaking his head. "It was however fortunate that nothing transpired to implicate you also. When one pal is at large, he can do much for another who is in lavender. It would have been worse if you had been lumbered too—far worse."

"Plant—pal—lumbered—lavender!" repeated Whittingham, with considerable emphasis on each word as he slowly uttered it. "I suppose you raly think my master is guilty of the crime computed to him?"

"Of course I do," replied Mac Chizale: "I can see as far into a brick wall as any one."

"Well, it's of no use argufying the pint," said the butler, after a moment's pause. "Here is Mr. Monroe's address: perhaps when you have seen him, you will arrive at new inclusions."

Mr. Whittingham then took leave of the solicitor, and proceeded to Bond Street.

Within a few yards of the house in which Mrs. Arlington resided, the butler ran against an individual who, with his hat perched jauntily on his right ear, was lounging along.

"Hollos, you fellow!" ejaculated Mr. Thomas Suggot—for it was he—"what do you mean by coming bolt agin a gen'leman in that kind of way?"

"Oh! my dear sir," cried Whittingham, "is that you? I am raly perforated with delight to see you."

Mr. Suggot gave a good long stare at Mr. Whittingham, and then exclaimed "Oh! it is you—is it? Well, I must say that your legs are in a very unfastidius condition."

"How, sir—how?" demanded the irritated butler. "Why, they want a pair of fetters, to be sure," said Suggot; and breaking into a horse-laugh, he passed rapidly on.

Whittingham felt humiliated; and the knock that he gave at the door of Diana's lodgings was sneaking and subdued. In a few minutes, however, he was ushered into a back room on the first floor, where Mrs. Arlington received him.

"Here is a letter, ma'am, which I was to deliver only into your own incidental hand."

"Is it—is it from your master?" demanded the Enchantress.

"It is, ma'am."

"Where is Mr. Markham?" asked Diana, receiving the letter with a trembling hand.

"He is now in Bow-street Police-Office, ma'am: in the course of the day he will be in Newgate;"—and the old butler wiped away a tear.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Diana; "then it is really too true!"

She immediately tore open the letter, and ran her eye over the contents, which were as follow:—

"The villany of one of the individuals with whom you are constantly associating, and in whom it has been my misfortune to place unlimited confidence, will perhaps involve you in an embarrassment similar to the one in which I am now placed. I cannot, I do not for one moment imagine that you are in any way conversant with their vile schemes—I

can read your heart; I know that you would scorn such a confederacy. Your frankness, your candour are in your favour: your countenance, which is engraven upon my memory, and which I behold at this moment as if it were really before me, forbids all suspicious injurious to your honour. Take a timely warning, then: take warning from one who wishes you well: and dissolve the connexion ere it be too late. R. M."

"When shall you see your master again?" enquired Diana of the butler, after the perusal of this letter.

"To-morrow, ma'am—with the blessing of God."

"My compliments to him—my very best remembrances," said Mrs. Arlington; "and I feel deeply grateful for this communication."

Whittingham bowed, and rose to depart.

"And," added Diana, after a moment's pause, "if there be anything in which my humble services can be made available, pray do not hesitate to come to me. Indeed, I hope you will call—often—and let me know how this unfortunate business proceeds."

"Then you don't believe that Master Richard is capable of this obliquity, madam?" cried the butler.

"Oh! no—impossible!" said Diana emphatically.

"Thank 'ee, ma'am, thank 'ee," exclaimed Whittingham: "you have done my poor old heart good. God bless you, ma'am—God bless you!"

And with these words the faithful dependant took his departure, not a little delighted to think that there was at least one person in the world who believed in the innocence of "Master Richard." In fact, the kindness of Diana's manner and the sincerity with which she had expressed herself on that point, effectually wiped away from the mind of the butler the reminiscences of Mac Chizale's derogatory suspicions, and Suggot's impertinence.

After a few minutes' profound reflection, Diana returned to the drawing-room, where Sir Rupert Harborough, Mr. Chichester, and Talbot were seated.

Her fine countenance wore an expression of melancholy seriousness; and there was a nervous movement of the under lip that denoted the existence of powerful emotions in her bosom.

"Well, Di.," exclaimed the baronet; "you seem annoyed."

"You will be surprised, gentlemen, when I inform you who has been here," she said, resuming her seat upon the sofa.

"Indeed!" cried Chichester, turning pale: "who could it be?"

"Not an officer, I hope?" exclaimed the baronet.

"The chimney-sweeps, perhaps," suggested Mr. Talbot.

"A person from Mr. Markham," said Diana, seriously. "By his appearance I should conceive him to be the faithful old servant of his family, of whom I have heard him speak."

"Whittingham, I'll be bound!" ejaculated Chichester. "And what did he want?"

"He brought me a letter from his master," returned Diana. "You may read it, if you please."

And she tossed it contemptuously towards Chichester.

"Read out," cried Talbot.

Mr. Chichester read the letter aloud, as he was requested.

"And what makes the young spark write to you in that d——d impudent and familiar style?" demanded the baronet, angrily.



"You cannot but admit that his letter is couched in a most friendly manner," said the lady, somewhat bitterly.

"Friendly be hanged!" cried the baronet. "I dare say you feel a most profound and sisterly sympathy for the young god-bird. After all, your profuse expenditure and extravagance helped to involve me in no end of pecuniary trouble; and I was compelled to have recourse to any means to obtain money. Somebody must suffer;—better Markham than any one of us."

"You do well, sir, to reproach me for being the cause of your embarrassments," answered Diana, her countenance becoming almost purple with indignation. "Have I not basely lent these rooms to your purposes, and acted as an attraction to the young men whom you have inveigled here to plunder at cards? I have never forgiven myself for the weakness which prompted me thus far to enter into your schemes. But when you informed me of your plans relative to the forged notes, I protested vehemently

against so atrocious a measure. Indeed, had it not been for your solemn assurance that you had abandoned the idea—at all events so far as it concerned Markham—I would have placed him upon his guard—in spite of your threats, your menaces, your remonstrances!"

Diana had warmed as she proceeded; and by the time she reached the end of her reply to the baronet's villainous speech, she had worked herself up almost into a fury of rage and indignation. Her bosom heaved convulsively—her eyes dilated; and her lips expressed ineffable scorn.

"Perdition!" exclaimed the baronet: "the world is coming to a pretty pass when one's own mistress undertakes to give lessons in morality."

"A desperate necessity, sir," retorted Diana, "made me your mistress;—but I would sooner seek an asylum at the workhouse this moment, than become a partner in villainy of this stamp."

"And, as far as I care," said the baronet, "you may go to the workhouse as soon as you choose."

With these words he rose and put on his hat.

Diana was about to answer this last brutal speech; but she determined not to provoke a discussion which only exposed her to the insolence of the man who was coward enough to reproach her with a frailty which had ministered to his pleasures. She bit her lips to restrain the burst of emotions which struggled for vent; and at that moment her hearing was as heightened and her aspect as proud as the superb dignity of incensed Juno.

"Come, Chichester," said the baronet, after a pause of a few minutes; "I shall be off. Talbot—this is no longer a place for any one of us. Madam," he added, turning with mock ceremony to Diana, "I wish you a very good afternoon. This is the last time you will ever see me in these apartments."

"I wish it to be so," said Diana, still stifling her rage with difficulty.

"And I need scarcely observe," exclaimed the baronet, "that after all that has passed between us—"

"Oh! I comprehend you, sir," interrupted the Enchantress, scornfully: "you need not fear me—your secrets are safe in my possession."

The baronet bowed and strode out of the room, followed by Chichester and Talbot.

The Enchantress was then alone.

She threw herself at full length upon the sofa, and remained for a long time buried in profound thought. A tear started into her large blue eye; but she hastily wiped it away with her snowy handkerchief. From time to time her lips were compressed with scorn; and then a prolonged sigh would escape her breast.

Had she given a free vent to her tears, she would have experienced immediate relief; she endeavoured to stifle her passion—and it nearly suffocated her.

But how beautiful was she during that painful and fierce struggle with her feelings! Her countenance was flushed; and her eyes, usually so mild and melting, seemed to burn like two stars.

"No," she exclaimed, after a long silence, "I must not revenge myself that way! Up to the present moment, I have eaten his bread and have been to him as a wife; and I should be guilty of a vile deed of treachery were I to denounce him and his companions. Besides—who would believe my testimony, unsupported by facts, against the indignant denial of a man of rank, family, and title? I must stifle my resentment for the present. The hour of retribution will no doubt arrive, sooner or later; and Harborough shall yet repent the cruel—the cowardly insults he has heaped on my head this day!"

She paused, and again appeared to reflect profoundly. Suddenly a gleam of satisfaction passed over her countenance, and she started up to a sitting posture upon the sofa. The ample skirts of her dress were partly raised by her attitude, and revealed an exquisitely turned leg to the middle of the swell of the calf. The delicate foot, imprisoned in the flesh-coloured stocking of finest silk, tapped upon the carpet, in an agitated manner, with the tip of the glossy leather shoe.

That gleam of satisfaction which had suddenly appeared upon her countenance, gradually expanded into a glow of delight, brilliant and beautiful.

"Perhaps he thinks that I shall endeavour to win him back again to my arms," she said, musing aloud;—"perhaps he imagines that his countenance and support are imperatively necessary to me? Oh! no—Sir Rupert Harborough," she exclaimed, with a

smile of triumph; "you may vainly await self-humiliation from me! To-morrow—yes, so soon as to-morrow shall you see that I can command a position more splendid than the one in which you placed me!"

Obedying the impulse of her feelings, she hastened to unlock an elegant rosewood writing-desk, edged with silver; and from a secret drawer she took several letters—or rather notes—written upon paper of different colours. Upon the various envelopes were seals impressed with armorial bearings, some of which were surmounted by coronets.

She glanced over each in a cursory manner, which showed she was already tolerably familiar with their contents. The greater portion she tossed contemptuously into the fire;—a few she placed one upon the other, quite in a business-like way, upon the table.

When she had gone through the entire file, she again directed her attention to those which she had reserved; and as she perused them one after the other, she mused in the following manner:—

"Count de Lestranges is brilliant in his offers, and immensely rich—no doubt; but he is detestably conceited, and would think more of himself than of his mistress. His appeal must be rejected;" and she threw the French nobleman's perfumed epistle into the fire.

"This," she continued, taking up another, "is from Lord Templeton. Five thousand a-year is certainly handsome; but then he himself is so old and ugly! Away with this suitor at once." The English Peer's *billet-doux* followed that of the French Count.

"Here is a beautiful specimen of calligraphy," resumed Diana, taking up a third letter; "but all the sentiments are copied, word for word, out of the love-scenes in Anne Radcliffe's romances. Never was such gross plagiarism! He merits the punishment I thus inflict upon him;"—and her plump white hand crushed the epistle ere she threw it into the fire.

"But what have we here? Oh! the German baron's killing address—interspersed with remarks upon the philosophy of love. Ah! my lord, love was not made for philosophers—and philosophers are incapable of love; so we will have none of you."

Another offering to the fire.

"Here is the burning address of the Greek *attaché* with a hard name. It is prettily written;—but who could possibly enter upon terms with an individual of the name of *Thesaurorchrysonichochryssides*?"

To the flames went the Greek lover's note also.

"Ah! this seems as if it were to be the successful candidate," said Diana, carefully perusing the last remaining letter. "It is written upon a plain sheet of white paper and without scent. But then the style—how manly! Yes—decidedly, the Earl of Warrington has gained the prize. He is rich—unmarried—handsome—and still in the prime of life! There is no room for hesitation."

The Enchantress immediately penned the following note:

"I should have replied without delay to your lordship's letter of yesterday week, but have been suffering severely from cold and bad spirits. The former has been expelled by my physician; the latter can only be forced to desamp by the presence of your lordship. "DIANA ARINGTONOR."

Having despatched this note to the Earl of Warrington, the Enchantress retired to her bed-room to prepare her toilette for the arrival of the nobleman around whom she had thus suddenly decided upon throwing her magic spells.

At eight o'clock that evening, a brilliant equipage stopped at the door of the house in which Mrs. Arrington resided.

The Earl of Warrington alighted, and was forthwith conducted into the presence of the Enchantress.

And never was she more bewitching!—never had she appeared more transcendently lovely.

A dress of the richest black velvet, very low in the corsage, set off her voluptuous charms and displayed the pure and brilliant whiteness of the skin to the highest advantage. Her ears were adorned with pendants of diamonds; and a tiara glittering with the same precious stones, encircled her brow. There was a soft and languishing melancholy in her deep blue eyes and in the expression of her countenance, which formed an agreeable contrast to the dazzling loveliness of her person and the splendour of her attire.

She was enchanting indeed.

Need we say that the nobleman, who had already been introduced to her and admired her, was enraptured with the prize that thus surrendered itself to him?

Diana became the mistress of the Earl of Warrington, and the very next day removed to a splendid suite of apartments in Albemarle Street, while his lordship's upholsterers furnished a house for her reception.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWGATE.

NEWGATE! what an ominous sound has that word.

And yet the horror exists not in the name itself; for it is a very simple compound, and would not grate upon the ear nor produce a shudder throughout the frame, were it applied to any other kind of building.

It is, then, its associations and the ideas which it conjures up that render the word NEWGATE fearful and full of dark menace.

At the mere mention of this name, the mind instantaneously becomes filled with visions of vice in all its most hideous forms, and crime in all its most appalling shapes;—wards and court-yards filled with a population peculiar to themselves,—dark gloomy passages, where the gas burns all day long, and beneath the pavement of which are interred the remains of murderers and other miscreants who have expiated their crimes upon the scaffold,—shelves filled with the casts of the countenances of these wretches, taken the moment after they were cut down from the gibbet,—condemned cells,—the chapel in which funeral sermons are preached upon men yet alive to hear them, but who are doomed to die on the morrow,—the clanking of chains, the banging of huge doors, oaths, prayers, curses, and ejaculations of despair!

Oh! if it were true that the spirits of the departed are allowed to revisit the earth for certain purposes and on particular occasions,—if the belief of superstition were well founded, and night could be peopled with the ghosts and spectres of those who sleep in troubled graves,—what a place of ineffable horrors—what a scene of terrible sights, would Newgate be at midnight! The huge flag-stones of the pavement would rise, to permit the phantoms of the murderers to issue from their graves. Demons would erect a gibbet at the debtor's door; and, amidst the sinister glare of torches, an executioner from hell would hang these miscreants over again. This would be part of

their posthumous punishment, and would occur in the long—long nights of winter. Newgate looking upon the court-yards (and there are none commanding the streets) would be brilliantly lighted with red flames, coming from an unknown source. And throughout the long passages of the prison would resound the orgies of hell; and skeletons wrapped in winding sheets would shake their fetters; and Greenacre and Good—Courvoisier and Pegworth—Blakosley and Marchant, with all their predecessors in the walks of murder, would come in fearful procession from the gibbet, returning by the very corridors which they traversed in their way to death on the respective mornings of their execution. Banquets would be served up to them in the condemned cells; demons would minister to them; and their food should be the flesh, and their drink the gore, of the victims whom they had assassinated upon earth!

All would be horrible—horrible!

But, heaven be thanked! such scenes are impossible; and never can it be given to the shades of the departed to revisit the haunts which they loved or hated—adored or desecrated, upon earth!

NEWGATE!—fearful name!

And Richard Markham was now in Newgate.

He found, when the massive gates of that terrible prison closed behind him, that the consciousness of innocence will not afford entire consolation, in the dilemma in which unjust suspicions may involve the victim of circumstantial evidence. He scarcely knew in what manner to grapple with the difficulties that beset him;—he dared not contemplate the probability of a condemnation to some infamous punishment;—and he could scarcely hope for an acquittal in the face of the testimony that conspired against him.

He recalled to mind all the events of his infancy and his boyish years, and contrasted his present position with that which he once enjoyed in the society of his father and Eugene.

His brother?—~~yes~~—what had become of his brother?—that brother, who had left the paternal roof to seek his own fortunes, and who had made so strange an appointment for a distant date, upon the hill-top where the two trees were planted? Four years and four months had passed away since the day on which that appointment was made; and in seven years and eight months it was to be kept.

They were then to compare notes of their adventures and success in life, and decide who was the more prosperous of the two,—Eugene, who was dependent upon his own resources, and had to climb the ladder of fortune step by step;—or Richard, who, placed by his father's love half-way up that ladder, had only to avail himself, it would have seemed, of his advantageous position to reach the top at his leisure?

But, alas! probably Eugene was a miserable wanderer upon the face of the earth; perhaps he was mouldering beneath the sod that no parental nor fraternal tears had watered;—or haply he was languishing in some loathsome dungeon the doors of which served as barriers between him and all communion with his fellow-men!

It was strange—passing strange that Eugene had never written since his departure; and that from the fatal evening of his separation on the hill-top all traces of him should have been so suddenly lost.

Peradventure he had been frustrated in his sanguine expectations, at his very outset in life;—perhaps he had terminated in disgust an existence which was blighted by disappointment?

Such were the topics of Markham's thoughts as he walked up and down the large paved court-yard belonging to that department of the prison to which he had been consigned;—and, of a surety, they were of no pleasurable description. Uncertainty with regard to his own fate—suspense in respect to his brother—and the dread that his prospects in this life were irretrievably blighted—added to a feverish impatience of a confinement totally unmerited—all these oppressed his mind.

That night he had nothing but a basin of gruel and a piece of bread for his supper. He slept in the same ward with a dozen other prisoners, also awaiting their trials: his couch was hard, cold, and wretched; and he was compelled to listen to the ribald talk and vaunts of villainy of several of his companions. Their conversation was only varied by such remarks as these:—

"Well," said one, "I hope I shan't get before the Common-Sergeant: he's certain to give me toko for yam."

"I shall be sure to go up the first day of sessions, and most likely before the Recorder, as mine is rather a serious matter," observed a second. "He won't give me more than seven years of it, I know."

"For my part," said a third, "I'd much sooner wait till the Wednesday, when the Judges come down: they never give it so severe as them City beaks."

"I tell you what," exclaimed a fourth, "I shouldn't like to have my meat hashed at evening sittings before the Commissioner in the New Court. He's always so devilish sulky, because he has been disturbed at his wine."

"Well, you talk of the regular judges that come down on the Wednesday," cried a fifth; "I can only tell you that Baron Griffin and Justice Spikeman are on the rota for next sessions; and I'm blomed if I wouldn't sooner go before the Common-Sergeant a thousand times, than have old Griffin needle in my case. Why—if you only look at him, he'll transport you for twenty years."

At this idea all the prisoners who had taken part in this conversation, burst out into a loud guffaw—but not a whit the more hearty for being so boisterous.

"Is it possible," asked Markham, who had listened with some interest to the above discourse,— "is it possible that there can be any advantage to a prisoner to be tried by a particular judge?"

"Why, of course there is," answered one of the prisoners. "If a swell like you gets before Justice Spikeman, he'll let you off with half or a quarter of what the Recorder or Common-Sergeant would give you: but Baron Griffin would give you just double, because you happened to be well-dressed."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Markham, whose ideas of the marvellous equality and admirable even-handedness of English justice, were a little shocked by these revelations.

"Oh! yes," continued his informant, "all the world knows these things. If I go before Spikeman, I shall plead Guilty and whimper a bit, and he'll be very lenient indeed; but if I'm heard by Griffin I'll let the case take its chance, because he wouldn't be softened by any show of penitence. So you see, in these matters, one must shape one's conduct according to the judge that one goes before."

"I understand," said Markham: "even justice is influenced by all kinds of circumstances."

The conversation then turned upon the respective

merits of the various counsel practising at the Central Criminal Court.

"I have secured Whiffins," said one: "he's a capital fellow—for if he can't make anything out of your case, he instantly begins to bully the judge."

"Ah! but that produces a bad effect," observed a second; "and old Griffin would soon put him down. I've got Clearnley—he's such a capital fellow to make the witnesses contradict themselves."

"Well, I prefer Barkson," exclaimed a third; "his voice alone frightens a prosecutor into fits."

"Smouch and Silke are the worst," said a fourth: "the judges always read the paper or fall asleep when they address them."

"Yes—because they are such low fellows, and will take a brief from any one," exclaimed a fifth; "whereas it is totally contrary to etiquette for a barrister to receive instructions from any one but an attorney."

"The fact is that such men as Smouch and Silke do a case more harm than good, with the judges," observed a sixth. "They haven't the ear of the Court—and that's the real truth of it."

These remarks diminished still more the immense respect which Markham had hitherto entertained for English justice; and he now saw that the barrister who detailed plain and simple facts, did not stand half such a good chance of saving his client as the favoured one "who possessed the ear of the Court."

By a very natural transition, the discourse turned upon petty juries.

"I think it will go hard with me," said one, "because I am tried in the City. I wish I had been committed for the Middlesex Sessions at Clerkenwell."

"Why so!" demanded another prisoner.

"Because, you see, I'm accused of robbing my master; and as all the jurymen are substantial shopkeepers, they're sure to convict a man in my position,—even if the evidence isn't complete."

"I'm here for swindling tradesmen at the West-End of the town," said another.

"Well," exclaimed the first speaker, "the jury will let you off if there's the slightest pretence, because they're all City tradesmen, and hate the West-End ones."

"And I'm here for what is called 'a murderous assault upon a police-constable,'" said a third prisoner.

"Was he a Metropolitan or a City-Policeman?"

"A Metropolitan."

"Oh! well—you're safe enough; the jury are sure to believe that he assaulted you first."

"Thank God for that blessing!"

"I tell you what goes a good way with Old Bailey Juries—a good appearance. If a poor devil, clothed in rags and very ugly, appears at the bar, the Foreman of the Jury just says, 'Well, gentlemen, I think we may say GUILTY; for my part I never saw such a long-dog countenance in my life.' But if a well-dressed and good-looking fellow is placed in the dock, the Foreman is most likely to say, 'Well, gentlemen, for my part I never saw nor will believe that the prisoner could be guilty of such wickedness; so I suppose we may say NOT GUILTY, gentlemen.'"

"Can this be true?" ejaculated Markham.

"Certainly it is," was the reply. "I will tell you more, too. If a prisoner's counsel don't tip the jury plenty of soft sawdow, and tell them that they are enlightened Englishmen, and that they are the main prop, not only of justice, but also of the crown itself, they will be certain to find a verdict of Guilty."

"What infamy!" cried Markham, perfectly astounded at these revelations.

"Ah! and what's worse still," added his informant, "is that Old Baily juries always, as a matter of course, convict those poor devils who have no counsel."

"And this is the vaunted palladium of justice and liberty!" said Richard.

In this way did the prisoners in Markham's ward contrive to pass away an hour or two, for they were allowed no candle and no fire, and had consequently been forced to retire to their wretched couches immediately after dusk.

The night was thus painfully long and wearisome.

Markham found upon enquiry that there were two methods of living in Newgate. One was to subsist upon the gaol allowance: the other to provide for oneself. Those who received the allowance were not permitted to have beer, nor were their friends suffered to add the slightest comfort to their sorry meals; and those who paid for their own food, were restricted as to quantity and quality.

Such is the treatment prisoners experience before they are tried;—and yet there is an old saying that every one must be deemed innocent until he be proved guilty. The old saying is a detestable mockery!

Of course Markham determined upon paying for his own food; and when Whittingham called in the morning, he was sent to make the necessary arrangements with the coffee-house keeper in the Old Bailey who enjoyed the monopoly of supplying that compartment of the prison.

The most painful ordeal which Richard had to undergo during his captivity in Newgate, was his first interview with Mr. Monroe. This gentleman was profoundly affected at the situation of his youthful ward, though not for one moment did he doubt his innocence.

And here let us mention another revolting humiliation and unnecessary cruelty to which the wretched prisoner is compelled to submit. In each yard is a small enclosure, or cage, of thick iron bars, covered with wire-work; and beyond this fence, at a distance of about two feet, is another row of bars similarly interwoven with wire. The visitor is compelled to stand in this cage to converse with his relative or friend, who is separated from him by the two gratings. All private discourse is consequently impossible.

What can recompense the prisoner who is acquitted, for all the mortifications, insults, indignities, and privations he has undergone in Newgate previous to that trial which triumphantly proclaims his innocence?

Relative to the interview between Markham and Monroe, all that it is necessary to state is that the young man's guardian promised to adopt all possible means to prove his innocence, and spare no expense in securing the most intelligent and influential legal assistance. Mr. Monroe moreover intimated his intention of removing the case from the hands of Mac Chizale to those of a well-known and highly respectable solicitor. Richard declared that he left himself entirely in his guardian's hands, and expressed his deep gratitude for the interest thus demonstrated by that gentleman in his behalf.

Thus terminated the first interview in Newgate between Markham and his late father's confidential friend.

He felt somewhat relieved by this visit, and entertained strong hopes of being enabled to prove his innocence upon the day of trial.

But it then wanted a whole month to the next sessions—thirty horrible days which he would be compelled to pass in Newgate!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REPUBLICAN AND THE RESURRECTION MAN.

As Richard was walking up and down the yard, an hour or two after his interview with Mr. Monroe, he was attracted by the venerable appearance of an elderly gentleman who was also parading that dismal place to and fro.

This individual was attired in a complete suit of black; and his pale countenance, and long grey hair flowing over his coat-collar, were rendered the more remarkable by the mournful nature of his garb. He stooped considerably in his gait, and walked with his hands joined together behind him. His eyes were cast upon the ground; and his meditations appeared to be of a profound and soul-absorbing nature.

Markham immediately experienced a strange curiosity to become acquainted with this individual, and to ascertain the cause of his imprisonment. He did not, however, choose to interrupt that venerable man's reverie. Accident presently favoured his wishes, and placed within his reach the means of introduction to the object of his curiosity. The old gentleman changed his line of walk in the spacious yard, and tripped over a loose flagstone. His head came suddenly in contact with the ground. Richard hastened to raise him up, and conducted him to a bench. The old gentleman was very grateful for these attentions; and, when he was recovered from the effects of his fall, he surveyed Markham with the utmost interest.

"What circumstance has thrown you into this vile den?" he inquired, in a pleasant tone of voice.

Richard instantly related, from beginning to end, those particulars with which the reader is already acquainted.

The old man remained silent for some minutes, and then fixed his eyes upon Markham in a manner that seemed intended to read the secrets of his soul.

Richard did not quail beneath that eagle-glance; but a deep blush suffused his countenance.

"I believe you, my boy—I believe every word you have uttered," suddenly exclaimed the stranger: "you are the victim of circumstances; and deeply do I commiserate your situation."

"I thank you sincerely—most sincerely for your good opinion," said Richard. "And now, permit me to ask you what has plunged you into a gaol? No crime, I feel convinced before you speak!"

"Never judge hastily, young man," returned the old gentleman. "My conviction of your innocence was principally established by the very circumstance which would have led others to pronounce in favour of your guilt. You blushed—deeply blushed; but it was not the glow of shame: it was the honest flush of conscious integrity unjustly suspected. Now, with regard to myself, I know why you imagine me to be innocent of any crime; but, remember that a mild, peaceable and venerable exterior frequently covers a heart eaten up with every evil passion, and a soul stained with every crime. You were however right in your conjecture relative to myself. I am a person accused of a political offence—a libel upon the government, in a journal of considerable influence which I conduct. I shall be tried next session;

my sentence will not be severe, perhaps; but it will not be the less unjust. I am the friend of my fellow-countrymen and my fellow-creatures: the upright and the enlightened denominate me a philanthropist; my enemies denounce me as a disturber of the public peace, a seditious agitator, and a visionary. You have undoubtedly heard of Thomas Armstrong?"

"I have not only heard of you, sir," said Richard, surveying the great Republican writer with profound admiration and respect, "but I have read your works and your essays with pleasure and interest."

"In certain quarters," continued Armstrong, "I am represented as a character who ought to be loathed and shunned by all virtuous and honest people,—that I am a moral pestilence,—a social plague; and that my writings are only deserving of being burnt by the hands of the common hangman. The organs of the rich and aristocratic classes, level every species of coarse invective against me. And yet, O God!" he added enthusiastically, "I only strive to arouse the grovelling spirit of the industrious millions to a sense of the wrongs under which they labour, and to prove to them that they were not sent into this world to lick the dust beneath the feet of majesty and aristocracy!"

"Do you not think," asked Richard, timidly, "that you are somewhat in advance of the age? Do you not imagine that a republic would be dangerously premature?"

"My dear youth, let us not discuss this matter in a den where all our ideas are concentrated in the focus formed by our misfortunes. Let me rather assist you with my advice upon the mode of conduct you should preserve in this prison, so that you may not become too familiar with the common herd, nor offend by being too distant."

Mr. Armstrong then proffered his counsel upon this point.

"I feel deeply indebted to you for your kindness," exclaimed Markham: "very—very grateful!"

"Grateful!" cried the old man, somewhat bitterly. "Oh! how I dislike that word! The enemies who persecute me now, are those who have received the greatest favours from me. But there is one—one whose treachery and base ingratitude I never can forget—although I can forgive him! Almost four years ago, I accidentally learnt that a young man of pleasing appearance, genteel manners, and good acquirements, was in a state of the deepest distress, in an obscure lodging in Hoxton Old Town. I called upon him: to the account which had reached my ears was too true. He was bordering upon starvation; and—although he assured me that he had relations and friends moving in a wealthy sphere—he declared that particular reasons, which he implored me not to divulge into, compelled him to refrain from addressing them. I relieved his necessities; I gave him money, and procured him clothes. I then took him as my private secretary, and soon put the greatest confidence in him. Alas! how was I recompensed? He betrayed all my political secrets to the government: he literally sold me! At length he absconded, taking with him a considerable sum of money, which he abstracted from my desk."

"How despicable!" ejaculated Richard.

"That is not all, I met him afterwards, and forgave him!" said Armstrong.

"Ah! you possess, sir, a noble heart," cried Richard: "I hope that this misguided young man will find sincere proofs of repentance!"

"Oh! he was very grateful!" ejaculated Mr. Armstrong, with a satirical smile: "when he heard that there was a warrant issued for my apprehension, upon a charge of libel on the government, he secretly instructed the officers relative to my private haunts, and thus sold me again!"

"The villain!" cried Markham, with unfeigned indignation. "Tell me his name, that I may avoid him as I would a poisonous viper!"

"His name is George Montague," returned Mr. Armstrong.

"George Montague!" cried Richard.

"Do you know him? have you heard of him before? If you happen to be aware of his present abode—"

"You would send and have him arrested for the robbery of the money in your desk?"

"No—write and assure him of my forgiveness once more," replied the noble-hearted republican. "But how came you acquainted with his name?"

"I have heard of that young man before, but not in a way to do him honour. A tale of robbery and seduction—of heartless cruelty and vile deceit—has been communicated to me relative to this George Montague. Can you forgive such a wretch as he is?"

"From the bottom of my heart," answered the republican.

Markham gazed upon that venerable gentleman with profound respect. He remembered to have seen the daily Tory newspapers denounce that same old man as "an unprincipled agitator—the enemy of his country—the foe to morality—a political ruffian—a bloody-minded votary of Robespierre and Danton!"—and he now heard the sweetest and holiest sentiment of Christian morality emanate from the lips of him who had thus been fearfully represented. And that sentiment was uttered without affectation, but with unequivocal sincerity!

For a moment Richard forgot his own sorrows and misfortunes, as he contemplated the benign and holy countenance of him whom a certain class loved to depict as a demon incarnate!

The old man did not notice the interest which he had thus excited, for he had himself fallen into a profound reverie.

Presently the conversation was resumed; and the more that Markham saw of the Republican, the more did he respect and admire him.

In the course of the afternoon Markham was accosted by one of his fellow-prisoners, who beckoned him aside in a somewhat mysterious manner. This individual was a very short, thin, cadaverous-looking man, with coal-black hair and whiskers, and dark piercing eyes half concealed beneath shaggy brows of the deepest jet. He was apparently about five-and-thirty years of age. His countenance was downcast; and when he spoke, he seemed as if he could not support the glance of the person whom he addressed. He was dressed in a seedy suit of black, and wore an old-skin cap with a large shade.

This person, who was very reserved and retired in his habits, and seldom associated with his fellow-prisoners, drew Markham aside, and said, "I've taken a liberty with your name; but I know you won't mind it. In a place like this we must help and assist each other."

"And in what way—" began Markham.

"Oh! nothing very important; only it's just as well to tell you in case the turnkey says a word about it. The fact is, I haven't half enough to eat with this infernal gruel and soup that they give those who, like me, are forced to take the gas allowance,

and my old mother—who is known by the name of the Mummy—has promised to send me in presently a jolly good quarton loaf and three or four pound of Dutch cheese."

"But I thought that those who took the gaol allowance were not permitted to receive any food from outside?" said Markham.

"That's the very thing," said the man: "so I I have told the Mummy to direct the parcel to you, as I know that you grub yourself at your own cost."

"So long as it does not involve me——"

"No—not in the least, my good fellow," interrupted the other. "And, in return," he added, after a moment's pause, "if I can ever do you a service, outside or in, you may reckon upon the Resurrection Man."

"The Resurrection Man!" ejaculated Richard, appalled, in spite of himself, at this ominous title.

"Yes—that's my name and profession," said the man. "My godfathers and godmothers called me Anthony, and my parents had previously blessed me with the honourable appellation of Tidkins: so you may know me as Anthony Tidkins, the Resurrection Man."

"And are you really——" began Richard, with a partial shudder; "are you really a——"

"A body-snatcher?" cried Anthony; "of course I am—when there's any work to be done; and when there isn't, then I do a little in another line."

"And what may that be?" demanded Markham.

This time the Resurrection Man did look his interlocutor full in the face; but it was only for a moment; and he again averted his glance in a sinister manner, as he jerked his thumb towards the wall of the yard, and exclaimed, "Crankey Jem on t'other side will tell you if you ask him. They would not put us together: no—no," he added, with a species of chuckle; "they know a trick worth two of that. We shall both be tried together: fifteen years for him—freedom for me! That's the way to do it."

With these words the Resurrection Man turned upon his heel, and walked away to the farther end of the yard.

We shall now take leave of Markham for the present: when we again call the reader's attention to his case, we shall find him standing in the dock of the Central Criminal Court, to take his trial upon the grave accusation of passing forged notes.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DUNGEON.

RETURN now to Bill Bolter, the murderer, who had taken refuge in the subterranean hiding-place of the Old House in Chick Lane.

Heavily and wearily did the hours drag along. The inmate of that terrible dungeon was enabled to mark their lapse by the deep-mouthed bell of St. Sepulchre's Church, on Snow Hill, the sound of which boomed ominously at regular intervals upon his ear.

That same bell tolls the death-note of the convict on the morning of his execution at the debtors' door of Newgate.

The murderer remembered this, and shuddered. A faint—faint light glimmered through the little grating at the end of the dungeon; and the man kept his eyes fixed upon it so long, that at length his imagination began to conjure up phantoms to

appal him. That small square aperture became a frame in which hideous countenances appeared; and then, one gradually changed into another—horrible dissolving views that they were!

But chiefly he beheld before him the tall gaunt form of his murdered wife—with one eye smashed and bleeding in her head—the other glared fearfully upon him.

This phantasmagoria became at length so fearful and so real in appearance, that the murderer turned his back towards the little grating through which the light struggled into the dungeon in two long, narrow, and oblique columns.

But then he imagined that there were goblins behind him; and this idea soon grew as insupportable as the first;—so he rose, and groped his way up and down that narrow vault—a vault which might become his tomb!

This horrible thought never left his memory. Even while he reflected upon other things,—amidst the perils which enveloped his career, and the reminiscences of the dread deeds of which he had been guilty,—amongst the reasons which he assembled together to convince himself that the hideous countenances at the grating did not exist in reality,—there was that one idea—unnixed—definite—standing boldly out from all the rest in his imagination,—that he might be left to die of starvation!

At one time the brain of this wretch was excited to such a pitch that he actually caught his head in his two hands, and pressed it with all his force—to endeavour to crush the horrible visions which haunted his imagination.

Then he endeavoured to hum a tune; but his voice seemed to choke him. He lighted a pipe, and ate and smoked; but as the thin blue vapour curled upwards, in the faint light of the grating, it assumed shapes and forms appalling to behold. Spectres, clad in long winding sheets—cold grisly corpses, dressed in shrouds, seemed to move noiselessly through the dungeon.

He laid aside the pipe; and, in a state of mind bordering almost upon frenzy, tossed off the brandy that had remained in the flask.

But so full of horrible ideas was his mind at that moment, that it appeared to him as if he had been drinking blood!

He rose from his seat once more, and groped up and down the dungeon, careless of the almost stunning blows which he gave his head, and the violent contusions which his limbs received, against the uneven walls.

Hark! suddenly voices fell upon his ears. He listened with mingled fear and joy,—fear of being discovered, and joy at the sound of human tones in the midst of that subterranean solitude.

Those voices came from the lower window of the dwelling on the other side of the ditch.

"How silent and quiet everything has been lately in the old house opposite," said a female.

"Last night—or rather early this morning, I heard singing there," replied another voice, which was evidently that of a young woman.

Oh! never had the human tones sounded so sweet and musical upon the murderer's ears before!

"It is very seldom that any one ever goes into that old house now," said the first speaker.

"Strange rumours are abroad concerning it: I heard that there are subterranean places in which men can conceal themselves, and no power on earth could find them save those in the secret."

"How absurd! I was speaking to the policeman

his imagination began to conjure up phantoms to

about that very thing a few days ago; and he laughed at the idea. He says it is impossible; and of course he knows best."

"I am not so sure of that. Who knows what fearful deeds have those old walls concealed from human eye? For my part, I can very well believe that there are secret cells and caverns. Who knows but that some poor wretch is hiding there this very moment?"

"Perhaps the man that murdered his wife up in Union Court."

"Well—who knows? But at this rate we shall never get on with our work."

The noise of a window being shut down fell upon the murderer's ears; and he heard no more.

But he had heard enough! Those girls had spoken of him:—they had mentioned him as *the man who had murdered his wife*.

The assassination, then, was already known: the dread deed was braited abroad—thousands and thousands of tongues had no doubt repeated the tale here and there—conveying it hither and thither—far and wide!

And throughout the vast metropolis was he already spoken of as *the man who had murdered his wife*!

And in a few hours more, would millions in all parts hear of the *man who had murdered his wife*!

And already were the officers of justice actively in search of the *man who had murdered his wife*!

Heavily—heavily passed the hours.

At length the dungeon became pitch dark; and then the murderer saw sights more appalling than when the faint gleam stole through the grating.

In due time the sonorous voice of Saint Sepulchre proclaimed the hour of nine.

Scarcely had the last stroke of that iron tongue died upon the breeze, when a noise at the head of the spiral staircase fell upon the murderer's ears. The trap-door was raised, and the well-known voice of Dick Flairer was heard.

"Well, Bill—alive or dead, eh—old fellow!" exclaimed the burglar.

"Alive—and that's all, Dick," answered Bill Bolter, ascending the staircase.

"My God! how pale you are, Bill," said Dick, the moment the light of the candle fell upon the countenance of the murderer as he emerged from the trap-door.

"Pale, Dick!" ejaculated the wretch, a shudder passing over his entire frame; "I do not believe I can stand a night in that infernal hole."

"You must, Bill—you must," said Flairer: "all is discovered up in Union Court there, and the police are about in all directions."

"When was it found out? Tell me the particulars—speak!" said the murderer, with frenzied impatience.

"Why, it appears that the neighbours heard a devil of a noise in your room, but didn't think nothink about it, cos you and Polly used to spar a bit now and then. But at last the boy—Harry, I mean—went down stairs and said that his mother wouldn't move, and that his father had gone away. So up the neighbours went—and then everything was blown. The children was sent to the workus, and the coroner held his inquest this afternoon at three. Harry was had up before him; and—"

"And what?" demanded Bolter, hastily.

"And, in course," added Dick, "the Coroner got out of the boy all the particlars: so the jury returned a verdict —"

"Of *Wilful Murder*, eh?" said Bill, sinking his voice almost to a whisper.

"*Wilful Murder against William Bolter*," answered Dick, coolly.

"That little vagabond Harry!" cried the criminal—his entire countenance distorted with rage; "I'll be the death on him!"

"There's no news at all about t'other affair up at Clapton, and no stir made in it at all," said Dick, after a moment's pause: "so that there business is all right. But here's a lot of grub and plenty of lush, Bill: that'll cheer ye, if nothink else will."

"Dick!" exclaimed the murderer, "I cannot go back into that hole—I had rather get nabbed at once. The few hours I have already been there have nearly drove me mad; and I can't—I won't attempt the night in that infernal cold damp vault. I feel as if I was in my coffin."

"Well, you know best," said Dick, coolly. "A hempen neckcloth at Tuck-up fair, and a leap from a tree with only one leaf, is what you'll get if you're perverse."

"My God—my God!" ejaculated Bolter, wringing his hands, and throwing glances of extreme terror around the room: "what am I to do? what am I to do?"

"Lie still down below for a few weeks, or go out and be scragged," said Dick Flairer. "Come, Bill, be a man; and don't take on in this here way. Besides, I'm in a hurry, and must be off. I've brought you enough grub for three days, as I shan't come here too often till the business has blowed over a little."

Bill Bolter took a long draught from a quart bottle of rum which his friend had brought with him; and he then felt his spirits revive. Horrible as the prospect of a long sojourn in the dungeon appeared, it was still preferable to the fearful doom which must inevitably follow his capture; and, accordingly, the criminal once more returned to his hiding-place.

Dick Flairer promised to return on the third evening from that time; and the trap-door again closed over the head of the murderer.

Bolter supped off a portion of the provisions which his friend had brought him, and then lay down upon the hard stone bench to sleep. A noisome stench entered the dungeon from the Ditch, and the rats ran over the person of the inmate of that subterranean hole. Repose was impossible: the miserable wretch therefore sat up, and began to smoke.

By accident he kicked his leg a little way beneath the stone bench: the heel of his boot encountered something that yielded to the touch; and a strange noise followed.

That noise was like the rattling of bones!

The pipe fell from the man's grasp; and he himself was stupefied with sudden terror.

At length, exercising immense violence over his feelings, he determined to ascertain whether the horrible suspicions which had entered his mind, were well-founded or not.

He thrust his hand beneath the bench, and encountered the mouldering bones of a human skeleton.

With indescribable feelings of agony and horror he threw himself upon the bench—his hair on end, and his heart palpitating violently.

Heaven only can tell how he passed that long weary night—alone, in the darkness of the dungeon, with his own thoughts, the skeleton of some murdered victim, and the vermin that infected the subterranean hole.



c. 1847.

He slept not a wink throughout those live-long hours, the lapse of which was proclaimed by the voice of Saint Sepulchre's solemn and deep toned bell.

And none who heard the bell during that night experienced feelings of such intense anguish and horror as the murderer in his lurking-hole. Not even the neighbouring prison of Newgate, nor the hospital of Saint Bartholomew, nor the death-bed of a parent, knew mental suffering so terrible as that which wrung the heart of this guilty wretch.

The morning dawned; and the light returned to the dungeon.

The clock had just struck eight, and the murderer was endeavouring to force a mouthful of food down

his throat, when the voice of a man in the street fell upon his ear. He drew close up to the grating, and clearly heard the following announcement:—

Here is a full and perfect account of the horrible assassination committed by the miscreant William Bolter, upon the person of his wife; with a portrait of the murderer, and a representation of the room as it appeared when the deed was first discovered by a neighbour. Only one Penny! The fullest and most perfect account—only one Penny!

A pause ensued, and then the voice, hawling more lustily than before, continued thus:—

"A full and perfect account of the bloody and cruel murder in Upper Union Court; showing how the assassin first dashed out one of his victim's eyes, and

then fractured her skull upon the floor. Only one Penny, together with a true portrait of the murderer, for whose apprehension a reward of One Hundred Pounds is offered! Only one Penny!"

"A reward of one hundred pounds!" cried another voice: "my eye! how I should like to find him!"

"Wouldn't I precious soon give him up!" ejaculated a third.

"I wonder whereabouts he is," said a fourth. "No doubt that he has run away—perhaps to America—perhaps to France."

"That shows how much you know about such things," said a fifth speaker. "It is a very strange fact, that murderers always linger near the scene of their crime; they are attracted towards it, seemingly, as the moth is to the candle. Now, for my part, I shouldn't at all wonder if the miscreant was within a hundred yards of us at the present moment."

"Only one Penny! The fullest and most perfect account of the horrible and bloody murder——"

The itinerant vendor of pamphlets passed on, followed by the crowd which his vociferations had collected; and his voice soon ceased to break the silence of the morning.

Bolter sank down upon the stone bench, a prey to maddening feelings and fearful emotions.

A hundred pounds were offered for his capture! Such a sum might tempt even Dick Flairer or Tom the Cracksman to betray him.

Instinctively he put his fingers to his neck, to feel if the rope were there yet, and he shook his head violently to ascertain if he were hanging on a gibbet, or could still control his motions.

The words "miscreant," "horrible and bloody murder," and "portrait of the assassin," still rang in his ears—loud—sonorous—deep—and with a prolonged echo like that of a bell!

Already were men speculating upon his whereabouts, and anxious for his apprehension—some for the reward, others to gratify a morbid curiosity; already were the newspapers, the cheap press, and the pamphleteers busy with his name.

None now mentioned him save as the miscreant *William Bolter*.

Oh! if he could but escape to some foreign land,—if he could but avoid the ignominious consequences of his crime in this,—he would dedicate the remainder of his days to penitence,—he would toil from the dawn of morning till sunset to obtain the bread of honesty,—he would use every effort, exert every nerve to atone for the outrage he had committed upon the laws of society!

But—no! it was too late. The blood-hounds of the law were already upon his track.

An hour passed away; and during that interval the murderer sought to compose himself by means of his pipe and the rum-bottle; but he could not banish the horrible ideas which haunted him.

Suddenly a strange noise fell upon his ear.

The blood appeared to run cold in his very heart in a reflux tide; for the steps of many feet, and the sounds of many voices, echoed through the old house.

The truth instantly flashed to his mind: the police had entered the premises.

With hair standing on end, eye-balls glaring, and forehead bathed in perspiration, the murderer sat motionless upon the cold stone bench—afraid even to breathe. Every moment he expected to hear the trap-door at the head of the spiral staircase move;

but several minutes elapsed, and his fears in this respect were not accomplished.

At length he heard a sound as of a body falling heavily; and then a voice almost close to him fell upon his ear.

The reader will remember that the vault in which he was concealed, joined the cellar from whence Walter Sydney had escaped. The officers had entered that cellar by means of the trap-door in the floor of the room immediately above it. Bolter could overhear their entire conversation.

"Well, this is a strange crib, this is," said one. "Show the bull's-eye up in that further corner; there may be a door in one of them dark nooks."

"It will jist end as I said it would," exclaimed another: "the feller wouldn't be sich a fool as to come to a place that's knowed to the Force as one of bad repate."

"I didn't think, myself, there was much good in coming to search this old crib; but the inspector said yes, and so we couldn't say no."

"Let's be off: the cold of this infernal den strikes to my very bones. But I say—that there shivering board that we first lighted on in getting down, isn't made to help people to come here alive."

"Turn the bull's-eye more on it."

"Now can you see?"

"Yes—plain enough. It leads to a hole that looks on the ditch. But the plank is quite old and rotten; so I dare say it was put there for some purpose or another a long time ago. Perhaps the thieves used to convey their swag through that there hole into a boat in the ditch, and——"

"No, no," interrupted the other policeman: "it wasn't swag that they tumbled down the plank into the Fleet; it was stiff 'uns."

"Very likely. But there can't be any of that kind of work ever going on now; so let's be off."

The murderer in the adjoining vault could hear the policemen climb up the plank towards the trap-door; and in a few minutes profound silence again reigned throughout the old house.

This time he had escaped detection; and yet the search was keen and penetrating.

The apparent safety of his retreat restored him to something like good spirits; and he began to calculate the chances which he imagined to exist for and against the probability of his escape from the hands of justice.

"There is but five men in the world as knows of this hiding-place," he said to himself; "and them is myself, Dick Flairer, Crankey Jem, the Resurrection Man, and Tom the Cracksman. As for me, I'm here—that's one what won't blab. Dick Flairer isn't likely to sell a pal: Tom the Cracksman I'd rely on even if he was on the rack. Crankey Jem is staunch to the backbone; besides, he's in the Jug; so is the Resurrection Man. They can't do much harm there. I think I'm tolerably safe; and as for frightening myself about ghosts and goblins——"

He was suddenly interrupted by the rattling of the bones beneath the stone-bench. He started; and a profuse perspiration instantly broke out upon his forehead.

A huge rat had disturbed those relics of mortality; but this little incident tended to lull the murderer back again into all that appalling gloominess of thought from which he had for a moment seemed to be escaping.

Time wore on: and heavily and wearily still passed

the hours. At length darkness again came down upon the earth: the light of the little grating disappeared; and the vault was once more enveloped in the deepest obscurity.

The murderer ate a mouthful, and then endeavoured to compose himself to sleep, for he was worn out mentally and bodily.

The clock of Saint Sepulchre's proclaimed the hour of seven, as he awoke from a short and feverish slumber.

He thought he heard a voice calling him in his dreams; and when he started up he listened with affright.

"Bill—are you asleep?"

It was not, then, a dream: a human voice addressed him in reality.

"Bill—why don't you answer?" said the voice. "It's only me!"

Boher suddenly felt relieved of an immense load; it was his friend Dick who was calling him from the little trap-door. He instantly hurried up the staircase, and was surprised to find that there was no light in the room.

"My dear feller," said Dick, in a hurried tone, "I didn't mean to come back so soon again, but me and Tom is a-going to do a little business together down Southampton way—somebody that he has been told of; and as we may be away a few days, I thought I'd better come this evenin' with a fresh supply. Here's plenty of grub, and rum, and bakker."

"Well, this is a treat—to hear a friendly voice again so soon," said Bill;—"but why the devil don't you light the candle?"

"I'm a-going to do it now," returned Dick; and he struck a lucifer-match as he spoke. "I thought I wouldn't show a light here sooner than was necessary; and we must not keep it burning too long; cos there may be chinks in them shutters, and I des say the blue-bottles is on the scent."

"They come and searched the whole place this mornin'," said Bill; "but they didn't smell me though."

"Then you're all safe now, my boy," cried Dick. "Here, look alive—take this basket, and pitch it down the stairs: it's well tied up, and chock full of cold meat and bread. Put them two bottles into your pocket: there—that's right. Now—do you want anythink else?"

"Yes—a knife. I was forced to gnaw my food like a dog for want of one."

"Here you are," said Dick; and, taking a knife from the secret cupboard between the windows, he handed it to his friend. "Now are you all right?"

"Quite—that is, as right as a feller in my situation can be. You won't forget to come—"

Boher was standing within two or three steps from the top of the staircase; and the greater part of his body was consequently above the trap-door.

He stopped suddenly short in the midst of his injunction to his companion, and staggered in such a way that he nearly lost his footing.

His eye had caught sight of a human countenance peering from behind the half-open door of the room.

"Damnation!" exclaimed the murderer: "I'm sold at last!"—and, rushing up the steps, he fell upon Dick Flairer with the fury of a tiger.

At the same moment four or five officers darted into the room:—but they were too late to prevent another dreadful deed of blood.

Boher had plunged the knife which he held in his hand, into the heart of Dick Flairer, the burglar.

The blow was given with fatal effect: the unfortunate wretch uttered a horrible cry, and fell at the feet of his assassin, stone dead.

"Villain! what have you done?" ejaculated the sergeant who headed the little detachment of police.

"I've drawn the claret of the rascal that nosed upon me," returned Boher doggedly.

"You were never more mistaken in your life," said the sergeant.

"How—what do you mean? Wasn't it that scoundrel Dick that chirped against me?"

"No—ten thousand times No!" cried the officer: "it was a prisoner in Newgate who split upon this hiding place. Somehow or another he heard of the reward offered to take you; and he told the governor the whole secret of the vault. Without knowing whether we should find you here or not, we came to search it."

"Then it was the Resurrection Man who betrayed me after all!" exclaimed Boher; and, dashing the palms of his two hands violently against his temples, he added, in a tone of intense agony, "I have murdered my best friend—monster, miscreant that I am!"

The policeman speedily fixed a pair of manacles about his wrists; and in the course of a quarter of an hour he was safely secured in one of the cells at the station-house in Smithfield.

On the following day he was committed to Newgate.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE BLACK CHAMBER.

Once more does the scene change.

The reader who follows us through the mazes of our narrative, has yet to be introduced to many strange places—many hideous haunts of crime, abodes of poverty, dens of horror, and lurking-places of perfidy—as well as many seats of wealthy voluptuousness and aristocratic dissipation.

It will be our task to guide those who choose to accompany us, to scenes and places whose very existence may appear to belong to the regions of romance rather than to a city in the midst of civilization, and whose characteristic features are as yet unknown to even those that are the best acquainted with the realities of life.

About a fortnight had elapsed since the events related in the preceding chapter.

In a small, high, well-lighted room five individuals were seated at a large round oaken table. One of these persons, who appeared to be the superior, was an elderly man with a high forehead, and thin white hair falling over the collar of his black coat. He was short and rather corpulent: his countenance denoted frankness and good-nature; but his eyes, which were small, grey, and sparkling, had a lurking expression of cunning, only perceptible to the acute observer. The other three individuals were young and gentlemanly-looking men, neatly dressed, and very deferential in their manners towards their superior.

The door of this room was carefully bolted. At one end of the table was a large black tray covered with an immense quantity of bread-crusts of all sizes. Perhaps the reader may recall to mind that, amongst the pursuits and amusements of his school-days, he diverted himself with moistening the crumb of bread, and kneading it with his fingers into a consistency capable of taking and retaining an accurate impres-

sion of a seal upon a letter. The seals—or rather blank bread-stamps—now upon the tray, were of this kind, only more carefully manufactured, and well consolidated with thick gum-water.

Close by this tray, in a large wooden bowl were wafers of all sizes and colours; and in a box also standing on the table, were numbers of wafer-stamps of every dimension used. A second box contained thin blades of steel, set fast in delicate ivory handles, and sharp as razors. A third box was filled with sticks of sealing-wax of all colours, and of foreign as well as British manufacture. A small glass retort fixed over a spirit-lamp, was placed near one of the young men. A tin-box containing a little cushion covered with printer's red ink in one compartment, and several stamps such as the reader may have seen used in post-offices, in another division, lay open near the other articles mentioned. Lastly, an immense pile of letters—some sealed, and others wafered—stood upon that end of the table at which the elderly gentleman was seated.

The occupations of these five individuals may be thus described in a few words.

The old gentleman took up the letters one by one, and bent them open, as it were, in such a way, that he could read a portion of their contents when they were not folded in such a manner as effectually to conceal all the writing. He also examined the addresses, and consulted a long paper of an official character which lay upon the table at his right hand. Some of the letters he threw, after as careful a scrutiny as he could devote to them without actually breaking the seals or wafers, into a large wicker basket at his feet. From time to time, however, he passed a letter to the young man who sat nearest to him.

If the letters were closed with wax, an impression of the seal was immediately taken by means of one of the bread stamps. The young man then took the letter and held it near the large fire which burnt in the grate until the sealing-wax became so softened by the heat that the letter could be easily opened without tearing the paper. The third clerk read it aloud, while the fourth took notes of its contents. It was then returned to the first young man, who re-sealed it by means of the impression taken on the bread stamp, and with wax which precisely matched that originally used in closing the letter. When this ceremony was performed, the letter was consigned to the same basket which contained those that had passed unopened through the hands of the Examiner.

If the letter were fastened with a wafer, the second clerk made the water in the little glass retort boil by means of the spirit-lamp; and when the vapour gushed forth from the tube, the young man held the letter to its mouth in such a way that the steam played full upon the identical spot where the wafer was placed. The wafer thus became moistened in a slight degree; and it was only then necessary to pass one of the thin steel blades skillfully beneath the wafer, in order to open the letter. The third young man then read this epistle, and the fourth took notes, as in the former instance. The contents being thus ascertained, the letter was easily fastened again with a very thin wafer of the same colour and size as the original; and if the job were at all clumsily done, the tin-box before noticed furnished the means of imprinting a red stamp upon the back of the letter, in such a way that a portion of the circle fell precisely over the spot beneath which the wafer was placed.

These processes were accomplished in total silence,

save when the contents of the letters were read; and then, so accustomed were those five individuals to hear the revelations of the most strange secrets and singular communications, that they seldom appeared surprised or amused—shocked or horrified, at anything which those letters made known to them. Their task seemed purely of a mechanical kind; indeed, automatons could not have shown less passion or excitement.

Oh! vile—despicable occupation,—performed, too, by men who went forth, with heads erect and confident demeanour, from their atrocious employment—after having violated those secrets which are deemed most sacred, and broken the seals which merchants, lovers, parents, relations, and friends, had placed upon their thoughts!

Base and diabolical outrage—perpetrated by the commands of the Ministers of the Sovereign!

Reader, this small, high, well-lighted room, in which such infamous scenes took place with doors well secured by bolts and bars, was the *Black Chamber of the General Post-Office, Saint Martin's-le-Grand*.

And now, reader, do you ask whether all this be true;—whether, in the very heart of the metropolis of the civilized world, such a system and such a den of infamy can exist;—whether, in a word, the means of transferring thought at a cheap and rapid rate, be really made available to the purposes of government and the ends of party policy? If you ask these questions, to each and all do we confidently and boldly answer "Yes."

The first letter which the Examiner caused to be opened on the occasion when we introduce our readers to the Black Chamber, was from the State of Castile, in Italy, to the representative of that Grand-Duchy at the English court. Its contents, when translated, ran thus:—

City of Mantua, Castile.

"I am desired by my lord the Marquis of Geronzo, his Highness's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to inform your Excellency that, in consequence of a general amnesty just proclaimed by His Serene Highness, and which includes all political prisoners and emigrants, passports to return to the Grand Duchy of Castile, may be accorded to his Highness Alberto Prince of Castile, nephew of his Serene Highness the reigning Grand Duke, as well as to all other natives of Castile now resident in England, but who may be desirous of returning to their own country.

"I have the honour to renew to your Excellency assurances of my most perfect consideration.

"BARON RUFFINO,

"Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, &c. &c.

The second letter perused upon this occasion, by the inmates of the Black Chamber, was from a famous London Banker to his father at Manchester:—

"You will be astonished, my dear father, when your eye meets the statement I am now at length compelled to submit to you. The world believes my establishment to be so firmly based as the rocks themselves; my credit is unlimited, and thousands have confided their funds to my care. Alas, my dear father, I am totally insolvent: the least drain upon the bank would plunge me into irredeemable ruin and dishonour. I have, however, an opportunity of retrieving myself, and building up my fortunes: a certain government operation is proposed to me; and if I can undertake it, my profits will be immense. Fifty thousand pounds are absolutely necessary for my purposes within six days from the present time. Consider whether you will save your son by making him this advance; or allow him to sink into infamy, disgrace and ruin, by withholding it. Whichever way you may determine breathe not a word to a soul. The authorities in the Treasury have made all possible inquiries concerning me, and believe me to be not only solvent, but immensely rich. I expect your answer by return of post.

"Your affectionate but almost heart-broken son,
"JAMES TOMLINSON."

The writer of this letter flattered himself that the government had already made "all possible enquiries;"—he little dreamt that his own epistle was to furnish the Treasury, through the medium of the Post Office, with the very information which he had so fondly deemed unknown to all save himself.

When the third letter was opened, the clerk whose duty it was to read it, looked at the signature, and, addressing himself to the Examiner, said, "From whom, sir, did you anticipate that this letter came?"

"From Lord Tremorbyn. Is it not directed to Lady Tremorbyn?" exclaimed the Examiner.

"It is, sir," answered the clerk. "But it is written by that lady's daughter Cecilia."

"I am very sorry for that. The Home Office," said the Examiner, "is particularly anxious to ascertain the intention of Lord Tremorbyn in certain party matters; and it is known," he added, referring to the official paper beside him, "that his lordship communicates all his political sentiments to her ladyship, who is now at Bath."

"Then, sir, this letter need not be read!" cried the clerk interrogatively.

"Not read, young man!" ejaculated the Examiner, impatiently. "How often am I to tell you that every letter which is once opened, is to be carefully perused? Have we not been able to afford the government and the police some very valuable information at different times, by noting the contents of letters which we have opened by mistake?"

"Certainly," added the first clerk. "There is that deeply-planned and well-laid scheme of Stephens, and his young lady disguised as a man, who lives at Upper Clapton, which we discovered by the mere accident of opening a wrong letter."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the clerk whose duty it was to read the epistles, and whose apology to the Examiner was delivered in a most deferential manner. "I will now proceed with the letter of the Honourable Miss Cecilia Huntingfield to her mother Lady Tremorbyn."

The young clerk then read as follows:—

"Oh! my dear mother, how shall I find words to convey to you the fearful tale of my disgrace and infamy of which I am the unhappy and guilty heroine! A thousand times before you left London, I was on the point of throwing myself at your feet and confessing all! But, no—I could not—I dared not. And now, my dear parent, I can conceal my shame no longer! Oh! how shall I make you comprehend me, without actually entrusting this paper with the fearful secret? My God! I am almost distracted. Scarcely you can understand my meaning! If not, learn the deplorable tidings at once, my dearest and most affectionate parent: I AM ABOUT TO SECURE A WIFE! Oh! do not spare me from you—do not curse your child! It has cost me pangs of anguish ineffable, and of mental agony an idea of which I could not convey to you, to sit down and read your heart with this avowal. But, O heavens! what am I to do! Concealment is no longer possible: IN THREE MONTHS MORE I SHALL BE A MOTHER! That villain Harborough—the friend of our family, Sir Rupert Harborough—the man in whom my dear father put every confidence,—that wretch has caused my shame! And yet there are times, my dear mother, when I feel that I love him—for he is the father of the child which must soon publish my disgrace! And now, my fond—cuddling—tender parent, you know all. Oh! come to my rescue: adopt some means to conceal my shame—shield me from my father's wrath—I can write no more at present; but my mind feels relieved now I have thus opened my heart to my mother.

"Your afflicted and almost despairing daughter,

"CECILIA HUNTINGFIELD."

Thus was a secret involving the honour of a noble family,—a secret compromising the most sacred interests—revealed to five men at one moment, by means of the atrocious system pursued in the Black Chamber of the General Post Office.

The fourth letter was from Mr. Robert Stephens of London to his brother Mr. Frederick Stephens of Liverpool:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"I write you a few hasty instructions, in which I solicit your earnest attention. You are well aware that the 26th instant is my grand day—the day to which I have been so long and so anxiously looking forward. All my schemes are so well organized that detection is impossible. That fellow Montague gave me a little trouble a fortnight or so ago, by suddenly and most unexpectedly declaring that he would not act as the witness of identity; and I was actually compelled to give him five hundred pounds to silence him. What could have been his motive for shirking out of the affair, I cannot tell. So that as it may, I have supplied his place with another and better man—a lawyer of the name of Miss Christie. But now for my instructions. The grand blow will be struck soon after mid-day on the 26th instant. Immediately it is done, I shall give Walter (I always speak of HER as a man) the ten thousand pounds I have promised him; and then off to Liverpool in a post-chaise and four. Now, if there be a packet for America on the 27th, secure me a berth; if not, ascertain if there be a vessel sailing for Havre or Bordeaux on that day, and then secure me a berth in such ship—but should there be none in this instance also, then obtain a list of all the ships which, according to present arrangements, are to leave Liverpool on the 27th, with their places of destination and all other particulars.

"Bene this letter the moment you have read it: we then know that it cannot possibly have told tales.

"Your affectionate brother,

"ROBERT STEPHENS."

Poor deluded man! he believed that letters confided to the General Post Office administration could "tell no tales" during their progress from the sender to the receiver:—how miserably was he mistaken!

And here we may observe that if the system of opening letters at the General Post Office were merely adopted for the purpose of discovering criminals and preventing crime, we should still deprecate the proceeding, although our objections would lose much of their point in consideration of the motive: but when we find—and know it to be a fact—that the secrets of correspondence are flagrantly violated for political and other purposes, we raise our voice to denounce so atrocious a system, and to excite the indignation of the country against the men who can countenance or avail themselves of it!

Numerous other letters were read upon the occasion referred to in this chapter; and their contents carefully noted down. The whole ceremony was conducted with so much regularity and method, that it proceeded with amazing despatch; and the re-fastening of the letters was managed with such skill that in few, if any instances, were the slightest traces left to excite suspicion of the process to which those epistles had been subjected.

It was horrible to see that old man forgetting the respectability of his years, and those four young ones lying aside the fine feelings which ought to have animated their bosoms,—it was horrible to see them earnestly, systematically, and skillfully devoting themselves to an avocation the most disgraceful, soul-debasing, and morally execrable!

When the ceremony of opening, reading, and re-sealing the letters was concluded, one of the clerks conveyed the basket containing them to that department of the establishment where they were to undergo the process of sorting and sub-sorting for despatch by the evening mails; and the Examiner then proceeded to make his reports to the various offices of the government. The notes of the despatch from Castledale were forwarded to the Foreign Secretary; the contents of the Banker's letter to his father were copied and sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; the particulars of Miss Cecilia Huntingfield's affect-

ing epistle to her mother were entered in a private book in case they should be required at a future day;—and an exact copy of Robert Stephens' letter to his brother was forwarded to the Solicitor of the Bank of England.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE 26TH OF NOVEMBER.

As soon as the first gleam of morning penetrated through the curtains of the boudoir in the Villa near Upper Clapton, Walter leapt from her couch.

Conflicting feelings of joy and sorrow filled her bosom. The day—the happy day had at length arrived, when, according to the promise of the man on whom she looked as her benefactor, that grand event was to be accomplished, which would release her from the detestable disguise which she had now maintained for a period of nearly five years. The era had come when she was again to appear in the garb that suited alike her charms and her inclinations. This circumstance inspired her with the most heartfelt happiness.

But, on the other hand, she loved—tenderly loved one who had meditated against her an outrage of a most infamous description. Instead of halting her approaching return to her female attire as the signal for the consummation of the fond hopes in which she had a few weeks before indulged,—hopes which pictured to her imagination delicious scenes of matrimonial bliss in the society of George Montague,—she was compelled to separate that dream of felicity from the fact of her emancipation from a thraldom repulsive to her delicacy and her tastes.

It was, therefore, with mingled feelings of happiness and melancholy, that she commenced her usual toilette—that masculine toilette which she was that day to wear for the last time.

"You ought to be in good spirits this morning, my dearest mistress," said Louisa, as she entered the room: "the period so anxiously looked forward to by you has at length arrived."

"And to-morrow—to-morrow," exclaimed Walter, her hazel eyes lighting up with a brilliant expression of joy, "you, my excellent Louisa, will assist me to adorn myself with that garb which I have neglected so of late!"

"I shall be happy both for your sake and mine," returned Louisa, who was indeed deeply attached to her mistress; "and when I see you recovering all your usual spirits, in a foreign land—"

"In Switzerland," hastily interrupted Walter; in Switzerland—whither you will accompany me, my good and faithful Louisa; and to which delightful country we will proceed without delay! There indeed I shall be happy—and, I hope, contented!"

"Mr. Stephens is to be here at ten, is he not?" said Louisa, after a short pause.

"At ten precisely; and we then repair forthwith to the West End of the town, where certain preliminaries are requisite previously to receiving an immense sum of money which will be paid over to us at the Bank of England. This much Mr. Stephens told me yesterday. He had never communicated so much before."

"And this very afternoon it is your determination to leave London?" said Louisa.

"I am now resolved upon that step," replied the lady. "You alone shall accompany me: Mr. Stephens has promised to provide for the groom and

the old cook. Therefore, while I am absent this morning about the momentous business—the real nature of which, by-the-by, has yet to be explained to me—you will make all the preparations that may be necessary for our journey."

This conversation took place while Louisa hastily lighted the fire in the boudoir. In a few minutes the grate sent up a cheering and grateful heat; and the flames roared up the chimney. The lady, with an elegant dressing-gown folded loosely around her, and her delicate white feet thrust into red morocco slippers, threw herself into her luxurious easy-chair while Louisa hastened to serve up breakfast upon a little rose-wood table, covered with a napkin as white as snow. But the meal passed away almost untouched; the lady's heart was too full of hope and tender melancholy to allow her to experience the least appetite.

The mysterious toilette was completed; and Walter descended to the parlour, attired in masculine garments for the last time!

At ten o'clock precisely Mr. Stephens arrived. He was dressed with peculiar neatness and care; but his countenance was very pale, and his eyes vibrated in a restless manner in their sockets. He, however, assumed a bold composure; and thus the profound anxiety to which he was at that moment a prey, was unnoticed by Walter Sydney.

They seated themselves upon the sofa, and looked at each other for an instant without speaking. Those glances on either side expressed, in the ardent language of the eye, the words—"This is the day!"

"Walter," said Mr. Stephens, at length breaking the silence which had prevailed, "your conduct to-day must crown my designs with glorious success, or involve me in irretrievable ruin."

"You may rely with confidence upon my discretion and prudence," answered Walter. "Command me in all respects—consistently with honour."

"Honour!" exclaimed Stephens impatiently; "why do you for ever mention that unmeaning word? *Honour* is a conventional term, and is often used in a manner inconsistently with common sense and sound judgment. *Honour* is all very well when it is brought in contact with *honour* only; but when it has to oppose fraud and deceit, it must succumb if it trust solely to its own force. The most honest lawyer sets chicanery and quibble to work, to counteract the chicanery and quibble of his pettifoggling opponent; the politician calls the machinery of intrigue into play, in order to fight his foe with that foe's own weapons;—if the French employ the aid of riflemen concealed in the thicket while the fair fight takes place upon the plain, the English must do the same."

"I certainly comprehend the necessity of frequently fighting a man with his own weapons," said Walter; "but I do not see to what point in our affairs your reasoning tends."

"Suppose, Walter," resumed Stephens, speaking very earnestly, and emphatically accentuating every syllable,—suppose that you had a friend who was entitled to certain rights which were withheld from him by means of some detestable quibble and low chicanery; suppose that by stating that your friend's name was George instead of William, for instance, you could put him in possession of what is justly and legitimately his due, but which, remember, is shamefully and most dishonestly kept away from him;—in this case, should you hesitate to declare that his name was George, and not William?"

"I think that I should be inclined to make the statement, to serve the cause of justice and to render a friend a signal service," answered Sydney, after a moment's hesitation.

"I could not have expected a different reply," exclaimed Stephens, a gleam of joy animating his pale countenance: "and you would do so with less remorse when you found that you were transferring property from one individual who could well spare what he was never justly entitled to, to a person who would starve without the restoration of his legitimate rights."

"Oh! certainly," said Walter; and this time the reply was given without an instant's meditation.

"Then," continued Stephens, more and more satisfied with the influence of his sophistry, "you would in such a case eschew those mandarin and unworldly ideas of *honor*, which arbitrarily exact that a falsehood must never be told for a good purpose, and that illegitimate means must never—never be adopted to work out virtuous and profitable ends?"

"My conduct in assuming this disguise," returned Sydney, with a smile and a blush, "has proved to you, I should imagine, that I should not hesitate to make use of a deceit comparatively innocent, with a view to oppose fraud and ensure permanent benefit to my friend and myself."

"Oh! Walter, you should have been a man in person as well as in mind!" cried Stephens, enthusiastically. "Now I have no fears of the result of my plans; and before sun-set you shall be worth ten thousand pounds!"

"Ten thousand pounds!" repeated Walter, mechanically. "How much can be done with such a sum as that!"

"You expressed a wish to leave this country, and visit the south of Europe," said Stephens: "you will have ample means to gratify all your tastes, and administer to all your inclinations. Only conceive a beautiful little cottage on the shore of the lake of Brienz—that pearl of the Oberland; the fair boat-women—the daughters of Switzerland—passing in their little shallops beneath your windows, and singing their national songs, full of charming tenderness, while the soft music mingles with the murmuring waves and the sounds of the oars!"

"Oh! what an enchanting picture!" cried Walter. "And have you ever seen such as this?"

"I have; and I feel convinced that the existence I recommend is the one which will best suit you. To-day," continued Stephens, watching his companion's countenance with a little anxiety, "shall you recover your rights—to-day shall you oppose the innocent deceit to the enormous fraud;—to-day shall you do for yourself what you are now stated you would do for a friend!"

"If you have drawn my own case in putting those queries to me,—if immense advantages will be derived from my behaviour in this affair,—if I am merely wresting from the hands of base cupidity that which is justly mine own,—and if the enemy whom we oppose can well afford to restore to me the means of subsistence, and thus render me independent for the remainder of my days,—oh! how can I hesitate for a moment? how can I refuse to entrust myself wholly and solely—blindly and confidently—in your hands,—you who have done so much for me, and who have taught me to respect, honour, and obey you?"

The lady uttered these words with a species of electric enthusiasm, while her eyes brightened, and her cheeks were suffused with the purple glow of

animation. The specious arguments and the glowing description of Swiss life, brought forward by Stephens with admirable dexterity, awakened all the ardour of an impassioned soul; and the bosom of that beauteous creature palpitated with hope, with joy, and with excitement, as she gazed upon the future through the mirror presented by Stephens to her view.

She was now exactly in a frame of mind suited to his purpose. Without allowing her ardour time to abate, and while she was animated by the delicious aspirations which he had conjured up, as it were by an enchanter's spell, in her breast, he took her by the hand, and led her up to the mantelpiece; then, pointing to the portrait of her brother, he said in a low, hurried, and yet solemn tone,—“The fortune which must be wrested from the grasp of cupidity this day, would have belonged to your brother; and no power on earth could have deprived him of it; for, had he lived, he would yesterday have attained his twenty-first year! His death is unknown to him who holds this money: but, by a miserable legal technicality, you—yes, his sister, and in justice his heiress—you would be deprived of that fortune by the man who now grasps it, and who would chuckle at any plan which made it his own. Now do you comprehend me? You have but to say that your name is *Walter*, instead of *Eliza*,—and you will recover your just rights, defeat the wretched chicanery of the law, and enter into possession of those resources which belong to you in the eyes of God, but which, if you shrink, will be for ever alienated from you and yours!”

"In one word," said the lady, "I am to personate my brother?"

"Precisely! Do you hesitate?" demanded Stephens: "will you allow the property of your family to pass into the hands of a stranger, who possesses not the remotest right to its enjoyment? or will you by one bold effort—an effort that cannot fail—direct that fortune into its just, its proper, and its legitimate channel?"

"The temptation is great," said the lady, earnestly contemplating the portrait of her brother; "but the danger—the danger?" she added hastily: "what would be the result if we were detected?"

"Nothing—nothing, save the total loss of the entire fortune," answered Stephens: "and, therefore, you perceive, that want of nerve—hesitation—awkwardness—blushes—confusion on your part, would ruin all. Be firm—be collected—be calm and resolute—and our plans *must* be crowned with unequivocal success!"

"Oh! if I proceed farther, I will pass through the ordeal with ease and safety," exclaimed the lady: "I can nerve my mind to encounter any danger, when it is well defined, and I know its extent;—it is only when it is vague, uncertain, and indistinct, that I shrink from meeting it. Yes," she continued, after a few moments' reflection, "I will follow your counsel in all respects; you do know—you must know how much we risk, and how far we compromise ourselves;—and when I see you ready to urge on this matter to the end, how can I fear to accompany you? Yes," she added, after another pause, much longer than the preceding one,—“I will be Walter Sydney throughout this day at least!”

"My dear friend," ejaculated Stephens, in a transport of joy, "you act in a manner worthy of your noble-hearted brother, I see—he smiles upon you even in his picture-frame."

"I will retrieve from the hands of strangers that

which is thine, dear brother," said the lady, addressing herself to the portrait as if it could hear the words which she pronounced with a melancholy solemnity; then, turning towards Stephens, she exclaimed, "But you must acquaint me with the ceremonies we have to fulfil, and the duties which I shall have to perform, in order to accomplish the desired aim."

"I need not instruct you now," returned Stephens; "the forms are nothing, and explain themselves, as it were;—a few papers to sign at a certain person's house in Grosvenor Square—then a ride to the Bank—and all is over. But we must now take our departure: the hackney-coach that brought us hither is waiting to convey us to the West End."

Stephens and Sydney issued from the house together. The former gave certain directions to the coachman; and they then commenced their memorable journey.

Mr. Stephens did not allow his companion a single moment for calm and dispassionate reflection. He continued to expatiate upon the happiness which was within her reach amidst the rural scenery of Switzerland: he conjured up before her mental vision the most ravishing and delightful pictures of domestic tranquillity, so congenial to her tastes;—he fed her imagination with all those fairy visions which were calculated to attract and dazzle a mind tinged with a romantic shade;—and then he skillfully introduced those specious arguments which blinded her as to the real nature of the deceit in which she was so prominent an agent. He thus sustained an artificial state of excitement, bordering upon enthusiasm, in the bosom of that confiding and generous-hearted woman; and not for one moment during that long ride, did she repent of the step she had taken. In fact, such an influence did the reasoning of Stephens exercise upon her mind, that she ceased to think of the possibility of either incurring danger or doing wrong;—she knew not how serious might be the consequences of detection;—she believed that she was combating the chicanery of the law with a similar weapon, the use of which was justified and rendered legitimate by the peculiar circumstances of the case.

The hackney-coach proceeded by way of the New Road, and stopped to take up Mr. Mac Chizzle at his residence near Saint Pancras New Church. The vehicle then proceeded to Grosvenor Square, where it stopped opposite one of those princely dwellings whose dingy exteriors afford to the eye of the foreigner accustomed to the gorgeous edifices of continental cities, but little promise of the wealth, grandeur, and magnificence which exist within.

The door was opened by a footman in splendid livery.

This domestic immediately recognised Mr. Stephens, and said, "His lordship expects you, sir."

The three visitors alighted from the coach: and as Stephens walked with the disguised lady into the hall of the mansion, he said in a hurried whisper, "Courage, my dear Walter: you are now about to appear in the presence of the Earl of Warrington!"

The servant led the way up a wide staircase, and conducted the visitors into a library fitted up in the most luxurious and costly manner. Cases filled with magnificently bound volumes, statues of exquisite sculpture, and pictures of eminent artists, denoted the taste of the aristocratic possessor of that lordly mansion.

Two individuals were seated at a table covered with papers and legal documents. One was a fine, tall, middle-aged man, with a noble and handsome countenance, polished manners, and most kind and affable address;—the other was an old gentleman with a bald head, sharp features, and constant smile upon his lips when he addressed the personage just described.

The first was the Earl of Warrington; the other was his solicitor, Mr. Pakenham.

The Earl rose and greeted Mr. Stephens cordially; then, turning towards Walter, he shook her kindly by the hand, and said, "I need not ask if you are the young gentleman to whom I am to be introduced as Mr. Walter Sydney."

"This is my ward, your lordship," said Mr. Stephens, smiling. "I think it is scarcely necessary to call your lordship's attention to the striking resemblance which he bears to his lamented father."

"Yes—it would be impossible to mistake him," said his lordship hastily, while a cloud passed over his brow. "But sit down—pray sit down; and we will proceed to business. I presume that gentleman is your professional adviser?"

"Mr. Mac Chizzle," observed Stephens, introducing the lawyer. "Mr. Pakenham, I have had the pleasure of seeing you before," he added, addressing the nobleman's attorney with a placid smile.

Mr. Pakenham acknowledged the salutation with a bow; and his eye wandered for a moment, with some surprise, towards Mac Chizzle,—as much as to say, "I am astonished to see a person like you employed in so important an affair."

When every one was seated, the Earl of Warrington referred to some papers placed before him, and said, "The object of this meeting is known to every one present. The duty that devolves upon me is to transfer to Walter Sydney, the only son and heir of the late Stanford Sydney, upon being satisfied with respect to the identity of the claimant, the sum of forty-one thousand pounds now invested in certain stocks in the Bank of England."

"It is needless, I presume," said Mr. Pakenham, "to enter into the particulars of this inheritance. We on our side admit our liability to pay the amount specified by his lordship, to the proper claimant."

"Quite satisfactory," observed Mac Chizzle, to whom these observations were addressed.

"The proofs of identity are, then, all that your lordship now requires?" said Mr. Stephens.

"And I only require them as a mere matter of necessary form and ceremony, Mr. Stephens," returned the Earl of Warrington. "I am well aware of your acquaintance with the late Mrs. Sydney, and of the fact that the deceased lady left her children to your care."

"My lord, here are the various certificates," said Stephens, placing a small packet of papers before the Earl. "In the first instance you have the marriage certificate of Stanford Sydney and Letitia Harding, the natural daughter of the late Earl of Warrington, your lordship's uncle."

"Well—well," exclaimed the nobleman, somewhat impatiently, as if he were anxious to get rid as soon as possible of a business by no means pleasant to him. "That certificate is beyond all dispute."

"Here," continued Stephens, "is the certificate of the birth of Eliza Sydney, born October 12th, 1810; and here is the certificate of her death, which took place on the 14th of February, 1831."

"This certificate is not necessary," observed Mr.



Pakenham; "as in no case, under the provisions of these deeds," he added, pointing to a pile of documents before him, "could that young lady have instituted even a shadow of a claim to this money."

"We had better possess one deed too many, than one too few," said Mr. Stephens, with another bland smile.

"Oh! certainly," exclaimed the Earl. "And this precaution shows the exact condition of the late Mr. Stanford Sydney's family. The daughter is no more: the son lives, and is present."

"Here, then, my lord," continued Stephens, "is the certificate of the birth of Walter Sydney, on the 25th day of November, 1814."

The nobleman examined this document with far more attention than he had devoted to either of the former. He then handed it to Mr. Pakenham, who also scrutinized it narrowly.

"It is quite correct, my Lord," said this gentleman. "We now require two witnesses as to identity."

"I presume his Lordship will receive me as one," observed Mr. Stephens, "considering my intimate acquaintance with all—"

"Oh certainly—certainly," interrupted the Earl hastily.

"And Mr. Mac Chizale will tender his evidence in the other instance," said Stephens.

"I have known this young gentleman for the last six years," exclaimed Mac Chizzle, pointing towards Walter, "and I knew his mother also."

"Is your Lordship satisfied?" enquired Mr. Pakenham, after a short pause.

"Perfectly," answered the nobleman, without hesitation. "I am, however, in your hands."

"Oh! as for me," returned Mr. Pakenham, "I have no objection to offer. Your Lordship is acquainted with Mr. Stephens."

"Yes—yes," again interrupted the Earl; "I have known Mr. Stephens for some years—and I know him to be a man of honour."

"Then there is nothing more to be said," observed Pakenham.

"No—nothing," added Mac Chizzle; "but to complete the business."

"I will now read the release," said Mr. Pakenham.

The solicitor settled himself in a comfortable manner in his chair, and taking up a deed consisting of several folios, proceeded to make his hearers as much acquainted with its contents as the multifarious redundancies of law terms would allow.

The disguised lady had now time for reflection. She had been more or less prepared for the assertion of Mr. Stephens that Eliza Sydney was dead, and that Walter was living—but the bare-faced falsehood uttered by Mac Chizzle (who, so far from having been acquainted with her for years, had never seen her until that morning), shocked and astounded her. She had also just learnt for the first time, that her late mother was the natural daughter of an Earl; and she perceived that she herself could claim a distant kinship with the nobleman in whose presence she then was. This circumstance inspired her with feelings in his favour, which were enhanced by the urbanity of his manners, and the readiness with which he admitted all the proofs submitted to him by Mr. Stephens. She had expected, from the arguments used by this gentleman to convince her that she should not hesitate to fight the law with its own weapons, &c., that every obstacle would be thrown in the way of her claims by him on whom they were to be made;—and she was astonished when she compared all the specious representations of Stephens with the readiness, good-will, and alacrity manifested by the Earl in yielding up an enormous sum of money. Now also, for the first time, it struck her as remarkable that Stephens had promised her ten thousand pounds only—a fourth part of that amount to which, according to his own showing, she alone was justly entitled.

All these reflections passed rapidly through her mind while the lawyer was reading the deed of release, not one word of which was attended to by her. She suddenly felt as if her eyes were opened to a fearful conspiracy, in which she was playing a conspicuous part—she trembled, as if she were standing upon the edge of a precipice;—and yet she knew not how to act. She was bewildered; but the uppermost idea in her mind was that she had gone too far to retreat.

This was the impression that ruled her thoughts at the precise moment when Mr. Pakenham brought the reading of the long wearisome document to a termination. The buzzing, droning noise which had filled her ears for upwards of twenty minutes, suddenly ceased;—and she heard a voice say in a kind tone, "Will you now please to sign this?"

She started—but immediately recovered her presence of mind, and, taking the pen from the

lawyer's hand, applied the signature of *Walter Sydney* to the document. It was next witnessed by Pakenham, Stephens, and Mac Chizzle, and handed to the Earl.

The nobleman then took several papers—familiar to all those who have ever possessed Bank Stock—from an iron safe in one corner of the library, and handing them to the disguised lady, said, "Mr. Walter Sydney, I have much pleasure in putting you in possession of this fortune; and I can assure you that my best—my very best wishes for your health and prosperity, accompany the transfer."

Walter received the documents mechanically as it were, and murmured a few words of thanks and gratitude.

"Perhaps, Mr. Stephens," said the Earl, when the ceremony was thus completed, "you and your friends will do me the honour to accept of a slight refreshment in an adjoining room. You will excuse my absence; but I have a few matters of pressing importance to transact with my solicitor, and which cannot possibly be postponed. You must accept this as my apology; and believe in my regret that I cannot keep you company."

The Earl shook hands with both Stephens and Sydney, and bowed to Mac Chizzle. These three individuals then withdrew.

An elegant collation was prepared for them in another apartment; but Mac Chizzle was the only one who seemed inclined to pay his respects to it. Walter, however, gladly swallowed a glass of wine; for she felt exhausted with the excitement she had passed through. Stephens was too highly elated either to eat or drink, and too anxious to complete the business in the City, to allow Mac Chizzle to waste much time over the delicacies of which the collation consisted.

They were, therefore, all three soon on their way to the Bank of England.

"Well, I think we managed the job very correctly," said Mac Chizzle.

"Everything passed off precisely as I had anticipated," observed Mr. Stephens. "But you, Walter—you are serious."

"I do not look upon the transaction in the same light as I did a couple of hours since," answered she coldly.

"Ah! my dear friend," cried Stephens, "you are deceived by the apparent urbanity of that nobleman, and the mildness of his solicitor. They assumed that appearance because there was no help for them;—they had no good to gain by throwing obstacles in our way."

"But the certificate of my death was a forgery," said Walter, bitterly.

"A necessary alteration of names—without which the accomplishment of our plan would have been impossible," answered Stephens. "But let me ease your mind in one respect, my dear Walter. That nobleman is a relation of yours—and yet until this day his name has never been mentioned to you. And why? Because he visits upon you the hatred which he entertained for your deceased mother! Did you not observe that he interrupted me when I spoke of her? did you not notice that he touched with extreme aversion upon the topics connected with your revered parents?"

"I did!—I did!" exclaimed Walter.

"He hates you!—he detests you!" continued Stephens, emphatically; "and he will not countenance any claim which you might advance towards kinship with him. His duties as a nobleman and a gentleman dictated the outward civility with which he treated you; but his heart gave no echo

to the words of congratulation which issued from his lips."

"I believe you—I know that you are speaking the truth," cried Walter. "Pardon me, if for a moment I ceased to look upon you as a friend."

Stephens pressed the hand of the too-confiding being, over whom his dangerous eloquence and subtle reasoning possessed an influence so omnipotent for purposes of evil; and he then again launched out into glowing descriptions of the sources and means of happiness within her reach. This reasoning, aided by the hope that in a few hours she should be enabled to quit London for ever, restored the lady's disposition to that same easy and pliant state, to which Stephens had devoted nearly five years to model it.

At length the hackney-coach stopped at the Bank of England. Stephens hurried to the rotunda to obtain the assistance of a stock-broker, for the purpose of transferring and selling out the immense sum which now appeared within his reach, and to obtain which he had devoted his time, his money, and his tranquillity!

Walter and the lawyer awaited his return beneath the porch of the entrance. After the lapse of a few moments he appeared, accompanied by a broker of his acquaintance. They then all four proceeded together to the office where the business was to be transacted.

The broker explained the affair to a clerk, and the clerk, after consulting a huge volume, received the documents which Lord Warrington had handed over to Sydney. Having compared these papers with the entries in the book, the clerk made a sign to three men who were lounging at the upper end of the office, near the stove, and who had the appearance of messengers, or porters.

These men moved hastily forward, and advanced up to Stephens, Mac Chizale, and Walter Sydney.

A deadly pallor spread over the countenance of Stephens; Mac Chizale appeared alarmed; but Walter remained still unsuspecting of danger.

"Those are the persons," said the clerk, significantly, as he pointed to the three conspirators, to whom he observed, almost in the same breath, "Your plans are detected—these men are officers!"

"Officers!" ejaculated Sydney; "what does this mean?"

"We are here to apprehend you," answered the foremost of these functionaries. "Resistance will be vain: there are others outside in readiness."

"Merciful heavens!" cried Walter, joining her hands in agony: "Oh! Stephens, to what have you brought me!"

That unhappy man hung down his head, and made no reply. He felt crushed by this unexpected blow, which came upon him at the very instant when the object of his dearest hopes seemed within his reach.

As for Mac Chizale, he resigned himself with dazed submission to his fate.

The officers and their prisoners now proceeded to the Mansion House, accompanied by the clerk and the stock-broker.

Sydney—a prey to the most dreadful apprehensions and painful remorse—was compelled to lean for support upon the arm of the officer who had charge of her.

Sir Peter Laurie sat for the Lord Mayor.

The worthy knight is the terror of all swindlers, mock companies, and bubble firms existing in the City of London; wherever there is fraud, within the jurisdiction of the civic authorities, he is certain to root it out. He has conferred more benefits

upon the commercial world, and has devoted himself more energetically to protect the interests of the trading community, than any other alderman. Unlike the generality of the city magistrates, who are coarse, vulgar, ignorant, and narrow-minded men, Sir Peter Laurie is possessed of a high range of intellect, and is an enlightened, an agreeable, and a polished gentleman.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, when Stephens, Mac Chizale, and Sydney were placed in the dock of the Mansion House Police-office.

The solicitor of the Bank of England attended for the prosecution.

"With what do you charge these prisoners?" demanded the magistrate.

"With conspiring to obtain the sum of forty-one thousand pounds from the hands of the Earl of Warrington, and the Governor and Company of the Bank of England."

"Is his lordship present?"

"Your worship, he is, at this moment, unaware of the diabolical fraud that has been contemplated, and in part perpetrated upon him. He has given up to the prisoners certain documents, which constituted their authority for transferring and selling out the sum I have mentioned. By certain means the intentions of the prisoners were discovered some time ago; and secret information was given to the Bank directors upon the subject. The directors were not, however, permitted to communicate with the Earl of Warrington, under penalty of receiving no farther information from the quarter whence the original warning emanated. Under all circumstances, I shall content myself with stating sufficient to support the charge to-day, so that your worship may remand the prisoners until a period when the attendance of the Earl of Warrington can be procured."

"State your case."

"I charge this prisoner," said the solicitor, pointing towards Sydney, "with endeavouring to obtain the sum of forty-one thousand pounds from the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, under pretence of being one Walter Sydney, a man—whereas the prisoner's name is Eliza Sydney, and she is a woman!"

An immense sensation prevailed in the justice-room at this announcement.

The disguised lady moaned audibly, and leant against the bar of the dock for support.

"And I charge the other prisoners, Robert Stephens and Hugh Mac Chizale, with aiding and abetting in the crime," added the solicitor, after a pause.

The unhappy lady, yielding to emotions and feelings which she was now no longer able to control, threw herself upon her knees, clasped her hands together in an agony of grief, and exclaimed, "It is true! I am not what I seem! I have been guilty of a fearful deception—a horrible cheat: but it was he—be," she cried, pointing to Stephens, "who made me do it!"

There was an universal sentiment of deep sympathy with the female prisoner, throughout the court; and the worthy alderman himself was affected.

"You must remember," he said, in a kind tone, "that anything which you admit here, may be used against you elsewhere."

"I am anxious to confess all that I have done, and all that I know," cried the lady; "and in so doing, I shall in some measure atone for the enormity of my guilt, which I now view in its true light!"

"Under these circumstances," said the alderman, "let the case stand over until to-morrow."

The prisoners were then removed.

In another hour they were inmates of the Gilt-spur-street Compter.

And how terminated the 26th of November for Walter Sydney? Instead of being in possession of an ample fortune, and about to visit a climate where she hoped to enjoy all the blessings of domestic tranquillity, and the charms of rural bliss, she found herself a prisoner, charged with a crime of deep dye!

Oh! what a sudden reverse was this!

Still, upon that eventful day, there was one hope of hers fulfilled. She threw aside her masculine attire, and assumed the garb adapted to her sex. A messenger was despatched to the villa, to communicate the sad tidings of the arrest to Louisa, and procure suitable clothing for her wretched mistress.

But, alas! that garb in which she had so ardently desired to appear again, was now doomed to be worn, for the first time, in a prison—the new epoch of her life, which was to be marked by a return to feminine habits, was commenced in a dungeon!

Still that new period had begun; and from henceforth we shall know her only by her real name of Eliza Sydney.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXPLANATIONS.

WITH the greatest forethought and the best taste, Louisa had forwarded to her mistress the most simple and unassuming garb which the boudoir contained, amongst its miscellaneous articles of female attire.

Dressed in the garments which suited her sex, Eliza was a fine and elegant woman—above the common female height, yet graceful in her deportment, and charming in all her movements. Her shoulders possessed that beautiful slope, and the contours of her bust were modelled in that ample and voluptuous mould, which form such essential elements of superb and majestic loveliness.

Although so long accustomed to masculine attire, there was nothing awkward—nothing constrained in her gait; her step was free and light, and her pace short, as if that exquisitely turned ankle, and long narrow foot had never known aught save the softest silken hose, and the most delicate prunella shoes.

In a word, the beauty of Eliza Sydney was of a lofty and imposing order—a pale high brow, melting hazel eyes, a delicately-chiselled mouth and nose, and a form whose matured expansion and height were rendered more commanding by its exquisite symmetry of proportions.

The morning journals published an account of the extraordinary attempt at fraud detected at the Bank on the previous day; and the utmost curiosity was evinced by an immense crowd that had collected to obtain a view of the prisoners, especially the female one, as they alighted from the separate cabs in which they were conveyed to the Mansion House for re-examination. Eliza's countenance was flushed and animated, and the expression of her eyes denoted profound mental excitement; Stephens was ghastly pale;—the lawyer maintained a species of sullen and reserved composure.

The police-office at the Mansion House was crowded to excess. Sir Peter Laurie presided; and on

his right hand was seated the Earl of Warrington. Mr. Pakenham was also present, in company with the solicitor of the Bank of England.

The moment the prisoners appeared in the dock, Eliza in a firm tone addressed the magistrate, and intimated her intention of making the most ample confession, in accordance with her promise of the preceding day. She was accommodated with a chair, and the chief clerk proceeded to take down the narrative which detailed the origin and progress of this most extraordinary conspiracy.

Alas! that so criminal a tale should have been accompanied by the music of that flute-like voice; and that so foul a history should have emanated from so sweet a mouth. Those words of guilt which trembled upon her lips, resembled the slime of the snail upon the leaf of the rose.

When the confession of Eliza Sydney was fully taken down, and signed by her the Earl of Warrington's solicitor entered into a statement which placed the magistrate in full possession of the facts of the case.

We shall now proceed to acquaint our readers with the complete history formed by these revelations.

"The late Earl of Warrington was a man of eccentric and peculiar habits. An accident in his infancy had rendered his person deformed and stunted his growth; and, being endowed with tender feelings and acute susceptibilities, he could not bear to mingle in that society where his own physical defects were placed in strong contrast with the fine figures, handsome countenances, and manly forms of many of his aristocratic acquaintances. He possessed a magnificent estate in Cambridgeshire; and in the country seat attached to that domain did he pass the greater portion of his time in solitude.

"The bailiff of the Warrington estate was a widower, and possessed an only child—a daughter. Letitia Hardinge was about sixteen years of age when the Earl first took up his abode in Cambridgeshire, in the year 1790. She was not good looking; but she possessed a mild and melancholy expression of countenance, and an amiability of disposition, which rendered her an object of interest to all who knew her. She was fond of reading; and the library at the neighbouring mansion was always open to her inspection.

"The reserved and world-shunning Earl soon became attracted towards Letitia Hardinge. He found that she possessed a high order of intellect; and he delighted to converse with her. By degrees he experienced a deep attachment towards a being whose society often relieved the monotonous routine of his life; and the gratitude which Letitia entertained towards the Earl for his kindness to her, soon partook of a more tender feeling. She found herself interested in a nobleman of high rank and boundless wealth, who was compelled to avoid the great world where the homage shown to his proud name appeared to him to be a mockery of his physical deformity; she ministered to him with all a woman's devotedness, during a tedious and painful malady which seized upon him shortly after his arrival in Cambridgeshire; and at length her presence became as it were necessary to him.

"They loved; and although no priest blessed their union, they entertained unalterable respect and affection for each other. That dread of ridicule which had driven the Earl from society, and which with him was a weakness amounting almost to folly, prevented the solemnization of his nuptials with the woman he loved. She became pregnant;

and the day that made the Earl the father of a daughter, robbed him of the mother of that innocent child who was thus born in sin!

"Letitia Hardinge, the Earl's natural child, grew up in health and beauty. The father was dotingly attached to her, and watched her growth with pride and adoration. She was sixteen years of age, when Frederick, the Earl's nephew and heir presumptive to the title and vast estates of the family, arrived in Cambridgeshire to pay his respects to his uncle, on his emancipation from college. The young man's parents had both died in his infancy, and he was entirely dependant upon the Earl.

"Letitia Hardinge passed as the niece of the Earl of Warrington. Frederick was acquainted with the real history of the young lady; and, previous to his arrival at the mansion of his uncle, he was not prepared to treat her with any excess of civility. He was brought up in that aristocratic school which looks upon pure blood as a necessary element of existence, and as alone entitled to respect. But he had not been many days in the society of Miss Hardinge, before his ideas upon this subject underwent a complete change, and he could not help admiring her. Admiration soon led to love—he became deeply enamoured of her!

"The Earl beheld this attachment on his part, and was rejoiced. An union between the two cousins would secure to his adored daughter that rank and social position, which he was most anxious for her to occupy. As the wife of the heir presumptive to the richest Earldom in the realm, her origin would never be canvassed nor thought of. But Letitia herself returned not the young man's love. By one of those extraordinary caprices, which so often characterise even the strongest female minds, she had taken a profound aversion to her suitor; and being of a high and independent disposition, not even the dazzling prospect of wealth and title could move her heart in his favour.

"There was a farmer upon the Earl's estate, of the name of Sydney. He had a son whose Christian name was Stanford—a handsome but sickly youth, and by no means comparable to the polished and intellectual Frederick. Nevertheless, Letitia entertained for this young man an affection bordering upon madness. The Earl discovered her secret, and was deeply afflicted at his daughter's predilection. He remonstrated with her, and urged the necessity of conquering her inclinations in this respect. It was then that she showed the temper and the spirit of a spoiled child, and declared that she would follow the dictates of her own mind in preference to every other consideration. The Earl swore a most solemn oath, that if she dared marry Stanford Sydney, neither she nor her husband should ever receive one single shilling from him!

"Reckless of this threat—indifferent to the feelings of that father who had cherished her so fondly, the perverse girl one morning abandoned the paternal home, and fled with Stanford Sydney, on whom she bestowed her hand. The blow came like a thunderbolt upon the head of the old Earl. He was naturally of a delicate and infirm constitution; and this sudden misfortune proved too much for his debilitated frame. He took to his bed; and a few hours before his death he made a will consistent with his oath. He left all his property to his nephew, with the exception of forty-one thousand pounds—the amount of his savings since he had inherited the title. This will ordained that his

nephew should enjoy the interest of this sum; but that, should Letitia bear a male child to Stanford Sydney, such issue should, upon attaining the age of twenty-one years, receive as his portion the above sum of forty-one thousand pounds. Such was the confidence which the old Earl possessed in his nephew, that he left the execution of this provision to him. It was also enacted by that will, that should the said Letitia die without bearing a son to the said Stanford Sydney; or should a son born of her die previously to attaining his twenty-first year, then the sum alluded to should become the property of Frederick.

"The old man died, a prey to the deepest mental affliction—indeed, literally heart-broken—shortly after making this will. Frederick, who was honour and integrity personified, determined upon fulfilling all the instructions of his uncle to the very letter.

"The fruits of the union of Stanford Sydney and Letitia Hardinge were a daughter and a son. The name of the former was Eliza; that of the latter was Walter. Eliza was a strong and healthy child; Walter was sickly and ailing from his birth. Shortly after the birth of Walter, the father, who had long been in a deep decline, paid the debt of nature. Letitia was then left a widow, with two young children, and nothing but a small farm for her support. Her high spirit prevented her from applying to the Earl of Warrington—the man whose love she had slighted and scorned; and thus she had to struggle with poverty and misfortune in rearing and educating her fatherless progeny. The farm which she tenanted was situated in Berkshire, whither she and her husband had removed immediately after the death of the father of Stanford. This farm belonged to a gentleman of the name of Stephens—a merchant of respectability and property, in the City of London.

"It was in the year 1829 that Robert Stephens appeared at the farm-house, to announce the death of his father and his inheritance of all the landed property which had belonged to the deceased. The widow was considerably in arrears of rent: Stephens inquired into her condition and prospects, and learnt from her lips her entire history—that history which, from motives of disappointed pride, she had religiously concealed from her children. She was well aware of the provisions of the late Earl's will; but she had determined not to acquaint either Eliza or Walter with the clause relative to the fortune, until the majority of the latter. Towards Stephens she did not manifest the same reserve, the revelation of that fact being necessary to convince him that she possessed good prospective chances of settling those long arrears, which she was in the meantime totally unable to liquidate.

"Robert Stephens was immediately attracted towards that family. It was not the beauty of Eliza which struck him;—he was a cold, calculating man of the world, and considered female loveliness as mere dross compared to sterling gold. He found that Walter was an amiable and simple-hearted youth, and he hoped to turn to his own advantage the immense inheritance which awaited the lad at his majority. He accordingly treated Mrs. Sydney with every indulgence, forgiving her the arrears already accumulated, and lowering her rent in future. He thus gained an immense influence over the family; and when a sudden malady threw the widow upon her death-bed, it was to Stephens that she recommended her children.

"Stephens manifested the most paternal attention towards the orphans, and secured their un-

bounded gratitude, attachment, and confidence. But his designs were abruptly menaced in an alarming manner. The seeds of consumption, which had been sown by paternal tradition in the constitution of Walter, germinated with fatal effect; and on the 14th of February, 1841, he surrendered up his spirit.

"Scarcely had the breath left the body of the youth, when Stephens, by that species of magic influence which he had already begun to exercise over Eliza, induced her to assume her brother's garb; and she was taught to believe, even by the very side of his corpse, that immense interests were connected with her compliance with his wish. An old woman was the only female attendant at the farm-house; and she was easily persuaded to spread a report amongst the neighbours that it was the daughter who was dead. Eliza did not stir abroad: Stephens managed the funeral, and gave instructions for the entry in the parish register of the burial of Eliza Sydney; and, as Eliza immediately afterwards repaired to the Villa at Clapton, the fraud was not suspected in the neighbourhood of the Berkshire farm.

"Stephens duly communicated the death of Mrs. Sydney and Eliza to the Earl of Warrington, and obtained an introduction to this nobleman. He called occasionally in Grosvenor Square, during the interval of four years and nine months which occurred between the reported death of Eliza and the 26th of November, 1835; and invariably took care to mention not only that Walter was in good health, but that he was residing at the Villa. His lordship, however, on no occasion expressed a wish to see the young man; for years had failed to wipe away the impression made upon Frederick's mind by the deceased Letitia Hardings!

"When Stephens introduced the disguised Eliza to the nobleman, as Walter Sydney, upon the morning of the 26th of November, the Earl entertained not the least suspicion of fraud. He knew that Stephens was the son of an eminent merchant, and that he was well spoken of in society; and he was moreover anxious to complete a ceremony which only recalled painful reminiscences to his mind. Thus, so far as his lordship was concerned, the deceit was managed with the most complete success; and there is no doubt that the entire scheme might have been carried out, and the secret have remained for ever undiscovered, had not a private warning been communicated in time to the Bank of England."

Such was the complete narrative formed by the statement of the Earl of Warrington, through his solicitor, and the confession of Eliza Sydney. The history excited the most extraordinary interest in all who heard it; and there was a powerful feeling of sympathy and commiseration in favour of Eliza. Even Lord Warrington himself looked once or twice kindly upon her.

The examination which elicited all the facts detailed in the narrative, and the evidence gone into to prove the attempt to obtain possession of the money at the Bank of England, occupied until four o'clock in the afternoon; when the magistrate committed Robert Stephens, Hugh Mac Chizle, and Eliza Sydney to Newgate, to take their trials at the approaching session of the Central Criminal Court.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE OLD BAILEY.

THE sessions of the Central Criminal Court commenced.

The street of the Old Bailey was covered with straw; and the pavement in the neighbourhood of the doors of the court on one side, and of the public-houses on the other, was crowded with policemen, the touters of the barristers and attorneys practising criminal law, and the friends of the prisoners whose trials were expected to come on that day.

The press-yard, which is situate between the solid granite wall of Newgate and the Court-house, was also flooded with living waves, which rolled onwards from the street to the flight of steps leading into the gallery of the Old Court. In former times, prisoners who refused to plead, were pressed beneath immense weights, until they would consent to declare themselves guilty or not guilty. This odious punishment was inflicted in that enclosure; hence its name of the press-yard.

It cannot be necessary to describe the court-house, with its dark santee walls, and its huge ventilator at the top. Alas! the golden bowl of hope has been broken within those walls, and the knell of many a miserable wretch has been rung upon its tribunals from the lips of the judge!

The street of the Old Bailey presents quite an animated appearance during the sessions;—but it is horrible to reflect that numbers of the policemen who throng in that thoroughfare upon those occasions, have trumped up the charges for which prisoners have been committed for trial, in order to obtain a holiday, and extort from the county the expenses of attending as witnesses.

At the time of which our tale treats, the sheriffs were accustomed to provide two dinners for the judges every day; one at three, and the other at five o'clock, so that those who could not attend the first, were enabled to take their seats at the second. Marrow puddings, beef-steaks, and boiled rounds of beef, invariably formed the staple commodities of these repasts; and it was the duty of the ordinary chaplains of Newgate to act as vice-presidents at both meals. This ceremony was always performed by those reverend gentlemen; the ecclesiastical gourmands contrived, during sessions, to eat two dinners every day, and wash each down with a very tolerable allowance of wine.

We said that the Sessions commenced. On the Monday and Tuesday, the Recorder in the Old Court, and the Common Sergeant in the New, tried those prisoners who were charged with minor offences; on the Wednesday the Judges upon the New took their seats on the bench of the Old Court.

Richard Markham's name stood first for trial upon the list on that day. He was conducted from Newgate by means of a subterraneous passage, running under the Press-yard, into the dock of the Court.

The Hall was crowded to excess, for the case had produced a profound sensation. The moment Markham appeared in the dock, every eye was fixed upon him. His countenance was very pale; but his demeanour was firm. He cast one glance around, and then looked only towards the twelve men who were to decide upon his fate. Close by the dock stood Mr. Monroe; Whittingham was in the gallery;—the Baronet, Chichester, and Talbot lounged together near the reporters' box.

The Jury were sworn, and the counsel for the prosecution stated the case. He observed that the prisoner at the bar was a young man who, upon his

majority, would become possessed of a considerable fortune; but that in the mean time he had no doubt fallen into bad company, for it would be proved that he was arrested by the police at a common gambling house in the evening of the very same day on which he had committed the offence with which he was now charged. It was but natural to presume that this young man had imbibed the habit of gaming, and, having thereby involved himself in pecuniary embarrassments, had adopted the desperate and fatal expedient of obtaining money by means of forged Bank-notes, rather than communicate his situation to his guardian. Where he procured these forged notes, it was impossible to say; it would, however, be satisfactorily proved to the jury that he passed a forged note for five hundred pounds at the banking-house of Messrs. —, and that when he was arrested a second note for fifty pounds was found upon his person. Several concurrent circumstances established the guilt of the prisoner. On the evening previous to his arrest, the prisoner dined with Sir Rupert Harborough, Mr. Chichester, and Mr. Talbot; and when these gentlemen proposed a walk after dessert, the prisoner requested them to accompany him to a common gaming-house in the Quadrant. They refused; but finding him determined to visit that den, they agreed to go with him, with the friendly intention of taking care that he was not plundered of his money, he being considerably excited by the wine he had been drinking. Ere he set out, the prisoner enquired if either of his companions could change him a fifty pound note; but neither gentleman had sufficient gold to afford the accommodation required. Now was it not fair to presume that the prisoner intended to pass off upon one of his friends the very forged fifty-pound note subsequently found upon him? On the following day, the prisoner—the moment he was released from custody on the charge of being found in a common gaming-house—hurried home, and ordered his servants to prepare for his immediate departure for the continent. He moreover wrote two letters, which would be read to the jury,—one to a lady, and the other to his guardian,—and both containing unequivocal admission of his guilt. The learned counsel then read the letters, and commented upon their contents at some length. There were several expressions (he said) which clearly tended to self-crimination.—“*Circumstances of a very peculiar nature, and which I cannot at present explain, compel me to quit London thus abruptly.*” “*I could not have remained in London another minute with safety to myself.*” “*I conceive it to be my duty—in consequence of rumours which may shortly reach you concerning me—to inform you that I have this moment only awoke to the fearful perils of the career in which I have for some weeks past been blindly hurrying along, till at length yesterday—*” “*I am penitent, deeply penitent; let this statement induce you to defend and protect my reputation.*” The last paragraph but one, which concluded so abruptly with the words, “*till at length yesterday—*” clearly pointed to the crime with which the prisoner was now charged; and the last paragraph of all undeniably implored Mr. Monroe, the young man’s guardian, to hush up the matter the moment it should reach his ears.

The clerk at the banking-house, who changed the five hundred pound note for the prisoner, then gave his evidence.

At length Sir Rupert Harborough was called into the witness-box; and he deposed that the prisoner had dined with him on the evening previous to his arrest; that he very pressingly solicited him (Sir Rupert),

and Mr. Chichester, and Mr. Talbot, to accompany him to the gambling-house; and that he moreover, enquired if either of them could accommodate him with change for a fifty pound note.

Mr. Chichester was called next. He stated the line of defence adopted by the prisoner at Bow-street, and positively denied having ever given the prisoner any notes to change for him.

Markham’s counsel cross-examined this witness with great severity.

“What are you, sir?”

“A private gentleman.”

“What are your means of subsistence?”

“I receive an allowance from my father!”

“Who is your father? Now, take care, sir, how you answer that question.”

“He is a commercial man, sir.”

“Is he not a tradesman?”

“Well,—he is a tradesman, then—if you like it.”

“Yes,—I do like it. Now—upon your oath—is he not a pawnbroker in Brick-lane, Bethnal Green?”

“He is a goldsmith in a large way of business, and lends money occasionally—”

“Ha!” complacently observed the counsel for the defence. “Go on, sir; *lends money occasionally—*”

“Upon real security, I suppose,” added Chichester, taken considerably aback by these questions.

“Upon deposits; let us give things their proper names. He lends money upon flannel petticoats—watches—flat-irons, &c.,” observed the barrister, with withering sarcasm. “But I have not done with you yet, sir. Was your father—this very respectable pawnbroker—ever elevated to the peerage?”

“He was not, sir.”

“Then how come you by the distinction of *Honorable* prefixed to your name?”

Mr. Chichester hung down his head, and made no reply. The counsel for the prisoner repeated the question in a deliberate and emphatic manner. At length, Mr. Chichester was fairly bullied into a humble acknowledgment “that he had no right to the distinction, but that he had assumed it as a convenient West-End appendage.” The cross-examination then proceeded.

“Did you not travel under the name of Winchester?”

“I did—in Germany.”

“With what motive did you assume a false name?”

“I had no particular motive.”

“Did you not leave England in debt? and were you not afraid of your bills of exchange following you abroad?”

“There is some truth in that; but the most honourable men are frequently involved in pecuniary difficulties.”

“Answer my questions, sir, and make no observations. You will leave me to do that, if you please. Now sir—tell the jury whether you were not accompanied by a valet or coachman in your German trip?”

“I am always accustomed to travel with a domestic.”

“A man who runs away from his creditors, should have more delicacy than to waste his money in such a manner. When you were at Baden-baden, were you not involved in some gambling transactions which compelled you to quit the Grand-Duchy abruptly?”

"I certainly had a dispute with a gentleman at cards; and I left the town next morning."

"Yes—and you left your clothes and your servant behind you—and your bill unpaid at the hotel?"

"But I have since met my servant, and paid him more than double the wages then due."

"You may stand down, sir," said the counsel for the defence—a permission of which the witness availed himself with surprising alacrity.

The counsel for the prosecution now called Mr. Whittingham. The poor butler ascended the witness-box with a rueful countenance; and, after an immense amount of badgering and baiting, admitted that his young master had meditated a sudden and abrupt departure from England, the very day upon which he was arrested. In his cross-examination he declared that the motives of the journey were founded upon certain regrets which Richard entertained at having permitted himself to be led away by Messrs. Chichester and Talbot, and Sir Rupert Harborough.

"And, my Lords," ejaculated the old domestic, elevating his voice, "Master Richard is no more guilty of this hero circumvention than either one of your Lordships; but the man that did it all is that there Chichester, which bilked his wally-de-shamble, and that vulgar fellow, Talbot, which called me a *fool*."

This piece of eloquence was delivered with much feeling; and the Judges smiled—for, they appreciated the motives of the honest old domestic.

The officer who arrested Markham, proved that he found upon his person, when he searched him at Bow Street, a pocket-book, containing between thirty and forty pounds, in notes and gold, together with a note for fifty pounds.

A clerk from the Bank of England proved that both the note for five hundred pounds changed at the bankers, and the one for fifty just alluded to, were forgeries.

The case for the prosecution here closed; and the Judges retired to partake of some refreshment.

Markham had leisure to think over the proceedings of the morning. He was literally astounded when he contemplated the diabolical perjury committed by Sir Rupert Harborough and Mr. Chichester; but he entertained the most sanguine hope that the discredit thrown upon the character of the latter would render his testimony worthless. He shuddered when he reflected how ingeniously the counsel for the prosecution had grouped together those circumstances which told against him; and then again a ray of satisfaction animated his countenance, when he remembered that his counsel would speedily show those circumstances in a new light.

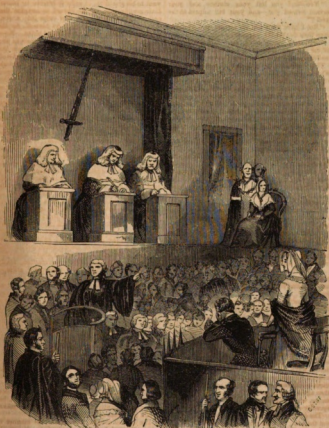
The Judges returned: silence prevailed throughout the hall; and the prisoner's counsel rose for the defence. Richard seated himself in the dock, and prepared to listen with the greatest attention to the speech of his advocate; and Whittingham placed his hand in a curved position behind his ear, in order to assist that organ on the present important occasion.

The counsel for the defence began by giving some account of the family and social position of the prisoner, who was born of parents accustomed to move in the first rank of life, and who was the heir to a fortune of no inconsiderable amount. During his minority, his guardian, who was then present, had promised to allow the prisoner six hundred pounds a-year. With these pecuniary advantages, it was absurd to suppose that a young man of education—a young man whose noble and honourable

feelings had been the object of remark on the part of all his friends, and who had only to express a want to his guardian, in order to receive its immediate gratification—it was absurd to imagine that such an individual would either enter into a conspiracy with others, or plan by himself, for the purpose of raising money upon forged notes. No—this young man was one of a most generous and confiding disposition; and, as he had seen but little of the world, he was totally unacquainted with its wiles and artifices. Thus was he made the dupe of some designing villains, at his very outset upon life. The whole history of the present transaction was to be summed up in a few words. A gang of conspirators had hit upon the desperate mode of passing forged notes, in order to retrieve their ruined fortunes. Not as magnanimous as the highwayman who perils his own existence while he perpetrates a crime, these men required a tool of whom they might make use, and who could be at any time sacrificed to save them. This instrument—this scapegoat, was the prisoner at the bar. The witness, whose real name was Chichester, but who, by his own confession, had travelled on the Continent under another denomination, was not a person on whom the Jury could place any reliance. He had assumed a distinction to which he was by no means entitled—he had affected all the arrogance and importance of a man of rank and fashion,—whereas he was the son of a pawnbroker in the retired locality of Brick-Lane, Bethnal Green! Endowed with much impudence, clever in imitating the manners of his superiors, and well versed in all the intricacies and subtleties of the world, this possessor of assumed distinctions—this swaggering imitator of a class far above him—this adventurer, with fascinating conversation, ready wit, amusing anecdote, and fashionable attire,—this *rose* of the present day, with jewellery about his person, and gold in his pocket—allowing even an engaging smile to play upon his lips, and professing unmitigated disgust at the slightest appearance of vulgarity in another,—this individual—this Mr. Chichester was the principal witness whom the counsel for the prosecution had brought forward. But no English Jury would condemn a fellow creature upon such testimony—the testimony of one who was compelled to fly ignominiously and precipitately from Baden, on account of some rascality at cards, and who left his domestic in a strange land, penniless, ignorant of the language, and surrounded by the odium which also attached itself to the name of his master. The prisoner had no motive in passing forged notes, because he was wealthy;—but Mr. Chichester had a motive, because he evidently lived far beyond the means which his father could allow him.

The learned counsel here related the manner in which Richard had been induced to change the larger note, and had become possessed of the smaller.

He then proceeded to observe, that the letters addressed to Mrs. Arlington and Mr. Monroe related to the fact that the prisoner's eyes had been suddenly opened to the characters of his associates, and to the career of dissipation in which they were leading him. The phrase upon which so much stress had been laid—"till at length yesterday"—alluded to the suicide of a young officer, which had taken place while the prisoner was at the gambling-house, whether he had been inveigled instead of inveigling others. "*He could not have remained in London another minute with safety to himself.*" And why? because these associates whom he had



accidentally picked up, would not leave him quiet. They regularly beset him. "He was penitent," and he hoped that Mr. Monroe would "defend and protect his reputation." Yes—when the newspaper reports conveyed to the knowledge of that gentleman the fact that his ward had been arrested in a common gambling-house, and fined for being there. The letters were written hurriedly, and were ambiguous: thus they were susceptible of more than one interpretation. Let the jury interpret them in favour of the prisoner. It was better to send a

dozen guilty men back again into society, terrible as that evil would be, than to condemn one innocent person. Then, with regard to the precipitate departure; the witness Whittingham had shown, in his cross-examination, that the prisoner's object was to escape from the three men whose characters were suddenly unveiled to him. It was said, that the prisoner had requested those three individuals to accompany him to the gaming-house, and that they at first refused. Oh! amazing fastidiousness—especially on the part of Clichester, who had been

compelled to decamp from Baden, for cheating at cards! Then it was stated that the prisoner asked for change for a fifty-pound note; and it was said, that he would have availed himself of that accommodation to pass a forged note. Why—he (the learned counsel) had already explained how that fifty-pound note came into the prisoner's possession—his own gold having been transferred by Mr. Chichester to Sir Rupert Harborough's writing-desk! The learned counsel concluded, by asking how it happened that no other forged Bank of England notes—no copper-plates to print them with—no materials for such a fraud, were found at the prisoner's house? Could it be supposed that a young man with his prospects would risk his reputation and his safety for a few hundreds of pounds? The idea was preposterous. The prisoner's counsel entered into a few minute points of the evidence which told in favour of his client, and wound up with a powerful appeal to the jury in his behalf.

Richard followed, with absorbing interest, the able defence made for him by his counsel; and his soul was filled with hope as each fact and argument in his favour was divested of all mystery, and lucidly exhibited to the consideration of the court.

Mr. Monroe was summoned to the witness box, and he proved the statements made by the prisoner's counsel relative to the pecuniary position of his ward. Snuggles, the ostler, followed, and very freely stated all the particulars of his late master's precipitate decampment from Baden.

This terminated the case for the defence.

The counsel of the prosecution—according to that odious right which gives the accusing party the last word in those instances where the defendant has called witnesses—rose to reply. He stated that neither the wealth nor the social position of an individual afforded a certain guarantee against crime. Besides, the law must not always be swayed by the apparent absence of motives; because some of the most extraordinary deeds of turpitude upon record had never been traced to a source which could satisfactorily account for their origin. The perpetration was the object which the jury had to keep in view; and the use of evidence was to prove or deny that perpetration by some particular individual. A forgery had been committed, and money obtained by the prisoner at the bar through the agency of that forgery. The defence had not attempted to deny that the prisoner was the individual who had thus obtained the money. The point to be considered was, whether the prisoner knew the note to be a forged one; and he (the learned counsel) considered that an assemblage of circumstances of a most unequivocal nature stamped the prisoner with that guilt. Mr. Chichester's evidence went to show that he himself never gave any notes to the prisoner. Even if Chichester were proved to be a disreputable person, there was nothing beyond the prisoner's mere assertion (made through his counsel) to prove that he had received the two notes from Chichester. Mr. Chichester had certainly assumed another name during his German tour, but it was for the purpose of avoiding arrest in a foreign land upon bills of exchange which might have been sent from England after him. He had, moreover, assumed the distinction of *Honorable*—a foolish vanity, but by no means a crime; for half the Englishmen who were called *Captains*, were no more captains than he (the learned counsel) was.

The senior judge now summoned up the evidence to the jury; and the most profound interest was

still manifested by all present in the proceedings. The learned judge occupied nearly two hours in his charge to the jury, whom he put in possession of all the points of the case which it was necessary to consider.

The jury retired, and debated for a considerable time upon their verdict.

This was the dread interval of suspense. Richard's countenance was deadly pale; and his lips were firmly compressed in order to prevent any sudden ebullition of feeling—a weakness to which he seemed for a moment inclined to yield. Mr. Monroe did not entertain much hope; the summing up of the judge had been unfavourable to Markham. As for Whittingham, he shook his head dolefully from time to time, and murmured, loud enough to be heard by those near him, "Oh! Master Richard, Master Richard! who would ever have prejugated an opinion that you would have been brought into such a fixture as this! It's all along of them fellers which call butlers *raïses*!"

How singularly reckless is the mind of man with regard to the destinies of those to whom he is not connected by any ties of blood or friendship! While the jury were absent, discussing their verdict, the various barristers, assembled round the table, began chattering together, and laughing, and telling pleasant anecdotes, as if the fate of a fellow-creature was by no means compromised at that moment. The counsel for the prosecution, who had done his duty by exerting all his talents, all his energies, and all his eloquence, to obtain the conviction of a youth who had never injured him, and whom he had never seen before, coolly took up a newspaper and perused it with evident gratification; while, at a little distance from him, stood the individual whom he had so zealously and earnestly sought to render miserable for life!

How strange!—how horribly depraved and vitiated must be that state of society in which hundreds of talented men are constantly employed, with large recompense, in procuring the condemnation of their fellow-creatures to the scaffold, the hulks, or eternal banishment! And what an idea must we entertain of our vaunted condition of consummate civilization, when we behold these learned men calling to their aid every miserable chicanery, every artificial technicality, and every possible exaggeration, to pursue the accused prisoner either to the platform of the gibbet, to loathsome dungeons, or to the horrors of Norfolk Island. Does society avenge?—or does it merely make examples of the wicked to warn others from sin? If the enquirer who asks himself or us these questions, would only attend the Central Criminal Court, he would hear the barristers for the prosecution imploring, coaxing, and commanding the jury to return such a verdict as will either condemn a human being to the scaffold, or separate him for ever from home, wife, children, kindred, and friends! He would find men straining every nerve, availing themselves of every miserable legal quirk and quibble, torturing their imaginations to find arguments, calling subtlety and mystification to their aid, shamefully exaggerating trivial incidents into important facts, dealing in misrepresentation and false deduction, substituting and dovetailing facts to suit their purposes, omitting others which tell against their own case, almost falling upon their knees to the jury, and staking their very reputation on the results,—and all these dishonourable, disgraceful, vile, and inhuman means and efforts exerted and called into action for the sake of sending a fellow-creature to the scaffold, or separating him for ever from the family that is

dependant upon him, and that will starve without him!

O God! is it possible that man can have been made for such sad purposes? Is it possible that the being whom thou hast created after thine own image, should be so demon-like in heart?

Oh! if the prisoner standing in the dock had inflicted some terrible injury upon the honour or the family of the barrister who holds a brief against him, then were it easy to comprehend that profound anxiety on the part of this barrister, to send the trembling criminal to the gallows! But, no—that barrister has no revenge to gratify—no hatred to assuage—no malignity to appease; he toils to take away that man's life, with all his strength, with all his talent, and with all his energy, because he has received gold to do his best to obtain a conviction!

Ah! what a hideous traffic in flesh and blood!

And if any one were to say to that barrister, "Thou art a blood-thirsty and merciless wretch," he would answer coolly and confidently, "No; on the other hand, I subscribe to philanthropic institutions!"

The jury returned; and the feeling uppermost in their minds was satisfaction at the prospect of being so speedily dismissed to their respective homes, where they would pursue their efforts after wealth, and speedily forget the youth whom they had condemned to punishment, and whose prospects they had blasted.

For their verdict was *Guilty!*

And the judges hastened to terminate the proceedings.

Richard was commanded to rise, and receive the sentence of the court. He obeyed with a kind of mechanical precision—for his mental energies were entirely prostrated. The voice of the judge addressing him rang like the chimes of distant bells in his ears—the numerous persons whom he beheld around, appeared to be all moving and agitating like an immense crowd assembled to witness an execution.

He stood up as he was commanded; and the Judge proceeded to pass sentence upon him. He said that the court took his youth into consideration, and that there were circumstances which would render a very lenient sentence satisfactory to that society which had been outraged. The court accordingly condemned him to two years' imprisonment in the Giltspur Street Compter, without hard labour.

"That's all!" said the spectators to each other; and they appeared disappointed!

The audience then separated.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ANOTHER DAY AT THE OLD BAILEY.

RICHARD WAS conveyed back to Newgate in a state of mind which can be more easily imagined than described. The Judges returned in their handsome carriages, to their splendid abodes—the prosecuting barrister, that zealous and enthusiastic defender of social morality, hastened to the Temple to entertain a couple of prostitutes in his chambers—and the various lawyers engaged about the court, hurried to their respective homes to prepare writs relating to fresh cases of turpitude and crime for the morrow.

Richard had shaken hands with Monroe and Whittingham over the parapet of the dock—he would not be allowed to see them again for three

months! They still believed in his innocence—although twelve men that afternoon had declared their conviction of his guilt!

On the ensuing morning the trial of Eliza Sydney, Robert Stephens, and Hugh Mac Chizale took place. As on the preceding day, the court was crowded from floor to roof. The bench was filled with the ladies and daughters of the aldermen; there was a full attendance of barristers; and extra reporters occupied the box devoted to the gentlemen of the press. The case had created an extraordinary sensation, not only in consequence of the immensity of the stake played for by the prisoners, but also on account of the remarkable fraud practised by one of the most lovely women that had ever breathed the air of this world.

Eliza was dressed with extreme simplicity, but great taste. A straw bonnet with a plain riband, enclosed her pale but charming countenance; there was a soft and bewitching melancholy in her eyes; and her moist red lips were slightly apart as if she breathed with difficulty. She was a woman of a strong mind, as we have said before; and she endeavoured to restrain her emotions to the utmost of her power. She did not condescend to cast a look upon her fellow prisoners; nor during the trial were her glances once turned towards them.

Stephens appeared to be suffering with acute mental pain; his countenance was cadaverous, so pale and altered was it—even his very lips were white. Mac Chizale still retained an air of dogged sullenness, approaching to brutal indifference.

The Earl of Warrington was in attendance.

When called upon to plead, Stephens and the lawyer replied *Not Guilty!* Eliza answered *Guilty* in a firm and audible voice.

As the entire facts of the case are known to the readers, we need not enter into any fresh details. Suffice it to say, that when the Jury had delivered their verdict of *Guilty* against the two male prisoners, the Earl of Warrington rose, and in a most feeling and handsome manner interceded with the court in behalf of Eliza Sydney. Eliza herself was quite overcome with this unexpected generosity, and burst into a flood of tears.

The foreman of the jury also rose and observed that, though the female prisoner had taken her case out of their hands by pleading guilty, the jury were nevertheless unanimous in recommending her to the favourable consideration of the court.

The Judge proceeded to pass sentence. He said, "Robert Stephens, you have been guilty of one of the most serious attempts at fraud, which, in a commercial country and a civilised community, could be perpetrated. You have moreover availed yourself of your influence over a young and confiding woman—an influence obtained by a series of kind actions towards her mother, her late brother, and herself—to convert her into the instrument of your guilty designs. The court cannot pass over your case without inflicting the severest penalty which the law allows. The sentence of the Court is that you be transported beyond the seas for the term of your natural life."

The culprit staggered, and leant against the dock for support. A momentary pause ensued, at the expiration of which he partially recovered himself and said, "My Lord, I acknowledge the justice of my sentence; but permit me to observe that the female prisoner Eliza Sydney is innocent of any attempt to defraud. Up to a few hours before we called upon the Earl of Warrington to sign the release and obtain the bank receipts, she was ignorant of the real object which I had in view. Even

then, when I unveiled my designs, she shrank from the part she had to perform; and I was compelled to make use of all the specious arguments and all the sophistry I could call to my aid, to blind her as to the real nature of the transaction. My Lord, I make these few observations in justice to her; I have nothing now to lose or gain by this appeal in her behalf."

Stephens sank back exhausted in a chair which had been placed in the dock for the accommodation of Eliza Sydney; and the lady herself was melted to fresh tears by this proof of latent generosity on the part of the man who had been the means of placing her in her present and position.

The Judge continued: "Hugh Mac Chizzle, you have been found guilty of aiding and abetting, at the last moment, in the consummation of a deed of almost unpardonable fraud. You have taken advantage of a profession which invests him who practises it with an appearance of respectability, and gives him opportunities of perpetrating, if he be so inclined, enormous breaches and abuses of confidence. You stand second in degree of culpability to the prisoner Stephens. The sentence of the court, therefore, is, that you be transported beyond the seas for the term of fifteen years."

There was another momentary pause; and the Judge then proceeded as follows, while the most breathless silence prevailed:—

"Eliza Sydney, your share in this unfortunate and guilty business has been rather that of an instrument than a principal. Still you had arrived, when you first assumed a masculine disguise, at the years of discretion, which should have taught you to reflect that no deceit can be designed for a good purpose. Your readiness to confess your guilt—the testimony of your fellow prisoner in your behalf—the recommendation of the jury—and the intercession of the prosecutor, however, weigh with the court. Still a severe punishment must be awarded you; for if we were to admit the plea that a person between twenty and thirty is not responsible for his or her actions, justice would in numerous cases be defeated, and crime would find constant apologies and extenuation. The sentence of the court is that you be imprisoned for the space of two years in her Majesty's goal of Newgate."

Eliza had anticipated transportation: she had made up her mind to banishment for at least seven years, from her native clime. The observation of the Judge that "a severe punishment must be awarded her," had confirmed her in that impression. The concluding words of that functionary had therefore taken her by surprise—a surprise so sudden that it overcame her. She tottered, and would have fallen; but she felt herself suddenly supported in the arms of a female, who conducted her to a seat in the dock, and whispered kind and consolatory words in her ear.

Eliza raised her eyes towards the countenance of this unexpected friend; and, to her astonishment, encountered the soft and sympathising glance of Diana Arlington.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Sydney," whispered the Enchantress: "the Earl of Warrington will do more for you than you may anticipate. He will use his influence with the Home Secretary, and obtain a mitigation of your sentence."

"Oh! how kind in him thus to interest himself in my behalf," murmured Eliza; "and I—who am so unworthy of his commiseration!"

"Do not say that! we have made enquiries, and we have found how you have been deceived. We have seen your faithful servant Louisa; and she

has told us enough to convince us that you was more to be pitied than blamed. One thing I have to communicate which will console you—I have taken Louisa into my service!"

"A thousand thanks, my dear madam," said Eliza. "The thought of what was to become of her has made me very unhappy. This is indeed one subject of comfort. But I saw Louisa yesterday; why did she keep me in the dark in this respect?"

"We enjoined her to maintain the strictest silence," returned Mrs. Arlington. "We were determined to see how you would set up to the very last moment in this distressing business, ere we allowed you to know that you had friends who cared for you."

"And how have I obtained this generous sympathy?" enquired Eliza, pressing Diana's hand with an effusion of gratitude.

"The Earl loved your mother, and blames himself for his neglect of her children, whose welfare would have been dear to his deceased uncle," said Diana gravely. "And for myself," she added, blushing—"anything which interests the Earl, also interests me."

"Believe me, I shall never forget this kindness on your part—neither shall I ever be able to repay it," observed Eliza. "I am now going to a protracted incarceration, in a terrible prison," she continued mournfully,— "and God only knows whether I may survive it. But until the day of my death shall I pray for you and that good nobleman who forgives, pities, and consoles me."

"He does—be does," said Mrs. Arlington, deeply affected: "but fancy not that your confinement will pass without being relieved by the visits of friends. I shall call and see you as often as the regulations of the prison will permit; and I again renew the promise which the Earl has authorised me to make relative to his intercession with the Secretary of State in your favour."

Eliza again poured forth her gratitude to Diana, and they then separated. The former was conveyed back to Newgate: the latter hastened to the humble hackney-coach which she had purposely hired to take her to the Old Bailey.

As soon as the case of Stephens, Mac Chizzle, and Eliza Sydney was disposed of, William Bolter was placed at the bar to take his trial for the murder of his wife.

"The miscreant"—as the newspapers had called him all along—wore a sullen and hardened appearance; and pleaded *Not Guilty* in a brutal and ferocious manner. The only feature of interest in the case was the examination of his son—his little son—as a witness against him. The poor boy seemed to comprehend the fearful position in which his father was placed; for he gave his evidence with the utmost reluctance. There was, however, a sufficiency of testimony, direct and circumstantial, to induce the jury to find the prisoner guilty without a moment's hesitation.

The Judge put on the black cap, and proceeded to pass upon the culprit the awful sentence of the law. Having expatiated upon the enormity of the prisoner's guilt, and admonished him to use the little time that remained to him in this world for the purpose of making his peace with heaven, he sentenced William Bolter to be taken back again to the place from whence he came, and thence to a place of execution, where he was to be hanged by the neck until he should be dead. "And may the Lord," added the Judge solemnly, "have mercy upon your soul."

There was some years ago, amongst ruffians of the very worst description, a custom of abusing the Judge, or "blackguarding the Beak," as it was called, when they received the award due to their crimes, in the felon's dock. This miserable and vain bravado—an affectation of recklessness which even the most hardened could scarcely feel—was revived by Bill Bolter upon the present occasion. "Taking a sight" at the Judge, the murderer commenced a string of horrible abuse—laden with imprecations and epithets of a most shocking and filthy nature. A shudder passed through the audience as if it were one man, at that revolting display on the part of a wretch who stood upon the edge of the tomb!

The officers of the court speedily interfered to put an end to the sad scene; and the convict, after a desperate resistance, was carried back to Newgate, where he was lodged in one of the condemned cells.

While these important cases were being disposed of in the Old Court, two others, which it is necessary to notice, were adjudicated upon in the New Court before the Recorder. The first was that of Thomas Armstrong, who was fortunate enough to be acquitted for want of evidence, George Montague, a principal witness against him, not appearing;—the other was that of Crankey Jem and the Resurrection Man. It is needless to enter into particulars in this matter; suffice it to say that the former was convicted of a daring burglary, upon the testimony of the latter who turned King's evidence. Crankey Jem was sentenced to transportation for life, he having been previously convicted of serious offences; and the Resurrection Man was sent back to Newgate to be discharged at the termination of the sessions.

The business of the Court was concluded in a few days; and Richard was removed to the Giltspur Street Compter. There he was dressed in the prison garb, and forced to submit to a régime peculiarly trying to the constitution of those who have been accustomed to tender nurture. The gruel, which constituted his principal aliment, created a nausea upon his stomach; the thin and weak soup was far from satisfying the cravings of the appetite; the bread was good, but doled out in miserably small quantities; and the meat seemed only offered to tantalise or provoke acuteness of hunger.

The Resurrection Man was set at liberty.

Stephens, Mac Chizzle, and Crankey Jem were removed to the hulks at Woolwich, previous to the sailing of a convict-ship for New South Wales.

Eliza Sydney remained in Newgate.

Bill Bolter, the murderer, also stayed for a short season in the condemned cell of that fearful prison.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LESSON INTERRUPTED.

THE moment the trial of Richard Markham was concluded, Sir Rupert Harborough and Mr. Chichester bade a cold and hasty adieu to Mr. Talbot, and left the court together.

They wended their way up the Old Bailey, turned into Newgate Street, and thence proceeded down Butcher-hall Lane towards Bartholomew Close; for in that large dreary Square did Mr. Chichester now occupy a cheap lodging.

This lodging consisted of a couple of small and ill-furnished rooms on the second floor. When the two gentlemen arrived there, it was past five

o'clock—for the trial had lasted the entire day; and a dirty cloth was laid for dinner in the front apartment. Black-handled knives and forks, a japanned pepper-box, pewter saltcellar and mustard pot, and common white plates with a blue edge, constituted the "service." The dinner itself was equally humble—consisting of mutton-chops and potatoes, flanked by a pot of porter.

The baronet and the fashionable gentleman took their seats in silence, and partook of the meal without much appetite. There was a damp upon their spirits; they were not so utterly depraved as to be altogether unmindful of the detestable part they had played towards Markham; and their own affairs were moreover in a desperate condition.

A slipshod, dirty, familiar girl cleared away the dinner things; and the gentlemen then took to gin-and-water and cigars. For some minutes they smoked in silence; till at length the baronet, stamping his foot impatiently upon the floor, exclaimed, "My God! Chichester, is nothing to be done?"

"I really don't know," answered that individual. "You heard how deucedly I got exposed to-day in the witness-box; and after that I should not dare show up at the west-end for weeks and months to come—even if the sheriff's officers weren't looking out for me."

"Well, something must be done," observed the baronet. "Here am I, playing at hide-and-seek as well as you—all my horses sold—my furniture seized—my carriages made away with—my plate pawned—and not a guinea—not a guinea left!"

"What should you say to a trip into the country?" demanded Chichester, after a pause. "London is too hot for both of us—at least for the present; indeed my surprise is that we were not arrested on those infernal bills, coming out of the court. But, as I was saying—a trip into the country might do more good. To be sure, this is no time for the watering places; we might, however, pay a visit to Hastings, Bath, and Cheltenham on a venture."

"And what could we do for ourselves there?"

"Why—pick up flats, to be sure!"

"You know, Chichester, that I am not able to work the cards and dice as you can."

"Then you must learn, as I did."

"And who will teach me?"

"Why—myself, to be sure! Could you have a better master than Arthur Chichester?"

"But it would take so long to understand all these manoeuvres—I should never have the patience."

"Oh! nonsense, Harborough. Come—what do you say? Three days' practice, and we will be off!"

"But the money—the funds to move with?" cried the baronet, impatiently. "I am literally reduced to my last guinea."

"Oh! as for that," returned Chichester, "I will engage to get a twenty pound note from my father to-morrow; and with that supply we can safely start off on our expedition."

"Well—if you can rely upon doing this," observed the baronet, "we will put your plan into execution. So let us lose no time; but please to give me my first lesson."

"That's what I call business," cried Chichester, rising from his seat and drawing the curtains, while the baronet lighted the two tall candles that adorned the wooden mantel-piece.

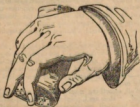
Chichester locked the door of the room, and then produced from his writing-desk the necessary im-

plements of a gambler—packs of cards, dice-boxes, and dice.

Having reseated himself, he took up a pair of dice and a box, and said, "Now, my dear fellow, be a good boy, and learn your lesson well. You will soon meet with your reward."

"I am all attention," observed the baronet.

"In the first place I shall show you how to *secure*," continued Chichester; "and as you know the game of *Hazard* well enough, I need say but little more on that head. There are two ways of *securing*. The first is to hold one of the dice between the fore and middle fingers, or the middle and third fingers, against the side of the box, so that one finger must cover the top of the die—in this way, you see."



"I understand," said the baronet, attentively watching the proceedings of his companion, who by certain clever and adroit manipulations with the dice-box, illustrated his oral descriptions.

"This system is not so easy as the second, which I shall presently show you," continued Chichester; "because the die must be kept cleverly inside the box, so as not to be seen. The second way of *securing* is by taking hold of one of the dice by the little finger, and keeping it firm against the palm of the hand while you shake the box, so as to be able to drop it skilfully upon the table at the proper moment, when it will seem as if it came from the box along with the other. This is the way."



"I shall soon understand," said the baronet. "Of course by being able to *secure* one die, you may make it turn up any number you choose."

"When you mean to practise this dodge," continued Chichester, "call five for a *sum*; because you can *secure* the four, and there is only the six on the loose die that can come up against you. If you have a good stake to get, *secure* a five every time; because when the *mass* is six to five, or seven to five, or eight to five, or nine to five, or ten to five, you *must* win every time, because you can't possibly throw out while the five is *secured*."

"But will not the ear tell the *peccan* that there is only one die rattling in the box?" demanded the baronet.

"Look at this box," exclaimed Chichester. "It has two rims cut inside, near the bottom: the one die shaking against them produces the sound of two dice."

"Are there not some peculiarities about these dice?" asked Sir Rupert, pointing to a pair which Chichester had placed apart from the rest.

"Yes—those are *unequal dice*, and are so well made that no one, except a regular sharper, could detect them. They are bigger at one end than the other, and the sides are placed on the smaller squares, because you must play with these dice to win upon high numbers, which are on those smaller squares. The dice will in nine cases out of ten fall upon the larger squares, and thus show the high numbers uppermost."



"And these dice?" enquired the baronet, taking up two others.

"Loaded ones," replied Chichester. "These are to throw low; and so the two sides which have got four and five on them are loaded."



"How are they loaded?" asked Sir Rupert.

"The corner pip of the four side, next to the five side, is bored very neatly to a certain depth: the same is done to the corner pip of the five side, adjoining the four side. Thus the two holes, so bored, meet each other at right angles. One of the holes is covered over with some strong cement; quicksilver is then poured in; and the other hole is covered over with the cement. The spots are blackened; and your dice are ready for use. These being intended to throw low, you must call a main, and take the odds accordingly."

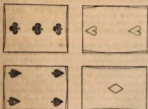
"Well," said the baronet, "I think I can now safely say that I know enough of the elements of your grammar to enable me to practise myself. Let us devote half an hour to the working of cards."

"The ways of managing the cards," said Chichester, taking up a pack, and shuffling them, "are numerous. These, for instance, are *Longs and Shorts*. All the cards above the eight, are the least thing longer than those below it. I have a machine which was invented on purpose to cut them accurately. Nothing under an eight can be cut, you see, with these cards, lengthways."

"And that pack so carefully wrapped up in the paper?"

"Oh! these are my *Concaves* and *Convexes*. All from the two to the seven are cut concave; and all from the eight to the king are cut convex. By cut-

ting the pack breadthways a convex card is cut; by cutting it lengthways, a concave one is secured."



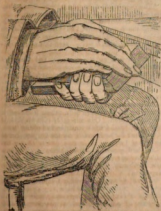
"I have often heard of the *bridge*," said Sir Rupert; "what does that mean?"

"Oh! the *bridge* is simply and easily done," replied Chichester, shuffling the pack which he held in his hand. "You see it is nothing but slightly curving a card, and introducing it carelessly into the pack. Shuffle the cards as your opponent will, you are sure to be able to cut the *bridge* one."



"I could do that without study," observed Sir Rupert Harborough. "Is my initiation now complete?"

"There are several other schemes with the cards," answered Chichester, "but I think that I have taught you enough for this evening. One famous device, however, must not be forgotten. You have heard of the way in which Lord de Roos lately attempted to cheat his noble companions at the club? The plan practised by him is called *saute à coupe*, and enables the dealer to do what he chooses with one particular card, which of course he has selected for his purpose. Now look how it is done; for I can better show practically than explain verbally."



Scarcely was this portion of the lesson accomplished, when steps were heard ascending the stairs; and immediately afterwards a heavy fat knocked with more violence than courtesy at the parlour door.

The baronet and Chichester both turned pale.

"They can't have found us out here!" murmured the one to the other in a hoarse and tremulous tone.

"What shall we do?"

"We must open—happen what will."

Chichester unlocked the door: two ill-looking men entered the room.

"Mr. Arthur Chichester?" said one.

"He isn't here—we don't know him. My name is Davis—ask the landlady if it is not," cried Chichester hurriedly, and in a manner which only served to convince the officer that he was right.

"Come—come, none of that there gammon," said the bailiff. "I know you well enough; my name's Garnell; and I'll stand the risk of your being Chichester. Here's execution out against you for four hundred and forty-seven pounds. I don't suppose that you can pay—so you'd better come off at once."

"Where to?" demanded Chichester, seeing that it was no use disputing his own identity any longer.

"Where to!" cried the officer; "why—to Whitecross, to be sure! Where the devil would you go to?"

"Can I not be allowed to sleep in a spouging-house?"

"No—this is an execution, and a large sum, mind. I don't dare do it."

"Well, then—here goes for Whitecross Street!" said Chichester; and after exchanging a few words in a whisper with the baronet, he left the house with the sheriff's officers.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHITECROSS-STREET PRISON.

A cold drizzling rain was falling, as Chichester proceeded along the streets leading to the debtors' prison. The noise of patters upon the pavement; the numbers of umbrellas that were up; the splashing of horses' feet and carriage-wheels in the kennels; the rush of cabs and the shouting of omnibuscads, were all characteristic of a wet night in a crowded metropolis.

Chichester shivered—more through nervousness than actual cold; and he felt an oppressive sensation at the bottom of his stomach, as well as at the chest.

The officer endeavoured to console him, by observing that "it was lucky he had been taken so close to the prison on such a rainy night."

The ruined young man envied many a poor wretch whom he passed on his way; for he knew that it was far easier to get into a debtors' goal than to get out of it.

At length they arrived at the prison.

It was now nine o'clock; and the pinner, viewed by the flickering light of the lamp at the gate of the governor's house, wore a melancholy and somber appearance. The prisoner was introduced into a small lobby, where an elderly turnkey with knee-breeches and gaiters, thrust a small loaf of bread into his hand, and immediately consigned him to the care of another turnkey, who led him through

several alleys to the staircase communicating with the Receiving Ward.

The turnkey pulled a wire, which rang a bell on the first floor.

"Who rings?" cried a voice at the top of the stairs.

"Sheriff's debtor—Arthur Chichester—L. S.," replied the turnkey, in a loud sing-song voice.

Chichester afterwards learnt that he was mentioned as a sheriff's prisoner, in contra-distinction to one arrested by a warrant from the Court of Requests; and that L. S. meant *London side*—an intimation that he had been arrested in the City of London, and not in the County of Middlesex.

Having ascended a flight of stone steps, Chichester was met at the door of the Receiving Ward by the steward thereof. This steward was himself a prisoner, but was considered a trustworthy person, and had therefore been selected by the governor to preside over that department of the prison.

The Receiving Ward was a long low room, with windows secured by bars, at each end. There were two grates, but only one contained any fire. The place was remarkably clean—the floor, the deal tables, and the forms being as white as snow.

The following conversation forthwith took place between the new prisoner and the steward:—

"What is your name?"

"Arthur Chichester."

"Have you got your bread?"

"Yes."

"Well—put it in that pigeon-hole. Do you choose to have sheets to-night on your bed?"

"Certainly."

"Then that will be a shilling the first night, and sixpence every night after, as long as you remain here. You can, moreover, sleep in the inner room, and sit up till twelve o'clock. Those who can't afford to pay for sheets sleep in a room by themselves, and go to bed at a quarter to ten. You see we know how to separate the gentlemen from the riff-raff."

"And how long shall I be allowed to stay up in the Receiving Ward?"

"That depends. Do you mean to live at my table? I charge sixpence for tea, the same for breakfast, a shilling for dinner, and four-pence for supper."

"Well—I shall be most happy to live at your table."

"In that case, write a note to the governor, to say you are certain to be able to settle your affairs in the course of a week; and I will take care he shall have it the very first thing to-morrow morning."

"But I am sure of not being able to settle in a week."

"Do as you like. You won't be allowed to stay up here unless you do."

"Oh! in that case I will do so at once. Can you oblige me with a sheet of writing-paper?"

"Certainly. Here is one. A penny, if you please."

Chichester paid for the paper, wrote the letter, and handed it to the Steward.

He then cast a glance round the room; and saw three or four tolerably decent-looking persons warming themselves at the fire, while fifteen or sixteen wretched-looking men, dressed for the most part as labourers, were sitting on the forms round the walls, at a considerable distance from the blazing grate.

The Steward, perceiving that the new prisoner threw a look of inquiry towards him, said,—"Those

gentlemen at the fire are Sheriff's Debtors, and live at my table; those *chaps* over there are Court of Requests' Men, and haven't a shilling to bless themselves with. So, of course, I can't allow them to associate with the others."

"How many prisoners, upon an average, pass through the Receiving Ward in the course of one year?"

"About three thousand three hundred as near as I can guess. All the Debtors receive each so much bread and meat a-week. The prison costs the City close upon nine thousand pounds a year."

"Nine thousand a-year, spent to lock men up, away from their families!" exclaimed Chichester.

"That sum would pay the debts of the greater portion of those who are unfortunate enough to be brought here."

"You may well say that," returned the Steward. "Why, half the prisoners who come here are poor working-men, snatched away from their labour, and obliged to know that their wives and children will starve during their absence. That man over there, with the little bundle tied up in a blue cotton handkerchief, is only arrested for 8d. The costs are three and sixpence."

"He is actually a prisoner, then, for four and two-pence."

"Exactly. The man next to him is arrested for 3d., the balance of a chandler's shop debt; his costs are five shillings. But the case of that poor devil who is crying so up in the corner, is the worst. It appears that he had an account at a tally-shop, and paid one shilling a-week towards its liquidation. He was in full work, and earned eighteen shillings a week; and so he regularly gave his wife the money every Saturday night to put away for the tally-man. But the woman is fond of tipping, and she spent the money in gin. Well, the tally-man takes out a summons from the Court of Requests; the wife receives it, and is afraid to tell her husband. Next week comes the *Ride*; this the woman also hides, hoping, somehow or another, to get together the debt and costs, and settle it unknown to her husband. But no such thing; so this morning, as the poor fellow was going home to dinner, he was arrested for four shillings debt, and six shillings costs."

"This was cruel indeed," observed Chichester, to whom all these details were perfectly new.

"Yes," continued the Steward; "but that is nothing to the things that I have heard men tell up in this room. Loan-Societies, Tally-Shops, and the low pettifogging lawyers, keep this place well-filled."

It was now a quarter to ten; and the poor wretches who could not afford to pay for sheets, were huddled up to bed. Chichester, and the "gentlemen who boarded at the Steward's table," remained up, smoking cigars and drinking ale, until twelve.

Chichester was then introduced into a large room, containing ten or a dozen beds, whose frame-work was made of iron. One miserably thin blanket, a horse-cloth, and a straw mattress and pillow, were all provided for each couch, by the Corporation of the City of London!

Oh! how generous—how philanthropic—how noble; to tear men away from their homes and give them straw, wrapped up in coarse ticking, to sleep upon!

On the following morning Chichester awoke early, and rose with every bone aching from the hardness of his bed. He performed his toilette in a species of scullery attached to the Receiving



Ward; and the enjoyment of this luxury was attended with the following disbursements—Towel, 2s.; Use of Soap, 1d.; Loan of Razor and Lather-box, 1d.

Breakfast, consisting of coffee and dry toast, was then served up.

Those who boarded with the stewards ate down and commenced a desperate assault upon the provisions; and those who fancied an egg or a rasher of bacon with their meal, paid twopence extra. The conversation was entirely associated with the prison affairs; it appeared as if those men, when once they set foot in the prison, discarded all thoughts

of the great world without, from which they have been snatched away. Even when the morning newspaper came in, attention was first directed, by a strange kind of sympathy, to the list of Bankrupts and to the Law Notices, the latter of which afforded them the pleasing and interesting intelligence of who were that day to appear before the Commissioners of the Insolvent Court.

At five minutes past nine, a violent ring at the bell called the Steward in haste to the door. This was the summons of a turnkey who came to remove the new prisoners to the respective departments of the establishment to which they belonged. These

they were classified into Middlesex Sheriffs' Debtors, London Sheriffs' Debtors, and City Freemen who were also Sheriffs' Debtors; and London Court of Requests' Debtors, and Middlesex Court of Requests' Debtors.

Chichester was ordered to remove to the Poultry Ward, on the London side, the governor declining to comply with the request contained in his letter.

It will be seen from what we have already said, that Whitecross-street prison is essentially different from the Bench, descriptions of which have been given in so many different works, and the leading features of which are so familiar to a large portion of the community, either from hearsay or experience. If a man cannot muster four or five pounds to transfer himself from the custody of the Sheriffs to that of the Judges, by a *habeas corpus* writ, he must remain in Whitecross-street prison, while the more wealthy debtor enjoys every luxury and privilege in the Bench. And yet, we are constantly assured that there is the same law for the poor as there is for the rich!

The system of imprisonment for debt is in itself impolitic, unwise, and cruel in the extreme;—it ruins the honest man, and destroys the little remnant of good feeling existing in the heart of the callous one. It establishes the absurd doctrine, that if a man cannot pay his debts while he is allowed the exercise of his talents, his labour, and his acquisitions, he can when shut up in the narrow compass of a prison, where his talents, his labours, and his acquisitions are useless. How eminently narrow-sighted are English legislators! They fear totally to abolish this absurd custom, because they dread that credit will suffer. Why—credit is altogether begotten in confidence, and never arises from the preconceived intention on the part of him who gives it, to avail himself of this law against him who receives it. Larceny and theft are punished by a limited imprisonment, with an allowance of food; but debtors, who commit no crime, may linger and languish—and starve in goal.

The Poultry Ward was a long, dark, low room, with seven or eight barred windows on each side, sandal upon the stone floor, and about a dozen or fourteen small tables arranged, like those of a coffee-house, around the walls. The room was full of debtors of all appearances—from the shabby-gentled down to the absolutely ragged. Here a prisoner was occupied in drawing up his schedule for the Insolvent Debtors' Court;—there an emaciated old man was writing a letter, over which he shed bitter and stinging tears;—at another table a young farmer's labourer-looking man was breakfasting off bread and cheese and onions, which he washed down with porter;—close by was a stout seely-looking person with grey hair, who did not seem to have any breakfast at all;—in this nook a poor pale wretch was reading a newspaper;—in that corner another individual was examining a pile of letters;—several were gathered round the fire in the scullery or kitchen attached to the Ward, preparing their breakfasts;—and others were lounging up and down the room, laughing and talking over the amusements of the preceding night up in the sleeping rooms.

The steward of the Poultry Ward had just finished his breakfast when the turnkey introduced Mr. Chichester.

"Well, Mr. Thayne," said the Steward, quite delighted to see the new prisoner, "I began to think we should have had none down this morning. Pray take a seat, sir."

This invitation was addressed to Chichester, who sat down accordingly.

The Steward, after exchanging a few observations with the turnkey, produced a book from a drawer in the table, and, addressing himself in a semi-mysterious tone to Mr. Chichester, said—"These are our rules and regulations. Every new member is required to pay an entrance fee of one pound and sixpence; and this goes towards the fund for paying the officers and servants of the ward, providing coals, and administering generally to the comforts of the place."

"I am quite satisfied with the justice of the charge," said Chichester; and he paid it accordingly.

"I suppose you will live at my table?" enquired the Steward. "Same charges as up stairs in the Receiving Ward."

"Oh! certainly," answered Chichester. "Have you any body here of any consequence at all?"

"Not particularly at this moment. Lord William Friggins stayed a couple of days with us, and went over to the Bench yesterday morning."

"Who is that gentleman walking up and down the narrow court outside?" enquired Chichester, glancing towards the window, through which might be seen a tall slim young man, with black moustachios, a long faded cotton dressing gown, a dingy velvet skull cap, and pantaloons hanging low and loose, because the owner had forgotten his braces.

"Oh! that is Count Pichantoss—a celebrated Russian nobleman, who was cleaned out some weeks since at a West-end Hell, and got put into prison for his hotel bill."

"And who is that respectable old gentleman with the bald head, and dressed in black?"

"That is a clergyman, the Rev. Henry Sharpless; he is an excellent preacher, they say—and the best securer of a die that I ever saw in my life."

"And that very sickly pale-faced youth, who seems to be scarcely twenty?"

"He is only twenty-one and a month. He was arrested the day after he came of age for blank acceptances which he had given, during his minority, to the tune of three thousand pounds, and for which he never received more than three hundred."

"And that quiet-looking old gentleman, at the table opposite?"

"He is a Chancery prisoner—committed for contempt. It appears that he was one morning walking by the Auction Mart, and saw large posting-bills announcing the immediate sale of an estate, consisting of thirteen houses, somewhere in Finsbury, under a decree of the Court of Chancery. My gentleman hadn't a guinea in his pocket, nor the means of raising one at the time. Nevertheless he walked into the Mart as bold as brass, strode up stairs to the auctioneer's rooms, and bid for the estate. There were plenty of competitors; but he didn't care—he bid away; and at last the estate was knocked down to him for four thousand three hundred pounds. When sales are effected under an order of the Chancellor, no deposit-money is required. This may seem strange to you; but it is not the less a fact. So off walks my gentleman, quite rejoiced at his bargain. The first thing he does is to go and collect all the arrears of rent he can from the tenants of the houses, and to distract upon those who couldn't or wouldn't pay. Lord! what a game he did play, to be sure! He called into request the services of half the brokers in Finsbury, and made the tenants cash up to the very last farthing that was due. Well, the lawyers employed for the sale of the estate, drew up the deeds

of courtesy and the abstract of the title; but my gentleman never meant paying—so at last, the Chanery Court, getting tired of his excuses, and finding that he would not disgorge the amount he had already received for rents, nor yet come down with a shilling towards the purchase-money, clapt him into limbo under some form or another;—and so here he is."

In this manner did the steward of the Poultry Ward render the new prisoner familiar with the leading characters of that department of the prison. In addition to the few instances of flagrant dishonesty, or culpable extravagance which were pointed out to Chichester, information was given him of many—very many cases of pure and unadulterated misfortune. The churchyard has known no sorrow—the death-chamber has known no anguish equal to that acute and poignant suffering which many an inmate endures within the walls of that prison. If he be an affectionate father, he thinks of his absent little ones, and he feels shocked at the cold cruelty of the rules which only permit children to visit their incarcerated sire twice a week—on Wednesday and Sunday—and then only for three hours each time. If he be a kind husband, and possess a tender and a loving wife, he dreads the fatal hour of five of the evening, which is the signal for all strangers and visitors to leave these walls. Misery—lank, lean, palpable misery—is the characteristic of Whitecross Street prison.

The legislature says—"We only allow men to be locked up in order to prevent them from running away without paying the debts they owe."—Then why treat them as felons? Why impose upon them rules and regulations, the severity of which is as galling to their souls as the iron chains of Newgate are to the felons' flesh? Why break their spirits and crush their good and generous feelings, by compelling them all to herd together—the high and the low—the polite and the vulgar—the temperate and the drunkard—the cleanly and the filthy—the religious and the profane—the sedate and the ribald?

O excellent legislators! do you believe that a man ever went out of the debtor's goal more moral and better disposed than he was when he went in? The answer to this question will, in one word, teach you the efficacy of Imprisonment for Debt.

Chichester walked out into a large stone-paved court attached to his ward, and bearing the attractive but somewhat illusive name of the "Park." At twelve o'clock the beer men from the public-houses in Whitecross Street were allowed admittance; and then commenced the debauchery of the day. The seats round the "Park" were soon crowded with prisoners and visitors, drinking, smoking, laughing, and swearing.

Many poor wretches, who could not boast of much strength of mind, but who were in reality well disposed, took to this occupation to till care. And who will blame them? Not you, proud peer, who bury your vexations in crystal goblets sparkling with the choicest juice of Epernay's grape—nor you, fine gentleman, who seek in gaming at your club a relief from the anxieties and petty troubles which now and then interrupt the otherwise even tenure of your way!

In the course of the day Mr. Chichester wrote a very penitent letter to his father, the pawnbroker, lamenting past follies, and promising future good conduct. The postscript contained an intimation that prison was bad enough when one possessed plenty of money; but that it was ten thousand times worse when associated with empty pockets.

This precious epistle succeeded in inducing the "old gentleman," as Chichester denominated his father, to loosen his purse strings, and remit a few pounds to supply immediate wants.

Chichester was thus enabled to live at the Steward's table, and smoke his cigars and drink his ale to his heart's content. In a small community like that of a ward in Whitecross Street, as well as in the great world without, he who has the most money is the most "looked up to"—which is a phrase perfectly understood, and almost synonymous with "respected;" and thus Mr. Chichester very speedily became the "star" of that department of the prison to which he had been assigned.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EXECUTION.

From the moment that Bill Bolser had been removed to the condemned cell, after his trial at the Old Bailey for the murder of his wife, he preserved a sullen and moody silence.

Two turnkeys sat up with him constantly, according to the rules of the prison; but he never made the slightest advances towards entering into conversation with them. The Chaplain was frequent in his attendance upon the convict; but no regard was paid to the religious consolations and exhortations of the reverend gentleman.

The murderer ate his meals heartily, and enjoyed sound physical health: he was hale and strong, and might, in the common course of nature, have lived until a good old age.

By day he sat, with folded arms, meditating upon his condition. He scarcely repented of the numerous evil deeds of which he had been guilty: but he trembled at the idea of a future state!

One night he had a horrid dream. He thought that the moment had arrived for his execution, and that he was standing upon the drop. Suddenly the board gave way beneath his feet—and he fell. An agonising feeling of the blood rushing with the fury of a torrent and with a heat of molten lead up into his brain, seized upon him: his eyes shot sparks of fire; and in his ears there was a loud droning sound, like the moan of the ocean on a winter's night. This sensation, he fancied, lasted about two minutes—a short and insignificant space to those who feel not pain, but an age when passed in the endurance of agony the most intense. Then he died; and he thought that his spirit left his body with the last pulsations of the lungs, and was suddenly whirled downwards, with fearful rapidity, upon the wings of a hurricane. He felt himself in total darkness; and yet he had an idea that he was plunging precipitately into a fearful gulf, around the sides of which hideous monsters, immense serpents, formidable bats, and all kinds of slimy reptiles were climbing. At length he reached the bottom of the gulf; and then the faculty of sight was suddenly restored to him. At the same moment he felt fires encircling him all around; and a horrible snake coiled itself about him. He was in the midst of a boundless lake of flame; and far as his eyes could reach, he beheld myriads of spirits all undergoing the same punishment—writhing in quenchless fire and girt by hideous serpents. And he thought that neither himself nor those spirits which he beheld around, wore any shape which he could define; and yet he saw them

painly—palpably. They had no heads—no limbs; and yet they were something more than shapeless trunks,—all naked and flesh-coloured, and unconsumed and indestructible amidst that burning lake, which had no end. In a few moments this dread scene changed, and all was again dark. The murderer fancied that he was now groping about in convulsive agonies upon the bank of a river, the stream of which was tepid and thick like blood. The bank was slimy and moist, and overgrown with huge osiers and dark weeds, amidst which louthsome reptiles and enormous alligators were crowded together. And it was in this frightful place that the murderer was now spiritually groping his way, in total and coal-black darkness. At length he slipped down the slimy bank—and his feet touched the river, which he now knew to be of blood. He grasped convulsively at the osiers to save himself from falling into that horrible stream: a huge serpent sprung from the thicket, and coiled itself about his arms and neck:—and at the same moment an enormous alligator rose from the river of blood, and seized him in the middle between its tremendous jaws. He uttered a fearful cry—and awoke.

This dream made a deep impression upon him. He believed that he had experienced a foretaste of hell—of that hell, with all its horrors, in which he would be doomed for ever and ever—without hope, without end.

And yet, by a strange idiosyncrasy of conduct, he did not court the consolation of the clergyman: he breathed no prayer, gave no outward and visible sign of repentance: but continued in the same sullen state of reserve before noticed.

Still, after that dream, he dreaded to seek his bed at night. He was afraid of sleep; for when he closed his eyes in slumber, visions of hell, varied in a thousand horrible ways, presented themselves to his mind.

He never thought of his children: and once when the clergyman asked him if he would like to see them, he shook his head impatiently.

Death! he shuddered at the idea—and yet he never sought to escape from its presence by conversation or books. He sat moodily brooding upon death and what would probably occur hereafter, until he conjured up to his imagination all the phantasmagorical displays of demons, spectres, and posthumous horrors ever conceived by human mind.

On another occasion—the Friday before the Monday on which he was executed—he dreamt of heaven. He thought that the moment the drop had fallen from beneath his feet, a brilliant light, such as he had never seen on earth, shone all around him:—the entire atmosphere was illuminated as with gold-dust in the rays of a powerful sun. And the sun and moon and stars all appeared of amazing size—immense orbs of lustrous and shining metal. He fancied that he winged his way upwards with a slow and steady motion, a genial warmth prevailing all around, and sweet odours delighting his senses. In this manner he soared on high—until at length he passed sun, moon, and stars, and beheld them all shining far, far beneath his feet. Presently the sounds of the most ravishing sacred music, accompanied by choral voices hymning to the praise of the Highest, fell upon his ear. His soul was enchanted by these notes of promise, of hope, and of love; and, raising his eyes, he beheld the shining palaces of heaven towering above vast and awe-inspiring piles of clouds. He reached a luminous avenue amidst the clouds, which led to

the gates of paradise. He was about to enter upon that glorious and radiant path, when a sudden change came over the entire spirit of his dream; and in a moment he found himself dashing precipitately downwards, amidst darkness increasing in intensity, but through which the sun, moon, and planets might be seen, at immense distances, of a lurid and ominous red. Down—down he continued falling, until he was pitched with violence upon the moist and slimy bank of that river of tepid blood, whose margin was crowded with hideous reptiles, and whose depths swarmed with wide-mouthed alligators.

Thus passed the murderer's time—dread meditations by day, and appalling dreams by night.

Once he thought of committing suicide, and thus avoiding the ignominy of the scaffold. He had no shame; but he dreaded hanging on account of the pain—whereof he had experienced the dread sensations in his dreams. Besides, death is not quite so terrible when inflicted by one's own hand, as it is when dealt by another. He was, however, closely watched; and the only way in which he could have killed himself was by dashing the back of his head violently against the stone-wall. Then he reflected that he might not do this effectually:—and so he abandoned the idea of self-destruction.

On the last Sunday of his life he attended the Chapel. A condemned sermon was preached according to custom. The sacred fane was filled with elegantly dressed ladies—the wives, daughters, and friends of the City authorities. The Clergyman enjoined the prisoner to repentance, and concluded by assuring him *that it was not even then too late to acknowledge his errors and save his soul. God would still forgive him!*

If God could thus forgive him,—why could not Man? Oh! wherefore did that preacher confine his observations to the mercy of the Almighty? why did he not address a terrible lecture to blood-thirsty and avenging mortals? Of what use was the death of that sinner? Surely there is no moral example in a public execution? "There is," says the Legislature. We will see presently.

Oh! why could not the life of that man—stained with crime and red with blood though it were—have been spared, and he himself allowed to live to see the horror of his ways, and learn to admire virtue? He might have been locked up for the remainder of his existence: bars and bolts in English goals are very strong; there was enough air for him to be allowed to breathe it; and there was enough bread to have spared him a morsel at the expense of the state!

We cannot give life: we have no right to take it away.

On the Sunday afternoon, the murderer's children were taken to see him in the condemned cell. He had not asked for them: but the authorities considered it proper that *they* should take leave of him.

The poor little innocents were dressed in the workhouse garb. The boy understood that his father was to be hanged on the following morning; and his grief was heart-rending. The little girl could not understand why her parent was in that gloomy place, nor what horrible fate awaited him:—but she had an undefined and vague sense of peril and misfortune; and she cried aloud.

The murderer kissed them, and told them to be good children;—but he only thus conducted himself because he was ashamed to appear so unfeeling and brutal as he knew himself to be, in the pre-

sence of the Ordinary, the Governor, the Sheriffs, and the ladies who were admitted to have a glimpse of him in his dungeon.

The morning of the second Monday after the Sessions dawned.

This was the one fixed by the Sheriffs for the execution of William Bolter, the murderer.

At four o'clock on that fatal morning the huge black stage containing the drop, was wheeled out of a shed in the Press Yard, and stationed opposite the debtors' door of Newgate. A carpenter and his assistant then hastily fitted up the two perpendicular spars, and the one horizontal beam, which formed the gibbet.

There were already several hundreds of persons collected to witness these preliminary arrangements; and from that hour until eight o'clock multitudes continued pouring from every direction towards that spot—the focus of an all-absorbing interest.

Man—that social, domestic, and intelligent animal—will leave his child crying in the cradle, his wife tossing upon a bed of pain and sickness, and his blind old parents to grope their way about in the dark, in order to be present at an exhibition of a fellow creature's disgrace, agony, or death. And the law encourages this morbid taste in all countries termed civilised,—whether it be opposite the debtors' door of Newgate, or around the guillotine erected at the Barriere Saint Jacques of Paris,—whether it be in the midst of ranks of soldiers, drawn up to witness the abominable infliction of the lash in the barracks of Charing Cross, or the buttons cut off a deserter's coat in the Place Vendome,—whether it be to see a malefactor broken on the wheel in the dominions of the tyrant who is called "Europe's Protestant Sovereign," or to behold the military execution of a great general at Madrid,—whether it be to hear an English Judge in the nineteenth century, unflinchingly condemn a man to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and his dissected corpse disposed of according to the will of our Sovereign Lady the Queen; or to witness some miserable peasant expire beneath the knout in the territories of the Czar.

But the Law is vindictive, cowardly, mean, and ignorant. It is vindictive because its punishments are more severe than the offences, and because its officers descend to any dirtiness in order to obtain a conviction. It is cowardly, because it cuts off from the world, with a rope or an axe, those men whose dispositions it fears to undertake to curb. It is mean, because it is all in favour of the wealthy, and reserves its thunders for the poor and obscure who have no powerful interest to protect them; and because itself originates nearly half the crimes which it punishes. And it is ignorant, because it erects the gibbet where it should rear the cross,—because it makes no allowance for the cool calculating individual who commits a crime, but takes into its consideration the case of the passionate man who assassinates his neighbour in a momentary and uncontrollable burst of rage,—thus forgetting that the former is the more likely one to be led by reflection to virtue, and that the latter is a demon subject to impulses which he can never subdue.

From an early hour a glittering light was seen through the small grated window above the debtors' door; for the room to which that door belongs, is now the kitchen.

There was something sinister and ominous in that oscillating glare, breaking through the mists

of the cold December morning, and playing upon the black spars of the gibbet which stood high above the already dense but still increasing multitudes.

Towards eight o'clock the crowd had congregated to such an extent, that it moved and undulated like the stormy ocean. And, oh! what characters were collected around that gibbet. Every hideous den, every revolting hole—every abode of vice, squalor, and low debauchery, had vomited forth their horrible population. Women, with young children in their arms,—pickpockets of all ages,—swell-mobmen,—prostitutes, thieves, and villains of all degrees and descriptions, were gathered there on that fatal morning.

And amidst that multitude prevailed mirth, and laughter, and gaiety. Ribald language, obscene jokes, and filthy expressions, were heard around, even to the very foot of the gallows; and even at that early hour intoxication was depicted upon the countenances of several whom the Law had invited thither to derive an example from the tragedy about to be enacted!

Example, indeed! Listen to those shouts of laughter: they emanate from a group collected round a pickpocket only twelve years old, who is giving an account of how he robbed an elderly lady on the preceding evening. But, ah! what are those moans, accompanied with horrible oaths and imprecations? Two women fighting; they are tearing each other to pieces—and their husbands are backing them. In another direction, a simple-looking countryman suddenly discovers that his handkerchief and purse are gone. In a moment his hat is knocked over his eyes; and he himself is cuffed, and kicked, and pushed about in a most brutal manner.

Near the scaffold the following conversation takes place:—

"I wonder what the man who is going to be hanged is doing at this moment."

"It is now half-past seven. He is about receiving the sacrament."

"Well—if I was he, I'd send the old parson to the devil, and pitch into the sheriffs."

"Yes—so would I. For my part, I should like to live such a life as Jack Sheppard or Dick Turpin did, even if I did get hanged at last."

"There is something noble and exciting in the existence of a highwayman: and then—at last—what admiration on the part of the crowd—what applause when he appears upon the drop!"

"Yes. If this fellow Bolter had contented himself with being a burglar, or had only murdered those who resisted him, I should have cheered him heartily—but to kill his wife—there's something cowardly in that; and so I shall hiss him."

"And so shall I."

"A quarter to eight! The poor devil's minutes are pretty well numbered."

"I wonder what he is about now."

"The pinioning will begin directly, I dare say."

"That must be the worst part."

"Oh! no—not a bit of it. You may depend upon it that he is not half so miserable as we are inclined to think him. A man makes up his mind to die as well as to anything else. But what the devil noise is that?"

"Oh! only some fool of a fellow singing a patter song about a man hanging, and imitating all the convulsions of the poor wretch. My eyes! how the people do laugh!"

"Five minutes to eight! They won't be long now."

At this moment the bell of Saint Sepulchre's

church began to toll the funeral knell—that same bell whose ominous sound had fallen upon the ears of the wretched murderer, when he lay concealed in the vault of the Old House.

The laughing—the joking—the singing—and the fighting now suddenly subsided; and every eye was turned towards the scaffold. The most breathless curiosity prevailed.

Suddenly the entrance of the debtor's door was darkened by a human form: the executioner hastily ascended the steps, and appeared upon the scaffold.

He was followed by the Ordinary in his black gown, walking with slow and measured pace along, and reading the funeral service—while the bell of Saint Sepulchre continued its deep, solemn, and foreboding death-note.

The criminal came next.

His elbows were bound to his sides, and his wrists fastened together, with thin cord. He had on a decent suit of clothes, supplied by the generosity of Tom the Crackman; and on his head was a white night-cap.

The moment he appeared upon the scaffold, a tremendous shout arose from the thousands and thousands of spectators assembled to witness his punishment.

He cast a hurried and anxious glance around him.

The large open space opposite the northern wing of Newgate seemed literally paved with human faces, which were continued down the Old Bailey and Giltspur Street, as far as he could see. The houses facing the prison were crammed with life—roof and window.

It seemed as if he were posted upon a rock in the midst of an ocean of people.

Ten thousand pairs of eyes were concentrated in him. All was animation and interest, as if some grand national spectacle were about to take place.

"Hats off!" was the universal cry: the multitudes were determined to lose nothing! The cheapness of an amusement augments the pleasure derived from it. We wonder that the government has never attempted to realise funds by charging a penny a-piece for admission to behold the executions at Newgate. In such a country as England, where even religion is made a compulsory matter of taxation, the dues collected at executions would form a fund calculated to thrive bravely.

While the executioner was occupied in fixing the halter round the convict's neck, the Ordinary commenced that portion of the Burial Service, which begins thus:—

"Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up, and is cut down like a flower: he fleeth as it were a shadow, and never continueth in one day."

The executioner having attached the rope, and drawn the nightcap over the criminal's face, disappeared from the scaffold, and went beneath the platform to draw the bolt that sustained the drop.

"In the midst of life we are in death; of whom may we seek for succour, but of thee, O Lord, who—"

Here the drop fell.

A dreadful convulsion appeared to pass through the murderer's frame; and for nearly a minute his hands moved nervously up and down. Perhaps during those fifty seconds, the horrors of his dream were realised, and he felt the blood rushing with the fury of a torrent and with a heat of molten lead up into his brain; perhaps his eyes shot sparks of fire; and in his ears was a loud drowning sound, like the moan of the ocean on a winter's night!

But the convulsive movement of the hands soon ceased, and the murderer hung a lifeless corpse.

The crowd retained its post till nine o'clock. When the body was cut down: then did that vast assemblage of persons, of both sexes and all ages, begin to disperse.

The public-houses in the Old Bailey and the immediate neighbourhood drove a roaring trade throughout that day.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE LAPSE OF TWO YEARS.

SHAKESPEARE said, "All the world is a stage:" we say, "All the world is an omnibus."

The old and young—the virtuous and wicked—the rich and the poor, are invariably thrown and mixed up together; and yet their interests are always separate. Few stretch out a hand to help a ragged or a decrepit man into the vehicle; and the well-dressed draw back and avert their heads as the impoverished wretch forces his way with difficulty past them up to the vacant seat in the farthest corner. The moment a well-dressed individual mounts the steps of the omnibus, every hand is thrust out to help him in, and the most convenient seat is instantaneously accorded to him. And then the World's omnibus hurries along, stopping occasionally at the gates of a church-yard to put down one of its passengers, and calling at some palace or some cottage indiscriminately to fill up the vacant seat.

Away—away thunders the World's omnibus again, rushing the fairest flowers of the earth in its progress, and frequently choosing rough, dreary, and unfrequented roads in preference to paths inviting, even, and pleasant. Sometimes, by the caprice of the passengers, or by the despotic commands of the masters of the World's omnibus, the beggar and the rich man change garments and places; and the former then becomes the object of deference and respect, while the latter is treated with contempt and scorn. In the World's omnibus *wight makes right*—but cunning frequently secures a more soft and comfortable seat than either.

If a dispute ensues, and the question at issue is referred to the conductor for arbitration, he glances at the personal appearance of the complainant and defendant, and decides in favour of him who wears the better coat. When stones or other impediments obstruct the way of the World's omnibus, the poor and the ragged passengers are commanded to alight and clear them away; and yet, when the vehicle stops for dinner at the inn by the way side, the well-dressed and the affluent appropriate to themselves the luxuries, while those who cleared away the stones and who grease the wheels, get only a sorry crust—and sometimes nothing at all.

And then, away—away the World's omnibus goes again, amidst noise, dust, and all variations of weather. In the inclement seasons extra garments are given to the well-dressed and the rich, but none to the ragged and the poor:—on the contrary, their very rags and tatters are frequently taken from them to pay the prices of the hard crusts at the road-side inns. So goes the World's omnibus; and the moment the driver and conductor, who are its masters and owners, are deposited in their turns at the gates of some cemetery, their sons succeed them, whether competent or not—whether infants in swaddling clothes, or old men

in their dotage. And few—very few of those drivers know how to hold the reins;—and thus is it that the World's omnibus is frequently hurried at a thundering rate over broken ground, even unto the very verge of some precipice, down which it would be inevitably dashed, did not some bold intrepid passenger emerge from his obscurity in the corner, rush upon the box, hurl the incompetent driver from his seat, and assume the reins in his stead. But mark the strange opinions of those who journey in the World's omnibus! The passengers, instead of being grateful to him who has thus rescued them from ruin, pronounce him the usurper of a seat to which he has no hereditary claim, and never rest till they have succeeded in displacing him, and restoring the incompetent driver to his functions.

So goes the World's omnibus! None of the passengers are ever contented with their seats, even though they may have originally chosen those seats for themselves. This circumstance leads to a thousand quarrels and mean artifices; and constant shiftings of positions take place. One passenger envies the seat of another; and, when he has succeeded in working his way into it, he finds to his surprise that it is not so agreeable as he imagines, and he either wishes to get back to his old one or to shove himself into another. The passengers in the World's omnibus are divided into different sects and parties, each party professing certain opinions for the authority of which they have no better plea than "the wisdom of their forefathers." Thus one party hates and abhors another; and each confidently imagines itself to be in the right, and all other parties to be in the wrong. And for those differences of opinion the most sanguinary broils ensue; and friendship, honour, virtue, and integrity are all forgotten in the vindictive contention.

But the World's omnibus rolls along all the same; and the Driver and Conductor laugh at the contests amongst the passengers, which they themselves have probably encouraged, and which somehow or another always turn to their individual benefit in the long run.

So goes the World's omnibus;—so it has always hurried onwards;—and in like manner will it ever go!

Oh! say not that Time has a leaden wing while it accompanies the World's omnibus on its way!

Two years elapsed from the date of the Old Bailey trials described in preceding chapters.

It was now the beginning of December, 1837. The morning was dry, fine, and bright: the ground was as hard as asphalt; and the air was pure, cold, and frosty.

From an early hour a stout, elderly man—well wrapped up in a large great coat, and with a worsted "comforter" coming up to his very nose, which was of a purple colour with the cold—was seen walking up and down the front of the Giltspur Street Compter, apparently dividing his attention between the prison entrance and the clock of Saint Sepulchre's church.

At a quarter to ten o'clock, on that same morning, a private carriage, without armorial bearings upon the panels, and attended by two domestics, whose splendid liveries were concealed beneath dark great-coats, drove up to the door of the house inhabited by the Governor of Newgate. Inside that carriage was seated a lady—wrapped up in the most costly furs, and with a countenance whose beauty was enhanced by the smile of pleasure and satisfaction which illuminated it.

Precisely as the clock of Saint Sepulchre's

Church struck ten, the doors of the Compter and Newgate opened simultaneously, and with a similar effect.

From the Compter issued Richard Markham;—the portal of Newgate gave freedom to Eliza Sydney.

They were both restored to liberty upon the same day—the terms of their imprisonment dating from the commencement of the sessions during which they were tried.

The moment Richard set foot in the street, he was caught in the arms of the faithful Whittingham, who welcomed him with a kind of paternal affection, and whimpered over him like a child.

Eliza Sydney entered the carriage awaiting her at the door of Newgate, and was clasped to the bosom of Mrs. Arlington. The vehicle immediately drove rapidly away in a north-easterly direction.

"Mr. Monroe is waiting for you at your own house at Holloway," said Whittingham to his young master, when the first ebullition of joy was over. "He has been ailing lately—and he thought that this happy and fortitudinous event would be too much for his nerves."

"Let us make haste home, my excellent friend," observed Markham. "I am dying to behold once more the haunts of my childhood."

Whittingham summoned a cab; and he and his young master were seen rolling along the road which led to home.

Two years' imprisonment had produced a great effect upon Richard Markham. The intellectual cast and faultless beauty of his countenance still remained; but the joyous expression, natural to youth, had fled for ever; and in its place was a settled melancholy which proclaimed an early and intimate acquaintance with misfortune. His spirit was broken; but his principles were not undermined;—his heart was lacerated to its very core,—but his integrity remained intact. Even though the gate of his prison had closed behind him, he could not shake off the idea that his very countenance proclaimed him to be a *Freeed Convict*.

At length the cab reached Markham Place.

Richard glanced, with a momentary gleam of satisfaction upon his pale countenance, towards the hill on which stood the two trees—the rallying point for the brothers who had separated, more than six years back, beneath their foliage. Tears started to his eyes; and the ray of sunshine upon his brow gave place to a cloud of deep and sombre melancholy. He thought of what he was when he bade adieu to his brother at that period, and what he was at the present moment. Then all was blooming and encouraging in his path; and now he felt as if the mark of Cain were upon him!

He alighted from the vehicle, and entered the library, where Mr. Monroe awaited him. He and his guardian were at length alone together.

But how altered was Monroe since Richard had last seen him! His form was bowed down, his countenance was haggard, his eyes were sunken, and his brow was covered with wrinkles. He glanced furtively and anxiously around him; the instant the young man entered the room; and, instead of hastening forward to welcome him, he sank upon a chair, covering his face with his hands. The tears trickled through his fingers; and his breast was convulsed with deep sobs.

"In the name of heaven, what ails you, sir?" demanded Richard.

"My boy—you have come back at last," exclaimed the old gentleman, scarcely able to articulate

late a word, through the bitterness of his grief—"and this much-dreaded day has at length arrived!"

"Much-dreaded day," repeated Markham, in unfeigned astonishment. "I should have thought, sir," he added coldly, "that you, who professed yourself so convinced of my innocence, would have received me with a smile of welcome!"

"My dear—dear boy," gasped the old man, "God knows I am rejoiced to hail your freedom; and that same Almighty power can also attest to my sincere conviction of your innocence. Believe me, I would go through fire and water to serve you,—I would lay down my life, miserable and valueless as it is, to benefit you;—but, oh! I cannot—cannot support your presence!"

And the old gentleman seemed absolutely convulsed with agony as he spoke.

"I presume," said Richard, leaning over him, so as to be enabled to whisper in his ear, although there was none else at hand to listen,—“I presume that you scorn the man who has been convicted of felony? It is natural, sir—it is natural; but such a demonstration of aversion is not the less calculated to wound one who never injured you.”

"No—no, Richard; you never injured me; and that makes me feel the more acutely now. But—hear me—I take God to witness that I love you as my own son, and that I am above such unnatural conduct as that which you would impute to me.”

"My God!" cried Markham, impatiently, "what does all this mean? Are you ill? Has anything unpleasant occurred? If so, we will postpone all discussion upon my affairs until a period more agreeable to yourself."

As Markham uttered these words, he gently disengaged the old man's hands from his countenance, and pressed them in his own. He was then for the first time struck by the altered and care-worn features of his guardian; and, without thinking of the effect his words might produce, he exclaimed, "My dear sir, you have evidently been very—very ill!"

"Ill!" cried the old man, bitterly. "When the mind suffers, the body is sympathetically affected; and this has been my case! If you have suffered much, Richard, during the last two years—so have I; and we have both only the same consolation—our innocence!"

"You speak in enigmas," ejaculated Markham. "What can you have to do with innocence or guilt—you who never wronged a human being?"

So strange became the expression of the old man's countenance, as Richard uttered these words, that the young man was perfectly astonished, and almost horrified; and undefined alarms seated through his brain. He was in a painful state of suspense; and yet he was afraid to ask a question.

"Richard!" suddenly exclaimed the old man, now looking our hero fixedly and fearlessly in the face, "I have a terrible communication to make to you."

"A terrible communication!" repeated Markham: "is it in respect to my brother? If so, do not keep me in suspense—let me know the worst at once—I can bear anything but suspense!"

"I have never heard from nor of your brother," answered Mr. Monroe; "and cannot say whether he be dead or living."

"Thank God, you have nothing terrible to communicate relative to him," exclaimed Markham; for he always had, and still entertained a presentiment that the appointment on the hill, beneath the two trees, would be punctually kept;—and this

hope had cheered him during his horrible imprisonment.

"But I will not keep you in suspense, Richard," said the old man; "it is better for me to unburden my mind at once. You are ruined!"

"Ruined!" said Markham, starting as that dread word fell upon his ears; for the word *ruin* does not express one evil, like other words, such as sickness, poverty, imprisonment; but it comprises and expresses an awful catalogue of all the miseries which can be supposed to afflict humanity. "Ruined!" he cried;—then catching at a straw, he added, "Aye! ruined in reputation, doubtless; but rich in the possessions which this world principally esteems. My property was all vested in you by my deceased father—I was not of age when I was condemned—and consequently the law could not touch my fortune when it fished from me my good name!"

"Ruined—ruined in property and all!" returned Mr. Monroe, solemnly. "Unfortunate speculations on my part, but in your interest, have consumed the vast property entrusted to me by your father!"

Markham fell into an arm chair; and for a moment he thought that every fibre in his heart would break. A terrible load oppressed his chest and his brain;—he was the victim of deep despair. As one looks forth into the darkness of midnight, and sees it dense and motionless, so did he now survey his own prospects. The single consolation which, besides the hope of again meeting his brother,—the real, the present, the tangible consolation, as it might be called, which would have enabled him to forget a portion of his sufferings and his wrongs,—this was now gone; and, a beggar upon the face of the earth, he found that he had not even the advantage of a good name to help him onwards in his career. Hope was quenched within him!

A long pause ensued.

At its expiration Markham suddenly rose from the arm-chair, approached his guardian, and said in a low and hollow voice, "Tell me how all this has happened; let me know the circumstances which led to this calamity."

"They are brief," said Monroe, "and will convince you that I am more to be pitied than blamed. Long previous to your unfortunate trial I commenced a series of speculations with my own property, all of which turned out unhappily. The year 1852 was a fatal one to many old-established houses; and mine was menaced with absolute ruin. In an evil hour I listened to the advice of a Mr. Allen, a merchant who had been reduced by great losses in America trading; and by his counsel, I employed a small portion of your property with the view of recovering my own, and augmenting your wealth at the same time. Allen acted as my agent in these new speculations. At first we were eminently successful: I speedily released myself from difficulty, and doubled the sum that I had borrowed from your fortune. At the beginning of 1856 Mr. Allen heard of a gentleman who required the loan of a considerable sum of money to work a patent which was represented to be a perfect mine of gold. Mr. Allen and I consulted upon the eligibility of embarking money in this enterprise; in a word, we were dazzled by the immense advantages to be derived from the speculation. At that time—it was shortly after your trial and sentence, Richard—I was ill and confined to my bed. Mr. Allen therefore managed this for me; and it is an extraordinary fact that I have never once seen the



individual to whom I lent an enormous sum of money—for I *did* advance the sum required by that person; and I drew largely upon your fortune to procure it! Oh! Richard—had this speculation succeeded, I should have been a wealthy man once more, and your property would have been more than doubled. But, alas! this individual to whom I advanced that immense amount, and whose securities I had fancied unexceptionable, defrauded me in the most barefaced manner! And yet the law could not touch him, for he had contrived to associate Allen's name with his own as a partner in the enterprise. Rendered desperate by this appalling loss, I embarked in the most extravagant speculations with the remainder of your money. The infatuation of a gambler seized upon me; and I never stopped until the result was ruin—total ruin to me, and comparative ruin to you!”

“Comparative ruin—only comparative ruin! ejaculated Markham, his countenance suddenly brightening up at these words; “is there any thing left from the wrecks of my property—is there any thing available still remaining? Speak;—and if you answer me in the affirmative—if you announce the existence of never so small a pittance, I will yet forgive you all!”

“This house and the small estate attached to it are left,” answered the old man, “and totally unincumbered. I neither could nor would touch your paternal possessions.”

Markham felt indescribable relief from this statement; and he wrung his guardian's hand with the same gratitude which he would have shown had he that day received his inheritance entire.

“Thank God, I am not totally ruined!” cried Markham. “I can at least bury myself in this re-

treat;—I can daily ascend that hill where the memorials of fraternal affection stand;—and I can there hope for the return of my brother! My dear sir, what has been done cannot be recalled: reproaches, even were I inclined to offer any, would be useless; and regrets would be equally unavailing. This estate will produce me a small income—but enough for my wants. Two hundred pounds a year are certainly a beggar's pittance, when compared with the inheritance which my father left me;—but I am still grateful that even the means of subsistence are left. And you, Mr. Monroe—upon what are you subsisting?"

"I still attend to the wrecks of my affairs," replied the old man; "and then I have my daughter Ellen—who earns a little with her needle—"

"You shall come and take up your abode with me—you and your daughter—and share my income," interrupted the generous young man, who saw not before him an individual that had deprived him of a large fortune, but an old—old man, bent down by the weight of numerous and deep afflictions.

Monroe wept at this noble conduct on the part of his ward, and strenuously refused to accept the proffered kindness and hospitality. Markham urged, begged, and entreated;—but the old man would not accede to his wish.

"You have not told me what became of your friend Mr. Allen," said Richard, after a pause.

"He was an honourable and an upright man," was the reply; "and the rain which he had been the means of entailing, though innocently, upon me, broke his heart. He died three months ago."

"And what became of the infamous cheat whose schemes have thus killed one person and ruined two others?"

"I know not," answered Mr. Monroe. "I never saw him myself; nor did he even know that there was such a person as myself connected with the loan which he received. Certain commercial reasons—too long to be explained now—made me put forward Allen as the person who advanced the money, and conducted the entire business as a principal, and not as an agent. Thus no communication ever took place between me and this George Montague."

"George Montague!" ejaculated Richard.

"Yes—he was the villain who has plundered us," said George Montague again!

"George Montague again!" murmured Richard, as he paced the room with hurried and uneven steps. "Why is it that this name should constantly obtrude itself upon my notice? wherefore should I be perpetually condemned to hear it uttered, and always coupled with epithets of abhorrence and reproach? and why should I be amongst the number of that miscreant's victims? Strange combination of circumstances!"

"Are you acquainted with this Montague?" demanded his guardian: "the name seemed to produce a singular effect upon you."

"I am not acquainted with him; like you, I have never even seen him," said Markham. "But I have heard much concerning him; and all that I have heard is evil. Surely—surely justice will some day overtake a miscreant who is constantly preying upon society, and who enriches himself at the expense of his fellow-creatures' happiness!"

Some time longer was devoted to conversation upon topics of interest to Markham and his guardian; and when the former had partially succeeded in tranquillising the mind of the latter, the old man was suffered to take his departure.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE VISIT.

WE purpose to follow the history of Richard Markham a little farther, ere we return to Eliza Sydney, whose adventures, after her release from Newgate, will, it is believed, excite the liveliest interest in the minds of the readers.

As soon as Mr. Monroe had taken his departure, Richard made Whittingham acquainted with his altered prospects; and they two together settled certain economical alterations in the establishment at the Place which were calculated to meet the limited means of its master, who, it will be remembered, was now of age, and, consequently invested with the control of the little property that the villainy of George Montague had left him.

Markham then proceeded, attended by Whittingham, to visit the various apartments of the old mansion from which he had been so long absent; and each recalled to his mind reminiscences that circumstances had made painful. In one apartment he had been wont to sit with his revered father of an evening, and survey the adjacent scenery and the mighty city from the windows. In another he had pursued his studies with the dearly loved brother whom he had lost; whichever way he turned, visions calculated to oppress his mind rose before him. He felt like a criminal who had disgraced an honourable name; and even the very pictures of his ancestors appeared to frown upon him from their antique and dust-covered frames.

But when he entered the room where the spirit of his father had taken his leave of this world, his emotions almost overpowered him. He wept aloud; and even the old butler did not now endeavour to comfort him. He had returned, branded with shame, to a house where he had received an existence that was full of hope and honour;—he had come back to a dwelling in the rooms of which were hung the portraits of many great and good men, who were his ancestors, but amongst whom his own likeness could never take a place, for fear that such a visitor to that mansion should write the words "Freed Convict" upon the frame.

For though conscience reproached him not for guilt, the world would not believe his innocence.

That night he could not sleep; and he hailed the dawn of morning as the shipwrecked mariner upon the raft beholds the signal of assistance in the horizon. He rose, and hastened to the hill, where he seated himself upon the bench between the two trees. There he gave free vent to his tears; and he was relieved.

Suddenly his eye caught sight of letters carved upon the bark of his brother's tree. He looked closer; and, to his indescribable joy, he beheld these characters rudely but deeply cut on the tree:—

EUGENE.

Dec. 25, 1836.

"Thank God! my brother lives!" exclaimed Richard, clasping his hands together. "This is an intimation of his remembrance of me! But—oh! why did he desert me in my need? wherefore came he not to see me in my prison? Alas! years must yet elapse ere I clasp him to my heart! Let me not repine—let me not reproach him without bearing his justification! He has revisited the hill; and he chose a sacred day for what he no doubt deemed a sacred duty! It was on the anniversary of the nativity of the Saviour that he came back to the

scenes of his youth! Oh, Eugene! I thank thee for this: it is an assurance that the appointment on the 10th of July, 1843, will be punctually kept!"

From the moment when his eyes rested upon the memorial of his lost brother thus carved upon the bark of the tree, Richard's mind became composed, and, indeed, comparatively happy. His habits, however, grew more and more secluded and reserved; and he seldom ventured into that mighty Babylon whose snares had proved so fatal to his happiness.

One day—it was about the middle of March, 1838—Richard was surprised by the arrival of a phaeton and pair at his abode; and he eagerly watched from the window to ascertain who could have thought of paying him a visit. In a few minutes he was delighted to see Mr. Armstrong, the political martyr with whom he had become acquainted in Newgate, alight from the vehicle.

Richard hastened to welcome him with the most unfeigned sincerity.

"You see I have found you out, my dear young friend," said Armstrong. "I miscalculated the date of your release from that abominable hole, and a few weeks ago was waiting for hours one day in Giltspur Street to welcome you to freedom. At length I did what I ought to have done at first—that is, inquired of the turnkeys whether you were to be released that day or not: and, behold—I found that the bird had flown."

"I should have written to you," said Richard, "for you were kind enough to give me your address; but really my mind has been so bent upon solitude——"

"From which solitude," interrupted Armstrong, smiling, "I am come to drag you away. Will you allow me to dispose of the next tea days for you?"

"How do you mean, my good friend?" inquired Markham.

"I mean that you shall pass that time with me at the house of a friend at Richmond. Solitude and seclusion will never wean you from the contemplation of your past sorrows."

"But you know that I cannot go into society again," said Richard.

"This is absurd, Markham. I will bear no apologies: you must and shall place yourself at my disposal," returned the old gentleman, in a kind and yet positive manner.

"But to whom do you wish to introduce me?" inquired Markham.

"To an Italian emigrant, who has only just arrived in this country, with his family, but the honour of whose friendship I have enjoyed for many, many years. I must tell you that I have travelled much; and that Italy has always been a country which has excited my warmest sympathy. It was at Montoni, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Castelcicala that I first met Count Alteroni; and his extremely liberal political opinions, which completely coincide with my own, were the foundation of a staunch friendship between us. Ten years ago he was compelled to fly from his native land; and he sought refuge in England. His only child—a beautiful girl of the name of Isabella—thus obtained an English education and speaks the language with fluency. Two years ago, he was allowed to return to Castelcicala; but a few months back fresh political events in that state forced him once more to become an exile. He arrived in England a month ago, and has taken a small but commodious and picturesque residence at Richmond. His means are ample, but not vast; and he therefore lives in comparative seclusion—other reasons, moreover, inducing him to

avoid the pomp and ostentation which noblemen of his rank usually maintain. Thus, in addressing him, you must drop the formality of *My Lord*; and remember also that his daughter chooses to be called simply, *Miss Isabella*, or the *Signora Isabella*."

"And how can I venture to present myself to this nobleman of high rank, and his wife and daughter, knowing that but a few weeks ago I was liberated from a goal?" demanded Richard, somewhat bitterly.

"The count has not heard of your misfortune, and is not likely to do so," answered Armstrong. "He pressed me yesterday to pass a few days with him; and I happened to mention that I was about to visit a young friend—meaning yourself—in whom I felt a deep interest. I then gave him such an account of you that he expressed a desire to form your acquaintance. Thus, you perceive, that I am taking no unwarranted liberty in introducing you to his house. As for the danger which you incur of your history being known, that cannot be avoided; and it is a point which you may as well risk now as upon any future occasion. A man of the world must always be prepared for reverses of this kind, and I think that I am not mistaken in you, Markham, when I express my opinion that you would know how to vindicate your character and assert your innocence in a manner which would disarm resentment and conquer prejudice. At least, assume as cheerful an appearance as possible; and, believe me, you will find yourself right welcome at the dwelling of Count Alteroni."

Reassured by remarks of this nature, and warmed by the generous friendship displayed towards him by the Republican writer, Markham's countenance again wore a smile; and he felt more at ease than he had done ever since his misfortune. The presence of one who took an interest in his welfare—the prospect of enjoying pleasant society—and the idea of change of scene, combined to elevate his spirits and create new hopes in his breast. He began to think that he was not altogether the solitary, deserted, and sorrow-doomed being he had so lately considered himself.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon that the phaeton, in which rode Markham and his friend the Republican, entered a spacious shrubbery, through which a wide avenue led to the front-door of a very beautiful country residence near Richmond. The dwelling was not large; but its external appearance seemed to bear ample testimony to its interior comfort.

A domestic, in a plain and unpretending livery, appeared at the door the moment the phaeton stopped; and the count himself met his visitors in the hall, to welcome their arrival.

The nobleman shook hands with Armstrong in the most cordial manner; and, when Richard was introduced to him, he received him with a courtesy and warm affability which showed how much any friend of Armstrong's was valued by the Italian exile.

The guests were ushered into the drawing-room, where the countess and her daughter, and two gentlemen who were also visitors, were seated.

But while we allow Richard time to get acquainted with the family of the Italian noble, we must give the reader a brief description of the new characters now introduced upon the stage.

Count Alteroni was about forty years of age. His hair and whiskers, originally of a deep black, were tinged prematurely with grey; but his moustachios were of the darkest jet. His complexion was of a clear olive. In figure he was tall, well formed, and

muscular, though slight. His countenance was expressive of great dignity—one would almost say of conscious superiority; but this softness of aspect and the nobility of demeanour which distinguished him, failed to produce any unpleasant impression, inasmuch as every one who approached the count was charmed by the affability of his manners and the condescending kindness of his tone.

The countess was about two years younger than her husband, and was of a complexion and cast of countenance which denoted her northern origin. In fact, she was a German lady of high birth; but she spoke Italian, French, and English with as much facility as her own tongue.

But what of Isabella? To say that she was beautiful were to say nothing. Her aspect was resplendent with all those graces which innocence lavishly diffuses over the lineaments of loveliness. She was sixteen years old; and her dark black eyes were animated with all the fire of that impassioned age, when even the most rugged paths of life seem adorned and strewed with flowers. Her mouth was small; but the lips were full and pouting, and revealed, when she smiled, a set of beautifully white and even teeth. Her hair was dark as the raven's wing, and was invariably arranged in the most natural and simple manner. Her brows were exquisitely pencilled; and as her large black eyes were the mirror of her pure and guileless soul, when she glanced downwards, and those expressive orbs were concealed by their long black fringes, it seemed as if she were drawing a veil over her thoughts. Her complexion was that of a brunette; but the pure, red blood shone in her vermilion lips and her rose-tinted nostrils, and mantled her pure brow with a crimson hue when any passion was excited. Her sylph-like figure was modelled with the most perfect symmetry. Her waist was so delicate, and her hands and feet so small, that it was easy to perceive she came of patrician blood; and the swell of her bosom gave a proper roundness to her form, without expanding into proportions that might be termed voluptuous.

In manners, disposition, and accomplishments, Isabel was equally calculated to charm all her acquaintances. Having finished her education in England, she had united all the solid morality of English manners, with the sprightliness and vivacity of her native clime; and as she was without levity and frivolity, she was also entirely free from any insipid and ridiculous affectations. She was artlessness itself; her manners commanded universal respect; and her bearing alone repressed the impertinence of the libertine's gaze. With a disposition naturally lively, she was still attached to serious pursuits; and her mind was well stored with all useful information, and embellished with every feminine accomplishment.

The two gentlemen who were present in the drawing room when Armstrong and Richard arrived, were two young *deux*—members of the aristocracy; and this was their only recommendation. It was not, however, on this account that they had obtained a footing in the count's abode; but because they were nearly related to a deceased English general who had taken part with the Italians against the French, during the career of Napoleon, and had been of essential service to the family to which the count belonged. With regard to their exterior, suffice it to say, that they were dressed in the extreme of fashion: one was very effeminate in appearance, having tricker whiskers nor the slightest appearance of a beard; and the other was rather good-looking, sported an incipient moustachio, and wore an undress military uniform.

The effeminate young gentleman was introduced to Armstrong and Markham by the name of Sir Cherry Bounce, and the moustachioed one as the Honourable Smilax Dapper, a captain (at the age of twenty) in His Majesty's 5th Regiment of Hussars.

During the hour which intervened between the arrival of the new guests and the announcement of dinner, a conversation ensued which will serve to throw some light upon the characters of those inmates of the hospitable abode, whom we have as yet only partially introduced to our readers.

"You reside in a very pleasant and healthy part of London, Mr. Markham," said the count; "I am well acquainted with the situation of your mansion and grounds, from the description which my friend Armstrong has given me. The house stands close by a hill, on the summit of which there are two trees."

"Ah, indeed!" ejaculated Sir Cherry Bounce. "The other day I waded by there for the first time in my life; and I remember the hoathy way beautifully thithuate in the ney-hourwood of the hill detribwed by the count, and with two ath tweeth on the top."

"That is my house," said Richard. "But it is an antiquated, gloomy-looking pile; but —"

"Oh! I beg your pardon, thir; it is the thweeteth little plath I ever thaw. I never thaw it but that time, and wath thwuck with the weway wearakable appearanth of the hill and the tweeth."

"Those trees were planted many years ago by my brother and myself," said Markham, a deep shade of melancholy suddenly enveloping his countenance; "and they yet remain there as the trysting-mark for a strange appointment."

"Indeed!" said the count; and as Richard saw that Isabella was also interested in his observations, he determined to gratify the sentiment of curiosity which he had excited.

"It is nearly seven years since that event took place. My elder brother disputed with my father, and determined to leave home and choose some career for himself, which he hoped might lead to fortune. He and I parted upon that hill, beneath those trees, with the understanding that in twelve years we were to meet again upon that same spot, and then compare our respective fortunes and worldly positions. On the 10th of July, 1843, that appointment is to be kept."

"And during the seven years which have already elapsed, have you received no tidings of your brother?" inquired Isabella.

"None direct," answered Markham. "All that I know is that on Christmas-day, 1836, he was alive; for he went to the hill, while I was absent from home, and carved his name upon the tree that he himself planted."

"Strike me stupid, if that isn't the most romantic thing I ever heard of!" exclaimed Captain Dapper, caressing his moustachio.

"You ought to write a copy of vertheth upon the remarkable inthident, in Mith thhabella's *Albow*," observed Sir Cherry Bounce.

"So I would, strike me! if I was half such a good poet as you, Cherry," returned the captain.

"You wote thum weway pweety poetry the other day upon the *Great Thes Therpendik, Thamilackth*," said the effeminate baronet; "and I don't know why you thouldn't do the thame by the two ath tweeth."

"Yes; but—strike me ugly! Miss Isabella would not let me insert them in her *Albow*," observed the captain; "and that was very unkind."

"Bella says that you undertook to finish a battes fly and spout it," exclaimed the count laughing.

"And now it themth for all the world like an enormouth frog," said Sir Cherry.

"Now, really, Bounce, that is too bad!" drawled the captain, playing with his moustachio. "I appeal to the signora herself, whether the butterfly was so very—very bad?"

"Considering it to be your first attempt," said the young lady, "it was not so very much amiss; and I must say that I preferred the butterfly to the lines upon the Sea Serpent."

"Well, may I perish," cried the hussar, "if I think the lines were so bad. But we will refer them to Mr. Markham;—not that I dispute Miss Isabella's judgment: I'd rather have my moustachios singed than do that! But——"

"The vertheth! the vertheth!" cried Sir Cherry.

"I am afraid that my talent does not justify such a reference to it," said Markham; "and I should rather imagine that Miss Isabella's decision will admit of no appeal."

"My dear thir, we will have your opinion. The vertheth were composed in a burway; and they may not be quite tho ekthient and faulttheth ath they might be."

"I only devoted half an hour to them, strike me if I did!"

"Let'th thee—how do they begin?" continued the effeminate young baronet of nineteen. "Oh! I remember—the opening thir thimble but ekprethive:

Through the thea the therpeneth wolith,
Moving ever 'twixth the poith,
Frightning herwirth, pweath, and thoth,
In luth pweath woid—
Thswallowing up the mighty thith,
By the thuction of luth lipth,
Oward'th the monthtwetweth,
Like——"

"Well, strike me!" interrupted the captain, "if ever I heard poetry spouted like that before. Please listen to me, Mr. Markham. This is the way the poem opens:—

Through the sea the serpent rolls
Moving ever 'twixt the poles,
Fright'ning herrings, sprats, and soles,
In his progress rapid,—
Swallowing up the mighty ships,
By the motion of his lips,
Oward still the monster trips,
Like——"

"No, that lhan't the way," cried Sir Cherry.

"Well, strike me, if I'll say another word more then," returned the captain of hussars, apparently very much inclined to cry.

"I am sure Miss Isabella was wrong not to have inserted these verses in her album," said Armstrong, with a smile of good-natured satire. "But I know that my young friend, Mr. Markham, has a more refined taste with regard to poetry than he chose just now to admit."

"Indeed!" said the beautiful Isabella; "I should be delighted to hear Mr. Markham's sentiments upon the subject of poetry; for I confess that I myself entertain very singular notions in that respect. It is difficult to afford a minute definition of what poetry is; for, like the unearthly visitants which the fears of superstition have occasionally summoned to the world, poetry fascinates the senses, but eludes the grasp of the beholder, and stands before him visible, powerful, and yet impalpable!"

"I concur with your views, Miss Isabella," said Markham, delighted to hear, amidst the frivolity of the conversation, remarks which exhibited sound sense and judgment. "It is impossible to set forth, in any array of words, the sublimity and peculiarity of

poetry, which soars above the powers of language and defies the reach of description."

"Yes," said Isabella; "the painter cannot place the rainbow or the glittering dew-drop upon his canvass; the sculptor cannot invest his image with a soul; and it seems equally difficult to define poetry."

"We know of what we are speaking when we allude to it; but there are no definitions which give us views of it sufficiently comprehensive."

"Well, strike me! if I didn't think that every thing with rhymes, or in lines of a certain length, was poetry," observed the captain of hussars.

"My daughter can explain the mystery to you," said the countess, surveying Isabella with pride and maternal enthusiasm.

Isabella blushed deeply. She feared that she had intruded her remarks on the company, and dreaded to be considered vain or anxious for display. Markham immediately perceived the nature of her thoughts, and skilfully turned the conversation to the poetry of her native land, and thence to the leading characteristics and features of Italian life.

Dinner was at length announced, and Richard had the felicity of conducting the lovely daughter of the count to the dining-room, and of occupying a seat by her side during the banquet.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE DREAM.

THREE weeks passed away in a most agreeable manner, and Richard frequently expressed his gratitude to Armstrong for the pleasure he had procured him by this visit.

The more he saw of Count Alterou's daughter, the more he was compelled to admire her personal and mental qualifications. But he felt somewhat annoyed when he discovered that Captain Smilax Dapper was paying his addresses to her: for he was interested in so charming a young lady, and would have regretted to see her throw herself away on such a coxcomb. He did not however find that Isabella gave the captain any encouragement: on the contrary he had frequently seen an erratic smile of contempt upon her lips when the military aspirant to her hand uttered an absurdity or indulged in an air of affectation.

By the constant and unvaried respect, and the absence of all familiarity on the part of Dapper towards the lovely Italian, Markham also argued that he had not as yet declared his sentiments, because had he been a favoured suitor, the truth would have betrayed itself in some trifling manner or another. Moreover, as Isabella conducted herself in only just the same friendly way towards Captain Dapper as she manifested towards her father's other guests, Richard saw no reason to believe that this passion was reciprocal.

Markham was thrown much in the signora's society during his visit at her father's house. He soon perceived that she preferred a conversation upon edifying and intellectual subjects to the frivolous chit-chat of Sir Cherry Bounce and Captain Dapper; and he frequently found himself carrying on a lengthened discourse upon music, poetry, painting and Italian literature, while the others were amusing themselves in the billiard or smoking-rooms. But Isabel was no blue-stocking; she was full of vivacity and life, and her conversation was sprightly and agreeable, even when turning upon those serious subjects.

In a few days after Richard's arrival, it was always

he who turned the leaves of Isabella's music-book, "because Captain Dapper didn't know when;" she always took his arm when they walked round the shrubbery and garden after breakfast, "because Captain Dapper was constantly leaving her to play Sir Cherry some trick;" and somehow or another at meal-times, Richard and Isabella were invariably seated next to each other.

Such was the state of things at the expiration of three weeks, to which extent, although contrary to the original proposal of Armstrong, the visit had already extended; and Captain Smilax Dapper more than once fancied that he saw a rival in Richard Markham. At length he determined to communicate his suspicions to his friend Sir Cherry Bounce—a resolution which he carried into effect in the following manner.

"Cherry, my dear fellow," said he, one morning, taking the effeminate young baronet with him into the garden, up the gravel walks of which he walked in a very excited state; "Cherry, my dear fellow, I have something upon my mind, strike me! and I wish to unburden myself to you."

"Do you, Thimbleth? What can possibly be the matter?" demanded the youth, turning very pale. "It's ith veway terrible? because if it ith, I had better call the count, and he will bring hith blunder-bath."

"Strike me an idiot, Cherry, if you sin't a fool with your counts and blunderbusses. Now listen to me! I love Isabella, and have been doing the agreeable to her—"

"On my thoul I never could thee it!"

"I dare say not! strike me, if I didn't keep it so precious snug and quiet! However I love the girl; and curse me if I don't have her too—that's more! She shall be Mrs. Smilax Dapper, as sure as she's born, and I hope the mother of a whole regiment of little Smilaxes. And then Cherry, you shall stay a month or six weeks with us at a time, and fondle the little ones on your knees, you shall, and every thing will go on comfortable and smooth."

"Oh! veway thumoth!" cried Sir Cherry Bounce, making a slight grimace at the pleasing prospect of fondling the little Dappers upon his knees.

"And I suppose I am not presumptuous in ascribing to the hand of Isabella? My father is a peer—and my uncle is a peer—and I have three thousand a-year of my own, beside expectations. Strike me, if I'm a man to be sneezed at!"

"Who thinkst of theeething at you?"

"I don't know exactly. And then I am not such a very bad looking fellow either. You are not ugly, Cherry, you are not—that is, not particularly ugly, although you have got pink eyes, and white lashes, and a pug nose;—but I'm more athletic, strike me!"

"I'm thure I don't dithpute what you thay."

"Well then—acknowledging all this," proceeded the captain, "how should I treat a fellow who endeavours to cut me out?"

"Challenge him to fight with thword and pithotl," answered Sir Cherry. "But who ith he?"

"That upstart fellow, Markham, who was brought here by that odious, republican, seditious, disloyal scoundrel Armstrong, and who talks all day about poetry and music, and God knows what. However, I can't say I admire that plan of yours," continued the bussar; "swords and pistols, you know are so very dangerous; and—and—"

"And what elth?"

"Why, you're a fool, Cherry. I thought you

would have hit upon some plan to enable me to secure the prize."

"Well then—thappothing we carwy the girl off, to Wochethter for inthanth."

"Dence take Rochester! my regiment is quartered at Clathum."

"Well—to Canterbury then?"

"Yes—that will do—strike me blind if it won't!" ejaculated the captain. "But if I could only get rid of this Markham somehow or another, I should prefer it. The fellow—"

Captain Smilax Dapper stopped short; for at that moment, as he and his companion were turning the angle of a summer-house, they ran against Richard Markham.

"It wath'at me—it wath'nt me who thpoke!" ejaculated Sir Cherry Bounce; and having uttered these words, he very fairly took to his heels, leaving his friend the captain to settle matters as best he might.

"Who was taking a most unwarrantable liberty with my name?" demanded Richard, walking straight up to Captain Smilax Dapper.

"I certainly made an observation," answered the captain, turning mighty pale, "and I do not hesitate to say, sir—"

"What, sir?"

"Why, sir—that I feel, sir—that strike me, sir!"

"Yes, sir—I shall strike you," very coolly answered Markham; "and that will teach you not to speak lightly of one, who is a comparative stranger to you, on another occasion."

As he uttered these words, he seized the captain by the collar, and gave him a couple of boxes on the ears. Dapper endeavoured to pluck up a spirit and resist; but the ceremony was performed before he could release himself from his assailant's clutches; and he then returned to the house, muttering threats of vengeance.

That same afternoon Markham took leave of his new friends.

On his return home, he found his dwelling more lonely and cheerless than ever. He felt that he was isolated in the world; and his heart seemed to be pierced with a red-hot iron when the remembrance of all his wrongs returned to his imagination.

Oh! if we could but study the alphabet of fate, and remember that each leaf which falls, each flower that dies, is but the emblem of man's kindred doom, how much of the coldness, the selfishness, the viciousness of life would be swept away, and earth would be but a proof-sheet of heaven's fairer volume—with errors and imperfections, it is true, but still susceptible of correction and amendment, ere its pages be unfolded before the High Chancery of heaven!

Spring now asserted its tranquil reign once more; and May strewed the earth with flowers, and covered the trees with foliage.

One evening Richard sat in his library reading until a very late hour. Night came, and found him at his studies; and the morning dawned ere he thought of retiring to slumber.

He hastened to his bed-room, with the intention of seeking his couch; but he felt no inclination to sleep. He walked up to the window, drew aside the curtain, and gazed forth into the open air. The partial obscurity seemed to hang like a dusky veil against the windows; but by degrees the darkness yielded to the grey light of the dawn.

He glanced in the direction of the hill upon the summit of which stood the two trees; and he thought of his brother. He wondered, for the thousandth time, whether the appointment would be eventually

kept, and why Eugene came not to revisit the home of his birth.

He was in the midst of cogitations like these, when his eyes were suddenly struck by an object which seemed to be moving between the trees upon the top of the hill. A superstitious fear seized upon Richard's mind. In the first moment of his surprise he imagined that the apparition of his brother had been led back to the trysting-place by those leafy banners that proclaimed the covenant of the heart. But he speedily divested himself of that momentary alarm, and smiled at his folly in believing it to be extraordinary that any one should visit the hill at that early hour.

The object was still there—it was a human being—and, as the morning gradually grew brighter, he was enabled to distinguish that it was a man.

But that was the hour at which labourers went to their daily toils;—still, why should one of those peasants linger upon the top of the hill, to reach which he must have gone out of his way?

Markham felt an indescribable curiosity to repair to the hill;—but he was ashamed to yield to the superstitious impulse under the influence of which he still more or less laboured;—and the sudden disappearance of the object of his anxiety from the hill confirmed him in his resolution to remain in his chamber. He accordingly closed the blind, and retired to his couch, where he shortly sank into a deep slumber.

Markham was now plunged into the aerial world of dreams. First he saw himself walking by the side of Isabella in a cool and shady grove, where the birds were singing cheerily in the trees; and it seemed to him that there reigned a certain understanding between himself and his fair companion which allowed him to indulge in the most delightful and tender hopes. He pressed her hand—she returned the token of affection and love. Suddenly this scene was rudely interrupted. From a deep recess in the grove appeared a wretch, covered with rags, dirty and revolting in appearance, with matted hair, parched and cracked lips, wild and ferocious eyes, and a demonic expression of countenance. Isabella screamed: the wretch advanced, grasped Richard's hand, gave utterance to a horrible laugh, and claimed his friendship—the friendship of Newgate! It seemed to Richard that he made a desperate effort to withdraw his hand from that rude grasp;—and the attempt instantly awoke him.

He opened his eyes;—but the horror experienced in his dream was now prolonged, for a human countenance was bending over him!

It was not, however, the distorted, hideous, and fearful one which he had seen in his vision,—but a countenance handsome, though very pale, and whose features were instantly familiar to him.

"Eugene, my brother—Eugene, dearest Eugene!" ejaculated Richard; and he stretched out his arms to embrace him whom he thus adored.

But scarcely had his eyes opened upon that countenance, when it was instantly withdrawn; and Richard remained for a few moments in his bed, deprived of all power of motion, and endeavouring to assure himself whether he was awake or in a vision.

A sudden impulse roused him from his lethargy;—he sprang from his couch, rushed towards the door, and called aloud for his brother.

The door was closed when he reached it; and no trace seemed to denote that any visitor had been in that chamber.

He threw on a dressing-gown, hurried down stairs, and found all the doors fast closed and locked as usual

at that hour. He opened the front-door, and looked forth,—but no one was to be seen. Bewildered and alarmed, he returned to his bed-chamber, and once more sought his couch. He again fell asleep, in the midst of numerous and conflicting conjectures relative to the incident which had just occurred; and when he awoke two hours afterwards, he was fain to persuade himself that it was all a dream.

He dressed himself, and walked towards the hill. On his arrival at the top, he instinctively cast his eyes upon the name and date carved in the bark of his brother's tree. But how great was his surprise—how ineffable his joy, when he beheld fresh traces of the same hand imprinted on that tree. Beneath the former memento—and still fresh and green, as if they had only been engraved a few hours—were the words—

EUGENE.

May 17th, 1838.

"My God!" exclaimed Richard, "it was then no dream!"

He threw himself upon the seat between the two trees and wept abundantly.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SPECULATION.—AN UNWELCOME MEETING.

FIVE months elapsed; and in the middle of October Richard received an invitation to pass a few days at the abode of Count Alterosi.

He contemplated change of scene with unfeigned delight, and lost no time in repairing to Richmond.

The count received him with the utmost cordiality: the countess expressed a regret that he should wait to be solicited to honour them with his company; and Isabella's countenance wore a smile and a blush as she extended her hand towards him.

"I was anxious to see you again," said the count, after dinner, before the ladies had retired, "if it were only to joke you about the fright into which you threw poor Bounce the last time you were here. Isabel apprehended a duel between you and Dapper; but we never could learn the origin of your dispute."

"Indeed, I scarcely dreaded such an event," said Isabella; "for however capable Mr. Markham may be of fighting, I felt perfectly well convinced that Captain Dapper would not be induced to commit such a breach of the peace."

"Our dispute was a mere trifle," said Markham; "and I am sorry it should have reached your ears."

"The Trojan war sprung from a trifle," cried the count; "but these trifles are frequently very interesting."

"The truth is," said Richard, "that I overheard Captain Dapper abuse me to his companion, heaven only knows why! Sir Cherry Bounce started away; and I was compelled to give the young officer a couple of boxes upon the ears to teach him courtesy in future."

Isabella laughed heartily at this anecdote; and Markham felt indescribably happy when he thus received a convincing proof that the lovely Italian was in no way interested in that aspirant to her hand.

"I shall not invite those gentlemen here very readily again," observed the count. "I thought that they would have helped to pass away the time agreeably; but one was such a fool, and the other such a fop, that I was really glad to get rid of them. However, I have now something else to occupy my attention."

"The count is going to speculate in an English Company," said the countess. "We foreigners, you

know, Mr. Markham, are struck with the facility with which enormous fortunes are built up in your country."

"Italy has lost all her commerce," added the count, with a sigh: "poor Italy!"

"With all due deference to your experience," said Markham, "I should counsel you to be particularly careful how you allow yourself to be deluded by visionaries and adventurers."

"Oh! the gentleman who has proposed to me certain schemes for the realization of an immense fortune, is a man of probity and honour. The truth is, that the political condition of Italy may possibly compel me to remain an exile from my native land for the rest of my existence; and I am anxious to turn the means now within my reach to the best advantage for my daughter."

"You know, my dear father," said Isabella, her eyes filling with tears, "that I can be contented with a little—a very little."

"I think I have before informed you that I lost a considerable portion of my own property through the nefarious speculations of an adventurer," observed Richard; "and I must confess that I look with a suspicious eye upon all schemes which induce us to change realities for chances. You possess, count, all that you require to make you happy during your exile;—why should you sigh and languish after immense wealth?"

The signora bestowed a glance of gratitude upon Markham, who also rose considerably in the estimation of the countess. Indeed, both the ladies were very much averse to the count's ideas of speculating; and they were delighted to find in their visitor so able an advocate of their opinions.

"I consider," resumed the count, "that a man is bound to do the best he can to increase the property he has to leave his offspring; and as my own estate in Castelicala is confiscated, and I have nothing to rely upon but a certain sum of ready-money, I am determined to vent the greater portion of it in an enterprise which will produce immense returns."

"And what may the nature of the undertaking be?" inquired Markham.

"A line of steam-packets between London and Montoni, the capital of Castelicala. Such an enterprise would absorb all the commerce now enjoyed by Leghorn and Civita Vecchia; and Montoni would be the great mercantile port of Italy."

"The scheme certainly seems plausible," observed Richard; "and, guided by your experience, may realize your expectations. I would rather see you embarking money in such an undertaking than in those desperate and outrageous ones which have nothing but their originality to recommend them."

The count smiled with triumph and satisfaction at having thus disarmed the opposition of his young friend to the projected speculation.

On the following day Count Alteroni repaired to London, and did not return home until dinner-time.

After dinner, when he and Richard were sitting alone together, sipping their claret, the count said in a semi-mysterious and confidential manner, "I have this morning broken the ice: indeed, I have made the first plunge. I have confided the necessary funds to Mr. Greenwood—that is the name of the gentleman with whom I am to co-operate;—and he will immediately busy himself with the foundation of the enterprise. I shall not, however, mention this to the countess and Isabella for a few days; for in commercial matters ladies always entertain apprehensions which give one what you English call the 'blue-devils.'"

Richard made no observation. The evil—if evil

it were—was done; and he did not choose to fill the count with apprehensions which might eventually prove to be unfounded. The conversation upon the subject accordingly dropped for the present; and the two gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

Several weeks glided away; and Markham still remained at Richmond. His acquaintance with the count's family rapidly expanded into an intimacy which gave him unfeigned pleasure. The count treated him as a near relative—almost as a son; and the countess was charmed with him because he could converse upon German literature and history;—and where the parents were so encouraging, how could the daughter be reserved? Isabella was naturally of a frank and confiding disposition; and she soon learned to consider Markham as a very intimate friend of the family. Whenever he hinted at the necessity of returning to his own home, he expressed his fears that he was intruding upon the hospitality of his kind hosts, Isabella always had some cause ready to delay his departure, as soon as her father and mother had concluded their own entreaties for him to prolong his visit. Markham had nothing to occupy his attention elsewhere; and he was thus easily induced to remain in a mansion where he received so much kindness, and where there was an attraction that daily disclosed new charms and revealed fresh spells.

It was in the middle of December that Markham was walking, on a fine frosty morning, with Isabella along the high road in the immediate vicinity of the count's dwelling, when he noticed a strange and repulsive looking individual following them at a short distance. At first he supposed that the man's way lay in the same direction which he and his fair companion were pursuing; he accordingly turned with Isabella into another path, and, to his misfortune and annoyance, found that he was still followed by the stranger whose dilapidated appearance, long black matted hair, week's beard, filthy person, and sinister expression of countenance, filled him with alarming suspicions.

He remembered his dream; and a shudder passed through his frame.

Determined to ascertain the motive of this man's perseverance in dogging him thus, he conducted Isabella by a short cut back to the house, and retraced his steps to encounter the person who was still following him.

The man advanced towards him with a dogged and determined air, and yet downcast eyes, which were buried beneath his projecting temples and shaggy brows.

"Hollo, my fine fellow!" he exclaimed, when he came within a few yards of Richard; "you don't mean to say that you have forgotten an old pal?"

"What, Anthony—is this you?" said Markham, turning deadly pale as he recognised one of his fellow-prisoners in Newgate.

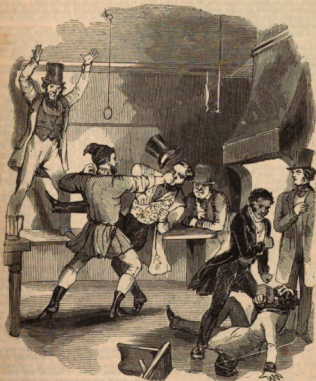
It was the Resurrection Man.

"Yes—it is me—poor Tony Tidkins. But now permit me to ask you a question or two. What are you doing now? Who lives there? And what young girl was that you were walking about with?"

"And by what right do you dare put those insolent queries to me?" cried Markham, surveying the ruffian with mingled indignation and disgust.

"Oh! if you don't choose to answer my questions, I can precious soon ascertain all the truth for myself," coolly replied the Resurrection Man, who never once looked Markham in the face;—then, having uttered these words, he advanced a few paces as if he were about to seek the count's dwelling.

"Wretch! what do you mean to do!" ejaculated



Richard, hurrying after him and detaining him by the arm: "you do not know that that abode is sacred—that it is the residence of probity, innocence, and honour—that if you were to breathe a hint who and what you are, you would be spurned from the door?"

"Ah! I am accustomed to *find* in this Christian land—in this land of Bibles and Missionary Societies," said the Resurrection Man bitterly: then, resuming his dogged surliness of tone, he added, "But at all events I can first ask for aims and a morsel of bread at that house, and thereupon state that the gentleman who was just now walking with the young lady belonging to the house, was a companion of mine in Newgate—a communication which will tend to preserve the innocence, honour, probity, and all the rest of it, of that family."

With these words he again set off in the direction of the count's abode.

"Confusion!" exclaimed Markham: this "man will now effect my ruin!"

A second time did he stop the Resurrection Man as he advanced towards the residence of the Italians.

"Well—what now? isn't a man at liberty to walk which way he chooses?"

"You cannot be so base as to betray me? you would not ruin my happiness for ever!" said Richard, in whose mind the particulars of his dream were now uppermost.

"And why should I have any regard for you, since you receive and treat me as if I was a dog?"

"I really did not mean——"

"Oh! bother to all apologies," cried the Resurrection Man ferociously.

"My God! what do you want of me? what can I do for you?" exclaimed Richard, uncertain how to act, and his mind a prey to the most painful emotions; for he already fancied that he saw himself exposed—banished from the count's hospitable roof—separated from Isabella, without a chance of reconciliation—and reproached for having intruded himself upon the society of a virtuous and untainted family.

The mere anticipation of such an afflicting series of incidents was more than he could bear; and he was prepared to make any sacrifices to avert so terrible an occurrence.

"I may obtain from your fears what I should not have got from your generosity," exclaimed the Resurrection Man: "but it doesn't matter what motive produces it, so long as I get it."

"And what is it that you require?" asked Richard hastily. "But let us walk aside—they may see us from the windows."

"And what do I care if they do?" brutally demanded the Resurrection Man. "I suppose I shan't suffer in character by talking to a companion in former misfortunes?" he added, in a sarcastic tone.

There was something peculiarly revolting about that man;—his death-like countenance, jet-black whiskers, shaggy brows, averted glances, and horrible nick-name, all combined to render him a loathsome and disgusting object.

The contact of such a wretch was like plunging one's hand amidst the spawn of toads.

But the savage irony of this monster—oh! that was utterly intolerable. Richard writhed beneath it.

"Now I tell you what it is," said the Resurrection Man, who probably by this time saw that he had reduced the young man to a pliability suitable to his purposes; "if you will only be civil I'll accommodate you to the utmost of my power. Let us walk away from the house—we can then talk more at our ease."

Richard accompanied the miscreant a short distance; and then they gain stopped, but no longer within view of the count's residence.

"You can, doubtless, suppose what I want!" said the Resurrection Man, turning suddenly round upon Markham, and looking him full in the face for the first time.

"Money, I presume," replied Richard.

"Yes—money. I know that you were in expectation of a great fortune when you were in Newgate; and I suppose you have not run through it all yet."

"I was almost totally ruined, during my imprisonment, by the unfortunate speculations in which my guardian engaged," answered Markham mournfully.

"That's all my eye! Nevertheless, I won't be hard upon you: I know that you have got a splendid house and a grand estate close by—"

"A few acres of land, as heaven is my witness!" "Well—you may try it on as much as you like; but I tell you plainly it won't do for me. Let us cut this matter devilish short, and come to some understanding at once. I am hard up—I don't know what to turn my hand to for a moment; and I can't get orders for the stiff ones as I used to do."

"All that I have told you about the loss of my property is quite true," said Markham; "and I have now but little more than a bare two hundred a-year to live upon."

"Well, I will be generous and let you off easy,"

said the Resurrection Man. "You shall give me for the present—"

"For the present!" repeated Markham, all the terror of his mind again betraying itself; "if I make any arrangement with you at all, it would be upon the express condition that you would never molest me more."

"Be it so," said the Resurrection Man, whom the promise cost nothing, and who knew that there was nothing to bind him to its implicit performance; "give me five hundred pounds, and I will ever seek you out again."

"Five hundred pounds!" exclaimed Richard: "I cannot command the money!"

"Not a rag less will I take," said the extortioner with a determined air and voice.

"I really cannot comply with the proposal—I have not the money—I do not know where to get it. Why do you persecute me in this way? what harm have I ever done to you? why should you seek to ruin me, and to annihilate all my hopes of again establishing myself in an honourable position in society?" Tell me—by what right, by what law, do you now endeavour to extort—vilely, infamously extort—this money from me?"

No pen could describe—no painter depict the singular expression of countenance which the Resurrection Man wore as these words fell upon his ears. He knew not whether to burst out into a fit of laughter, or to utter a volley of imprecations against his former companion in Newgate; and so, not to be wrong by doing one and omitting the other, he did both. His ironical and ferocious laugh fell horribly upon the ears of Markham, who was at the same time assailed by such a string of oaths and blasphemies, that he trembled.

"You want to know by what law and right I demand money of you," cried the wretch, when he had indulged in this out-pouring of laughter and imprecations to his heart's content: "well—I will tell you. My law is that practised by all the world—the oppression of the weak by the strong; and my right is also that of universal practice—the right of him who takes what will not dare to be refused. Now, then, you understand me; and if not, hear my resolution."

"Speak," said Richard, now thoroughly cooled and disarmed; "and let me know the worst at once."

"You have confirmed my suspicion that you are courting the young girl I saw you walking with: you have confirmed that suspicion by your manner and your words. Now, I require five hundred pounds; and if you are anxious that your fair one should remain in ignorance of your Old Bailey adventures, you had better comply with my terms."

"I positively declare that I have not the money," said Richard.

"Make it."

"But how?"

"Borrow it of the young lady's father or mother; or uncle, or aunt."

"Never—impossible!"

"You say that you have a few acres of land left. I believe you have more; but let's take your own statement. Upon those few acres you can easily borrow the money I require."

"And diminish my miserable income still more?"

"Yes—or no, without further wrangling? You must be well aware that this sacrifice is necessary if the girl is worth having."

"In the name of heaven, allude not to—to—to—Miss ——— to the young lady with whom you saw me ere now;—allude not to her in this disgraceful

manner!" cried Markham; for when the lips of that horrible man framed a sentiment which bore reference to Isabella, it seemed to Richard as if a loathsome serpent was pouring its slimy venom upon a sweet and blooming flower.

"Will you give me the money?" demanded the Resurrection Man.

"I will give you two hundred pounds—I have no more—I can get no more—I will not raise any more upon my property."

"Can't be done," returned the ruffian. "I will have the five hundred, or nothing."

"It will take some days to procure the money," said Markham, yielding gradually.

"Never mind. Give me what you have about you for my present purposes, and name the day and place for me to receive the rest."

Markham took his purse from his pocket, and examined its contents. There were seventeen sovereigns at that moment at his command. He retained two, and handed fifteen to the Resurrection Man, who pocketed them with savage glee.

"Now this looks like business," said he, "and is an earnest that you will do the thing that's right. Where and when for the remainder?"

"In a fortnight I will meet you at any place you may name in London," answered Markham.

"Well, make it a fortnight. Do you know the *Dark House*, in Brick Lane, Bethnal Green?"

"What is it?" asked Richard, shuddering at the name.

"A public-house. Any one will tell you where it is. This day fortnight I shall expect to find you there at eight o'clock in the evening. If I don't happen to be punctual, you can wait for me; and if I don't come that night, I shall the next. Remember how much depends upon your fulfilment of the contract."

"I shall not fail," answered Richard, with a sinking of the heart which none can understand who have not been placed in a similar position. "And you, on your part, will adhere to your side of the agreement?"

"Mute as a mouse," said the Resurrection Man; "and should I afterwards meet you by accident, I shall not know you. Farewell."

With these words the Resurrection Man turned away, and pursued his course towards London.

Markham followed him with his eyes until he turned an angle of the road and was no longer to be seen.

Then only did Richard breathe freely.

CHAPTER XLi.

MR. GREENWOOD.

ABOUT six o'clock in the evening—ten days after the incident which concluded the preceding chapter,—a handsome cabriolet drove up to the door of a house in Spring Gardens.

Down jumped the tiger—an urchin not much bigger than a walking stick—and away went the knocker, rat-tat-tat, for upwards of fifteen seconds. A servant in livery opened the door, and an elegantly-dressed gentleman, about six or seven and twenty years of age, alighted from the vehicle.

This gentleman rushed up stairs to his study, drew forth his cheque-book, wrote an order upon his banker for a thousand pounds, enclosed it in an envelope, and immediately despatched the letter to Lord Tremorsdyr by one of his numerous domestics. He had that afternoon lost the money to his lordship in some sporting-bet; and, "as it was a debt of honour," he could not possibly think of sitting

down to dinner, or even pulling off his boots (which, being fashionable, pinched him excessively) without settling it.

As soon as he had done this, another servant entered the room, and said, "If you please, sir, Mrs. Mangles has called, and is waiting below to see you. She has been here these three hours, and wishes very much to say a few words to you, sir."

"What! that bothering upholsterer's wife!" ejaculated the gentleman, in a tone of indignation which would have induced a stranger to believe that he was the most persecuted man in the world.

"Why—her husband's account hasn't been owing quite a year yet; and here she is boring from morning to night."

"Please, sir, she says that her husband is locked up in a spunging-house."

"Serve him right!"

"But he is a hard-working sober man——"

"He shouldn't run into debt."

"And he has five children."

"It is really disgusting! these lower orders literally swarm with children!"

"And if you would only pay a quarter of the money, he would get out to-night."

"I won't pay a sixpence till January."

"Then he will be totally ruined, sir, his wife says."

"Well—he must be ruined, then. Go and turn her out, and send up Lafleur."

And the fashionable gentleman, who would not owe a *debt of honour* for half an hour, thought no more of the sum which was due to a tradesman, which had been already owing for nearly a year, and which he could have immediately settled without the slightest inconvenience to himself.

For this man was rich; and, having got his money in the City (God knows how), had now come to the West End to make the most of it.

"Lafleur," said the fashionable gentleman to the French valet, "you must dismiss that fellow John to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sir."

"He actually had the impertinence to bring me a message from a dun, while I was in a hurry to get dressed for dinner."

"Indeed, sir—you don't say so sir!" ejaculated the valet, who had as much horror of a dun as an overcoer has of a paper. "Yes, sir—I will dismiss him to-morrow, sir—and without a character too."

"Do, Lafleur. And now to dress. Are the company come?"

"Mr. Chichester and Sir Rupert Harborough are in the drawing-room, sir."

"Oh!" said Mr. Greenwood—for such was the gentleman's name—"very well!"

Having carelessly perused three or four letters which he found upon his table, he repaired to his dressing-room, where he washed his hands in a silver basin, while the poor upholsterer's wife returned to her husband in the lock-up house, to say that their last hope had failed, and that nothing but a debtor's goal awaited them. Accordingly, while the poor man was being carried off to Whitecross Street Prison, Mr. Greenwood repaired to his elegantly furnished drawing-room to welcome the guests whom he had invited that day to dinner.

"My dear Sir Rupert," said Mr. Greenwood, "I am delighted to see you. Chichester, how are you? Where have you both been for the last six months? Scarcely had I the pleasure of forming your acquaintance, when you were off like shots:

and I have never seen nor heard of you till this morning."

"Upon my honour, I hardly know what we have been doing—or indeed, what we have not been doing," ejaculated the baronet. "We have been in Paris and Brussels, and enjoyed all the pleasures of the Continent."

"And we found our way into the good graces of the Parisian ladies, and the purses of their husbands," observed Chichester, with a complacent smile.

"Ah! ah!" said Mr. Greenwood, laughing. "Trust you both for allowing yourselves to starve in a land of plenty."

"And so here we are, come back to England quite fresh and ready for new sport," said Chichester. "You see that it is useful to go abroad for a season every now and then. Immediately after I passed through the Insolvents' Court, two years ago, I went to Paris for six months, and came home again with a new reputation, as it were."

"By the bye, Sir Rupert," exclaimed Mr. Greenwood, "I lost a cool thousand to your father-in-law this afternoon at Tattersall's."

"What! does the old lord do things in so spirited a way as that?" cried the baronet.

"Yes—now and then. I believe you and he are not on very good terms? When I asked him after you a month or two ago, he appeared to evade the conversation."

"The fact is," said the baronet, "old Lord and Lady Tremordyn pretend that I treat their daughter with neglect—just because I cannot and will not be tied to my wife's apron strings. I did not want to marry her; but Lady Tremordyn intrigued to catch me; and the old lord came down handsome—and so the match was made up."

The baronet did not think of informing his friend that he had stipulated for twenty thousand pounds to pay his debts, ere he would do justice to the young and beautiful creature whom he had seduced, and whose pathetic appeal to her mother has been already laid before the reader in the chapter which treats of the *Black Chamber* of the General Post Office.

"Do you know what has become of your old flame Diana Arlington?" inquired Mr. Greenwood of the baronet, after a pause.

"And was she not your old flame too?" said Sir Rupert, laughing. "I believe that when you were plain Mr. George Montague, instead of Mr. Montague Greenwood—"

"Oh! I have assumed the name of Greenwood, remember, because a relation of that name has left me a considerable fortune."

"Well—that is a very good story to tell the world, but not friends, my dear fellow," said the baronet, coolly. "But we were talking of the Enchantress. I presume she is still under the protection of the Earl of Warrington?"

"So I understand," replied Greenwood.

"Well—I must say," continued the baronet, "I always liked Diana; and I dare say we should have been together up to the present moment, if it had not been for that infernal affair of Markham's."

"Ah! Richard Markham!" ejaculated Mr. Greenwood hastily. "I have heard of him—but never seen him."

"I and Chichester were compelled to sacrifice him to save ourselves," observed Harborough.

"Yes—yes—it was a pity—a great pity," cried Greenwood, poking the fire violently.

"I wonder what has become of that same Markham?" said Chichester.

"I understand that he lost the greater portion of his property by some unfortunate speculation, or another, but the nature of which I have never learnt," replied Greenwood.

"And what about this Steam-Packet Company of which you were speaking this morning?" inquired Sir Rupert Harborough.

"The fact is, I have got a certain Italian count in tow, and I intend to make him useful. He is an emigrant from the Grand Duchy of Castellicola, having been concerned in some treasonable proceedings with Prince Alberto, who is the Grand Duke's nephew, and who has also been compelled to fly to some other country. Be it as it may, this Count Alteroni and I became acquainted; and, in the course of conversation, he observed that a fortune might be made by the establishment of a line of steam-packets between London and Montoni, the capital of Castellicola. He added that he should be very willing to embark his own capital in such an enterprise. '*How extraordinary!*' I immediately exclaimed: '*I had myself entertained the very same idea!*' The count was enchanted; and he has already advanced a considerable sum."

At this moment dinner was announced; and the three gentlemen proceeded to the apartment in which it was served up. The repast consisted of all the luxuries in season, and many out of season: the choicest wines were produced; and justice was done to each and all, while wit and humour flowed as freely, and sparkled as brightly as the juice of the grape itself. The baronet was more affable than ever;—Mr. Chichester related several amusing anecdotes of midnight spies, policemen, knockers, station-houses, and magistrates;—and Mr. Greenwood explained his plans relative to the steam-packets.

"I should very much like to have you both in the Direction," said Mr. Montague Greenwood, when he had terminated his elucidations: "but I have learnt that this Richard Markham, of whom we have been talking, is acquainted with the count; and if he saw your names connected with the affair, he would instantly blow upon it. I should then have the count upon me for the fifteen thousand pounds he has already lodged in my hands."

"Let us write an anonymous letter to the count, and inform him that Markham has been convicted at the Old Bailey," suggested Chichester.

"No—no," ejaculated Greenwood emphatically: "you have injured that young man enough already."

"And what do you care about him?" cried Chichester. "You said just now that you had never seen him."

"I did—and I repeat the assertion," answered Greenwood; then, in a very serious tone, he added, "and I will beg you both to remember, gentlemen, that if you wish to co-operate with me in any of those speculations which I know so well how to manage, you will leave Mr. Richard Markham alone; for I have certain private reasons for being rather anxious to do him a service than an injury."

"Well, I will not in any way interfere with your good intentions," said the baronet.

"Nor I," observed Chichester.

"And as it is impossible for you to enter my Steam-Packet Company," added Mr. Greenwood, "I will let you into another good thing which I have in view, and in which a certain banker is concerned. To tell you the real truth, this banker has been insolvent for some time; and if his father had not advanced him about fifty thousand pounds three years ago, he would have gone to smash. As it

was, the Lords of the Treasury got hold of his real position, by some means or another—he never could divine how; and they refused a tender which he sent in for a certain money contract—I don't know exactly what. Now his position is more desperate than ever, and he and I are going to do an admirable stroke of business. I will let you both into it."

We need scarcely remind the reader that the banker now alluded to was the writer of one of the letters perused by the Examiner's clerks in the *Black Chamber*.

The conversation between the three gentlemen was proceeding very comfortably, when a servant entered the room, and, handing his master a card upon a silver tray, said, "This gentleman, sir, requests to be allowed to see you, if perfectly convenient."

"The Count Alteroni!" exclaimed Mr. Greenwood. "What the devil could have brought him to London at this time of night? John—show him into the study—there is a good fire for him; and if that won't warm his heart, perhaps a bottle of Burgundy will."

The servant left the room; and in a few moments Mr. Greenwood hastened to join the count in the elegant apartment which was denominated "the study."

"My dear sir, I have to apologise for calling thus late," said the count; "but the truth is that I had a little business which brought me up to town to-day, and in this neighbourhood too; and I thought—"

"Pray offer no excuses, my dear count," interrupted Mr. Greenwood. "The truth is, I wished to see you very particularly—upon a matter not altogether connected with our enterprise—"

"Indeed," said the count; "you interest me. Pray explain yourself."

"In the first place, allow me to ask whether the ladies are yet acquainted with the undertaking in which you have embarked?"

"Yes—I acquainted them with the fact this very morning."

"And do they approve of it?"

"They approve of every thing which I think well, and disapprove of all that I abhor."

"And do they know that I am the projector and principal in the enterprise?" demanded Greenwood.

"They are acquainted with every thing," answered the count. "Indeed, they have formed of you the same exalted opinion which I myself entertain. It would be strange if they had not. We met you at the house of Lord Tremordyn; and that nobleman spoke in the highest possible terms of you. But what connection exists between all those questions which you have put to me, and the matter concerning which you desired to see me?"

"I am not sure that I ought to explain myself at present, nor to you in the first instance," was the answer, delivered with some embarrassment of manner; "at all events I should wish you to know a little more of me, and to have some reason to thank me for the little service which I shall have the means of rendering you, in enabling you to trouble your capital."

The count appeared mystified; and Mr. Greenwood continued:—

"I had the pleasure of seeing the amiable countess and her lovely daughter many times last summer at the house of Lord Tremordyn; and no one could know the Signora Isabella without being forcibly struck by her personal and mental qualifications. To render myself agreeable to Miss Isabella would be the bright of my earthly happiness. You will pardon my presumption; but—"

Mr. Greenwood ceased, and looked at the count to ascertain the effect which his words had produced.

The honourable and open-hearted Italian was not averse to this proposition. He considered his own affairs and prospects in Castelsola to be so desperate that he was bound to make the best provision he could for his daughter in a free, enlightened, and hospitable nation. Mr. Greenwood was good looking, moving in the best society, well spoken of by a peer of the realm (who, by the way, merely judged of Greenwood's character by the punctuality with which he paid his gambling debts), and evidently immensely rich—his manners were elegant, and his taste refined;—and, in a word, he might be called a most eligible suitor for the hand of the count's daughter. Not being over-well skilled in affairs of the heart himself, the count had not noticed the attachment which decidedly existed between Isabella and Richard Markham; and it never for a moment struck him that his daughter might manifest the most powerful repugnance to Mr. Greenwood.

"I have no doubt," said he, after a long pause, "that Isabella will feel highly flattered by your good opinion of her. Indeed, I shall inform her without delay of the manner in which you have expressed yourself."

"My dear sir," interrupted Greenwood hastily, "in the name of heaven tell the signora nothing at all about our present conversation. Her delicacy would be offended. Rather give me an opportunity of making myself better known to your daughter."

"I understand you. Come and pass a week or two with us at Richmond. We have not a soul staying with us at the present moment, Mr. Markham, who was our last guest, having returned to his own abode about ten days ago."

"This is a busy time with me," began Mr. Greenwood; "and I could scarcely spare a week with justice to yourself and my own interests—"

"True," interrupted the count. "I will bring the ladies up to town at the beginning of the new Year. We have a very pressing invitation from the Tremordyns, and I will avail myself of it."

Mr. Greenwood expressed his gratitude to the count for the favour which his suit thus received; and in a few minutes the Italian noble took his leave, more than ever convinced of the honour, wealth, and business-like habits of Mr. Greenwood.

"There," said the man of the world, as he once more seated himself at the table in the dining-room, where he had left the baronet and Chichester, "I have not passed the last hour unprofitably. I have not only demanded the hand of the count's lovely daughter, but have also persuaded the count to pay a few weeks' visit to your father-in-law, Lord Tremordyn," he added, addressing Sir Rupert.

"And what good do you propose by the latter arrangement?" demanded the baronet.

"I shall get the count's family at a house which Richard Markham stands no chance of visiting; for even if the count asked him to call upon him there, Markham would refuse, because he is sure to have read or heard that you, Sir Rupert, have married Lady Cecilia Hauntingfield, and he would be afraid of meeting you at Lord Tremordyn's residence."

"And why should you be so anxious to separate the count from Markham, since Chichester and I are not to be in the Steam-packet concern?"

"Because I myself could not, for certain reasons, visit the count's family if I stood the chance of meeting that same Richard Markham."

Mr. Greenwood then immediately changed the conversation, and pushed the bottle briskly about.

CHAPTER XLII.

"THE DARK HOUSE."

MARKHAM did not forget his appointment with the Resurrection Man. Having obtained the necessary sum from his solicitor, he determined to sacrifice it in propitiating a miscreant who possessed the power of wounding him in a tender and almost vital point. Accordingly we find him, on the evening agreed upon, threading his way on foot amidst the maze of narrow streets and crooked alleys which lie in the immediate neighbourhood of Spitalfields Church.

There is not probably in all London—not even in Saint Giles's nor the Mint—so great an amount of squalid misery and fearful crime budded together, as in the joint districts of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. Between Shoreditch Church and Wentworth Street the most intense pangs of poverty, the most profligate morals, and the most odious crimes, rage with the fury of a pestilence.

Entire streets that are nought but sinks of misery and vice,—dark courts, fetid with puddles of black slimy water,—alleys, blocked up with heaps of filth, and nauseating with unwholesome odours, constitute, with but little variety, the vast district of which we are speaking.

The Eastern Counties' Railway intersects Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. The traveller upon this line may catch, from the windows of the carriage in which he journeys, a hasty, but alas! too comprehensive glance of the wretchedness and squalor of that portion of London. He may actually obtain a view of the interior and domestic misery peculiar to the neighbourhood;—he may penetrate, with his eyes, into the secrets of those abodes of sorrow, vice, and destitution. In summer time the poor always have their windows open, and thus the hideous poverty of their rooms can be readily desecrated from the summit of the arches on which the railroad is constructed.

And in those rooms may be seen women half naked,—some employed in washing the few rags which they possess,—others ironing the linen of a more wealthy neighbour,—a few preparing the sorry meal,—and numbers scolding, swearing, and quarrelling. At many of the windows, men out of work, with matted hair, black beards, and dressed only in filthy shirts and ragged trousers,—lounged all the day long, smoking. From not a few of the open casements hang tattered garments to dry in the sun. Around the doors children, unwashed, uncombed, shoeless, dirty, and uncared for—through in numbers,—a rising generation of thieves and vagabonds.

In the districts of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green the police are but little particular with regard to street-stalls. These portable shops are therefore great in number and in nuisance. Fish, fresh and fried,—oysters, sweet-stuff, vegetables, fruit, cheap publications, soap-in-the-pan, shrimps and periwinkles, hair-combs, baked potatoes, liver and lights, curds and whey, sheep's heads, haddocks and red-herrings, are the principal comestibles which find vendors and purchasers in the public street. The public-houses and the pawnbrokers also drive an excellent trade in that huge section of London.

In a former chapter we have described the region of Saffron Hill: all the streets and courts of that locality are safe and secure when compared with many in Bethnal Green and Spitalfields. There are lanes and alleys between Shoreditch and Church Street, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the

Railway east of Brick Lane, through which a well-dressed person would not wander with a gold chain round his neck, at night, were he present.

Leading from the neighbourhood of Church Street up into the Hackney Road, is a sinuous thoroughfare, composed of Tyssen Street, Turk Street, Virginia Street, and the Bird-cage Walk; and in the vicinity of these narrow and perilous ways are the Wellington Road (bordered by a ditch of black mud), and several vile streets, inhabited by the very lowest of the low, the most filthy of the squalid, and the most profligate of the immoral.

We defy any city upon the face of the earth to produce a district equal in vice, dirt, penury, and fear-inspiring dens, to these which we are now describing.

The *Dark House* was a tavern of the lowest description in Brick Lane, a little north of the spot where the railway now intersects the street. The parlour of the *Dark House* was dirty and repulsive in all respects; the gas-lights formed two enormous black patches upon the ceiling; the tables were occupied by ill-looking men, whose principal articles of consumption were tobacco and malt liquor, and the atmosphere was filled with a dense volume of smoke. Markham was ashamed to be seen in such a place and in such society; but he consoled himself with the idea that neither he nor his business was known to those present; and as very little notice was taken of him as he proceeded to seat himself in the most retired and obscure corner, he speedily divested himself of the momentary embarrassment which had seized upon him.

Having satisfied himself by a glance that the Resurrection Man was not there, Richard ordered a glass of spirits and water, and resolved to await with patience the arrival of the extortioner.

By degrees he fell into a train of reflections in which he had never been involved before. He was about to purchase the silence of a villain who had menaced him with exposure to a family whose good opinion he valued. We have said elsewhere that he was a young man of the strictest honour, and that he was ever animated with the most scrupulous integrity of purpose. He could no longer conceal from himself the fact that he entertained a sincere and deep attachment for the Signora Isabella, and he flattered himself that he was not disagreeable to her in return. His transient passion for Mrs. Arlington had faded away with reflection, and he now comprehended the immense difference between an evanescent flame of that nature,—a flame kindled only by animal beauty, and unsustained by moral considerations,—and the pure, chaste, and sacred affection he experienced towards the charming Isabella. From the moment of his release from confinement, he had never inquired after Diana—much less sought after her; he knew not where she was, nor what had become of her, and his heart was totally independent of any inclination in her favour. He now asked himself whether he was pursuing an honourable part in concealing the antecedent adventures of his life from her whose pure and holy love he was so anxious to retain, whose confidence he would not lose for worlds, and whose peace of mind he would not for a moment sacrifice to his own passion or interest?

He had not satisfactorily answered the question which he had thus put to himself, when he was aroused from his reverie by the sound of a voice at the farther end of the room, which appeared familiar to him.

Glancing in that direction, he immediately recognised the well-known form and features of Mr. Talbot,

the vulgar companion of Sir Rupert Harborough and Mr. Chichester.

But how had the mighty fallen! The charitable gentleman now seemed to require the aid of charity himself. His hat, which was originally a gossamer at four-and-nine, was now so fully ventilated about the crown, that it would have fetched nothing at a Jew's auction, even though George Robins himself had put it up for sale. His coat was out at the elbows, his trousers out at the knees, and his shoes out at the toes; he was out of cash and out of spirits; and as he had none of the former, he trusted to the kindness of the frequenters of the *Dark House* parlour to supply him with some of the latter, diluted with hot water, and rendered more agreeable by means of sugar. Indeed, at the moment when his voice fell upon Markham's ear, he was just about to apply his lips to a tumbler of gin-punch which a butcher had ordered for his behoof.

"Well, Mr. Pocock," (this was Talbot's real name), said the butcher, "how does the world use you now?"

"Very bad, indeed, Mr. Griskin," was the reply. "For the last three year, come January, I havn't known, when I got up in the morning, where the devil I should sleep at night;—and that is God Almighty's truth."

"I'm sorry to hear your affairs don't mend," said the butcher. "For my part, I'm getting on blooming. I was a bankrupt only seven weeks ago."

"A strange manner of being successful in business," thought Markham.

"But all my goods was seized by the landlord," added the butcher, in a triumphant tone of voice; "and so they was saved from the mesenger of the Court, when he come down to take possession."

"Ah! I suppose your bankruptcy has put you all right again," said Pocock. "Nothing like a bankruptcy now-a-days—it makes a man's fortune."

"Yes—and no going to quod neither. I made a lot of friends of mine creditors, and so I got my certificate the very same day as I passed my second examination; and now I'm as right as a trivet. But what ails you, though, old feller, that you can't contrive to get on?"

"The fact is," said Pocock, sipping his gin-and-water, "I was led into bad company about three or four years ago, and I don't care before who I say it, or who knows what infernal scrapes I was partly the means of getting a nice young fellow into."

"I suppose you fell in with flash company?" observed the butcher.

"I did indeed! I went out of my element—out of my proper sphere, as I may say; and when a man does that without the means of keeping in it, he's d—d and done for at once. I fell in with a baronet and a swell cove of the name of Chichester, or Winchester, and who after all turned out to be the son of old Chichester the pawnbroker down the street here. They made a perfect tool of me. I was fed and pampered, and lived on the fat of the land; and then, when the scheme fell through, I was undressed off like a hoop of which a charity school-boy is tired. I fell into distress; and though I've sat at this here baronet and that there Chichester riding in their cabs, with tigers behind and horses before, they never so much as said, 'Talbot,' or 'Pocock, my tailor, here is a quid for you.'"

"Willanous," ejaculated the butcher. "But of what natur' was the scheme you talk of?"

"Why, I'll tell you that too. I shall certainly proclaim my own crimes; but I don't hesitate to say that I was led away by those two thieves. My name, as you well know, is Bill Pocock, and they

made me take the name of Talbot. I was brought up as an engraver, and did pretty well until some four years ago, when I lost my wife and got drinking, and then every thing went wrong. One day I fell in with this Chichester, and he lent me some money. He then began telling me how he knew the way of making an immense fortune with very little trouble, and no risk or expense to myself."

"So far, so good," said the butcher.

"I was hard up—I was rendered desperate by the death of my wife, and, to tell the truth, I wanted to live an idle life. I had got attached to public-house parlours, and couldn't sit down to work with the graver. So I bit at Chichester's proposal, and he introduced me to the baronet."

"Another glass, Pocock," interrupted the butcher, winking to the other inmates of the parlour, who were now all listening with the greatest attention to this narrative—but none with more avidity nor with deeper interest than Richard Markham, who sat unperceived by Pocock in his obscure corner.

"The scheme was certainly a very ingenious one," continued Talbot, "and deserved success. It was nothing more nor less than making bank-notes. I was used to engraving plates of that kind; and so I undertook the job. I don't care if any one here present goes and informs against me; perhaps I should be better off in a prison than out of one. But what goes to my heart—and what I can never forget, and shall reproach myself for as long as I live, was the getting of a nice young fellow into a scrape, and making him stand Moses for the punishment, as you do, Griskin, for the grog."

"And who was this young chap?" demanded the butcher.

"One Markham. You must recollect his case. He was tried just about this time three years ago, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment."

"Can't say I recollect."

"Well—this Markham was as innocent about the notes, as the child unborn!" added Pocock emphatically.

"I raly don't see that you need take on so," remarked the butcher, "for after all, you'd better let another feller get into trouble than be locked up in lavender yourself."

"It was an unfortunate event," said Pocock, shaking his head solemnly, "and nothing has prospered with me since. But what vexes me as much as all the rest, is to think of the conduct of those two chaps, Chichester and the baronet. They pretended not to know who I was, when I one day stopped them in Regent Street, and wanted to borrow a few pounds of them. The baronet turns round, and says to his pal, 'Who the devil is that fellow?' and Chichester puts up his eye-glass, stares at me through it for five minutes, and says, 'My good man, we never give ains to people unless they have certificates of good character to show.'"

"Perhaps you wasn't over swell in your togery?" said the butcher.

"Why—no: I don't think I was so well dressed then as I am now."

"The devil you wasn't! Well then, it ain't no wonder if so be they slighted you; for one wouldn't think as how you was trivited off at present to go to the Queen's le-ree."

"Come, no joking," exclaimed Pocock, "I have told you my story, and if you think it is a good one, and are inclined to do me a service, you can just order in a chop or a steak, for I think I could manage to eat a bit."

"With all my heart," said the butcher, who was a good-natured man in his way, and who, havin

realised a considerable sum by his late bankruptcy, was disposed to be generous: "you shall have as good a supper, and as much lusk as you can stow away. Here, Dick," he cried, addressing himself to the waiter, "run round to my shop, and ask the old woman for a nice steak; and then get it fried for me along with some inguns. And, Dick, let's have some tatars."

The waiter disappeared to execute these orders, and the conversation was then resumed upon the former topic.

Pocock entered into all the details with which the reader is already acquainted; and Markham who had made up his mind how to act, was determined to allow him to disclose spontaneously as much as he thought fit, before he should reveal himself. He sat in his obscure corner, shading his face with his hands, and affecting to be deeply interested in the columns of the *Morning Advertiser*, which lay the wrong way upwards before him.

The moment Pocock had begun to speak upon matters which so deeply interested him, Richard had become an attentive listener, and, as that individual proceeded, and he found within his reach a means of establishing his innocence, his brain seemed to be excited with joy—even to delirium. His pulse throbbled violently—his heart palpitated audibly. Much as he had loathed that den when he first entered it, he would now have fallen down, and kissed its dirty, saw-dust covered floor.

Hour after hour had passed away; the clock had struck eleven, and still the Resurrection Man did not make his appearance.

The butcher and Pocock were discussing their supper, and Markham was just thinking of accosting the latter, when the door was suddenly opened with great violence, and two persons muffled up in pea-coats, carrying enormous sticks, and smoking cigars, precipitated themselves into the parlour of the *Dark House*.

"D—n me, what a lark!" ejaculated one, flinging himself upon a seat, and laughing heartily: "but we're quite safe in here. I know this place; and the policeman lost sight of us, before we reached the door."

"Upon my honour, I cannot say that I admire frolics of this kind," observed the other; "it is really ridiculous to break lamps up at this end of the town. But, my God! what a neighbourhood you have brought me into! I couldn't have suspected that there was such a district in London."

"I told you that you would do good if you would come with me to my father," said the first speaker. "The old boy was quite delighted at the idea of a baronet condescending to sup with him; and you saw how he shelled out the blunt to me when he had imbibed his third glass of the punch."

The latter portion of this conversation was uttered in whispers, and the two gentlemen again laughed heartily—doubtless because they had succeeded in the business which had that evening brought them to the eastern regions of London.

In the midst of that second burst of hilarity, Mr. Pocock rose from his seat and advanced slowly towards the two new-comers.

"Well, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "this is an honour which you do us poor folks in Spitalfields. Come—you needn't stare so confounded hard at me. How are you, Chichester? Been to see the old gentleman at the sign of the Lombardy Arms—three bells, eh? Two chances to one that the things put up the spot will never come down again, eh?"

The butcher burst out into a roar of laughter, which was echoed by several other inmates of the room.

"Who the devil are you?" demanded Chichester, recovering his presence of mind sooner than the baronet; for both were astounded at this unexpected and very embarrassing encounter.

"Upon my honour, the man must be mistaken," murmured Sir Rupert Harborough.

"So far from being mistaken," cried Pocock, "you were the very fellows I was talking about just now. Gentlemen," he added, turning towards the people seated at the various tables, "these are the two swells that led me into the scrape I told you about just now. And now they pretend not to know me!"

"What does the fellow mean?" said Chichester, in an impudent tone: "do you know, Harborough?"

"'Pon my honour, not I!"

"Then I will tell you who I am," ejaculated the engraver. "I am the man who forged the plates from which the bank-notes were struck, that got poor Richard Markham condemned to two years' imprisonment in the Compter; and you know as well as possible that he suffered for our crime."

Chichester and the baronet were stupefied by this sudden and unexpected exposure.

They knew not what to say or do; and their countenances betrayed their guilt.

"Yes, gentlemen," resumed Pocock, growing excited, "these are the men whom some extraordinary chance—some providential or devilish design—has brought here this evening to confirm all I have told you."

"Devil take this impudence!" cried Chichester, now once more recovering his wonted self-possession, and determining to brave the accusation out: "my name isn't Chichester—you're quite mistaken, my good fellow—I can assure you that you are."

"Liar!" cried the engraver, furiously: "I should know you both amongst a million!"

"And so should I," calmly observed Markham, now advancing from his obscure corner, and appearing in the presence of those who so little expected to see him there.

A tremendous sensation now prevailed in the room, and those who were spectators anxiously awaited the result of this strange drama.

"Yes—there are indeed the villains to whom I am indebted for all the miseries I have endured," continued Markham. "But say not that a lucky accident brought us all here together this night,—think not that a mere chance occasioned the present meeting of the deceivers and the deceived—no; it was the will of the Almighty, to establish the innocence of an injured man!"

A solemn silence succeeded these words, which were delivered in a tone which produced an impression of awe upon all who heard them. Even the depraved and hardened men that were present on this occasion, in the parlour of the *Dark House*, gazed with respect upon the young man who dared to speak of the Almighty in that den of dissipation.

Markham continued after a short pause—

"Were it not that I should be involving in ruin a man who has spontaneously come forward to proclaim his own guilt, to declare his repentance, and to assert my innocence—without hope of reward from me, and even without knowing that God had sent me hither to overhear every word he uttered—were it not that I should be inflicting upon him the deepest injury, I would this moment assign you to the custody of the police, as the instigators of the diabolical fraud in which Talbot was your tool, and I your scape-goat. But though I shall take no steps to punish you, heaven will not allow you to triumph in your career of turpitude!"



"Well spoken," said Mr. Chichester, perceiving that he was in no danger, and therefore assuming an air of bravado.

"Upon my honour, I can't comprehend all this," muttered the baronet. "Let us go, my dear fellow—I do not admire your Spitalfields' rif-raff."

"Yes—go—depart!" cried Markham; "or else I shall not be able to restrain my indignation."

"They shan't go without a walloping, however," said the butcher, very coolly taking off his apron, and turning up the sleeves of his blue stuff jacket.

"I'll take one—who'll tackle the other?"

"I will," cried a barber's boy, laying aside his pipe, taking a long pull at the porter, and then advancing towards the two adventurers with clenched fists.

"Stop—stop, I implore you!" ejaculated Markham. "I ask not for such vengeance as this—no violence, I beseech you."

"Let 's give it 'em in true John Bull style, and knock all that cursed dandy nonsense out of 'em," cried the butcher; and before Richard could interfere farther, he felled the baronet with one blow of his tremendous fist.

The barber forthwith pitched into the fashionable Mr. Chichester, who struggled in vain to defend himself. The baronet rose; and the butcher instantly took his head "into chancery," and pummelled him to his heart's content.

As soon as Chichester and Sir Rupert were so

severely thrashed that they were covered all over with bruises, and could scarcely stand upon their legs, the butcher and the barber kicked them into the open air, amidst the shouts and acclamations of all the inmates of the *Dark House* parlour.

When order was once more restored, Markham addressed himself to the two champions who had avenged him in their own peculiar style, and not only thanked them for their well-meant though mistaken kindness, but also gave them munificent proofs of his bounty.

"And now," said Richard, turning towards Pocock, "are you willing to sign a declaration of my innocence?"

"On condition that the paper shall never be used against me," answered the engraver.

"Could I not this moment give you into custody to the police, upon your own confession of having forged the plate from which the bank-notes were printed?"

"Certainly: I was wrong to make any conditions. You are a man of honour."

Markham proceeded to draw up the declaration referred to; and Pocock signed it with a firm and steady hand.

This ceremony being completed, Richard placed Bank of England notes for fifty pounds in the engraver's hand.

"Accept this," he said, "as a token of my

gratitude and a proof of my forgiveness; and, believe me, I regret that my means do not allow me to be more liberal. Endeavour to enter an honest path; and should you ever require a friend, do not hesitate to apply to me."

Poovek wept tears of gratitude and repentance—the only acknowledgment he could offer for this sudden and most welcome aid. His emotions choked his powers of utterance.

Markham hurried from the room, and took his departure from the establishment which possessed such an ominous name, but which had proved the scene of a great benefit to him that evening.

He was hurrying up Brick Lane in a northerly direction—that is to say, towards Church Street, when he was suddenly stopped by an individual whom he encountered in his way, and who carried a large life-preserver in his hand.

"I suppose you were tired of waiting for me," said the Resurrection Man—for it was he.

"I certainly imagined you would not come to-night," answered Richard.

"Well, better late than never. It is fortunate that we met: it will save you another journey to-morrow night, you know."

"Yes—I am glad that we have met, as my time is now too valuable to waste."

"In that case, we can either return to the *Dark House*, which is open all night; or you can give me the money in the street. You don't require any receipt, I suppose?"

"No: neither will you require to give me any."

"So I thought: honour among thieves, eh? Excuse the compliment. But, in the first place, have you got the tin?"

"I had the whole amount just now, in my pocket, when I first went to the *Dark House*."

"Then I suppose it is all there still?"

"Not all. I have parted with fifty pounds out of it."

"The deuce you have! And how came you to do that?" demanded the Resurrection Man gruffly. "I gave you fair warning that I would take nothing less than the entire sum."

"I obtained, in a most extraordinary manner, a proof of my innocence; and I think I purchased it cheaply at that rate. I would have given all I possessed in the world," said Markham, "to procure it."

"The devil!" cried the Resurrection Man, who grew uneasy at the cold and indifferent way in which Markham spoke. "Well, I suppose I must take what you have got left. You can easily leave the remainder for me at the *Dark House*."

"Not a shilling will you now obtain from me," ejaculated Richard firmly; "and I have waited to tell you so. I have made up my mind to reveal the entire truth, without reserve, to those from whom I was before foolishly and dishonourably anxious to conceal it."

"This gammon won't do for me," cried the Resurrection Man. "You want to stall me off; but I'm too wide awake. Give me the tin, or I'll start off to-morrow morning to Richmond, and see the count upon—you know what subject. Before I left that neighbourhood the other day, I made all the necessary inquiries about the people of the house which the young lady went into."

"You may save yourself that trouble also," said Markham; "for I shall reveal all that you would unfold. But, in a word, you may do what you choose."

"Come now," ejaculated the Resurrection Man, considerably crest-fallen; "assist an old companion in difficulties: lend me a hundred or so."

"No," returned Richard in a resolute manner: "had you asked me in the first instance to assist you, I would have done so willingly;—but you have endeavoured to extort a considerable sum of money from me—much more than I could spare; and I should not now be justified in yielding to the prayers of a man who has found that his base menaces have failed."

"You do not think I would have done what I said?" cried the Resurrection Man.

"I believe you to be capable of any villainy. But we have already conversed too long. I was anxious to show you how a virtuous resolution would enable me to triumph over your base designs;—and I have now nothing more to say to you. Our ways lie in different directions, both at present and in future. Farewell."

With these words Markham continued his way up Brick Lane; but the Resurrection Man was again by his side in a moment.

"You refuse to assist me?" he muttered in a hoarse and savage tone.

"I do. Molest me no further."

"You refuse to assist me?" repeated the villain, grinding his teeth with rage: "then you may mind the consequences! I will very soon show you that you will bitterly—bitterly repent your determination. By God, I will be revenged!"

"I shall know how to be upon my guard," said Markham.

He then walked rapidly on, without looking behind him.

The Resurrection Man stood still for a moment, considering how to act: then, apparently struck by a sudden idea, he hastened stealthily after Richard Markham.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE MUMMY.

THE district of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green was totally unknown to Markham. Indeed, his visit upon the present occasion was the first he had ever paid to that densely populated and miserable region.

It was now midnight; and the streets were nearly deserted. The lamps, few and far between, only made darkness visible, instead of throwing a useful light upon the intricate maze of narrow thoroughfares.

Markham's object was to reach Shoreditch as soon as possible; for he knew that opposite the church there was a cab-stand where he might procure a vehicle to take him home. Emerging from Brick Lane, he crossed Church Street, and struck into that labyrinth of dirty and dangerous lanes in the vicinity of Bird-cage Walk, which we alluded to at the commencement of the preceding chapter.

He soon perceived that he had mistaken his way; and at length found himself floundering about in a long narrow street, unpaved, and here and there almost blocked up with heaps of putrescent filth. There was not a lamp in this perilous thoroughfare; no moon on high irradiated his path;—black night enveloped every thing above and below in total darkness.

Once or twice he thought he heard footsteps behind him; and then he stopped, hoping to be overtaken by some one of whom he might inquire his way. But either his ears deceived him, or else the person whose steps he heard stopped when he did.

There was not a light in any of the houses on either side; and not a sound of revelry or sorrow escaped from the ill-closed casements.

Richard was bewildered; and—to speak truly—he began to be alarmed. He remembered to have read of the mysterious disappearance of persons in the east end of the metropolis, and also of certain fell deeds of crime which had been lately brought to light in the very district where he was now wandering;—and he could not help wishing that he was in some more secure and less gloomy region.

He was groping his way along, feeling with his hands against the houses to guide him,—now knee-deep in some filthy puddle, now stumbling over some heap of slimy dirt, now floundering up to his ankles in the mud,—when a heavy and crushing blow fell upon his hat from behind.

He staggered and fell against the door of a house. Almost at the same instant that door was thrust open, and two powerful arms hurled the prostrate young man down three or four steps into a passage. The person who thus ferociously attacked him leapt after him, closing the door violently behind him.

All this occupied but a couple of seconds; and though Markham was not completely stunned by the blow, he was too much stupefied by the suddenness and violence of the assault to cry out. To this circumstance he was probably indebted for his life; for the villain who had struck him no doubt conceived the blow to have been fatal; and therefore, instead of renewing the attack, he strode over Markham and entered a room into which the passage opened.

Richard's first idea was to rise and attempt an escape by the front door; but before he had time to consider it even for a moment, the murderous ruffian struck a light in the room, which, as well as a part of the passage, was immediately illuminated by a powerful glare.

Markham had been thrown upon the damp tiles with which the passage was paved, in such a manner that his head was close by the door of the room. The man who had assailed him lighted a piece of candle in a bright tin shade hanging against the wall; and the reflection produced by the metal caused the strong glare that fell so suddenly upon Richard's eyes.

Markham was about to start from his prostrate position when the interior of that room was thus abruptly revealed to him; but for a few moments the spectacle which met his sight paralyzed every limb, and rendered him breathless, speechless, and motionless with horror.

Stretched upon a shutter, which three chairs supported, was a corpse—naked, and of that bluish or livid colour which denotes the beginning of decomposition!

Near this loathsome object was a large tub full of water; and to that part of the ceiling immediately above it were affixed two large hooks, to each of which hung thick cords.

In one corner of the room were long flexible iron rods, spades, pickaxes, wooden levers, coils of thick rope, trowels, saws, hammers, huge chisels, skeleton-keys, &c.

But how great was Richard's astonishment when, glancing from the objects just described towards the villain who had hurled him into that den of horrors, his eyes were struck by the sombre and revolting countenance of the Resurrection Man.

He closed his eyes for a moment, as if he could thus banish both thought and danger.

"Now, then, Mummy," ejaculated the Resurrection Man; "come and hold this light while I rifle the pockets of a new subject."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when a low knock was heard at the front door of the house.

"D—n the thing!" cried the Resurrection Man, aloud; "here are these fellows come for the stiff 'un."

These words struck fresh dismay into the soul of Richard Markham; for it instantly occurred to him that any friends of the Resurrection Man, who were thus craving admittance, were more likely to aid than to frustrate that villain's designs upon the life and property of a fellow-creature.

"Here, Mummy," cried the Resurrection Man, once more; and, hastily retreating into the passage, he reiterated his summons at the bottom of a staircase at the further end; "here, Mummy, why the hell don't you come down?"

"I'm a comin', I'm a comin'," answered a cracked female voice from the top of the staircase; and in another moment an old, blear-eyed, shrivelled hag made her appearance.

She was so thin, her eyes were so sunken, her skin was so much like dirty parchment, and her entire appearance was so horrible and repulsive, that it was impossible to conceive a more appropriate and expressive nickname than the one which had been conferred upon her.

"Now come, Mummy," said the ruffian, in a hasty whisper; "help me to drag this fellow into the back room; there's good pickings here, and the chaps have come for the stiff 'un."

Another knock was heard at the door.

Markham, well aware that resistance was at present vain, exercised sufficient control over himself to remain motionless, with his eyes nearly closed, while the Resurrection Man and the Mummy dragged him hastily into the back room.

The Mummy turned the key in the lock, while the Resurrection Man hurried to the street door, and admitted two men into the front apartment.

One was Tom the Cracksmen; the other was a rogue of the same stamp, and was known amongst his confederates in crime by the name of the Buffer. It was this man's boast that he never robbed any one without stripping him to the very skin; and as a person in a state of nudity is said to be "in buff," the origin of his pseudonym is easily comprehended.

"Well," said the Cracksmen, sulkily, "you ain't at all partikler how you keep people at your door—you ain't. For twopence, I'd have spotted it* with my foot."

"Why, the old Mummy was fast asleep," returned the Resurrection Man; "and I was up stairs trying to awake her. But I didn't expect you till to-morrow night."

"No; and we should n't have come either," said the Cracksmen, "if there hadn't been thirty quids to earn to-night."

"The devil there is!" cried the Resurrection Man. "Then you ain't come for the stiff 'un to-night?"

"No sich a thing; the Sawbones† that it's for don't expect it till to-morrow night; so its no use taking it. But there's t'other Sawbones, which lives down by the Middlesex Hospital, will meet us at half-past one at the back of Shoreditch church—"

"What, to-night!" ejaculated the Resurrection Man.

"To-night—in half an hour—and with all the tools," returned the Cracksmen.

"Work for the inside of the church, he says," added the Buffer. "Thirty quids isn't to be sneezed at; that's ten a-piece. I'm blowed if I don't like this here resurrection business better than cracking cribs. What do you say, Tom?"

"Anythink by way of a change; partikler as

* Burst it open.

† Surgeon.

when we want a stiff 'un by a certain day, and don't know in which churchyard to dive for one, we hit upon the plan of catching 'em alive in the street."

"It was my idea, though," exclaimed the Buffer. "Don't you remember when we wanted a stiff 'un for the very same Sawbones which we've got to meet presently, we waited for near two hours at this house-door, and at last we caught hold of a feller that was walking so comfortable along, looking up at the moon?"

"And then I thought of holding him with his head downwards in a tub of water," added the Crackman, "till he was drowned. That way don't tell no tales;—no wound on the skin—no pison in the stomach; and there ain't too much water inside neither, cos the poor devils don't swallow with their heads downwards."

"Ah! it was a good idea," said the Buffer; "and now we've reduced it to a regular system. Tub of water all ready on the floor—hooks and cords to hold the chaps' feet up to the ceiling; and then, my eye! there they hang, head downwards, jest for all the world like the carcasses in the butchers' shops, if they hadn't got their clothes on."



"And them we precious soon takes off. But I say, old feller," said the Crackman, turning to the Resurrection Man, who had remained silent during the colloquy between his two companions; "what be devil are you thinking of?"

"I was thinking," was the answer, "that the sawbones that you've agreed to meet to-night wants one particular body."

"He does," said the Crackman; "and the one he wants is buried in a vault."

"Well and good," exclaimed the Resurrection Man; "he is too good a customer to disappoint. We must be off at once."

The Resurrection Man did not for a moment doubt that Richard Markham had been killed by the blow which he had inflicted upon him with his life-preserver; and he therefore did not hesitate to undertake the business just proposed by his two confederates. He knew that, whatever Richard's pockets might contain, he could rely upon the honesty of the Mummy, who—horrible to relate—was the miscreant's own mother. Having therefore given a few instructions, in a whisper, to the old woman, he prepared to accompany the Crackman and the Buffer.

The three worthies provided themselves with some of the long flexible rods and other implements before noticed; and the Resurrection Man took from a cupboard two boxes, each of about six inches square, and which he gave to his companions to carry. He also concealed the tin shade which held the candle, about his person; and, these preliminaries being settled, the three men left the house.

Let us now return to Richard Markham. The moment he was deposited in the back room, and the door had closed behind the occupants of that fearful den, he started up, a prey to the most indescribable feelings of alarm and horror.

What a lurking hole of enormity—what a haunt of infamy—what a scene of desperate crime—was this in which he now found himself! A feculent smell of the decomposing corpse in the next room reached his nostrils, and produced a nauseating sensation in his stomach. And that corpse—was it the remains of one who had died a natural death, or who had been most foully murdered? He dared not answer the question which he had thus put to himself; he feared lest the solution of that mystery might prove ominous in respect to his own fate.

Oh! for the means of escape! He must fly—he must fly from that horrible sink of crime—from that human slaughter-house! But how? the door was locked—and the window was closed with a shutter. If he made the slightest noise, the ruffians in the next room would rush in and assassinate him!

But, hark! those men were talking, and he could overhear all they said. Could it be possible? The two who had just come, were going to take the third away with them upon his own revolting business! Hope returned to the bosom of the poor young man; he felt that he might yet be saved!

But—oh, horror! on what topic had the conversation turned? Those men were rejoicing in their own infernal inventions to render murder unsuspected. The object of the tub of water, and the hooks and cords upon the ceiling, were now explained. The unsuspecting individual who passed the door of that accursed dwelling by night was set upon by the murderers, dragged into the house, gagged, and suspended by his feet to these hooks, while his head hung downwards in the water. And thus he delivered up his last breath; and the wretches kept him there until decomposition commenced, that the corpse might not appear too fresh to the surgeon to whom it was to be sold!

Merciful heavens! could such things be! could atrocities of so appalling a nature be perpetrated in a great city, protected by thousands of a well-paid police? Could the voice of murder—murder effected with so much safety, cry up to heaven for vengeance through the atmosphere of London?

At length the three men went out, as before described; and Markham felt an immense weight suddenly lifted from off his mind.

Before the Resurrection Man set out upon his excursion with the Crackman and the Buffer, he had whispered these words to the Mummy: "While I've

gone, you can clean out the swell's pockets in the back room. He has got about four or five hundred pounds about him—so mind and take care. When you've searched his pockets, strip him, and look at his skull. I'm afraid I've fractured it, for my life-preserver came down precious heavy upon him; and he never spoke a word. If there's the wound, I must bury him to-morrow in the cellar: if not, wash him clean, and I know where to dispose of him."

It was in obedience to these instructions that the Mummy took a candle in her hand, and proceeded to the back-room, as soon as her son and his two companions had left the house.

The horrible old woman was not afraid of the dead; her husband had been a resurrection man, and her only son followed the same business.—she was therefore too familiar with the sight of death in all its most fearful as well as its most interesting shapes to be alarmed at it. The revolting spectacle of a corpse putrid with decomposition produced no more impression upon her than the pale and beautiful remains of any lovely girl whom death had called early to the tomb, and whose form was snatched from its silent couch beneath the sod ere the finger of decay had begun its ravages. That hideous old woman considered corpses an article of commerce, and handled her wares as a trader does his merchandise. She cared no more for the sickly and feid odour which they sent forth, than the tanner does for the smell of the tan-yard, or the scourer for the fumes of his bleaching-liquid.

The Mummy entered the back-room, holding a candle in her hand.

Markham started forward, and caught her by the wrist.

She uttered a sort of growl of savage disappointment, but gave no sign of alarm.

"Vile wretch!" exclaimed Richard; "God has at length sent me to discover and expose your crimes!"

"Don't do me any harm—don't hurt me," said the old woman; "and I will do any thing you want of me."

"Answer me," cried Markham: "that corpse in the other room—"

"Murdered by my son," replied the hag.

"And the clothes? where are the clothes? They may contain some papers which may throw a light upon the name and residence of your victim."

"Follow me—I will show you."

The old woman turned and walked slowly out of the room. Markham went after her; for he thought that if he could discover who the unfortunate person was that had met his death in that accursed dwelling, he might be enabled to relieve his family at least from the horrors of suspense, although he should be the bearer of fatal news indeed.

The Mummy opened the door of a cupboard formed beneath the staircase, and holding forward the light, pointed to some clothes which hung upon a nail inside.

"There—take them yourself if you want them," said the old woman; "I won't touch them."

With these words she drew back, but still held the candle in such a way as to throw the light into the closet.

Markham stepped forward to reach the clothes, and, in extending his hand to take them from the peg, he advanced one of his feet upon the floor of the closet.

A trap-door instantly gave way beneath his foot: he lost his balance, and fell precipitately into a subterranean excavation.

The trap-door, which worked with a spring, closed

by itself above his head, and he heard the triumphant cackling laugh of the old hag, as she fastened it with a large iron bolt.

The Mummy then went and seated herself by the corpse in the front room; and, while she rocked backwards and forwards in her chair, she crooned the following song:—

THE BODY-SNATCHER'S SONG.

In the churchyard the body is laid,
There they inter the beautiful maid;
"Earth to earth" is the solemn sound!
Over the sod where their daughter sleeps,
The father prays, and the mother weeps:
"Ashes to ashes" echoes around!
Come with the axe, and come with the spade;
Come where the beautiful virgin's laid:
Earth from earth must we take back now!
The sod is damp, and the grave is cold:
Lay the white corpse on the dark black mould,
That the pale moonbeam may kiss its brow!
Throw back the earth, and heap up the clay;
This cold white corpse we will bear away,
Now that the moonlight waxes dim;
For the staid doth his knife prepare
To hack all over this form so fair,
And sever the virgin limb from limb!
At morn the mother will come to pray
Over the grave where her child she lay,
And freshest flowers thereon will spread:
And on that spot will she kneel and weep,
Nor dream that we have disturbed the sleep
Of her who lay in that narrow bed.

We must leave the Mummy singing her horrible staves, and accompany the body-snatchers in their proceedings at Shoreditch Church.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE BODY-SNATCHERS.

THE Resurrection Man, the Crackman, and the Buffer hastened rapidly along the narrow lanes and filthy alleys leading towards Shoreditch Church. They threaded their way in silence, through the jet-black darkness of the night, and without once hesitating as to the particular turnings which they were to follow. Those men were as familiar with that neighbourhood as a person can be with the rooms and passages in his own house.

At length the body-snatchers reached the low wall surmounted with a high railing which encloses Shoreditch churchyard. They were now at the back part of that burial ground, in a narrow and deserted street, whose dark and lonely appearance tended to aid their designs upon an edifice situated in one of the most populous districts in all London.

For some minutes before their arrival an individual, enveloped in a long cloak, was walking up and down beneath the shadow of the wall.

This was the surgeon, whose thirst after science had called into action the energies of the body-snatchers that night.

The Crackman advanced first, and ascertained that the surgeon had already arrived, and that the coast was otherwise clear.

He then whistled in a low and peculiar manner; and his two confederates came up.

"You have got all your tools?" said the surgeon in a hasty whisper.

"Every one that we require," answered the Resurrection Man.

"For opening a vault inside the church, mind?" added the surgeon, interrogatively.

"You show us the vault, sir, and we'll soon have out the body," said the Resurrection Man.

"All right," whispered the surgeon; "and my

own carriage will be in this street at three precisely. We shall have plenty of time—there's no one stirring till five, and his dark till seven."

The surgeon and the body-snatchers then sealed the railing, and in a few moments stood in the churchyard.

The Resurrection Man addressed himself to his two confederates and the surgeon, and said, "Do you lie snug under the wall here while I go forward and see how we must manage the door." With these words he crept stealthily along, amidst the tomb-stones, towards the church.

The surgeon and the Crackman seated themselves upon a grave close to the wall; and the Buffer threw himself flat upon his stomach, with his ear towards the ground. He remained in this position for some minutes, and then uttered a species of low growl as if he were answering some signal which caught his ears alone.

"The skeleton-keys won't open the side-door," the Resurrection Man says," whispered the Buffer, raising his head towards the surgeon and the Crackman.

He then laid his ear close to the ground once more, and resumed his listening posture.

In a few minutes he again replied to a signal; and this time his answer was conveyed by means of a short sharp whistle.

"It appears there is a bolt; and it will take a quarter of an hour to saw through the padlock that holds it," observed the Buffer in a whisper.

Nearly twenty minutes elapsed after this announcement. The surgeon's teeth chattered with the intense cold; and he could not altogether subdue certain feelings of horror at the idea of the business which had brought him thither. The almost mute correspondence which those two men were enabled to carry on together—the methodical precision with which they performed their avocations—and the coolness they exhibited in undertaking a sacrilegious task, made a powerful impression upon his mind. He shuddered from head to foot;—his feelings of aversion were the same as he would have experienced had a loathsome reptile crawled over his naked flesh.

"It's all right now!" suddenly exclaimed the Buffer, rising from the ground. "Come along."

The surgeon and the Crackman followed the Buffer to the southern side of the church where there was a flight of steps leading up to a side-door in a species of lobby, or lodge. This door was open; and the Resurrection Man was standing inside the lodge.

As soon as they had all entered the sacred edifice, the door was carefully closed once more.

We have before said that the night was cold; but the interior of the church was of a chill so intense, that an icy feeling appeared to penetrate to the very back-bone. The wind murmured down the aisle; and every footstep echoed, like a hollow sound in the distance, throughout the spacious pile.

"Now, sir," said the Resurrection Man to the surgeon, "it is for you to tell us whereabouts we are to begin."

The surgeon groped his way towards the communion-table, and at the northern side of the railings which surrounded it he stopped short.

"I must now be standing," he said, "upon the very stone which you are to remove. You can, however, soon ascertain; for the funeral only took place yesterday morning, and the mortar must be quite soft."

The Resurrection Man stooped down, felt with his hand for the joints of the pavement in that

particular spot, and thrust his knife between them.

"Yes," he said, after a few minutes' silence; "this stone has only been put down a day or two. But do you wish, sir, that all traces of our work should disappear?"

"Certainly! I would not for the world that the family of the deceased should learn that this tomb has been violated. Suspicion would immediately fall upon me; for it would be remembered how earnestly I desired to open the body, and how resolutely my request was refused."

"We must use a candle, then, presently," said the Resurrection Man; "and that is the most dangerous part of the whole proceeding."

"It cannot be helped," returned the surgeon, in a decided tone. "The fact that the side-door has been opened by unfair means must transpire in a day or two; and search will then be made inside the church to ascertain whether those who have been guilty of the sacrilege were thieves or resurrection-men. You see, then, how necessary it is that there should remain no proofs of the violation of a tomb."

"Well and good, sir," said the Resurrection Man. "You command—we obey. Now, then, my mates, to work."

In a moment the Resurrection Man lighted a piece of candle, and placed it in the tin shade before alluded to. The glare which it shed was thereby thrown almost entirely downwards. He then carefully, and with surprising rapidity, examined the joints of the large flag-stone which was to be removed, and on which no inscription had yet been engraved. He observed the manner in which the mortar was laid down, and noticed even the places where it spread a little over the adjoining stones or where it was slightly deficient. This inspection being completed, he extinguished the light, and set to work in company with the Crackman and the Buffer.

The eyes of the surgeon gradually became accustomed to the obscurity; and he was enabled to observe to some extent the proceedings of the body-snatchers.

These men commenced by pouring vinegar over the mortar round the stone which they were to raise. They then took long clasp-knives, with very thin and flexible blades, from their pockets; and inserted them between the joints of the stones. They moved these knives rapidly backwards and forwards for a few seconds, so as effectually to loosen the mortar, and moistened the interstices several times with the vinegar.

This operation being finished, they introduced the thin and pointed end of a lever between the end of the stone which they were to raise and the one adjoining it. The Resurrection Man, who held the lever, only worked it very gently; but at every fresh effort on his part, the Crackman and the Buffer introduced each a wedge of wood into the space which thus grew larger and larger. By these means, had the lever suddenly given way, the stone would not have fallen back into its setting. At length it was raised to a sufficient height to admit of its being supported by a thick log about three feet in length.

While these three men were thus proceeding as expeditiously as possible with their task, the surgeon, although a man of a naturally strong mind, could not control the strange feelings which crept upon him. It suddenly appeared to him as if he beheld those men for the first time. That continuation of regular and systematic movements—that silent perseverance, faintly shadowed forth amidst the obscurity of the night, at length assumed so sim-

gular character, that the surgeon felt as if he beheld three demons disconcerting a doomed one to carry him off to hell!

He was aroused from this painful reverie by the Resurrection Man, who said to him, "Come and help us remove the stone."

The surgeon applied all his strength to this task; and the huge flag-stone was speedily moved upon two wooden rollers away from the mouth of the grave.

"You are certain that this is the place?" said the Resurrection Man.

"As certain as one can be who stood by the grave for a quarter of an hour in day-light, and who has to recognise it again in total darkness," answered the surgeon. "Besides, the mortar was soft—"

"There might have been another burial close by," interrupted the Resurrection Man; "but we will soon find out whether you are right or not, sir. Was the coffin a wooden one?"

"Yes! an elm coffin, covered with black cloth," replied the surgeon. "I gave the instructions for the funeral myself, being the oldest friend of the family."

The Resurrection Man took one of the long flexible rods which we have before noticed, and thrust it down into the vault. The point penetrated into the lid of a coffin. He drew it back, put the point to his tongue, and tasted it.

"Yes," he said, smacking his lips, "the coffin in this vault is an elm one, and is covered with black cloth."

"I thought I could not be wrong," observed the surgeon.

The body-snatchers then proceeded to raise the coffin, by means of ropes passed underneath it. This was a comparatively easy portion of their task; and in a few moments it was placed upon the flag-stones of the church.

The Resurrection Man took a chisel and opened the lid with considerable care. He then lighted his candle a second time; and the glare fell upon the pale features of the corpse in its narrow shell.

"This is the right one," said the surgeon, casting a hasty glance upon the face of the dead body, which was that of a young girl of about sixteen.

The Resurrection Man extinguished the light; and he and his companions proceeded to lift the corpse out of the coffin.

The polished marble limbs of the deceased were rudely grasped by the sacrilegious hands of the body-snatchers; and, having stripped the corpse stark naked, they tied its neck and heels together by means of a strong cord. They then thrust it into a large sack made for the purpose.

The body-snatchers then applied themselves to the restoration of the vault to its original appearance.

The lid of the coffin was carefully fastened down; and that now tenantless bed was lowered into the tomb. The stone was rolled over the mouth of the vault; and one of the small square boxes previously alluded to, furnished mortar wherewith to fill up the joints. The Resurrection Man lighted his candle a third time, and applied the cement in such a way that even the very workman who laid the stone down after the funeral would not have known that it had been disturbed. Then, as this mortar was a shade fresher and lighter than that originally used, the Resurrection Man scattered over it a thin brown powder, which was furnished by the second box brought away from his house on this occasion. Lastly, a light brush was swept over the scene of these operations, and the necessary precautions were complete.

The clock struck three as the surgeon and the body-snatchers issued from the church, carrying the sack containing the corpse between them.

They reached the wall at the back of the church-yard, and there deposited their burden, while the Cracksmen hastened to see if the surgeon's carriage had arrived.

In a few minutes he returned to the railing, and said in a low tone, "All right!"

The body was lifted over the iron barrier and conveyed to the vehicle.

The surgeon counted ten sovereigns into the hands of each of the body-snatchers; and, having taken his seat inside the vehicle, close by his strange freight, was whirled rapidly away towards his own abode.

The three body-snatchers retraced their steps to the house in the vicinity of the Bird-cage Walk; and the Cracksmen and Buffer, having deposited the implements of their avocation in the corner of the front room, took their departure.

The moment the Resurrection Man was thus relieved from the observation of his companions, he seized the candle and hastened into the back room, where he expected to find the corpse of Richard Markham stripped and washed.

To his surprise the room was empty.

"What the devil has the old fool been up to?" he exclaimed; then, hastening to the foot of the stairs, he cried, "Mummy, are you awake?"

In a few moments a door on the first floor opened, and the old woman appeared in her night gear at the head of the stairs.

"Is that you, Tony?" she exclaimed.

"Yes! who the hell do you think it could be? But what have you done with the fresh 'un?"

"The fresh 'un came alive again—"

"Gummon! Where is the money? how much was there? and is his skull fractured?" demanded the Resurrection Man.

"I tell you that he came to his senses," returned the old hag; "and that he sprang upon me like a tiger when I went into the back room after you was gone."

"Damnation! what a fool I was not to stick three inches of cold steel into him!" ejaculated the Resurrection Man, stamping his foot. "So I suppose he got clear away—money and all?—gone, may be, to fetch the traps!"

"Don't alarm yourself, Tony," said the old hag, with a horrible cackling laugh; "he's safe enough, I'll warrant it!"

"Safe! where—where?"

"Where his betters have been 'fore him," answered the Mummy.

"What!—in the well in the yard?" exclaimed the Resurrection Man, in a state of horrible suspense.

"No—in the hole under the stairs."

"Wretch!—drivelling fool!—idiot that you are!" cried the Resurrection Man in a voice of thunder; "you decoyed him into the very place from which he was sure to escape!"

"Escape!" exclaimed the Mummy, in a tone of profound alarm.

"Yes—escape!" repeated the Resurrection Man. "Did I not tell you a month or more ago that the wall between the hole and the saw-pit in the empty house next door had given way?"

"No—you never told me! I'll swear you never told me!" cried the old hag, now furious in her turn. "You only say so to throw all the blame on me; it's just like you."

"Don't provoke me, mother!" said the Resurrection Man, grinding his teeth. "You know that I told you about the wall falling down; and you

know that I spoke to you about not using the place any more!"

"It's false!" exclaimed the Mummy.

"It's true; for I said to you at the time that I must brick up the wall myself some night, before any new people take the carpenter's yard, or they might wonder what the devil we could want with a place under ground like that; and it would be the means of blowing us!"

"It's a lie! you never told me a word about it," persisted the old harridan doggedly.

"Perdition take you!" cried the man. "The affair of this cursed Markham will be the ruin of us both!"

The Resurrection Man still had a hope left: the subterranean pit beneath the stairs was deep, and Markham might have been stannied by the fall.

He hastened to the trap-door, and raised it. The vivid light of his candle was thrown to the very bottom of the pit by means of the bright reflector of tin.

The hole was empty.

Maddened by disappointment—a prey to the most terrible apprehensions—and uncertain whether to flee or remain in his den, the Resurrection Man paced the passage in a state of mind which would not have been envied by even a criminal on his way to execution.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE FRUITLESS SEARCH.

WHEN Richard Markham was precipitated into the hole beneath the stairs, by the perfidy of the Mummy, he fell with his head against a stone, and became insensible.

He lay in this manner for upwards of half an hour, when a current of air which blew steadily upon his face, revived him; and he awoke to all the horrors of his situation.

He had seen and passed through enough that night to unbinge the strongest mind. The secrets of the accursed den in a subterranean dungeon of which he now lay,—the atrocious mysteries revealed by the conversation of the body-snatchers ere they set out on their expedition to Shoreditch Church,—the cold corpse of some unfortunate being most inhumanly murdered, and all the paraphernalia of a hideous death, in the front-room of that outpost of hell,—hassated his imagination, and worked him up to a pitch of excitement bordering upon frenzy.

He felt that if he did not escape from that hole, he should dash his head against the wall, or go raving mad.

He clenched his fists and struck them against his forehead in an access of despair.

And then he endeavoured to reason with himself, and to look the perils that beset him, in the face.

But he could not remain cool—he could not control his agonising emotions.

"O God!" he exclaimed aloud; "what have I done to be thus afflicted? What sin have I committed to be thus tortured? Have I not served thee in word and deed to the best of my ability? Do I not worship—venerate—adore thee? O God! why wilt thou that I should die thus early—and die, too, so cruel a death? Is there not room on earth enough for a worm like me? Have I not been sufficiently tried, O my God? and in the hour of my deepest—bitterest anguish, did I ever deny thee? Did I repine against thy supreme will when false men encompassed me to destroy me in the opinion of the world? Hear me, O God—hear me! and let me not die this time!—let me not perish, O Lord, thus miserably!"

Such was the fervent, heart-felt prayer which Markham breathed to heaven, in the agony and despair of his soul.

He extended his arms, with his hands clasped together, in the ardour of his appeal; and they encountered an opening in the wall.

A ray of hope penetrated to his heart; and when upon further search, he discovered an aperture sufficiently wide for him to creep through, he exclaimed, "O Lord! I thank thee, thou hast heard my prayer! Pardon—oh! pardon my repinings;—forgive me that I dared to question thy sovereign will!"

At all risks he determined to pass through the opening—lead whithersoever it might; for he knew that he could scarcely be worse off; and he felt a secret influence which prompted him thus to act, and for which he could not wholly account.

He crept through the hole in the partition-wall, and found himself upon a soft damp ground.

Every thing was veiled in the blackest obscurity.

He groped about with his hands, and stepped cautiously forward, passing at every pace.

Presently his foot encountered what appeared to be a step; to his infinite joy he ascertained, in another moment, that he was at the bottom of a flight of stone stairs.

He ascended them, and came to a door, which yielded to his touch. He proceeded slowly and cautiously along a passage, groping his way with his hands; and, in a few moments he reached another door, which opened with a latch.

He was now in the open street!

Carefully closing the door behind him, he hurried away from that accursed vicinity as if he were pursued by blood-hounds.

He ran—he ran, reckless of the deep pools of stagnant water, careless of the heaps of thick mud through which he passed,—indifferent to the bruises which he sustained against the angles of houses, the corners of streets, and the stone-steps of doors,—unmindful of the dangers which he dared in threading thus wildly those rugged and uneven thoroughfares amidst the dense obscurity which covered the earth.

He ran—he ran, a delirium of joy thrilling in his brain, and thanksgiving in his soul; for now that he had escaped from the peril which so lately beset him, it appeared to his imagination a thousand times more frightful than when it actually impended over him. Oh! he was happy—happy—thrice happy, in the enjoyment of liberty, and the security of life once more;—and he began to look upon the scenes of that eventful night as an accumulation of horrors which could have possibility only in a dream!

He ran—he ran, amidst those filthy lanes and foul streets, where a nauseating atmosphere prevailed;—but had he been threading a labyrinth of rose-trees, amongst the most delicious perfumes, he could not have experienced a more burning—ardent—furious joy! Yes—his delight was madness, frenzy! On, on—splashed with mud—floundering through black puddles—knee-deep in mire,—on, on he went—reckless which direction he pursued, so long as the rapidity of his pace removed him afar from the accursed house that had nearly become his tomb!

For an hour did he thus pursue his way.

At length he stopped through sheer exhaustion, and seated himself upon the steps of a door over which a lamp was flickering.

He collected his scattered ideas as well as he could, and began to wonder whether his wild and reckless course had led him; but no conjecture on his part furnished him with any clue to solve the mystery of his present whereabouts. He knew that he must be



somewhere in the eastern district of the metropolis; but in what precise spot it was impossible for him to tell.

While he was thus lost in vain endeavours to unravel the tangled topographical skein which perplexed his imagination, he heard footsteps advancing along the street.

By the light of the lamp he soon distinguished a policeman, walking with slow and measured steps along his beat.

"Will you have the kindness to tell me where I am?" said Richard, accosting the officer: "I have lost my way. What neighbourhood is this?"

"Ratcliff Highway," answered the policeman: "in the middle of Wapping, you know."

"In the midst of Wapping?" ejaculated Markham, in a tone of surprise and vexation.

And, truly enough, there he was in the centre of that immense assemblage of dangerous streets, cut-throat lanes, and filthy alleys, which swarm with criminals ever ready to entrap the reckless and generous-hearted sailor; publicans who form the unloading of the colliers, and compel those whom they employ to take out half their wages in vile adulterated beer; and poor half-starved coal-heavers whose ex-

istence alternates between crushing toil and killing intoxication. It was in this neighbourhood that Richard Markham now was!

Heaven alone can tell what tortuous paths and circuitous routes he had been pursuing during the hour of his precipitate flight; but his feet must have passed over many miles of ground from the instant that he emerged from the murderers' den until he sank exhausted on the steps of a house in Ratcliff Highway.

He was wet and covered with mud, and very cold. But he suddenly remembered that there was a duty which he owed to society—an imperative duty which he dared not neglect. He was impressed with the idea that Providence had that night favoured his escape from the jaws of death, in order that he might become the means of rooting up a den of horrors.

There was not a moment to be lost: the three miscreants, unconscious of peril, had repaired to Shoreditch Church to exercise the least terrible portion of their avocations in that sacred edifice:—it might yet be time to secure them there!

The policeman was still standing near him.

"Which is the way to the station-house?" suddenly exclaimed Markham. "I have matters of

the deepest importance to communicate to the police,—I can place them upon the scent of three miscreants—three demons in human form—”

“And how came you to know about them?” asked the officer.

“Oh! it is too long to tell you now—we shall only be wasting time; and the villains may escape,” cried Richard, in a tone of excitement and with a wildness of manner which induced the officer to fancy that his brain was turned.

“Well, come along with me,” said the policeman; “and you can tell all you know to the Superintendent.”

Markham signified his readiness to accompany the officer; and they proceeded to the station-house in the neighbourhood.

There Richard was introduced to the Superintendent.

“I have this night,” said the young man, “escaped from the most fearful perils. I was proceeding along a dark, narrow, and dirty street somewhere in the neighbourhood of Shoreditch Church, when I was knocked down, and carried into a house where murder—yes, murder,” added Markham, in a tone of fearful excitement, “seems to be committed wholesale. At this moment there is a corpse—the corpse of some unfortunate man who has been assassinated in a most inhuman manner—lying stretched out in that house! I could tell you how the miscreants who frequent that den dispose of their victims,—how they pounce upon those who pass their door, and drag them into that human slaughter-house,—and how they make away with them;—I could tell you horrors which would make your hair stand on end;—but we should lose time; for you may yet capture the three wretches whose crimes have been this night so providentially revealed to me!”

“And where can we capture these men?” inquired the Superintendent, surveying Markham from head to foot in a strange manner.

“They are at this moment at Shoreditch Church,” returned the young man; “they are engaged in exhuming a corpse for a surgeon whom they were to meet at half-past one at the back of the burial-ground.”

“And it is now three o’clock,” said the Superintendent. “I dare say they have got over their business by this time. You had much better sit down here by the fire and rest yourself; and when it is daylight some one shall see you come to your friends.”

“Sit here tranquilly, when justice claims its due!” ejaculated Markham; “impossible! If you will not second my endeavours to expose a most appalling system of wholesale murder—”

“My dear sir,” interrupted the Superintendent, “do compose yourself, and get such horrid thoughts out of your head. Come—be reasonable. This is London, you know—and it is impossible that the things you have described could be committed in so populous a city.”

“I tell you that every word I have uttered is the strict truth,” cried Markham emphatically.

“And how came you to escape from such a place?” demanded the Superintendent.

“The villain who attacked me thought me dead—he fancied that I was killed by the blow; but it had only stunned me for a few moments—”

“Just now there were three murderers,” whispered one policeman to another: “now there is only one. He is as mad as a March-hare.”

“Then I was decoyed into a deep pit,” continued Markham; “and I escaped through an aperture opening into another pit, with stone steps to it, in the next house.”

The two policemen turned round to conceal their inclination to laugh; and the Superintendent could scarcely maintain a serious countenance.

“And now will you come with me to Shoreditch Church, and capture the villains?” cried Markham.

“We had better wait till morning. Fry sit down and compose yourself. You are wet and covered with mud—you have evidently been walking a great distance.”

“Oh! now I understand the cause of your hesitation,” ejaculated Markham: “you do not believe me—you fancy that I am labouring under a delusion. I conjure you not to suffer justice to be defeated by that idea! The tale is strange; and I myself, had it been communicated to me as it now is to you, should look upon it as improbable. No doubt, too, my appearance is strange; and my manner may be excited, and my tone wild;—but, I swear to you by the great God who hears us, that I am sane—in the possession of my reason,—although, heaven knows! I have this night passed through enough to unninge the strongest intellects!”

“Can you lead us to the house where you allege that these enormities are committed?” demanded the Superintendent, moved by the solemnity and rationality with which Markham had uttered this last appeal to him.

“No, I cannot,” was the reply: “I had lost my way amongst those streets with which I was totally unacquainted: the night was dark—dark as it is now;—and therefore I could not guide you to that den of such black atrocities. But, I repeat, the murderers left that house a little after one to commit a deed of sacrifice in Shoreditch Church. You say that it is now three: perhaps their resurrection-labours are not terminated yet; and you might then capture them in the midst of their unholy pursuits.”

“And if we do not find that Shoreditch Church has been broken open?” said the Superintendent; “you will admit—”

“Admit that I am mad—that I have deceived you—that I deserve to be consigned to a lunatic asylum,” exclaimed Markham, in a tone which inspired the Superintendent with confidence.

The officer accordingly gave instructions to four constables to accompany Markham to Shoreditch Church.

The little party proceeded thither with all possible expedition; but the clock struck four just as they reached the point of destination.

They hastily scaled the railings around the burial-ground, and proceeded to the very door from which the body-snatchers had emerged an hour previously.

One of the policemen tried the door; and it immediately yielded to his touch. At the same moment his foot struck against something upon the top step. He picked it up;—it was a padlock with the semicircular bolt sawed through.

The policemen and Markham entered the church; and the former commenced a strict search by means of their bull’s-eye lanterns.

“There’s no doubt that the gentleman was right, and all he said was true,” observed one of the officers; “but the birds have flown—that’s clear.”

“Well—they must have done their work pretty cleverly if they haven’t left a trace,” said another.

“I have heard it stated,” remarked Richard, “that resurrection-men are so expert at their calling, that they can defy the most acute eye to discover the spot upon which they have been operating.”

"Well, if we don't find out which vault they have opened, it's no matter. We have seen enough to convince us that you were right, sir, in all you told us."

"And as the body-snatchers are not here," added another police-officer, "we had better get back as quick as we can and report the church's saving-bone broke open to our Superintendent."

"And I will return with you," said Markham; "for when it is light I may perhaps be enabled to conduct you to within a short distance of the street—even if not into the very street itself—where the den is situated which these monsters frequent or inhabit."

The officers and Richard accordingly returned to the station-house whence they came; and as soon as the Superintendent heard that the church had really been broken open, he apologised to Markham for his former incredulity.

"You will, however, admit, sir," said this functionary, "that your narrative was calculated to excite strange suspicions relative to the condition of the intellects of the person who told it."

"I presume you fancied that I had escaped from a madhouse?" observed Markham.

"To tell you the truth, I did," answered the Superintendent; "you were in such a dreadful condition! And that reminds me that you are all wet and covered with mud: please to step into my private room, and you will find every thing necessary to make you clean and comfortable."

Day dawned shortly after seven; and at that time might be seen Richard Markham, accompanied by an officer in plain clothes, and followed by others at a distance, threading the streets and alleys in the neighbourhood of the Bird-cage Walk.

The sun rose upon that labyrinth of close, narrow, and wretched thoroughfares, and irradiated those sinks of misery and crime as well as the regal palace and the lordly mansion at the opposite end of London.

But the search after the house in which Markham had witnessed such horrors and endured such intense mental agony on the preceding night, was as vain and fruitless as if its existence were but a dream.

There was not a street which Markham could remember having passed through; there was not a house to which even his suspicions attached.

And yet, may be, he and his official companions proceeded up the very street, and went by the door of the very house, which they sought.

After a useless search throughout that neighbourhood for nearly four hours, Markham declared that he was completely at fault.

The police accordingly abandoned any further proceedings on that occasion. It was however agreed between them and Markham that the strictest secrecy should be preserved relative to the entire business, in order that the measures to be subsequently adopted with a view to discover the den of the murderers, might not be defeated by the tattle of busy tongues.

CHAPTER XLVI.

RICHARD AND ISABELLA.

RICHARD MARKHAM had determined to lose no time in revealing to Count Altoni those adventures which had rendered him an inmate of the Giltspur Street Compter for two years.

And yet it was hard to dare the destruction of the bright visions which had dawned upon him in respect to the Signora Isabella: it was cruel to dash away

from his lips the only cup of enjoyment which he had tasted for a long time.

He knew not how the count would receive such a narrative as he had to tell. Doubtless it would alarm him: "for society," thought Richard, "was to apt to judge rashly by outward appearances." Should the count, however, nobly and generously rise above the prejudices of the world, and believe the statement of Markham's innocence, corroborated as it was by the document signed by Talbot, *alias* Pocock, much would have been gained by a candid and honourable confession. But if the reverse ensued, and the count banished Richard from his friendship, the young man felt that he himself would only have performed a melancholy duty, and broken asunder of his own accord those bonds which, were he to remain silent, an accident might one day snap abruptly and rudely.

"I feel happy," said Markham to himself, as he arose in the morning after the day on which the fruitless search mentioned in the preceding chapter took place.—"I feel happy even while about to consummate a sacrifice which may destroy the most golden of my dreams! The Infinite Being has declared that the days of our life shall be marked with sorrow; and they are—as I can well testify! But the afflictions to which we are subject are attended with blessed antidotes;—moral sources of enjoyment are given to us, as fruits and flowers for the soul; and the teachings of interest, as well as the impulses of gratitude, should lead us to consider with attention those duties we owe each other, for the sake of the bounties the Almighty showers upon us."

So reasoned Richard Markham.

That evening he arrived at the count's abode near Richmond, a few minutes before dinner.

A kind welcome awaited him on the part of the count and countess; and the eyes of Signora Isabella expressed the satisfaction she experienced at his return.

When Markham was seated with the count after dinner, he determined to commence the explanation which he had resolved to give.

He was just about to breach the subject, when the count observed, "By the bye, I am happy to inform you that I received letters from Greenwood this morning; and he assures me that the speculation looks admirably."

"I am delighted to hear it," returned Richard. "But the chief object of my present visit—"

"Was to speak about this Steam Packet business, no doubt," interrupted the count. "Well, if you like to take shares in it, it is not too late. But what do you think? I am going to tell you a secret. You know that I look upon you as a friend of the family; besides, I am well aware that you respect Isabella and love her like a brother—"

"What did you say, count?" stammered Markham.

"I was going to tell you that Mr. Greenwood—who is immensely rich—has taken a liking to Isabella—"

"Indeed!"

"Yes—and I gave him some little encouragement."

"What! without previously ascertaining whether the Signora's feelings are reciprocal?" cried Richard.

"As for that, my dear Markham, remember that a dutiful daughter knows no will and no inclination save those of her parents."

"This is not an English doctrine," said Markham, "so far as the principle applies to affairs of the heart."

"It is nevertheless an Italian doctrine," exclaimed the count, somewhat haughtily; "and I have no doubt that Isabella will ever recognise the authority of her parents in this as in all other matters."

As the count uttered these words, he rose and led the way to the drawing-room; and thus deprived Markham of that opportunity of making the confession he had intended.

Richard was unhappy and dispirited. He perceived that the count was inclined to favour Mr. Greenwood's suit; and he now felt how dear Isabella was to him—how profoundly seated was his love for the beautiful Italian!

Misfortunes never come alone. Richard was destined to receive a crushing blow, although innocently inflicted, the moment he entered the drawing-room.

The countess was conversing with her daughter upon her own family connections.

"Do not let us interrupt your conversation," said the count, as he took his seat upon the sofa near his wife.

"We were only talking about the Chevalier Guild-erster, whose death was mentioned in yesterday's newspaper," observed the countess. "I was saying that I remembered how delighted I was when I discovered a few years ago that the chevalier was not related to our family, as he had always pretended to be."

"And why so?" inquired the count.

"Because the father of the chevalier was put to death in Austria for coining—or rather upon a charge of coining," answered the countess; "and although his innocence was discovered and proclaimed a few years after his death, I should not like to have amongst my ancestors a man who had been criminally convicted, however innocent he may in reality have been."

"Certainly not," said the count. "I should be very sorry for any one whose character had ever been tainted with suspicion, to have the slightest connection with our family."

"I cannot say that I agree with you," observed Isabel. "There can be no disgrace attached to one who has suffered under a false accusation: on the contrary—such a person is rather deserving of our deepest sympathy and—"

"Heavens, Mr. Markham!" ejaculated the countess: "are you ill? Bella, dear—ring the bell—get Mr. Markham a glass of water—"

"It is nothing—nothing, I can assure you," stammered Richard, whose countenance was as pale as that of a corpse. "Miss Isabella, do not give yourself any trouble! It was only a sudden faintness—a spasm; but it is over now."

With these words Markham hurried to the bed-chamber which was always allotted to him when he visited the count's residence.

All the horrible tortures which man can conceive, harassed him at that moment. He threw himself upon his couch—he writhed—he struggled, as if against a serpent which held him in its embraces. His eyes seemed as if they were about to start from their sockets; his teeth were fast closed—he wrung his hair—he beat his breast—and low moans escaped from his bosom. The *fiat* of the count had gone forth. He who would claim or aspire to connection with his family must be like the wife of Caesar—beyond all suspicion. It was not enough that such an one should be innocent of any crime: he must never have even been accused of one. Such was the disposition of the count—elicited by an accident, and unexpectedly; and Markham could now divine the nature of the treatment which he would be

likely to experience, were he to reveal his misfortunes to a nobleman who entertained such punctilious and extremely scrupulous notions!

"But I was mad to imagine that Isabella would ever become mine," thought Markham within himself, as soon as he became somewhat more tranquillised. "It was folly—supreme folly—rank, idiotic, inconceivable folly, in me to have cherished a hope which could never be realised! All that now remains for me to do, is to abandon myself to my adverse fate—to attempt no more struggles against the destinies that await me,—to leave this house without delay—to return home, and bury myself in a solitude from which no persuasions nor attractions shall henceforth induce me to emerge! Would that I could leave this house this very evening;—but appearances compel me to remain at least until to-morrow! I must endeavour to assume that ease of manner—that friendly confidence, which is reciprocal here:—for a few hours I must consent to act the hypocrite; and to-morrow—to-morrow, I shall be relieved from that dread necessity,—I shall be compelled to bid adieu to Isabella for ever! No avowal of my past sufferings is now required—since I shall to-morrow leave this hospitable mansion, never to return!"

A flood of tears relieved the unfortunate young man; and he descended once more to the drawing-room—very pale, but as calm and tranquil as usual. Isabella glanced towards him from time to time with evident anxiety; and, in spite of all his endeavours to appear cheerful and at his ease, he was embarrassed, cool, and reserved. Isabella was wounded and mortified by his conduct—she attempted to rally him, and to ascertain whether he was really chilling in his manners on purpose, or only melancholy against his will: but she received frigid and laconic replies, which annoyed and disheartened the poor girl to such an extent that she could scarcely refrain from tears. Markham felt that, as an honourable man, he could no longer aspire to the hand of the signora, after the expression of opinion accidentally conveyed to him by the count and countess; and he therefore forbore from any attempt to render himself agreeable, or to afford the slightest testimony of his passion. Acting with these views, and endeavouring to seem only properly polite, he fell into the opposite extreme, and grew cold and reserved. The count and countess imagined that he was unwell, and were not therefore annoyed by his conduct;—but poor Isabella, who was deeply attached to him, set down his behaviour to indifference. This idea on her part was confirmed, when Markham, in the course of conversation, intimated his intention of returning home on the following day.

"Return home! and what for?" ejaculated the count. "You have no society there, and here you have some—unamusing and tedious though it may be."

"Never did I pass a happier period of my existence than that which I have spent in your hospitable abode," said Richard.

"Then remain with us at least ten days or a fortnight," cried the count. "We shall then be visiting London ourselves, for we have promised to pass a few weeks with Lord and Lady Tremordyn."

"Lord Tremordyn!" exclaimed Richard.

"Yes—do you know him?"

"Only by name. But did not his daughter marry Sir Rupert Harborough?" said Markham, shuddering as he pronounced the abhorred name.

"The same. Sir Robert treats her shamefully—neglects her in every way, and passes whole months

away from his home. He has, moreover, expended all the fortune she brought him, and is again, I understand, deeply involved in debt."

"Poor Lady Cecilia!" ejaculated Isabella. "She is deeply to be pitied!"

"But to return to this sudden resolution of yours to depart to-morrow," said the count.

"Which resolution is very suddenly taken," added the signora, affecting to be engaged in contemplating a book of prints which lay upon the table before her, while her beautiful countenance was suffused with a deep blush.

"My resolution is sudden, certainly," observed Richard. "Circumstances over which I have no control, and which it would be useless to communicate to you, frequently compel me to adopt sudden resolutions, and set up to them. Be assured, however, that the memory of your kindness will always be dear to me."

"You speak as if we were never to meet again," exclaimed the count.

"We cannot dispose of events in this world according to our own will," said Markham, emphatically. "Would to God we could!"

"But there are certain circumstances in which we seem to be free agents," said Isabella, still holding down her head; "and remaining in one place, or going to another, appears to be amongst those actions which depend upon our own volition."

At this moment a servant entered the room and informed the count that the private secretary of the envoy of the Grand Duke of Castelsiala to the English court desired to speak with him in another apartment.

"Oh! I am interested in this," exclaimed the countess; and, upon a signal of approval on the part of her husband, she accompanied him to the room where the secretary was waiting.

Markham was now alone with Isabella.

This was a probable occurrence which he had dreaded all that evening. He felt himself cruelly embarrassed in her presence; and the silence which prevailed between them was awkward to a degree.

At length the signora herself spoke.

"It appears that you are determined to leave us, Mr. Markham?" she said, without glancing towards him, and in a tone which she endeavoured to render as cool and indifferent as possible.

"I feel that I have been too long here already, signora," answered Richard, scarcely knowing what reply to make.

"Do you mean to tax us with inattention to your comfort, Mr. Markham?"

"God forbid, signora! In the name of heaven do not entertain such an idea!"

"Mr. Markham has been treated as well as our humble means would admit; and he leaves us with an abruptness which justifies us in entertaining fears that he is not comfortable."

"How can I convince you of the injustice of your suspicions?" ejaculated Markham. "You would not wantonly wound my feelings, Miss Isabella, by a belief which is totally unfounded? No! that is not the cause of my departure. My own happiness—my own honour—every thing commands me to quit a spot where—where I shall, nevertheless, leave so many reminiscences of joy and tranquil felicity behind me! I dare not explain myself farther at present; perhaps sooner will you know the cause—but, pardon me, signora—I am wandering—I know not what I say!"

"Pray compose yourself, Mr. Markham," said Isabella, now raising her head from the book, and glancing towards him.

"Compose myself, Isabella—signora, I mean," he exclaimed: "that is impossible! Oh! if you knew all, you would pity me! But I dare not now reveal to you what I wish. A word which this day dropped from your father's lips has banished all hope from my mind. Now I am wandering again! In the name of heaven, take no notice of what I say; I am mad—I am raving!"

"And what was it that my father said to annoy you?" inquired Isabella timidly.

"Oh! nothing—nothing purposely," answered Markham. "He himself was unaware that he fired the arrow from his bow."

"Am I unworthy of your confidence in this instance?" asked Isabella; "and may I not be made acquainted with the nature of the annoyance which my father has thus unintentionally caused you to experience?"

"Oh! why should I repeat words which would only lead to a revelation of what it is now useless to reveal. Your father and mother both delivered the same sentiment—a sentiment that destroys all hope. But, oh! you cannot understand the cause of my anxiety—my grief—my disappointment!"

"And why not entrust me with that cause? I could sympathise with you as a friend."

"As a friend! Alas, Isabella, it is useless for me now to deplore the visions which I had conjured up, and which have been so cruelly destroyed? You yourself know not what is in store for you—what plans your father may have formed concerning you!"

"And are you acquainted with those plans?" asked the beautiful Italian, in a tone of voice rendered almost insensible by a variety of emotions—for the heart of that innocent and charming being fluttered like a bird in the net of the Fowler.

"Do not question me on that head, Isabella! Let me speak of myself—for it is sweet to be commiserated by such as you! My life for some time past has been a scene of almost unceasing misery. When I came of age I found my vast property dissipated by him to whom it was entrusted. And other circumstances gave a new and unpleasant aspect to those places which were dear to me in my childhood. What wild hopes, in early life, had I there indulged,—what dreams for the future had there visited my mind in its boyhood!—what vain wishes, what strong yearnings, what ambitious aspirations had there first found existence! When I returned to those spots, after an absence of two years, and thought of the feelings that there once agitated my bosom, and contrasted them with those which had displaced them,—when I traced the history of each hope from its inception there, and followed it through the vista of years until its final extinction,—when I thought how differently my course in life had been shaped from that career which I had there marked out, and how vain and futile were all the efforts and strivings which I exerted against the tide of events and the force of circumstances,—I awoke, as it were from a long dream,—I opened my eyes upon the path which I should thenceforth have to pursue, and judged of it by the one I had been pursuing,—I saw the nothingness of men's lives in general, and the witer vanity of the main pursuits which engross their minds, and waste their energies;—and I then felt convinced that I was indeed but an instrument in the hands of another, and that the ends which I had obtained had not been those for which I had striven, but which the Almighty willed! So is it with me now, Isabella. I had planned a dream—a dream of Elysium, with which to cheer and bless the remainder of my

existence; and, behold! like all the former hopes and aspirations of my life, this one is also suddenly destroyed!"

"How know you that it is destroyed?" inquired Isabella, casting down her eyes.

"Oh! I am unworthy of you, Isabella—I do not deserve you; and yet it was to your hand that I aspired;—you were the star that was to irradiate the remainder of my existence! Oh! I could weep—I could weep, Isabella, when I think of what I might have been, and what I am!"

"You say that you aspired to my hand," murmured the lovely Italian maiden, casting down her large dark eyes and blushing deeply; "you did me honour!"

"Silence, Isabella—silence!" interrupted Richard. "I dare not now hear the words of hope from your lips! But I love thee—I love thee—God only knows how sincerely I love thee!"

"And shall I conceal my own feelings with regard to you, Richard?" said Isabella, approaching him and laying her delicate and beautifully modelled hand lightly upon his wrist.

"She loves me in return—she loves me!" ejaculated Markham, half wild with mingled joy and apprehensions;—and, yielding to an impulse which no mortal under such circumstances could have conquered, he caught her in his arms.

He kissed her pure and chaste brow—he felt her fragrant breath upon his cheek—her hair commingled with his own—and he murmured the words, "You love me!"

A gentle voice breathed an affirmative in his ear; and he pressed his lips to hers to ratify that covenant of two fond hearts.

Suddenly he recollected that Count Alteroni had declared that no one against whom there was even a suspicion of crime should ever form a connection with his family. Markham's high sense of honour told him in a moment that he had no right to secure the affections of a confiding and gentle girl whose father would never yield an assent to their union: his brain, already excited, now became inflamed almost to madness;—he abruptly turned aside from her who had just avowed her attachment to him,—he muttered some incoherent words which she did not comprehend, and rushed out of the room.

He hurried to the garden at the back of the house, and walked rapidly up and down a shady avenue of trees which ran along the wall that bounded the enclosure on the side of the public road.

By degrees he grew calm and relaxed the speed of his pace. He then fell into a long and profound meditation upon the occurrences of the last half hour.

He was beloved by Isabella, it was true;—but never might he aspire to her hand;—never could it be accorded to him to lead her to the altar where their attachment might be ratified and his happiness confirmed! An inseparable barrier seemed to oppose itself to his wishes; and he felt that no alternative remained to him but to put his former resolution into force, and take his departure homewards on the ensuing morning.

Thus was it that he now reasoned.

The moon shone brightly; and the heavens were studded with stars.

As Markham was about to turn for the twentieth time at that end of the avenue which was the more remote from the house, the beams of the moon suddenly disclosed to him a human face peering over the wall at him.

He started, and was about to utter an exclamation of alarm, when a well-known voice fell upon his ears.

"Hush!" was the word first spoken; "I have

just one question to ask you, and then one thing to tell you; and the last will just depend upon the first."

"Wretch—miscreant—murderer!" exclaimed Richard; "nothing shall now prevent me from securing you on the behalf of justice."

"Fool!" coolly returned the Resurrection Man—for it was he; "who can catch me in the darkness and the open fields?"

"True!" cried Markham, stamping his foot with vexation. "But God grant that the day of retribution may come!"

"Come, come—none of this nonsense, my dear boy," said the Resurrection Man, with diabolical irony. "Now, answer me—will you give me a cool hundred and fifty? If not, then I will get away in spite of you."

"Why do you thus molest and persecute me? I would sooner handle the most venomous serpent, than enter into a compromise with a fiend like you!"

"Then beware of the consequences!"

The moon shone full upon the cadaverous and unearthly countenance of the Resurrection Man, and revealed the expression of ferocious rage which it wore as he uttered these words. That vile and forboding face then suddenly disappeared behind the wall.

"Who are you talking to, Markham?" cried the voice of the count, who was now advancing down the avenue.

"Talking to?" repeated Richard, alarmed and confused.

"Yes—I heard your voice, and another answering you," said the count.

"It was a man in the road," answered Markham.

"I missed you from the drawing-room on my return; and Bella said she thought you were unwell, and had gone to walk in the garden for the fresh air. The news I have received from Castelsicola, through the Envoy's secretary, are by no means favourable to my hopes of a speedy return to my native land. You therefore see that I have done well to lay out my capital in this. But we will not discuss matters of business now; for there is company up stairs, and we must join them. Who do you think have just made their appearance?"

"Mr. Armstrong and other friends?" said Markham inquiringly.

"No—Armstrong is on the Continent. The visitors are Sir Cherry Bounce and Captain Smilax Dapper; and I am by no means pleased with their company. However, my house must always remain open to them in consequence of the services rendered to me by their deceased relative."

Markham accompanied the count back to the drawing-room, where Captain Smilax Dapper had seated himself next to the signors; and Sir Cherry Bounce was endeavouring to divert the countess with an account of their journey that evening from London. They both coloured deeply and bowed very politely when Richard entered the apartment.

"Well, ah! I wish thaying," continued Sir Cherry, "one of the twatheth broke at the bottom of the hill, and the hortheth took to flight. Thmilakth thwere like a twoooper; but nothing could thwop the thatheth till it walled thlap down into a dwy dith. Dapper then wored like a bull; and I—"

"And Cherry began to cry, strike me if he didn't!" ejaculated the gallant hoosar, caressing his moustache. "A countryman who passed by asked him if his mamma knew he was out; Cherry thought that the fellow was in earnest, and assured him that he had her permission to undertake the journey. I never laughed so much in my life!"

"Oh! naughty Dapper to thay that I cwied! That really ith too cwuel. Well, we got the thaithe lifted out of the dish, and the twathe mended."

"You are the heroes of an adventure," said the count.

"I intend to put it into verse, strike me ugly if I don't!" cried the young officer; "and perhaps the signora will allow me to copy it into her *Album*?"

"Oh! I must read it first," said Isabella, laughing. "But since you speak of my *Album*, I must show you the additions I have received to its treasures."

"This is really a beautiful landscape," observed Captain Dapper, as he turned over the leaves of the book which the beautiful Italian presented to him. "The water flowing over the wheel of the mill is quite natural, strike me! And—may I never know what fair woman's smiles are again, if those trees don't seem actually to be growing out of the paper!"

"Thuperb?" ejaculated Sir Cherry Bounce. "The wiver libewally wulth along in the picture. The cweth and the theep are walking in the green fieldth. Pwey who might have been the artthith of thith matheleth production?"

"That is a secret," said the signora. "And now read these lines."

"Read them yourself, Bella," said the count. "No one can do justice to them but you."

Isabella accordingly read the following stanzas in a tone of voice that added a new charm to the words themselves:—

LONDON.

'Twas midnight—and the beam of Cythia shone
In company with many a lovely star,
Steeping in silver the huge Babylon
Whose countless habitations stretch afar,
Plain, valley, hill, and river's bank upon,
And in whose mighty heart all interests jar!—
O sovereign city of a thousand towers,
What vice is cradled in thy princely towers!

If thou would'st view fair London-town aright,
Survey her from the bridge of Waterloo;
And let the hour be at the morning's light,
When the sun's earliest rays have struggled through
The star-beveagled curtain of the night,
And when Aurora's locks are moist with dew:
Then take thy stand upon that bridge, and see
London awake in all her majesty!

Then do her greatest features seem to crowd
Down to the river's brink—then does she raise
From off her brow the everlasting cloud,
(Thus with her veil the coquette archly plays)
And for a moment shows her features, proud
To catch the Rembrandt light of the sun's rays:—
Then may the eye of the beholder dwell
On steeple, column, dome, and pinnacle.

Yes—he may reckon temple, mart, and tower—
The old historic sites—the halls of kings—
The seats of art—the fortalice of power—
The ships that wait our commerce on their wings!—
All these commingle in that dawning hour,
And each into one common focus brings
Some separate moral of life's scenes so true,
As all those objects form one point of view!

The ceaseless hum of the huge Babylon
Has known no silence for a thousand years;
Still does her tide of human life flow on,
Still is she racked with sorrows, hopes, and fears;
Still the sun sets, still morning dawns upon
Hearts full of anguish, eye-balls dimmed with tears,
Still do the millions toil to bless the few—
And hideous Woe stalks on her pathways through!

"Beautiful—very beautiful!" exclaimed Captain Dapper. "Strike me if I ever heard more beautiful poetry!"

"Almost ith good ith your lineth on the Thes Therpent. Wath the poem witten by the thame cwethion that painted the landthrape?"

"The very same," answered Isabella. "His initials are in the corner."

"R. M. Who can that be?" exclaimed Dapper.

"Robert Montgomery, perhaps?" said Isabella, smiling with a charmingly arch expression of countenance.

"No—Wichard Markham!" cried Sir Cherry; and then he and his friend the hussar captain were excessively annoyed to think that they had been extolling to the skies the performance of an individual who had frightened the one out of his wits, and boxed the ears of the other.

Thus passed the evening; but Markham was reserved and melancholy. It was in vain that Isabella exerted herself to instil confidence into his mind, by means of those thousand little attentions and manifestations of preference which lovers know so well how to exhibit, but which those around perceive not. Richard was firm in those resolutions which he deemed consistent with propriety and honour; and he deeply regretted the explanation and its consequences into which the enthusiasm of the moment had that evening led him.

At length the hour for retiring to rest arrived. Richard repaired to his chamber—but not to sleep. His mind was too much harassed by the events of the evening—the plans which he had pursued, and those which he intended to pursue—the love which he bore to Isabel, and the stern opposition which might be anticipated from her father—the persecution to which he was subject at the hands of the Resurrection Man—and the train of evil fortune which appeared constantly to attend upon him;—of all these he thought; and his painful meditations defied the advance of slumber.

The window of his bed-chamber overlooked the garden at the back of the house; from which direction a strange and alarming noise suddenly broke in upon his reflections. He listened—and all was quiet; he therefore felt convinced that his terror was unfounded. A few moments elapsed; and he was again alarmed by a sound which seemed like the jarring of an unfastened shutter. A certain uneasiness now took possession of him; and he was determined to ascertain whether all was safe about the premises. He leapt from his bed, raised the window, and looked forth. The night was now pitch dark; and he could distinguish nothing. Not even were the outlines of the trees in the garden discernible amidst that profound and dense obscurity. Markham held his breath; and the whispering of voices met his ears. He could not, however, distinguish a word they uttered:—a low hissing continuous murmur, the nature of which it was impossible to mistake, convinced him that some persons were talking together immediately beneath his window. In a few moments the jarring of a door or shutter, which he had before heard, was repeated; and then the whispering ceased.

By this time his eyes had become accustomed to the darkness; and he could now faintly discern the outlines of three human forms standing together at the back door of the house. He could not, however, distinguish the precise nature of their present employment. It was, nevertheless, evident to him that they were not there with any honest intention in view; and he resolved to adopt immediate measures to defeat their burglarious schemes. He hastily threw on his clothes, struck a light, and issued from his room.

Cautiously advancing along a passage was the count, only half-dressed, with a pistol in each hand and a cutlass under his arm.

"This is fortunate!" whispered the count: "I was coming to alarm you: there are thieves breaking in. You and I can manage them; it is of no use to call Bounce or Dapper. Take this cutlass, and let us descend gently. Here come the men-servants."

The count hurried down stairs, followed by Markham, and the three male domestics of the household.

A noise was heard in the pantry, which was situate at the back of the house on the same level with the hall.

"Douse the darkey, blow the glim, and mizzle," cried a hoarse gruff voice, as the count, Richard, and the servants approached the pantry: "there 's five on 'em—it 's no use—"

The count rushed forward, and burst open the door of the pantry, closely followed by Markham, holding the candle.

Two of the burglars made a desperate push down the kitchen stairs and escaped: the third was captured in an attempt to follow his companions.

The light of the candle fell upon the villain's countenance, which was literally ghastly with a mingled expression of rage and alarm.

Richard shuddered: for the captured burglar was no other than the Resurrection Man.

"Wretch!" exclaimed Markham, recovering his self-command: "the law will at length reach you."

"What! do you know this fellow?" demanded the count, somewhat surprised by the observation.

"Know me!" cried the Resurrection Man: "of course he does. But supposing some one was to tell you a piece of valuable information, count—about a matter closely concerning yourself and family—would you be inclined to be merciful?"

"Of what nature is that information? It must be very valuable indeed, if you think that I will enter into any compromise with such as you."

"Pledge me your word that you will let me go scot free, and I will tell you something that concerns the peace and happiness—perhaps the honour of your daughter."

"Miscreant!" cried Markham: "profane not that lady by even alluding to her!"

"Stay—curse the fellow's impudence," said the count: "perhaps he may really have somewhat worth communicating. At all events, I will try him. Now, then, my man, what is it that you have to say? If your statement be worth hearing, I swear that I will neither molest you, nor suffer you to be molested."

"Hold count," exclaimed Markham: "make no rash vow—you know not what a wretch—"

"Silence, my dear friend," said the count authoritatively: "I will hear the man, let him be who or what he may!"

"And you will do well to hear me, sir," continued the Resurrection Man. "You harbour a villain in your house; and that villain is now before you. He boasts of having secured the affections of your daughter, and hopes to gull you into allowing him to marry her."

"Miscreant—murderer!" exclaimed Markham, no longer able to contain his indignation: "pollute not innocence itself by these allusions to a lady whose spotless mind—"

"Hush!" said the count. "Let us hear patiently all this man has to say. I can soon judge whether he be speaking the truth; and if he deceives me, I will show him no mercy."

"But, count—allow me one word—I myself will unfold—"

"Excuse me, Markham," interrupted the Italian noble, with dignified firmness: "I will hear this man first. Proceed!"

"The villain I allude to is of course that Markham," continued the Resurrection Man. "It was him, too, that induced me and my pals, the Crackman and the Buffer, to make this attempt upon your house to-night."

"What foul—what hideous calumny is this!" almost screamed the distracted Markham, as this totally unexpected and unfounded accusation met his ears.

The count himself was shocked at this announcement; for he suddenly recollected Richard's moody, embarrassed, and thoughtful manner the whole evening, and his sudden intention of departing the next day.

"Go on," said the count.

"I met that man," continued the body-snatcher, pointing contemptuously towards Markham. "A little more than a fortnight ago in this neighbourhood: he was walking with your daughter; and it was in consequence of certain little arrangements with me that he went back to London next day. Oh! I am well acquainted with all his movements."

"And you sought my life in a manner the most base—" began Markham, unable to restrain his feelings.

"Silence, Markham!" exclaimed the count, still more authoritatively than before. "Your time to speak will come."

"We planned this work while he was in London," continued the Resurrection Man; "and this very evening he told me over the garden wall that all was right."

"Merciful God!" cried the count: "this is but too true!"

"Yes, sir—I certainly spoke to him," said Richard,—"and from the garden too—"

"Mr. Markham, this continued interruption is indecent," exclaimed the count emphatically, while a cold perspiration burst out upon his forehead; for he had recalled to mind the incident respecting the garden.

"I have little more to add, count," said the Resurrection Man. "This Markham told me that you had plenty of plate and money always in the house; and as he had lost nearly all his property, he should not be displeased at an opportunity of getting hold of a little swag. It was agreed that we should meet in London to arrange the business; and so we did meet at the *Dark House* in Brick Lane, where we settled the affair along with the Crackman and the Buffer, who have just made off. This is all I have to say—unless it is that me and your friend Markham first got acquainted in Newgate—"

"Newgate!" ejaculated the count, with a thrill of horror.

"Yes—Newgate; where he was waiting to be tried for forgery, for which he got two years in the Compter. And that's all. Let him deny it if he can."

Scarcely were these terrible words uttered by the Resurrection Man, when a loud—long—and piercing scream was heard, coming from the direction of the staircase; and then some object instantly fell with violence upon the marble floor of the hall.

"Isabella! Isabella!" ejaculated Markham, turning hastily round to hurry to her assistance.

"Stop, sir—seek not my daughter," cried the count in a stern voice, as he caught Richard's arm and held him back. "Let not a soul stir until my return!"

There was a noble and dignified air of comman-



about Count Alteroni, as he uttered these words, which could not escape the notice of Richard Markham, even amidst the crushing and overwhelming circumstances that surrounded him.

The count took the candle from Markham's hand, and hastened to the aid of his daughter, who, half-dressed, was lying upon the cold marble of the hall. He hastened to raise her; and at that moment the countess appeared upon the stairs, followed by a lady's-maid bearing a lamp.

The count reassured her in respect to the safety of the house, consigned Isabella to her care, and then returned to the pantry, where his presence was awaited in silence.

"Have you any thing more to say?" demanded the count of the Resurrection Man.

"Nothing. Have not I said enough?"—and he glanced with fiendish triumph towards Markham.

"Now, sir," said the count, turning to Richard; "is the statement of this man easy to be refuted?"

"Alas! I am compelled to admit that, the victim of the most extraordinary circumstantial evidence ever known to fix guilt upon an innocent man, I was a prisoner in Newgate and the Compter; but—"

"Say no more! say no more! God forgive me, that I should have allowed such a man to become the friend of my wife and daughter!"

The count uttered these words in a tone of intense agony.

"Count Alteroni, allow me one word of explanation," said Richard. "Only cast your eyes over this paper, and you will be convinced of my innocence!"

Markham handed the document signed by Talbot, *alias* Pocock, to the count; but the nobleman tossed it indignantly on the floor.

"You have confessed that you have been an inmate of the felons' goals: what explanation can you give that will wipe away so foul a stain? Depart—begone! defile not my house longer with your presence!"

Vainly did Markham endeavour to obtain a hearing. The count silenced him with an air of command and an imposing dignity of manner that struck him with awe. Never did the Italian nobleman appear more really noble than when he was thus performing that which he considered to be an imperious duty. His fine form was drawn up to its full height

—his chest expanded—his cheeks were flushed—and his eyes flashed fire. Yes—even beneath his dark complexion was the rich Italian blood seen mantling his countenance.

"Go, sir—hasten your departure—stay not another minute here! A man accused of forgery—condemned to an infamous punishment,—a liberated felon—a freed convict in my family dwelling—Holy God! I can scarcely restrain myself within the bounds of common patience when I think of the indignity that myself, my wife, and my innocent daughter have endured."

With these words the colonel pushed Markham rudely from the pantry, and ordered a servant to conduct him to the front door.

The blood of the young man boiled in his veins at this ignominious treatment!—and yet he dared not rebel against it!

The Resurrection Man took his departure at the same time by the garden at the back of the house.

As Markham turned down the shrubbery, a window on the third floor of the count's dwelling was thrown open; and the voices of Sir Cherry Bounce and the Honourable Captain Dapper were heard loading him with abuse.

Bowed down to the earth by the weight of the misfortune which had just fallen upon his head,—crushed by unjust and unfounded suspicions,—and sinking beneath a sense of shame and degradation, which all his innocence did not deprive of a single pang,—Markham dragged himself away from the house in which he had passed so many happy hours, and where he left behind him all that he held dear in this life.

He seated himself upon a milestone at a little distance from the count's mansion, to which he turned his eyes to take a last farewell of the place where Isabella resided.

Lights were moving about in several rooms;—perhaps she was ill?

Most assuredly she had heard the dread accusations which had issued from the lips of the Resurrection Man against her lover;—and she would haply believe them all!

So thought Richard. Human language cannot convey an adequate idea of the heart-rending misery which the poor oppressed young man endured as he sat by the road-side, and pondered upon all that had just occurred.

Shame upon shame—degradation upon degradation—mountain upon mountain rolled on his breast, as if he were a modern Titan, to crush him and keep him down—never more to rise!—this was now *his* fate!

At length, afraid of being left alone with his own thoughts, which seemed to urge him to end his earthly woes in the blood of a suicide, he rose from the cold stone, turned one last sorrowful and lingering glance towards the mansion in the distance, and then hurried along the road to Richmond as if he were pursued by bloodhounds.

And not more fearful nor more appalling would those bloodhounds have been than the horrible and excruciating thoughts which haunted him upon his way, and of which he could not divest himself; so that at length a species of delirium seized upon him as he ran furiously onward, the mark of Cain appearing to burn like red-hot iron upon his brow, and a terrible voice thundering in his ear—"FUGIO CONVICT!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

ELIZA SYDNEY.

THE reader will remember that the events already related have brought us up to the close of 1838.

Thus three years had elapsed since the memorable trial which resulted in the condemnation of Eliza Sydney to an imprisonment of twenty-four long months in Newgate; and a year had passed since her release from that dread abode.

We therefore return to her again in December, 1838—about the same time that those incidents occurred which we detailed in the last few chapters.

Probably to the surprise of the reader, we again find Eliza Sydney the mistress of the beautiful villa at Upper Clapton.

Yes: on the evening when we once more introduce ourselves to her, she was sitting alone in the drawing-room of that house, reading by the side of a cheerful fire.

She was now twenty-eight years of age; and, although somewhat more inclining to *emdespoint* than when we first described her, she was still a lovely and fascinating woman. That slightly increased roundness of form had given her charms a voluptuousness the most ravishing and seductive, but the effects of which upon the beholder were at-tempered by the dignity that reigned upon her high and noble brow, and the chaste expression of her melting hazel eyes.

She was one of those fine creatures—one of those splendid specimens of the female sex, which are alone seen in the cold climates of the north; for it appears to be a rule in nature that the flowers of our species expand into the most luscious loveliness in the least genial latitudes.

There was a soft melancholy in the expression of her countenance, which might have been mistaken for languor, and which gave an additional charm to her appearance; for it was easy to perceive her mind was now at ease, that delicate shade of sadness being the indelible effect of the adventures of the past.

Her mind was at ease, because she was pure in heart and virtuous in intention,—because she knew that she had erred innocently when she lent herself to the fraud for which she had suffered,—because she possessed a competency that secured her against care for the present and fear for the future,—and because she dwelt in that strict solitude and retirement which she loved, and which was congenial to a soul that had seen enough of the world to learn to dread its cruel artifices and deceptive ways.

We said that it was evening when we again introduce Eliza to the readers. A cold wind whistled without; and a huge Christmas log burnt at the back of the grate, giving an air of supreme comfort to that tastefully-furnished room.

The French porcelain time-piece upon the mantel proclaimed the hour of eight.

Scarcely had the silvery chime ceased, when Louisa entered the room in great haste and excitement.

"Oh, ma'am! who do you think is here?" she cried, closing the door carefully behind her.

"It is impossible for me to guess, Louisa," said Eliza, smiling.

"Mr. Stephens!" exclaimed the servant: "and he earnestly implores to see you!"

"Mr. Stephens!" echoed Eliza. "Impossible!"

"It is him, flesh and blood: but so pale—so ghostly pale—and so altered!"

"Mr. Stephens!" repeated Eliza. "You must be mistaken—you must be dreaming; for you are

will swear that, in accordance with his sentence, he must be very—very far from England."

"He is here—he is in London—he is at your door!" said Louisa emphatically; "and as far as I could see by the light of the candle that I had with me when I answered his knock, he is in rags and tatters."

"And he wishes to see me?" said Eliza, musing.

"Yes, ma'am."

There was a pause of a few moments.

"I will see him," exclaimed Eliza, in a decided tone, after some consideration. "He may be in want—in distress; and I cannot forget that he proclaimed my innocence in the dock of the Old Bailey."

Louisa left the room: and in another minute the convict Stephens stood in the presence of Eliza Sydney.

Altered! he was indeed altered. His eyes were sunken and lustreless—his cheeks wan and hollow—his hair prematurely tinged with grey—and his form thin and emaciated. He was moreover clad in rags—absolute rags.

"My God!" ejaculated Eliza: "in what a condition do you return to your native land!"

"And heaven alone knows what sacrifices I have made, and what hardships I have undergone to come back!" said Stephens in a hollow voice.

"You are pardoned, then?"

"Oh, no! crimes like mine are not so readily forgiven. I escaped!"

"Escaped!" exclaimed Eliza: "and are you not afraid of being recaptured?"

"I must run that risk," replied Stephens, sorrowfully. "But give me food—I am hungry—I am starving!"

The unhappy man sank upon a chair as he uttered these words; and Eliza summoned Louisa to bring refreshments.

The servant placed a tray laden with provisions upon the table, and retired.

Stephens then fell ravenously upon the food thus set before him; while tears stood in Eliza's eyes when she thought that the miserable wretch had once commanded in that house where he now craved a morsel of bread!

At length the convict terminated his meal.

"I had eaten nothing," he said, "since yesterday afternoon, when I spent my last penny to procure a roll. Last night I slept in a shed near the docks, a large stone for my pillow. All this day I have been wandering about the most obscure and wretched neighbourhoods of London—not knowing whither to go, and afraid to be seen by any one who may recognise me. Recognise me!" he added, in a strange satirical manner: "that would perhaps be difficult;" then, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, he said in a tone of profound and touching melancholy, "Do you not find me much—very much altered?"

"You have doubtless suffered deeply," said Eliza, wiping away the tears from her eyes; for at that moment she remembered not the injury brought by that man upon herself—she saw and knew of nought save the misery of the hapless being before her.

"You weep, Eliza," exclaimed Stephens, "you weep for me who am unworthy even of your notice!"

"Forget the past: I prefer dwelling upon the kindnesses rather than the injuries I have experienced at your hands."

"Excellent woman!" cried the convict, deeply affected. "Oh! you know not what I have endured—what dangers I have incurred—what hardships I have undergone—what privations I have experienced;

Compelled to work my passage back to England as a common sailor—a prey to the brutality of a tyrannical and drunken captain—exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather,—no tongue can tell what I have gone through! But I will not weary you with my complaints. Rather let me hear how you yourself have fared."

"My tale is short," answered Eliza. "The two years in Newgate passed away. God knows how they passed away—but they did pass! Of that I will say no more—save that the most powerful interest was exerted to obtain a mitigation of my sentence—but in vain! The Secretary of State assured the Earl of Warrington that he could not interfere with the very lenient judgment awarded by the court relative to myself. One more circumstance I must mention. Every three months, when the prison regulations allowed the admission of the friends of those confined, a lady visited me; and though that lady be the mistress of the Earl of Warrington, I would rejoice to call her sister."

"Oh! how rejoiced I am to know that you were not without friends!" exclaimed Stephens.

"The Earl of Warrington sent me by this lady assurances of his forgiveness, and even of his intention to befriend me, for the sake of my dear departed mother. But, oh! who could have anticipated the noble—the generous conduct pursued towards me by that nobleman? The day of my liberation dawned. Mrs. Arlington came in the earl's private travelling carriage, and received me at the door of the prison. The carriage rolled away; and, when I had recovered from the first emotions of joy at leaving that horrible place, I found we were proceeding along the Hackney Road. I cast a glance of surprise at Mrs. Arlington; she only smiled, and would not gratify my curiosity. At length we came in sight of the villa, and my astonishment increased. Still Mrs. Arlington only smiled. In a few minutes more the carriage entered the enclosure, and drove up to this door. Mrs. Arlington seemed to enjoy my surprise—and yet tears glistened in her eyes. Oh! the admirable woman: they were tears of joy at the grateful task which the earl had imposed upon her. The front door opened, and Louisa ran forward to welcome me. Mrs. Arlington took my hand, and led me into the dining-room. The furniture was all entirely new. She conducted me over the house: every room was similarly renovated. At length I felt exhausted with pleasure, hope, and alarm, and sank upon the sofa in this apartment. 'My dear Eliza,' said Mrs. Arlington, 'all that you survey is yours. The very house itself is your own property. The Earl of Warrington has purchased it for you; and his solicitor, Mr. Pakenham, will call upon you to-morrow with the title-deeds.'—I fainted through excess of happiness and gratitude."

"How noble!" exclaimed Stephens. "I knew that the Earl of Warrington had purchased this estate; for I had already mortgaged it to its full value previous to that fatal epoch when all my hopes failed! My brother, who resided in Liverpool, left England six months after my departure, and went out to settle in New South Wales. He told me that the person who had lent me the money upon this property, had disposed of it to the earl. My brother's object was to settle at Sydney, and procure me to be allotted to him as his servant. I should then have been free. But, alas! scarcely had he set foot in the island, when he was seized with a malignant fever, which proved fatal."

"Misfortunes never come singly," said Eliza. Then, after a pause, she added, "Neither do bless-

lings! And if I have been greatly afflicted—I have also enjoyed some happiness. In reference to my own narrative, I must add that Mr. Pakenham called on the following day, as Mrs. Arlington had promised; and he placed the deeds in my hand. I desired him to retain them in his care for me. He then informed me that the Earl of Warrington had purchased for me an annuity of four hundred pounds a-year. Oh! such generosity overwhelmed me. I begged to be allowed to hasten and throw myself at the feet of that excellent nobleman; but Mr. Pakenham intimated that his lordship was averse to an interview. In a word, he made me understand that I might never hope to thank my benefactor to his face, and that a letter expressing my feelings would be equally unwelcome. The good lawyer, however, tranquillised my mind on one point: the earl has no aversion to me—entertains no animosity against me; but he cannot bear to contemplate the offspring of the woman whom he himself loved so madly!"

"Thus you are happy, and blest with kind friends; and I—I am an outcast!" said Stephens, in a tone of bitter remorse. "Oh! what would I give to be able to recall the past! Blessed, however, be that strange and unaccountable curiosity which led me into this neighbourhood to-night! I say, blessed be it—since it has been the unexpected means for me to hear and know that you at least are happy. Oh! conceive my astonishment when, on approaching the villa, I inquired of a peasant, 'Who dwells there now?' and he replied, 'Miss Sydney!' I could not mistake that announcement: I was already prepared by it for the narrative which you have given me of the Earl of Warrington's generosity."

"Without him, what should I be at this moment?" said Eliza. "He has been more than a friend to me,—his kindness was rather that of a father or a brother! And that angel Mrs. Arlington, who visited me in prison—who poured consolation into my soul, and sustained me with hopes that have been more than realised,—oh! how deep a debt of gratitude do I owe to her also. She did not conceal from me her true position in reference to the Earl of Warrington: she detailed to me the narrative of her sorrows; and I learnt that George Montague was the base deceiver who first taught her to stray from the paths of virtue."

"George Montague!" exclaimed Stephens. "What has become of that man? He is artful, talented, designing, and might perhaps be able to serve me if he would."

"He has assumed, I am told, the name of Greenwood, and dwells in a magnificent house in Spring Gardens. This I learnt from Mrs. Arlington, who called here a few days ago. She also informed me that Montague had circulated a report amongst his acquaintances, that the death of a distant relation had put him in possession of considerable property, and rendered the assumption of the name of Greenwood an indispensable condition of its enjoyment."

"And thus has Montague risen," said Stephens; "while I am humbled to the dust! His intrigues and machinations have enriched him; and the story of the death of a wealthy relation is no doubt the apology for the sudden display of the treasures he has been amassing for the last four or five years. Have you seen him lately?"

"He called here a few days after my release from imprisonment," said Eliza, with a slight blush; "but I did not choose to see him. I love solitude—I prefer retirement."

"And my visit has most disagreeably intruded upon your privacy," observed Stephens.

"I could have wished to have seen you in a more prosperous state, for your own sake," answered Eliza; "but as I observed just now, I would rather remember the kindnesses I have received at your hands, than the miseries which have resulted from your guilty deception. If with my modest and limited means I can assist you, speak! What do you propose to do?"

"My object is to proceed to America, where I might be enabled to obtain an honest livelihood by my mercantile experience and knowledge. Every moment that I prolong my stay in England is fraught with increased peril to my safety; for were I captured, I should be sent back to that far-off clime where so many of my fellow-countrymen endure inconceivable miseries, and where my lot would become terrible indeed."

"I will assist you in your object," said Eliza. "Mr. Pakenham, who acts as my banker, has a hundred pounds of mine in his hands: to-morrow I will draw that amount; and if it will be of any service towards the accomplishment of your plans—"

"Oh, Eliza! how can I sufficiently express my gratitude?" interrupted Stephens, joy and hope animating his care-worn countenance and string his sunken eyes.

"Do not thank me," said Eliza. "I shall be happy if I can efface one wrinkle from the brow of a fellow-creature. For your present necessities take this,"—and she handed him her purse. "To-morrow evening I shall expect you to call again; and I will then provide you with the means to seek your fortune in another quarter of the world."

Stephens shed tears as he received the purse from the fair hand of that noble-hearted woman.

He then took his departure with a heart far more light than when he had knocked humbly and timidly at the door of that villa an hour before.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MR. GREENWOOD'S VISITORS.

MR. GREENWOOD was seated in his study the morning after the event which occupied the last chapter.

He was dressed *en seigneur*.

A French velvet skull-cap, embroidered with gold, sat upon his curled and perfumed hair: a sumptuous brocade silk dressing-gown was confined around the waist by a gold cord with large tassels hanging almost to his feet: his shirt collar was turned down over a plain broad black riband, the bow of which was fastened with a diamond brooch of immense value; and on his fingers were costly rings, sparkling with stones of corresponding kind and worth.

On the writing-table an elegant French watch attached to a long gold chain, lay amidst a pile of letters, just as if it had been carelessly tossed there. A cheque, partly filled up for a thousand guineas,—several bank-notes, and some loose gold, were lying on an open writing-desk; and, at one end of the table lay, in seeming confusion, a number of visiting cards bearing the names of eminent capitalists, wealthy merchants, peers, and members of Parliament.

All this pell-mell assemblage of proofs of wealth and tokens of high acquaintance, was only apparent—and not real. It was a portion of Mr. Greenwood's system—one of the principles of the art which he practised in deceiving the world. He knew none of the capitalists, and few of the aristocrats whose card

lay upon his table: and his own hand had arranged the manner in which the watch, the cheque-book, and the money were tossing about. Never did a coquet practise a particular glance, attitude, or mannerism, more seriously than did Mr. Greenwood these little artifices which, however trifling they may appear, produced an immense effect upon those with whom he had to deal, and who visited him in that study.

Every thing he did was the result of a calculation, and had an aim: every word he spoke, however rapid the utterance, was dully weighed and measured.

And yet at this time the man who thus carried his knowledge of human nature even to the most ridiculous niceties, was only in his twenty-eighth year. How perverted were great talents—how misapplied an extraordinary quickness of apprehension in this instance!

Mr. Greenwood contemplated the arrangements of his writing-table with calm satisfaction; and a smile of triumph curled his lip as he thought of the position to which such little artifices as those had helped to raise him. He despised the world; he laughed at society; and he cared not for the law—for he walked boldly up to the extreme verge where personal security ceased and peril began; but he never over-stepped the boundary. He had plundered many—he had enriched himself with the wealth of others—he had built his own fortunes upon the ruins of his fellow men's hopes and prospects; but still he had so contrived all his schemes that the law could never reach him, and if one of his victims accused him of villany he had a plausible explanation to offer for his conduct.

If a person said to him, "Your schemes have involved me in utter ruin, and deprived me of every penny I possessed,"—he would unblushingly reply, "What does the man mean? He forgets that I suffered far more than he did; and that where he lost hundreds I lost thousands! It is impossible to control speculations: some turn up well, some badly; and this man might as well blame the keeper of a lottery-office because his ticket did not turn up a prize, as attempt to throw any odium upon me!"

And this language would prove satisfactory and seem straight-forward to all by-standers, save the poor victim himself, who nevertheless would be struck dumb by the other's assurance.

Greenwood had commenced his ways of intrigue and pursuits of duplicity in the City, where he was known as George Montague. The moment he had obtained a considerable fortune, he repaired to the West End, added the name of Greenwood to his other appellations, and thus commenced, as it were, a new existence in a new sphere.

He possessed the great advantage of exercising a complete control over all his feelings, passions, and inclinations—save with respect to women. In this point of view he was a complete sensualist—a heartless voluptuary. He would spare neither expense nor trouble to gratify his amorous desires, where he formed a predilection; and if in any case he would run a risk of involving himself in the complexities of civil or criminal law, the peril would be encountered in an attempt to satisfy his lustful cravings. There are many men of this stamp in the world,—especially in great cities—and, more especially still, in London.

Mr. Greenwood, having completed the arrangements of his study in the manner described, rang the bell.

His French valet Laffeur made his appearance in

answer to the summons. Mr. Greenwood then threw himself negligently into the arm-chair at his writing-table, and proceeded to issue his instructions to his dependant.

"Laffeur, the Count Alteroni will call this morning. When he has been here about ten minutes, bring me in this letter."

He handed his valet a letter, sealed, and addressed to himself.

"At about twelve o'clock Lord Tremordyn will call. Let him remain quietly for a quarter of an hour with me; and then come in and say, 'The Duke of Portsmouth has sent round, sir, to know whether he can positively rely upon your company to dinner this evening.' Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," answered Laffeur, without the slightest variation of countenance; for he was too politic and too finished a valet to attempt to criticise his master's proceedings by means of even a look.

"So far, so good," resumed Mr. Greenwood. "Sir Rupert Harborough will call this morning; you will tell him I am not at home."

"Yes, sir."

"Lady Cecilia Harborough will call at one precisely: you will conduct her to the drawing-room."

"Yes, sir."

"And all the time she is here I shall not be at home to a soul."

"No, sir."

"At four o'clock I shall go out in the cab: you can then pay a visit to Upper Clapton and ascertain by any indirect means you can light upon, whether Miss Sydney still inhabits the villa, and whether she still pursues the same retired and secluded mode of existence as when you last made inquiries in that quarter."

"Yes, sir."

"And you can ride round by Holloway and find out—also by indirect inquiries, remember—whether Mr. Markham is at home, and any other particulars relative to him which you can glean. I have already told you that I have the deepest interest in being acquainted with all that that young man does—his minutest actions even."

"I will attend to your orders, sir."

"To-night, you will dress yourself in mess attire and repair to a low public-house on Saffron-hill, known by the name of the *Boozing Kitten* by the thieves and reprobates of that district. You will inquire for a man who frequents that house, and who is called Tom the Cracksmen. No one knows him by any other name. You will tell him your master is, and that I wish to see him upon very particular business. He must be here to-morrow night at nine o'clock. Give him this five-pound note as an earnest of good intentions."

"Yes, sir."

"And now take these duplicates and that bank-note for five hundred pounds, and just go yourself to V——'s the pawnbroker's in the Strand, and redeem the diamonds mentioned in these tickets. You will have time before any one comes."

"Yes, sir."

"And should Lord Tremordyn happen to be here when you return, hand me the packet, which you will have wrapped up in white paper, saying, 'With the Duke's compliments, sir.'"

"Yes, sir."

Thus ended the morning's instructions.

The valet took the letter (which Mr. Greenwood had written to himself,) the duplicates, and the bank notes; and retired.

In half an hour he returned with a small purp-

morocco case containing a complete set of diamonds, worth at least twelve hundred guineas.

He again withdrew, and returned in a few minutes—but this time it was to usher in Count Altironi.

Mr. Greenwood received the Italian noble with more than usual affability and apparent friendship.

"I am delighted to inform you, my dear count," he said, when they were both seated, "that our enterprise is progressing well. I yesterday received a letter from a certain capitalist to whom I applied relative to the loan of two hundred thousand pounds which I informed you it was necessary to raise to carry out our undertaking, in addition to the capital which you and I have both subscribed; and I have no doubt that I shall succeed in this point. Indeed, he is to send me his decision this very morning."

"Then I hope that at length the Company is definitively formed?" said the count.

"Definitively," answered Mr. Greenwood.

"And the deed by which you guarantee to me the safety of the money I have embarked, let the event be what it may?" said the count.

"That will be ready to-morrow evening. Can you dine with me to-morrow, and terminate that portion of the business after dinner? My solicitor will send the deed hither by one of his clerks at half-past eight o'clock."

"With pleasure," said the count, evidently pleased at this arrangement.

"There has been some delay," said Mr. Greenwood; "but really the fault has not existed with me."

"You will excuse my anxiety in this respect: indeed, I have probably pressed you more than I ought for the completion of that security; but you will remember that I have embarked my all in this enterprise."

"Do not attempt an apology. You have acted as a man of prudence and caution; and you will find that I shall behave as a man of business."

"I am perfectly satisfied," said the count. "I should not have advanced my money unless I had been so perfectly satisfied with your representations; for—unless events turn up in my favour in my own country, I must for ever expect to remain an exile from Castelvicala. And that good fortune will shine upon me from that quarter, I can scarcely expect. My liberal principles have offended the Grand-Duke and the old nobility of that state; and now that the aristocracy has there gained the ascendancy, and is likely to retain it, I can hope for nothing. I would gladly have aided the popular cause, and obtained for the people of Castelvicala a constitution; but the idea of representative principles is odious to those now in power."

"I believe that you were a staunch adherent of the Prince of Castelvicala, who is the nephew of the reigning Grand-Duke and the heir-apparent to the throne?" said Mr. Greenwood.

"You have been rightly informed; but if the Pope and the Kings of Naples and Sardinia support the aristocracy of Castelvicala, that prince will be excluded from his inheritance and a foreigner will be placed upon the grand-ducal throne. In this case, the prince will be an exile until his death—without even a pension to support him; so irritated are the old aristocracy against him."

"I believe that Castelvicala is a fine state?"

"A beautiful country—extensive, well-cultivated, and productive. It contains two millions of inhabitants. The capital, Montoni, is a magnificent city, of a hundred thousand souls. The revenues of the

Grand-Duke are two hundred thousand pounds sterling a-year; and yet he is not contented! He does not study his people's happiness."

"And where at the present moment is that gallant prince who has thus risked his accession to the throne, for the welfare of his fellow-countrymen?" inquired Greenwood.

"That remains a secret," answered the count.

"His partisans alone know."

"Of course I would not attempt to intrude upon matters so sacred," said Greenwood, "were I not deeply interested in yourself, whom I know to be one of his most staunch adherents."

At that moment the door opened; and Ladreur entered, bearing a letter, which he handed to Mr. Greenwood. He then retired.

"Will you excuse me?" said Greenwood to the count; then, opening the letter, he appeared to read it with attention.

At the expiration of a few moments, he said, "This letter is from my capitalist. He gives me both good and bad news. He will advance the loan; but he cannot command the necessary amount for three months."

"Then there will be three months' more delay!" exclaimed the count in a tone of vexation.

"Three months! and what is that? A mere nothing!" cried Mr. Greenwood. "You can satisfy yourself of my friend's sincerity."

With these words he handed to the count the letter which he had written to himself in a feigned hand, and to which he had affixed a fictitious name and address.

The count read the letter and was satisfied.

He then rose to depart.

"To-morrow evening, at seven o'clock punctually, I shall do myself the pleasure of waiting upon you. In a few days, you remember, I and my family are coming up to town to pass some time with Lord Tremordyn."

"And I shall then be bold and presumptuous enough," said Greenwood, "to endeavour to render myself acceptable to the Signora Isabella."

"By the bye," exclaimed the count, "I forgot to inform you of the villany of that Richard Markham, whom I received into the bosom of my family, and treated as a son, or a brother."

"His villany!" ejaculated Greenwood, in a tone of unfeigned surprise.

"Villany the most atrocious!" cried the count. "He is a man branded with the infamy of a felon's goal!"

"Impossible!" said Greenwood, this time affecting the astonishment expressed by his countenance.

"It is, alas! too true. The night before last, he invited thieves to break into my dwelling; and to those miscreants had he boasted of his intentions to win the favour of my daughter!"

"Oh! no—no," said Greenwood emphatically; "you must have been misinformed!"

"On the contrary, I have received evidence only too corroborative of what I tell you. But when I come to-morrow evening, I will give you the details."

The count then took his departure.

"Thank God!" said Mr. Greenwood to himself, the moment the door had closed behind the Italian nobleman: "I have succeeded in putting off that bothering count for three good months. Much may be done in the mean time; and if I can secure his daughter—all will be well! I can then pension him off upon a hundred and fifty pounds a year—and re-

tain possession of his capital. But this deed—he demands the deed of guarantee: he presses for that! I must give him the security to show my good-will; and then neutralise that concession on my part, in the manner already resolved upon. How strange was the account he gave me of Richard Markham! That unhappy young man appears to be the victim of the most wonderful combination of suspicious circumstances ever known; for guilty he could not be—oh! no—impossible!”

Mr. Greenwood's meditations were interrupted by the entrance of Lord Tremordyn.

This nobleman was a short, stout, good-tempered man. Being a large landholder, he exercised considerable influence in his county, of which he was lord-lieutenant; and he boasted that he could return six members to parliament in spite of the Reform-bill. His wife was moreover allied to one of the richest and most important families in the hierarchy of the aristocracy; and thus Lord Tremordyn—with no talent, no knowledge, no acquisitions to recommend him, but with certain political tenets which he inherited along with the family estate, and which he professed for no other reason than because they were those of his ancestors,—Lord Tremordyn, we say, was a very great man in the House of Lords. He seldom spoke, it is true; but then he *roared*—and dictated to others how to *roar*; and in this existed his power. When he *did* speak, he uttered an awful amount of nonsense; but the reporters were very kind—and so his speeches read well. Indeed, he did not know them again when he perused them in print the morning after their delivery. Moreover, his wife was a blue-stocking, and dabbled a little in politics; and she occasionally furnished her noble husband with a few hints which might have been valuable had he clothed them in language a little intelligible. For the rest, Lord Tremordyn was a most hospitable man, was fond of his bottle, and fancied himself a sporting character because he kept hounds and horses, and generally employed an agent to “make up a book” for him at races, whereby he was most amazingly plundered.

“My dear lord,” exclaimed Mr. Greenwood, conducting his noble visitor to a seat; “I am delighted to see your lordship look so well. So you have parted with *Electricity*? I heard of it yesterday at Tattersalls’.”

“Yes—and a good price I had for him. But, by the way, my dear Greenwood, I must not forget to thank you for the Hook you sent me. It is superb!”

“I am delighted that your lordship is pleased with it. Have you seen Sir Rupert Harborough lately?”

“My scapegrace son-in-law! I wish I had never seen him at all!” ejaculated his lordship. “He is over head and ears in debt again; and I swear most solemnly that I will do nothing more for him—not to the amount of a penny-piece! Cecilia, too, has quarrelled with her mother; and, even if she had not, Lady Tremordyn is the last woman on earth to advance them a shilling.”

“It is a pity—a great pity!” said Mr. Greenwood, apparently musing; then, after a brief pause, he added, “You never can guess, my dear lord, why I wished to see your lordship so particularly this morning?”

“About the match between *Electricity* and *Galvanism*? The odds are three to four.”

“That was not exactly my business,” said Greenwood, with a bland smile; “the fact is, the representation of Rottenborough will be vacant in a few weeks. I know positively, that the present member intends to accept the Chiltern Hundreds.”

“I have received a similar intimation,” observed his lordship.

“At present the matter is a profound secret.”

“Yes—a profound secret; known only to the member's friends, and me and my friends, and you and your friends,” added the nobleman, seriously meaning what he said without any attempt at irony or satire.

“Of course there will be an election in February, shortly after the Houses meet,” continued Greenwood. “I was going to observe to your lordship that I should be most happy to offer myself as a candidate——”

“You, Greenwood! What—are you a politician?”

“Not so profound nor so well versed as your lordship; but I flatter myself that, aided by your lordship's advice——”

“Lady Tremordyn would never consent to it!”

“And by Lady Tremordyn's suggestions——”

“It would never do! She will have a man of rank and family; and—excuse me, Greenwood—although you are no doubt rich enough for a lord, and well educated, and clever, and so on—the deuce of it is that we don't know who the devil you are!”

“An excellent family—an excellent family, my dear lord,” exclaimed Mr. Greenwood; “and, although nothing equal to your own, which I know to be the most ancient in England——”

“Or Scotland, or Ireland, either.”

“Or Scotland, or Ireland, or even Europe—still——”

“No—it cannot be done, Greenwood;—it cannot be done,” interrupted the nobleman. “I would do any thing to oblige you;—but——”

At that moment the door opened, and Lafleur entered the study.

“If you please, sir,” said the French valet, “the Duke of Portsmouth has sent round to know whether he can positively rely upon your company to dinner this evening?”

“My best compliments to his grace, Lafleur,” said Mr. Greenwood, affecting to meditate upon this message for a moment, “and I will do myself the honour of waiting on his grace at the usual hour.”

“Very good, sir.”

And Lafleur retired.

“Well, after all,” resumed Lord Tremordyn, who had not lost a word of this message and the answer, “I think I might undertake to arrange the Rottenborough business for you. You have high acquaintances—and they often do more good than high connexions. So we will consider that matter as settled.”

“I am deeply obliged to your lordship,” said Greenwood, with the calmness of a man who had never entertained a fear of being ultimately enabled to carry his point; “you will see that I shall imitate in the Lower House your lordship's admirable conduct in the Upper, to the very best of my ability.”

“Of course you will always support the measures I support, and oppose those which I may oppose?”

“Oh! that is a matter of course! What would become of society—where should we be, if the Commons did not obey the great landholders who allow them to be returned?”

“Ah! what indeed?” said the nobleman, shaking his head ominously. “But really, Greenwood, I was n't at all aware that you were half so clever a politician as I see you are.”

“Your lordship does me honour. I know how to

vine your lordship's good opinion," said Greenwood, in a meek and submissive manner: then, after a moment's silence, he added, "By the bye, I understand that our mutual friend Alteroni, and his amiable wife, and beautiful daughter, are going to pass the first few weeks of the new year with your lordship and Lady Tremordyn?"

"Yes: we shall be very gay. The signora must pick up a husband amongst the young nobles or scions of great families whom she will meet this winter in London."

"Do you not know, my lord," said Greenwood, sinking his voice to a mysterious whisper, "that Count Alteroni detests gaiety? are you not aware that he and the ladies have accepted your kind invitation under the impression that they will enjoy the pleasing society of your lordship and Lady Tremordyn, and a few select friends only?"

"I am glad you have told me that!" exclaimed the nobleman. "We will have no gaiety at all."

"The count has honoured me with his utmost confidence, and his sincere friendship," said Greenwood.

"Oh! of course you will be welcome on all occasions: do not wait for invitations—I give you a general one."

"I am more than ever indebted to your lordship." After a little more conversation in the same strain, the nobleman took his leave, more pleased with Mr. Greenwood than ever.

This gentleman, the moment he was alone, threw himself into his chair, and smiled complacently.

"Gained all my points!" he said, musing. "I shall be a member of parliament—the fair Isabella will stand no chance of captivating some wealthy and titled individual who might woo and win her—and I have obtained a general invitation to Lord Tremordyn's dwelling! I alone shall therefore have an opportunity of paying court to this Italian beauty."

The French valet entered the room.

"Lady Cecilia Harborough is in the drawing-room, sir."

Mr. Greenwood thrust the morocco case containing the diamonds into the pocket of his dressing-gown; and then proceeded to the apartment where the lady was waiting.

Lady Cecilia Harborough was about two-and-twenty, and very beautiful. Her hair was auburn, her eyes blue, and her features regular. Her figure was good; but she was very slightly made—a perfect sylph in symmetry and model. Nursed amidst fashionable pleasure and aristocratic dissipation, she was without those principles which are the very basis of virtue. If she were true and faithful to her husband, it was only because she had not been strongly tempted to prove otherwise: if she had never indulged in an intrigue, it was simply because one to her taste had never come in her way. Her passions were strong—her disposition decidedly sensual. Thus was it that she had become an easy prey to Sir Rupert Harborough; and when she had discovered that she was in a way to become a mother in consequence of that amour, she only repented of her conduct through dread of shame, and not for the mere fact of having deviated from the path of virtue. Her disgrace was concealed by a patched-up marriage with her seducer, a trip to the Continent, and the death of the child at its birth; and thus there was no scandal in society attached to the name of Lady Cecilia Harborough.

Mr. Greenwood had not made her wait many moments when he entered the drawing-room.

Lady Cecilia rose, and hastening towards him, said, "Oh! Mr. Greenwood, what can you think of me after the imprudent step I have taken in coming alone and unattended?"

"I can only think, Lady Cecilia," said Greenwood, handing her to a seat, and taking a chair near her, "that you have done me an honour, the extent of which I can fully appreciate."

"But why insist upon this visit to you? why could you not have called upon me?" inquired the lady impatiently.

"Your ladyship wishes to consult with me upon financial affairs: and every capitalist receives visits, and does not pay them, when they refer to business only."

"Thank you for this apology for my conduct. I fancied that I was guilty of a very great imprudence; you have reassured me upon that head;—and a smile played upon the fair patrician's lips.

"In what manner can I be of service to your ladyship? You perceive that I will save you the trouble of even introducing a disagreeable subject."

"Well, Mr. Greenwood," said Lady Cecilia, with that easy familiarity which is always shown towards those who are confidants in cases of pecuniary embarrassment,—“you are well aware of Sir Rupert's unfortunate situation; and of course his position is also mine. We are literally without the means of paying the common weekly bills of the house, and the servants' wages. I have quarrelled with my mother; and my father will not advance another sixpence."

"Your ladyship is well aware that Sir Rupert Harborough has no security to offer; and if he had, I would scarcely advance money to him—since I know that your ladyship seldom profits by any funds which he may possess."

"Oh! that is true, Mr. Greenwood!" ejaculated Lady Cecilia, emphatically. "Would you believe it—even my very diamonds are gone? Sir Rupert has made away with them!"

"In plain terms he pawned them."

"He did;—but that is such a horrid avowal to make! When one thinks that it is generally supposed that the poor alone have recourse to such means, and that we in the upper class do not even know what is meant by a pawnbroker's—Oh! how false is that idea! how erroneous is that impression!"

"It is, indeed," said Greenwood. "The jewels of half the high-born ladies in London have been deposited at different times in the hands of the very pawnbroker where yours were."

Lady Cecilia stared at Mr. Greenwood in profound astonishment: then, as a sudden idea seemed to flash across her brain, she added, "But Sir Rupert must have told you of this?"

He did."

"Do you know," continued the lady, "that I have actually lost the receipts or duplicates—or whatever you call them—which the pawnbroker gave when Harborough sent the diamonds by a trusty servant of ours?"

"Those duplicates Sir Rupert Harborough handed over to me," said Greenwood. "I lent him a hundred pounds upon them yesterday morning!"

"Oh! how ungrateful he is—how unworthy of one particle of affection!" exclaimed Lady Cecilia. "He knew how distressed—literally distressed I was for ready money; and he never offered me a guinea!"

"Are you so distressed as that?" inquired Mr. Greenwood, drawing his chair closer to that of his fair visitor.



"Why should I conceal any thing from you, when I come to consult you upon my embarrassments?" said Lady Cecilia, tears starting into her eyes. "I am literally disgraced! I cannot go to court, nor appear at any grand reunion, for the want of my jewels; and I am indebted to old Lady Mariborough to the amount of two hundred pounds which she lent me. Yesterday she wrote for the sixth time for the money, and actually observed in her letter that she considered my conduct unlady-like in the extreme. If I do not pay her this day, I shall be ruined—exposed—ashamed to show my face in any society whatever!"

"You would therefore make any sacrifice to relieve yourself from these embarrassments?" said Greenwood interrogatively.

"Oh! any sacrifice! To obtain about eight hundred or a thousand pounds, to redeem my jewels and pay my most pressing debts—Lady Mariborough's, for instance—I would do any thing!"

"You would make any sacrifice? You would do any thing, Lady Cecilia?" repeated Greenwood emphatically. "That is saying a great deal; and an

impertinent coxcomb—like me, for instance—might perhaps construe your words literally, and be most presumptuous in his demands."

"My God, Mr. Greenwood—what do you mean?" exclaimed the lady, a slight flush appearing upon her cheeks. "My case is so very desperate—I have no security to offer at present—and yet I require money,—money I must have! Tell me to throw myself into the Thames a year hence, so that I have money to-day, and I would willingly subscribe to the contract. I could even sell myself to the Evil One, like Dr. Faustus—I am so bewildered—so truly wretched!"

"Since you have verged into the regions of romance, and mentioned improbabilities, or impossibilities," said Mr. Greenwood, "suppose another strange case;—suppose that a man threw himself at your feet—declared his love—sought yours in return—and proffered his fortune as a proof of the sincerity of his heart?"

"Such generous and noble-minded lovers are not so easily found now-a-days," returned Lady Cecilia: "but, if I must respond to your question, I am

almost inclined to think that I should not prove very cruel to the tender swain who would present himself in so truly romantic a manner."

Greenwood caught hold of Lady Cecilia's hand, fell at her feet, and presented her with the purple morocco case containing the diamonds.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, half inclined to suppose that this proceeding was a mere jest,—"what do you mean, Mr. Greenwood? Surely you were not supposing a case in which you yourself were to be the principal actor?"

"Permit me to lay my heart and fortune at your feet!" said Greenwood. "Nay—you cannot repulse me now: you accepted the alternative; your own words have rendered me thus bold, thus presumptuous!"

"Ah! Mr. Greenwood," exclaimed the fair patrician lady, abandoning her left hand to this bold admirer, and receiving the case of diamonds with the right; "you have spread a snare for me—and I have fallen into the tangled meshes!"

"You can have no compunction—you can entertain no remorse in transferring your affections from a man who neglects you, to one who will study your happiness in every way."

"But—merciful heavens! you would not have me leave my husband altogether? Oh! I could not bear the *féat* of an elopement: no—never—never!"

"Nor would I counsel such a proceeding," said Greenwood, who was himself astonished at the ease with which he had obtained this victory: "you must sustain appearances in society; but when we can meet—and when we are together—oh! then we can be to each other as if we alone existed in the world—as if we could indulge in all the joys and sweets of love without fear and without peril!"

"Yes—I will be yours upon these terms—I will be yours!" murmured Cecilia. "And—remember—you must be faithful towards me; and you must never forget the sacrifice I make and the risk I run in thus responding to your attachment! But—above all things—do not think ill of me—do not despise me! I want something to love—and some one to love me;—and you sympathise with my distress—you feel for my unhappiness—you offer me your consolations: oh! yes—it is you whom I must love—and you will love me!"

"For ever," answered the libertine; and he caught that frail but beautiful lady in his arms.

An hour elapsed: Lady Cecilia had taken her departure, richer in purse but poorer in honour;—and Greenwood had returned to his study.

The flush of triumph was upon his brow; and the smile of satisfaction was upon his lip.

Lafleur entered the room.

"While you were engaged, sir," said the valet, "Sir Rupert Harborough called. He was most anxious to see you. I assured him that you were not at home. He said he would call again in an hour."

"You can then admit him."

The valet bowed and withdrew.

Mr. Greenwood then wrote several letters connected with the various schemes which he had in hand. His occupation was interrupted by the entrance of Sir Rupert Harborough.

With what ease and assurance—with what unblushing confidence did the libertine receive the man whose wife he had drawn into the snares of infamy and dishonour!

"You really must excuse my perseverance in seeing you this day," said Sir Rupert, who perceived by Greenwood's attire that he had not been out of

the house that morning; "but I am in such a mass of difficulties and embarrassments, I really know not which way to turn."

"I was particularly engaged when you called just now," said Greenwood; "and you are aware that one's valet always answers '*Not at Home*' in such cases."

"Oh! deuce take ceremony," exclaimed Sir Rupert. "See if you can do any thing to assist me. Lord Tremordyn has literally cut me; and Lady Tremordyn is as stingy as the devil. Besides, she and Lady Cecilia have quarrelled; and so there is no hope in that quarter."

"I really cannot assist you any farther—at present," observed Greenwood. "In a short time I shall be enabled to let you into a good thing, as I told you a little while ago; but for the moment—"

"Come, Greenwood," interrupted the baronet; "do not refuse me. I will give you a *post-obit* on the old lord; he is sure to leave me something handsome at his death."

"Yes—but he may settle it upon your wife in such a manner that you will not be able to touch it."

"Suppose that Lady Cecilia will join me in the security?"

"Insufficient still. Lord Tremordyn may bequeath her ladyship merely a life interest, without power to touch the capital."

"Well—what the devil can I do?" exclaimed the baronet, almost distracted. "Point out some means—lay down some plan—do any thing you like—but don't refuse some assistance."

Mr. Greenwood reflected for some minutes; and this time his thoughtful manner was not affected. It struck him that he might effect a certain arrangement in this instance by which he might get the baronet completely in his power, and lay out some money at an enormous interest at the same time.

"You see," said Mr. Greenwood, "you have not an atom of security to offer me."

"None—none," answered Sir Rupert: "I know of none—if you will not have the *post-obit*."

"The only means I can think of for the moment," pursued Mr. Greenwood, "is this:—Get me Lord Tremordyn's acceptance to a bill of fifteen hundred pounds at three months, and I will lend you a thousand upon it without an instant's delay."

"Lord Tremordyn's acceptance! Are you mad, Greenwood?"

"No—perfectly sane and serious. Of course I shall not call upon him to ask if it be his acceptance—neither shall I put the bill into circulation. It will be in my desk until it is due; and then—if you cannot pay it—"

"What then?" said the baronet, in a subdued tone, as if he breathed with difficulty.

"Why—you must get it renewed, that's all!" replied Mr. Greenwood.

"I understand you—I understand you," exclaimed Sir Rupert Harborough: "it shall be done! When can I see you again?"

"I shall not stir out for another hour."

"Then I shall return this afternoon."

And the baronet departed to forge the name of Lord Tremordyn to a bill of exchange for fifteen hundred pounds.

"I shall hold him in iron chains," said Greenwood to himself, when he was again alone. "This bill will hang constantly over his head. Should he detect my intrigue with his wife, he will not dare open his mouth; and when I am tired of that amour, and care no more for the beautiful Cecilia, I can obtain payment of the entire amount, with interest, from Lord Tremordyn himself; for his lordship will

never allow his son-in-law to be ruined and lost for fifteen or sixteen hundred pounds."

Again the study door opened; and again did Lafeur make his appearance.

"A person, sir, who declines to give his name," said the valet, "solicits an interview for a few minutes."

"What sort of a looking person is he?"

"Very pale and sallow; about the middle height; genteel in appearance; respectably clad; and I should say about forty years of age."

"I do not recollect such a person. Show him up."

Lafeur withdrew, and presently introduced Stephens.

For a few moments Greenwood surveyed him in a manner as if he were trying to recollect to whom that pale and altered countenance belonged; for although Stephens had made considerable improvement in his attire, thanks to the contents of Eliza's purse, he still retained upon his features the traces of great suffering, mental and bodily.

"You do not know me?" he said, with a sickly smile.

"Stephens! is it possible?" exclaimed Greenwood, in an accent of the most profound surprise.

"Yes—it is I! No wonder that you did not immediately recognise me: were I not fearfully altered I should not dare thus to venture abroad by daylight."

"Ah! I understand. You have escaped?"

"I have returned from transportation. That is the exact truth. Had it not been for an angel in human shape, I should have died last night of starvation. That generous being who relieved me was Eliza Sydney."

"Eliza Sydney!" cried Greenwood. "She received you with kindness?"

"She gave me food, and money to obtain clothes and lodging. She moreover promised to supply me with the means to reach America. I am to return to her this evening, and receive a certain sum for that purpose."

"And she told you that I was residing here?" said Greenwood inquiringly.

"Yes. I thought that you might be enabled to assist me in my object of commencing the world anew in another quarter of the globe. I shall arrive there with but little money and no friends;—perhaps you can procure me letters of introduction to merchants in New York."

"I think I can assist you," said Greenwood, musing upon a scheme which he was revolving in his mind, and which was as yet only a few minutes old: "yes—I think I can. But, would it not be better for you to take out a few hundred pounds in your pocket? How can you begin any business in the States without capital?"

"Show me the way to procure those few hundreds," said Stephens, "and I would hold myself ever your debtor."

"And perhaps you would not be very particular as to the way in which you obtained such a sum?" demanded Greenwood, surveying the returned convict in a peculiar manner.

"My condition is too desperate to allow me to stick at trifles," answered Stephens, not shrinking from a glance which seemed to penetrate into his very soul.

"We understand each other," said Greenwood. "I have money—and you want money; you are a returned transport, and in my power. I can serve and save you; or I can ruin and crush you for ever."

"You speak candidly, at all events," observed Stephens, somewhat bitterly. "Try promises first; and should they fail, essay threats."

"I merely wished you to comprehend your true position with regard to me," said Greenwood, coolly.

"And now I understand it but too well. You require of me some service of a certain nature—no matter what: in a word, I agree to the bargain."

"The business regards Eliza Sydney," proceeded Greenwood.

"Eliza Sydney!" exclaimed Stephens, in dismay.

"Yes; I love her—and she detests me. I must therefore gratify two passions at the same moment—vengeance and desire."

"Impossible!" cried Stephens. "You can never accomplish your schemes through my agency!"

"Very good;" and Mr. Greenwood moved towards the bell.

"What would you do?" demanded Stephens, in alarm.

"Summon my servants to hand a returned convict over to justice," answered Greenwood, coolly.

"Villain! you could not do it!"

"I will do it;" and Greenwood placed his hand upon the bell-ropes.

"Oh! no—no—that must not be!" exclaimed Stephens. "Speak—I will do your bidding."

Mr. Greenwood returned to his seat.

"I must possess Eliza Sydney—and you must be the instrument," he said in his usual calm and measured tone. "You are to return to her this evening?"

"I am. But I implore you—"

"Silence! This evening I am engaged—and to-morrow evening also. The day after to-morrow I shall be at liberty. You will invent some excuse which will enable you to postpone your departure; and you will contrive to pass the evening after to-morrow with Eliza Sydney. Can you do this?"

"I can, no doubt; but, again, I beg—"

"No more of this nonsense! You will adopt some means to get her faithful servant Louisa out of the way; and you will open the front-door of the villa to me at midnight on the evening appointed."

"You never can effect your purpose!" cried Stephens emphatically. "Were you to introduce yourself to her chamber, she would sooner die herself, or slay you, than submit to your purpose!"

"She must sleep—sleep profoundly!" said Greenwood, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, and regarding his companion in a significant manner.

"My God! what an atrocity!" ejaculated Stephens, with horror depicted upon his countenance.

"Perhaps you prefer a return to the horrors of transportation,—the miseries of Norfolk Island?" said Greenwood satirically.

"No—death, sooner!" cried Stephens, striking the palm of his right hand against his forehead.

Greenwood approached him, and whispered for some time in his ear. Stephens listened in silence; and when the libertine had done, he signified a reluctant assent by means of a slight nod.

"You understand how you are to act?" said Greenwood aloud.

"Perfectly," answered Stephens.

He then took his departure.

Scarcely had he left the house when Sir Rupert Harborough returned.

The baronet was deadly pale, and trembled violently. Greenwood affected not to observe his emotions, but received the bill of exchange which the baronet handed to him, with as much coolness

he were concluding a perfectly legitimate transaction.

Having read the document, he handed a pen to the baronet to endorse it.

Sir Rupert affixed his name at the back of the forged instrument with a species of desperate resolution.

Mr. Greenwood consigned the bill to his desk, and then wrote a cheque for a thousand pounds, which he handed to the baronet.

Thus terminated this transaction.

When the baronet had taken his departure, Mr. Greenwood summoned Lafleur, and said, "You need not institute any inquiries relative to Miss Sydney, at Upper Clapton. My orders relative to Mr. Markham remain unchanged; and mind that the fellow known as Tom the Cracksman is here to-morrow evening at nine o'clock."

Mr. Greenwood having thus concluded his morning's business, partook of an elegant luncheon, and then proceeded to dress for his afternoon's ride in the Park.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE DOCUMENT.

THE more civilization progresses, and the more refined becomes the human intellect, so does human iniquity increase.

It is true that heinous and appalling crimes are less frequent;—but every kind of social, domestic, political, and commercial intrigue grows more into vogue; human ingenuity is more continually on the rack to discover the means of defrauding a neighbour or cheating the world;—the sacred name of religion is called in to aid and further the nefarious devices of the schemer;—hypocrisy is the cloak which conceals modern acts of turpitude, as dark nights were trusted to for the concealment of the bloody deeds of old; mere brute force is now less frequently resorted to; but the refinements of education or the exercise of duplicity are the engines chiefly used for purposes of plunder. The steel engraver's art, and the skill of the calligrapher, are mighty implements of modern misdeed:—years and years are expended in calculating the chances of cards and dice;—education, manners, and good looks are essential to the formation of the adventurers of the present day;—the Bankruptcy Court itself is a frequent avenue to the temple of fortune;—and, in order to suit this new and refined system of things, the degrees of vices themselves are qualified by different names, so that he who gambles at a gaming-table is a scamp, and he who propagates a lie upon the Exchange and gambles accordingly, and with success, is a respectable financier. Chicanery, upon a small scale, and in a miserable dark office, is a degradation;—but the delicate and elaborate chicanery of politics, by which a statesman is enabled to outwit parties, or deceive whole nations, is a masterpiece of human talent! To utter a falsehood in private life, to suit a private end, is to cut one's-self off from all honourable society:—but to lie day and night in a public journal—to lie habitually and boldly in print—to lie in a manner the most shameless and barefaced in the editorial columns of a newspaper, is not only admissible, but conventional, and a proof of skill, tact, and talent.

Thus is modern society constituted;—let him deny the truth of the picture who can!

London is filled with Mr. Greenwoods; they are to be found in numbers at the West End. Do not

for one moment believe, reader, that our portrait of this character is exaggerated.

In pursuing the thread of a narrative like this, there will naturally be found much to alarm, to astonish, and to shock: but however appalling the picture, it teaches lessons which none can regret to learn. The chart that would describe the course to virtue must point out and lay bare the shoals, the quicksands, and the rocks of vice which render the passage perilous and full of terrors.

With these few remarks, we pursue our history.

At seven o'clock in the evening of the day following the one on which we have seen Mr. Greenwood conducting his multifarious schemes and transactions with the precision of a minister of state, Count Alteroni arrived at that gentleman's house in Spring Gardens. He was shown into the elegantly furnished drawing-room, where Mr. Greenwood received him. The count was, however, the only one of all the financier's visitors who did not seem dazzled by the proofs of wealth and luxury that prevailed around.

The Italian nobleman remarked these indications of great riches, and considered them the guarantees of Mr. Greenwood's prosperous position in the world; but, apart from this view of the splendour and sumptuousness of the mansion, he neither appeared astonished nor struck with admiration. The truth was, that Mr. Greenwood's abode, with all its magnificent decorations and ornaments, its costly furniture, and its brilliant display of plate, was a mere hovel compared to the count's own palace at Montoni, the capital city of Castile.

Mr. Greenwood and the count had not exchanged many words, ere dinner was announced. The banquet, although only provided for the founder of the feast and his one guest, was of a most magnificent description, every luxury which London could produce appearing upon the table.

At half-past eight o'clock, the clerk of Mr. Greenwood's solicitor arrived, and was introduced into the dining-room. He had brought with him a deed by which Greenwood bound himself to be answerable to Count Alteroni for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds, which the latter had placed in the hands of the former for the purpose of speculation in a certain Steam-packet Company, Greenwood recognising his responsibility towards the count to the above extent whether the company should succeed or not, it having been originally agreed that he (Greenwood) should incur all risks, as he had undertaken the sole direction of the enterprise. This deed was signed by George M. Greenwood, witnessed by the attorney's clerk, and handed to Count Alteroni.

The clerk then withdrew.

Mr. Greenwood ordered a bottle of the very best Burgundy to be opened, and drank a bumper to the health of the Signora Isabella.

Scarcely was this toast disposed of, when Lafleur entered the room, and said, "A courier with despatches from your correspondents in Paris, sir, has just arrived, and requests to see you instantly. I have shown him into the study."

"Very good," exclaimed Mr. Greenwood, suddenly assuming a business air. "Will you excuse me, count, for a few minutes?"

"I shall take my leave, since you are likely to be much occupied," said the nobleman.

"On the contrary—pray remain—I insist upon it! I shall not be long with this messenger," cried Mr. Greenwood: "and we must empty another bottle before I allow you to take your departure."

The count suffered himself to be over-ruled; and Mr. Greenwood repaired to his study, well-knowing

that, instead of a courier from Paris, he should there find Tom the Cracksmán.

Nor was he mistaken. That individual was sitting very comfortably in an arm-chair near the fire, gazing around him, and wondering, amongst other things, where the master of the house kept his strong-box.

"You are known, I believe," said Greenwood, carefully closing the door, "as the Cracksmán?"

"That 's my title, sir—for want of a better," answered the villain.

"You are, perhaps, astonished that I have sent for you here," continued Greenwood; "but I wish a certain service performed this very night, and for which I will pay you liberally."

"What 's the natur' of the service?" demanded the Cracksmán, darting a keen and penetrating glance at Greenwood.

"A highway robbery," coolly answered this individual.

"Well, that 's plain enow," said the Cracksmán. "But first tell me how you come to know of me, and where I was to be seen; because how can I tell but what this is all a plant of yours to get me into trouble?"

"I will answer you candidly and fairly. A few years ago, when I first entered on a London life, I determined to make myself acquainted with all the ways of the metropolis, high or low, virtuous or vicious. I disguised myself on several occasions, in very mean clothes, and visited all the flash houses and pater-cribs—amongst others, the boozing-ken on Great Saffron-hill. There you were pointed out to me; and your skill, your audacity, and your extraordinary luck in eluding the police, were vaunted by the landlord of that place in no measured terms."

"Well—this is singular—blow me if it ain't!" cried the Cracksmán. "Another person found me out just in the same way this very morning, only, and he wants a little private job done for him. But that 's for to-morrow night. Howsomever, I never blab to one, of what I have done or am going to do for another. You to-night—him to-morrow night! Arter all, the landlord 's a fool to talk so free: how did he know you wasn't a trap in disguise?"

"Because I told him that my object was merely to see life in all its shapes; and I was then so very young I could scarcely have been considered dangerous. However, I have occasionally indulged in such rambles, even very lately; and only a few weeks ago I looked in at the boozing-ken dressed as a poor countryman. There I saw you again; and I overheard you say to a friend of yours whom you called the Buffer, that you were generally there every evening to see what was going on."

"All right!" cried the Cracksmán. "Now what 's the robbery, and what 's the reward?"

"Are you man enough to do it alone?"

"I 'm man enow to try it on; but if so be the chap is stronger than me—"

"He is a tall, powerful person, and by no means likely to surrender without a desperate resistance."

"Well, all that can be arranged," said the Cracksmán, coolly. "Not knowing what you wanted with me, I brought two of my pals along with me, and they 're out in the street, or in the alley leading into the park. If there 'd been anything wrong on your part, they would either have rescued me, or marked you and your house for future punishment."

"I am glad that you have your companions so near. Of course they will assist you?"

"In anythink. The Resurrection Man and the Buffer will stick to me like bricks."

"Very good. I will now explain to you what I want done. Between eleven and twelve o'clock a gentleman will leave London for Richmond. He will be in his own cabriolet, with a tiger, only twelve years old, behind. The cab is light blue—the wheels streaked with white. This is peculiar, and cannot be mistaken. The horse is a tall bay, with silver-mounted harness. This gentleman must be stopped; and every thing his pockets contain—every thing, mind—must be brought to me. Whatever money there may be about him shall be yours; and I will add fifty guineas to the amount;—but all that you find about his person, save the money, must be handed over to me."

"I understand," said the Cracksmán. "Does he carry pistols?"

"I should imagine not."

"Never mind: the Resurrection Man has got a couple of burkers. But supposing he shouldn't come at all—what then?"

"You shall have twenty guineas for your loss of time. Here are ten as an earnest."

"That 's business," said the Cracksmán. "Any more instructions?"

"No. I need scarcely say that no unnecessary violence is to be used?"

"Leave all that to me. You will sit up and wait for me?"

"Yes. Give a low single knock at the door, and the same servant who sought you out last night, and let you in just now, will admit you again."

The Cracksmán gave a significant nod and took his departure.

Mr. Greenwood returned to the dining-room, where he had left the count.

"My news from Paris is of the most satisfactory nature," he observed. "My correspondents in that city, moreover, promise me their best support in our new enterprise."

"I am delighted to hear that your letters have pleased you," said the count.

The two gentlemen then broached another bottle of Burgundy; and Mr. Greenwood conversed with even more sprightliness than usual. Indeed, the count fancied that he had never found his host so agreeable and entertaining.

At eleven o'clock precisely, the count's cabriolet was announced; and the nobleman took his departure, with the conviction, that, under his present circumstances, Mr. Greenwood was the most eligible suitor for the hand of Isabella that was likely to present himself.

As soon as the count had taken his departure, Mr. Greenwood rang for his slippers and dressing-gown, drew close to the cheerful fire that burnt in the grate, and ordered Lefleur to make him a tumbler of the best pine-apple rum-punch. This exhilarating beverage and a fragrant Havannah cigar enabled Mr. Greenwood to pass the time away in a most comfortable and soul-soothing manner.

And it was thus that he amused as he watched the pale blue transparent smoke of his cigar wrestling upwards to the ceiling:—

"I began the world without a shilling, and at an age when I had no experience in the devious ways of society;—and what am I now? The possessor of sixty thousand pounds! A few years ago I slept in coffee-houses, paying eight-pence a night for my bed; I breakfasted for three-pence halfpenny; dined for ten-pence; and supped for two-pence. Now the luxuries of the four quarters of the world tempt my palate at every meal. At the outset of my career, my transactions were petty rogueries: now I play my

false cards to produce me thousands at a stake. I once purchased my coat for twelve shillings in Holywell-street; there is not now a tailor at the west-end who will not give credit to George Greenwood. My wealth purchases me every kind of pleasure. I can afford to bestow a thousand guineas upon the woman, who, daughter of a peer, and wife of a baronet, throws herself into my arms. One single scheme produces me ten times that amount. And Isabella—besutuous Isabella shall be my wife. I shall receive no dowry with her, it is true—because I have obtained all her father's fortune in advance;—but I shall be proud to introduce a lovely wife—the daughter of a count, and descended from a long line of ancestry, in that fashionable sphere to which I must henceforth belong. I shall be a member of parliament: Lord Tremorbyn can easily obtain for me a baronetcy in due time;—and then, the peerage is not a height too difficult to aspire to! Oh! if with a coronet upon my brow, and Isabella by my side, I can drive in my chariot to—”

Lafleur entered the room at this moment, and handed a letter to his master. Greenwood opened it, and read as follows:—

“I have done your bidding in every particular up to the present moment. Louisa set off this afternoon for Birmingham, having received a letter stating that her only sister is at the point of death in that town. You will of course understand by whom that letter was written. I have, moreover, invented an excuse, relative to the date of the departure of the New York packets from Liverpool, by which means I am enabled to remain in London without exciting the suspicions of Eliza. I shall pass to-morrow evening with her. You may rely upon being admitted at midnight.”

Greenwood full well understood the meaning of this note without a signature; and its contents tended to augment that happiness which the success of his schemes infused into his breast.

Hour after hour passed away;—at length midnight sounded; and all the servants, save Lafleur, were dismissed to their sleeping apartments.

The cigars, the rum-punch, and the pleasurable reflections into which the financier plunged, made the time elapse rapidly. One o'clock struck; and he had not found a single moment tedious. He was not anxious, nor a prey to suspense, as other men would have been; he felt certain that his wishes would be accomplished, and he was therefore as composed as if he had already been assured of their success.

The clock struck two; and a low knock was heard at the front door. Lafleur answered the summons; and in a few moments introduced the Cracksmen to the room where his master was sitting.

“All right, sir,” said that worthy, the moment Lafleur had withdrawn.

“And no violence, I hope?” cried Greenwood.

“Not a bit,” returned the Cracksmen. “We was as gentle as lambs. We on’y pitched the small boy into a dry ditch that was by the side of the road; and as for the gentleman, I just tapped him over the head with the butt of a pistol to keep him quiet; but I did it myself to make sure that it was n’t done too hard.”

“You surely have not murdered him?” said Greenwood, his whole countenance suddenly convulsed with horror.

“Don’t be afraid; he was on’y stunned—you may take my word for that,” returned the Cracksmen, coolly. “But here’s all the papers we found in his pocket; and as for his purse—it had but a few pounds in it.”

Mr. Greenwood received the papers from the hands of the Cracksmen, and observed with a glance

that amongst them was the document which he had given a few hours previously to guarantee the safety of the fifteen thousand pounds placed in his hands by Count Alteroni.

“You are sure,” he said, with some uneasiness depicted upon his countenance, “that there is no danger to be apprehended from the blow—?”

“Danger be d—d!” cried the Cracksmen; “I know from experience exactly what kind o’ blow will stun, or break a limb, or kill outright. I’ll forfeit my reputation if there’s any harm in that there whack which I gave to-night.”

“We must hope that you are right in your conjecture,” said Greenwood;—then, taking his purse from his pocket, he counted down forty-two sovereigns upon the table, adding, “That will make up the fifty guineas promised.”

The Cracksmen consigned the money to his hob, and then took leave of his employer, hoping “that he should have his custom in future.”

The moment he was gone, Greenwood thrust the document, which he had thus got back by a crime of an infamous nature, into the fire. When it was completely consumed, he proceeded to examine the other papers. These consisted chiefly of letters written in cypher, addressed to Count Alteroni, and bearing the post-mark of Mentoni, Castelcivola; the rest were notes and memoranda of no consequence whatever.

Mr. Greenwood, being unable to unriddle the letters written in cypher, and considering that they were upon political subjects with which he had little or no interest, consigned the entire packet of papers to the flames.

He then retired to rest, and slept as soundly as if his entire day had been passed in virtuous deeds.

At about ten o’clock in the morning he received the following letter from Richmond:—

“MY DEAR MR. GREENWOOD,

“As I was on my way home last evening, I was suddenly attacked by three villains in a dark and lonely part of the road. One of the miscreants stunned me with the blow of a pistol, and threw the little jockey into a ditch. Fortunately we are neither of us seriously injured. The rascals plundered me of every thing I had about my person—my purse containing thirty-four sovereigns, and all my papers, amongst which was the security I had received from your hands a few hours before. You will perhaps have another drawn.

“I do not think it is worth while to make any disturbance relative to the matter, as, in consequence of the darkness of the night, I should be totally unable to recognise the miscreants.

“Yours faithfully,

“ALTERONI.”

“Thank heavens, there is no danger in that quarter!” exclaimed Mr. Greenwood, when he had perused this letter. “He is not hurt—and he will not adopt any means to detect the culprits. As for having another document drawn up—I can take my time about that, and he will not dare press me for it as he did for the first. Besides, he will consider my honourable intentions in the matter fully proved by having given the one which he has lost! Thus have I obtained fifteen thousand pounds without much trouble—thus have I thrown dust into the eyes of this count, and still do I retain his confidence. And his lovely daughter—the beautiful Isabella, with her large black eyes, her raven hair, her sweet red lips, and her syph-like form,—she shall be mine! I shall lead her to the altar—that charming Italian virgin, whose very looks are heaven. Every thing progresses well: success attends all my plans;—and to-night—to-night,” he added, in a tone of triumph, “to-night will ensure me the gratification

of my desires and my vengeance with regard to that haughty fair one of the villa!"

CHAPTER L.

THE DRUGGED WINE-GLASS.

RETURN we once more to the villa at Upper Clapton.

Eliza Sydney's household consisted only of Louisa and a peasant girl of about fifteen. She no longer kept horses and dogs, as she was compelled by Stephens to do during the time of her disguise, previously to her imprisonment. She therefore required no male retainers, save an old gardener who lived in one of the out-houses.

A fictitious letter had caused the faithful Louisa to set out on a long journey; and thus the principal obstacle to the atrocious scheme of the conspirators against Eliza's peace and honour was removed.

At ten o'clock on the evening fixed for the perpetration of the foul deed, the servant-girl carried the supper-tray to the dining-room where Eliza and Stephens were seated. The domestic spread the table with the materials for the most sociable of all meals, and, having placed two decanters upon the hospitable board, withdrew.

The countenance of Stephens was particularly calm, considering the part he had undertaken to play towards a woman whose loveliness alone was sufficient to disarm the hand of enmity, and obtain the friendship of the most lawless. She had, moreover, already suffered so much through him,—she had extended towards him the hand of forgiveness and succour in his dire need,—and she possessed the most generous, the most noble, and the most confiding of dispositions. Oh! should not all these considerations have moved that man in her favour?

He had received from Eliza the hundred pounds which she had promised him. With that sum he might have found his way to America, and still had a considerable balance in his pocket. But he had determined to add to it the two hundred pounds more which Greenwood had promised him.

Although calm, he was very thoughtful.

"You seem unhappy!" said Eliza, observing the pensive air of her guest. "Surely you cannot regret your approaching departure from a land where your safety is so fearfully compromised?"

"And yet the land of which you speak is the one of my birth; and when once I have left it, I may reckon upon being destined to see it never again."

"Yes—it is hard to bid an eternal adieu to one's native country. And yet," continued Eliza, "there is but little to wed the sensitive mind to England. Since my release I have passed nearly all my time in reading; and I am shocked to perceive, from the information I have gleaned, that England is the only civilized country in the world where death from starvation—literal starvation, is common. Indeed, it is an event of such frequent occurrence, that it actually ceases to create astonishment, and almost fails to excite dismay. There must be something radically wrong in that system of society where all the wealth is in the hands of a few, and all the misery is shared by millions."

"You would then, quit England without much regret?" said Stephens.

"For myself," answered Eliza, "I abhor a country in which poverty and destitution prevail to such a fearful extent, while there is so much to spare in the hands of the favoured few. I sometimes look

forth from the window, and survey that mighty city which stretches over plain, hill, and valley, and which is ever extending its mighty arms—as if in time it would embrace the entire island:—I gaze upon it at that hour in the morning when the eternal cloud is raised for a little space from his brow; and, as I mark the thousand spires which point up into the cool clear sky, I tremble—I feel oppressed as with a weight, when I reflect upon the hideous misery, the agonising woe, the appalling sorrow that want entails upon the sons and daughters of toil in that vast Babylon."

"And do you not suppose that the same destitution prevails in the other great cities of Europe?"

"Certainly not. Were a person to die of actual starvation in Paris, the entire population would rise up in dismay. With all our immense and cumbersome machinery of Poor Laws, there is no other cruelty in these islands than in any other country upon the face of the earth, not even excepting the myriads who dwell upon the rivers in China."

"The topic is calculated to distress you, because you enter so deeply and feelingly into it," said Stephens. "Take a glass of wine—it will compose you."

Stephens filled two glasses with Port wine; and almost at the same moment he exclaimed, "What a bad light the lamp gives this evening." Then, in a feigned attempt to raise the wick, he turned the screw the wrong way, and extinguished the light.

"How awkward I am!" he cried; and, while Eliza hastened to re-light the lamp, he poured a few drops from a phial into one of the glasses of wine.

The lamp was lighted once more; and Eliza had resumed her seat.

Stephens handed her the fatal glass.

"May all health and happiness attend you," he said; "and may God reward you for your generosity towards me."

The words did not stick in his throat as he gave them utterance.

"And may you prosper in another clime," exclaimed Eliza in a tone which proved that the wish came from the bottom of her heart.

She then drank a portion of the wine in her glass.

The countenance of Stephens did not change as Eliza imbibed the soporific fluid. He contemplated her beautiful face with as much calmness as if he had just administered to her a potion calculated to embellish her charms, and add to her health and happiness.

"Either my taste deceives me," said Eliza, placing the half-emptied glass upon the table; "or this wine has some defect which I cannot understand."

"No—it is excellent," returned Stephens.

"I drink so little that I scarcely know the proper taste," observed Eliza. "The pure spring water is my favourite beverage."

"It is considered an unlucky omen to leave unfinished the glass in which you pledge the health of one who is about to traverse the ocean," said Stephens.

"In that case," answered Eliza, with a smile, "I will relieve your superstitious fears;" and she drained her glass.

Half an hour passed in conversation; and Eliza felt an irresistible drowsiness cover her. She endeavoured to rally against it—but in vain; and at length she would have fallen from her chair fast asleep, had not Stephens rushed forward and caught her.

He then rang the bell for the servant,

"Your mistress is unwell—she has been complaining all the evening; and she has now fallen into a profound sleep. I will assist you to convey her up stairs to her chamber."

Stephens and the servant carried the entranced lady to the boudoir.

Having placed her upon the bed, Stephens left the servant to undress her, and hastily descended to the hall. He opened the front door with caution, and whistled.

Two men emerged from the total darkness without, and glided into the hall. Stephens conducted them into a back parlour, and gave them the key to lock themselves in.

He himself then returned to the dining-room, where he tranquilly awaited the arrival of Mr. Greenwood.

Midnight was proclaimed at length.

A low knock at the front door fell upon Stephens's ear.

He hastened to obey the summons, and admitted Greenwood into the house.

They repaired to the dining-room together.

"Your wishes have been obeyed in all respects," said Stephens. "Eliza is in your power; the servant has retired to her own room. Give me my reward—for I am in a hurry to leave a dwelling to which my presence will have brought so much misery."

And yet this man did not seem appalled nor horror-struck at the infernal nature of the crime for which he thus demanded the recompense.

"You will await me here five minutes," said Greenwood; and he left the room.

At the expiration of that interval he returned, the fire of triumph and lust flashing from his eyes.

"It is all well—you have not deceived me," he observed in a tone of joy and exultation; "I have seen her, buried in a profound sleep—stretched like a beautiful statue in her voluptuous bed! The light of a lamp plays upon her naked bosom; the atmosphere of her chamber is soft, warm, and perfumed. Such charms are worth a kingdom's purchase! She is mine—she is mine: here is your reward!"

Greenwood handed a bank-note to his accomplice—or rather instrument in this atrocious proceeding; and Stephens then took his departure.

But as he passed through the hall, he thrust a letter, addressed to Eliza Sydney, beneath the carpet that covered the stairs.

The moment Greenwood was alone, he paced the dining-room for a few minutes, to feast his imagination with the pleasures of love and triumph which he now beheld within his reach.

"Yes—she is mine," he said; "she is mine—no power on earth can now save her! Oh! how will I triumph over the proud and haughty beauty, when to-morrow she awakes and finds herself in my arms. She will thrust her hand beneath the pillow for her long sharp dagger; it will not be there! She will extend her arm towards the bell-rope; it will be cut! And then she may rave—and weep—and reproach—and pray; I shall smile at her grief—her eyes will be more beautiful when seen through her tears! I shall compel her then to crave to be my mistress—she who refused to be my wife! Oh! what a triumph is within my reach!"

He passed; filled a tumbler half full of wine—and drank the contents at a draught.

"Now for my victory—now for the fruits of my intrigues!" he resumed. "But let me wait one moment longer! let me ask myself whether it be

really true that the lovely Eliza Sydney will shortly bless my arms—that she is at this moment in my power. It is—it is; and I shall now no longer delay the enjoyment of that terrestrial paradise!"

With these words, he left the dining-room, and crossed the hall towards the staircase.

He was now about to ascend to the boudoir.

His foot was upon the first step, when he was rudely seized from behind, and instantly gagged with a pocket-handkerchief.

Turning his head partially round, in a vain effort to escape from the powerful grasp in which he found himself, he encountered, by the light of the lamp that hung in the hall, the glance of the Cracksmen.

"The deuce!" exclaimed the burglar in a low and subdued tone: "this is a run go! Working for you last night, and against you to-night! But, never mind; we must fulfil our agreement, let it be what it will. I can however tell you for your satisfaction that we don't mean to hurt you. So come along quiet; and all will be right."

"What's the meaning of this, Tom?" said the Cracksmen's companion, who was no other than the Resurrection Man; "you don't mean to say that you know this fellow?"

"He's the one that we did the job for last night on the Richmond road," answered the Cracksmen.

"And he's got plenty of tin," added the Resurrection Man significantly. "We can perhaps make a better bargain with him than what Stephens has promised us for this night's business."

"Yes—but we can't talk here," returned the Cracksmen; "so come along. I've got my plan all cut and dry."

Greenwood conveyed several intimations, by means of signs, that he wished to speak; but the two ruffians hurried him out of the house.

They conducted him across the fields to an empty barn at a distance of about a mile from the villa. During the journey thither they conversed together in a flash language altogether unintelligible to their captive, who was still gagged. A difference of opinion evidently seemed to subsist between the two men, relative to the plan which they should pursue with regard to Greenwood; but they at length appeared to agree upon the point.

With regard to Greenwood himself, he was a prey to a variety of painful feelings,—disappointment in his designs upon Eliza at the moment when he appeared to stand upon the threshold of success,—bitter malignity against Stephens who had thus duped him,—and alarm at the uncertainty of the fate which might await him at the hands of the villains in whose power he thus strangely found himself.

The night was pitch-dark; but the moment the two ruffians with their captive entered the barn, a lantern in the hands of the Cracksmen was suddenly made to throw a bright light forwards.

That light fell upon the countenance of Stephens, who was standing in the middle of the shed.

"All right," said the Cracksmen. "We pinioned the bird without trouble; and he ain't a strange one, neither."

"What! do you mean that you know him?" demanded Stephens.

"That's neither here nor there," replied the Cracksmen. "We don't tell secrets out of school, 'cos if we did, there'd be no reliance put in us; and we does a great many pretty little jobs now and then for the swell folks. But here is your bird—delivered at this werry spot, accordin' to agreement."



"Well and good," said Stephens. "Tie him hand and foot."

The Cracksmen and the Resurrection Man instantly obeyed this command: they threw Greenwood upon a truss of straw, and fastened his hands together, and then his feet, with strong cord.

"Here is your reward," said Stephens, as soon as this was accomplished. "I have now no more need of your services."

He handed them some money as he thus spoke; and, having counted it, the two villains bade him good night and left the barn, which was now enveloped in total darkness.

"Montague Greenwood," said Stephens, as soon as he was alone with his prisoner. "your design upon Eliza Sydney was too atrocious for even a man who has been knocked about in the world, as I have, to permit. You dazzled me with the promise of a reward which my necessities did not permit me to refuse;—and you moreover secured my co-operation by means of menaces. But I was determined to defeat your treacherous designs—to avenge myself for the threats which you uttered against me—and to obtain the recompense you had promised me, at

the same time. How well I have succeeded you now know. The whole of yesterday morning did I wander amongst the sinks of iniquity and haunts of crime in Clerkenwell, and the neighbourhood of Saffron Hill; and accident led me into a low public house where I encountered two men who agreed to do my bidding. I tell you all this to convince you that never for a moment was I villain enough—bad though I may be—to pander to infamy of so deep a dye as that which you meditated. I have taken measures to acquaint the noble-hearted woman whose ruin you aimed at, with the entire history of this transaction, so that she may be upon her guard in future. With reference to you, here I shall leave you: in a few hours the labourers of the farm will no doubt discover you, and you will be restored to liberty when Eliza has awakened from her torpor, and I shall be far beyond the danger of pursuit."

Stephens ceased; and taking a long rope from a corner of the barn where he had concealed it, he fastened it to the cord which already confined the hands and feet of Greenwood. He then attached the ends firmly to one of the upright beams of the

barn, so as to prevent the captive from crawling away from the place.

This precaution being adopted, Stephens took his departure.

It would be impossible to describe the rage, vexation, and disappointment which filled the breast of Greenwood while Stephens addressed him in the manner described, and then bound him with the cord. Yet during this latter process he lay perfectly quiet—well aware that any attempt at escape on his part would at that moment be totally unavailing.

Five minutes elapsed after Stephens had left the barn, and Greenwood was marvelling within himself how long he should have to remain in that unpleasant position—bound with cords, and gagged in such a way that he could only breathe through his nostrils,—when the sounds of footsteps fell upon his ear, and the light of the Cracksman's lantern again flashed through the barn.

"Well, sir," said the Cracksman, "your friend is gone now; and so we can have a word or two together. You see, we couldn't help you afore, 'cos we was obliged to fulfil our agreement with the man which hired us for the evening. Now it is just likely that you may have to remain here for some hours if so be we don't let you loose; so tell us what you 'll give us for cutting them cords."

The Cracksman removed the gag from Greenwood's mouth, as he uttered these words.

"I will give you my purse," exclaimed the discomfited financier, "if you will release me this moment. It contains ten or a dozen guineas."

"Thank'ee kindly," said the Cracksman, drily; "we've got that already. We helped ourselves to it as we came across the fields. Don't you see, we always make it a rule to have the plucking of all pigeons which we're hired to snare. You told us we might take all we found on the swell in the sky-blue cab; and that man with the sallow complexion that hired us to do this here business to-night, said, 'I will give you twenty pounds, and you can help yourselves to all you find about the gentleman you're to operate on.'"

"Call upon me to-morrow, and I will give you another twenty pounds to free me from these bonds," said Greenwood.

"That's only the price of a good corpse," said the Resurrection Man. "Make it thirty."

"Yes—make it thirty," added the Cracksman.

"Well—I will give you thirty guineas," cried Greenwood; "only delay not another instant. My limbs are stiffening with the cold and with the confinement of these accursed cords."

"Let it be thirty, then," said the Cracksman. "Here, Tony," he added, turning towards his companion, "hold this here light while I cut the cords. And while I think of it, Mr. Greenwood, I shan't call upon you for the money; but you 'll send it to the landlord of the Boozing-ken, where your servant came and found me. Mind it's there by to-morrow night, or else you 'll repent it—that's all. Blowed if we haven't had two good nights' work on it, Tony. But, my eye! wasn't I surprised yesterday when the man with the sallow face which hired us for to-night, told me that we was to come to that there willa yonder, and I found out as how it was the same that I'd cracked three year ago along with Bill Bolter and Dick Flairer. Arter all, there 's been some curious things about all these matters—partickler our having to tackle to-night the wery gentleman which we served last night."

"Come—don't talk so much, Tom," said the Resurrection Man; "but let's make haste and be off."

"There—it's done," exclaimed the Cracksman: "the cords is all cut: you can get up, sir."

Greenwood arose from the straw upon which he had been lying, and stretched his limbs with as much pleasure as if he had just recovered from a severe cramp.

He then reiterated his promise to the two men relative to the reward to be paid for the service just rendered him; and, having inquired of them which was the nearest way to the West End, he set out upon his long and lonely walk home, depressed, disappointed, and hesitating between plans of vengeance against Stephens and fears of exposure in his own vile and defeated machinations with regard to the beautiful Eliza Sydney.

CHAPTER LI.

DIANA AND ELIZA.

On the morning following the events just narrated, Mrs. Arlington was seated at breakfast in a sweet little parlour of the splendid mansion which the Earl of Warrington had taken and fitted up for her in Dover Street, Piccadilly.

It was about eleven o'clock; and the Enchantress was attired in a delicious *decolleté*. With her little feet upon an ottoman near the fender, and her fine form reclining in a luxurious large arm-chair, she divided her attention between her chocolate and the columns of the *Morning Herald*. She invariably prolonged the morning's repast as much as possible, simply because it served to wile away the time until the hour for dressing arrived. Then visits received, filled up the interval till three or four o'clock, when the carriage came round to the door. A drive in the park, or shopping (according to the state of the weather) occupied the time until six or seven. Then another toilet in preparation for dinner. In the evening a *lôte-à-lôte* with the Earl of Warrington, who had, perhaps, arrived in time for dinner,—or a visit to a theatre, the Opera, or a concert,—and to bed at midnight, or frequently much later.

Such was the routine of the Enchantress's existence.

The Earl of Warrington behaved most liberally towards her. On the first day of every month he enclosed her a cheque upon his banker for two hundred guineas. He supplied her cellar with wine, and frequently made her the most splendid presents of jewellery, plate, cachemeres, &c. The furniture for her mansion had cost fifteen hundred pounds; and all the bills were paid in her name. She was not extravagant, as women in her situation usually are; and therefore, so far from incurring debts, she saved money.

We cannot say that the Earl of Warrington positively loved her. His first affections in life had experienced such a blight, that they might almost be said to have been interred in the grave of defeated hopes and aspirations. He could therefore never love again. But he liked Mrs. Arlington; and he had every reason to believe that she was faithful to him. He was charmed with her conversation and her manners; he saw in her a woman who gave herself no airs, but, on the contrary, exerted herself in every way to please him;—she never attempted to excite his jealousy, nor affected gusts of passion, merely for the sake of asserting her independence or of proving the hold which she possessed over him;—and in her society he forgot the cares of

politics (in which he was profoundly interested) and all those other little annoyances, real or imaginary, to which every one in this world is subject, be his condition never so prosperous!

And Diana was faithful to him. She was a woman naturally inclined to virtue;—circumstances had made her what she was. She looked upon the Earl of Warrington as a benefactor; and, although she did not actually love him more than he loved her, she liked him upon pretty nearly the same principles that he liked her. Her vanity was flattered by having captivated and being able to retain a handsome man, whose wealth and high rank rendered him an object of desire on the part of all ladies situated as was Diana;—she moreover found him an agreeable companion, kind, and indulgent;—and thus their *liaison* continued upon a basis which nothing appeared to threaten, nor even to weaken.

They never spoke of love in reference to their connection. The earl was never upon his knees at the feet of his mistress; nor did he repeat vows of constancy and fidelity every time he saw her. She acted on the same principle towards him. There was a great amount of real friendship and good feeling between those two;—but not an atom of marvellous sentimentality. The earl could trust Diana; he consulted her upon many of his plans and proceedings, whether in regard to his political career or the management of his estate; and she invariably tendered him the advice which appeared most consistent with his interests. He therefore placed the fullest confidence in her;—and hence have we seen her carrying out all his generous plans with reference to Eliza Sydney.

But to continue.

Mrs. Arlington was seated at breakfast, as we have before stated, when a servant entered and informed her that Miss Sydney requested a few minutes' conversation with her. Diana immediately ordered Eliza to be admitted.

"Pardon this early and unceremonious visit, my dear friend," said Eliza, affectionately grasping the hand that was stretched out to welcome her.

"I am always at home to you, Eliza," answered the Enchantress. "But how pale you are! Come—sit down here—close by me—and tell me in what way I can be of service to you."

"My dear friend," continued Eliza, "I have a secret to reveal to you—and a deed of infamy to narrate—"

"Oh! you alarm me, Eliza! Has any harm happened to yourself?"

"No, thank heavens! The compunction of one man saved me from disgrace and ruin. But read this—it will explain all."

With these words, Eliza handed to Mrs. Arlington the letter which Stephens had thrust under the stair-carpet at the villa on the preceding evening.

Diana perused the letter with attention; and a flush of indignation animated her fine countenance, as she thus made herself acquainted with the atrocious plot contrived by Greenwood against the honour of Eliza Sydney.

"Such is the villainy of George Montague!" cried Diana at the termination of the perusal of that letter.

"Forgive me, dearest friend," said Eliza, taking the hand of Mrs. Arlington and pressing it between her own;—"forgive me if I have kept back one secret of my life from your knowledge. That George Montague—I once loved him!"

"You!" exclaimed Mrs. Arlington in surprise.

"Yes, Diana—I once loved that man—before the fatal exposure which led to my imprisonment;—

but he behaved like a villain—he endeavoured to take advantage of my affection;—and I smothered the feeling in my bosom!"

"Oh! you did well—you did well thus to triumph over a passion which would have been fatal to your happiness;—for never would your hopes have been fulfilled—with honour to yourself," added Mrs. Arlington, sinking her voice almost to a whisper.

"Alas! you are right! I stood upon the brink of a precipice—I escaped;—but Montague, or Greenwood,—whichever he may choose to call himself,—pursues me with a view of accomplishing my dishonour."

"The crimes of that man are unlimited, and his perseverance is unwearying," said Diana.

"What plan can I adopt," demanded Eliza, "to escape his machinations? What system can I pursue to avoid his persecution? Conceive my affliction when upon awaking this morning, I remembered that I had not retired to bed last evening of my own accord—that I could think of nothing that had occurred since supper-time! Then I found that the bell-ropes in my sleeping-room was cut, and that a weapon which I have been in the habit of keeping beneath my pillow ever since I first dwelt in the villa, had disappeared! Oh! I was alarmed—I shuddered, although it was broad day-light, and every thing was calm and silent around. At length I summoned the servant—and she entered, bearing a letter which she had discovered a few moments before beneath the stair-carpet. That letter is the one you read ere now;—and it explained all. Tell me—tell me, Diana, how am I to avoid the persecution, and combat the intrigues of this man?"

"Alas! my dear friend," replied Mrs. Arlington, after a few minutes' consideration, "I know of no effectual method save that of leaving London."

"And if I leave London, I will leave England," said Miss Sydney. "But I can do nothing without the consent of him to whom I am under such deep obligations."

"You mean the Earl of Warrington," observed Mrs. Arlington. "I admire the sentiment of gratitude which animates you. The earl will do all he can to forward your views and contribute to your happiness. You shall pass the day with me, Eliza; here at least you are safe;—and I will immediately write a note to the earl, and request him to call upon me without delay."

"His lordship will be perhaps annoyed—"

"Fear nothing, Eliza. I will see the earl in another room. And let not this disinclination to meet you on his part, cause you pain; you well know the motive of his conduct. The memory of your mother—"

"I am well aware he can have no antipathy towards me, on my own account," interrupted Eliza; "else he could not have acted towards me in a way which claims all my gratitude!"

Mrs. Arlington dispatched the note to Lord Warrington, and then hastened to dress to receive him. In an hour the earl arrived.

He and Mrs. Arlington were then cloaked together for a considerable time.

It was four o'clock when the nobleman took his departure, and Diana returned to the room where she had left Eliza Sydney.

"The Earl of Warrington," said the Enchantress, whose countenance was animated with joy, "has listened with attention to the tale of atrocity which I have related to him in respect to George Montague Greenwood. His lordship and myself—for he does me the honour to consult me—have debated upon

the best means of ensuring your tranquillity and safety; and we have decided that you had better quit England for a time. The perseverance of that bold bad man, backed by his wealth, may succeed in effecting your ruin—you yourself remaining innocent of guilt's participation! The earl has recommended Italy as the country most likely to please you—and the more so because he himself possesses a charming villa in the State of Castelcicala."

"How kind of his lordship!" exclaimed Eliza, tears of gratitude starting into her eyes.

"Some years ago," continued Diana, "the earl set out upon a continental tour, and passed two years at Montoni, the capital of the Grand Duchy of Castelcicala. So charmed was he with that delightful city, that he purchased a small estate in the suburbs, with the idea of spending the summer from time to time amidst Italian scenery and beneath an Italian sky. The idea has, however, been displaced by others arising from new occupations and fresh interests; and for a long period has the villa at Montoni remained uninhabited, save by an old porter and his wife. The house is situate upon the banks of the river which flows through Montoni, and commands the most delicious views. That villa is to be your residence so long as it may be agreeable; and the earl will make arrangements with his London bankers so that your income may be regularly paid you by their agents at Montoni. His lordship has moreover instructed me to supply you with the necessary funds for your travelling expenses."

"Oh! my dearest friend, how can I ever testify my gratitude——"

"Not a word—not a word!" interrupted Mrs. Arlington, playfully closing Eliza's lips with her hand. "The earl conceives that he is performing a duty, sacred to the memory of his deceased uncle, in thus caring for you, who are the offspring of that uncle's daughter; and, on my part, Eliza—on my part, it is a pleasure to do you a service. But I have not yet finished. The earl has gone straight to Richmond, to call upon a certain Count Alteroui—a noble exile from the Grand Duchy of Castelcicala—with whom it appears the earl was acquainted in Italy. His object is to obtain for you a few letters of introduction to some of the best families of Montoni, so that you may not want society."

"I shall live in so retired a manner," said Eliza, "that this additional act of kindness was scarcely necessary."

"The earl will have his own way; and perhaps those letters may prove useful to you—who can tell?" exclaimed Mrs. Arlington. "But I must observe that I cannot think of parting with you any more until you leave England altogether. In three or four days the necessary preparations for your journey will be completed; meantime you must remain here as my guest. The earl himself recommended this step; that is," added Mrs. Arlington, "if my house be agreeable to you, and my society——"

"Oh! how can you entertain a doubt on that head?" cried Eliza, embracing Diana with the most grateful fervour. "Ah! it is but a few hours since I said how happy I should be to call you by the endearing name of *Sister*!"

"And would you not blush, Eliza, to call me your sister?" said Mrs. Arlington, in a tone deeply affected.

"Blush to call you my sister!" exclaimed Miss Sydney, as if she repelled the idea with indignation: "Oh! no—never, never! You are the most noble-hearted of women, and as such, I love—I revere you!"

"We will then be sisters in heart, although not

in blood," said Diana, warmly returning her friend's embrace; "and perhaps our affection towards each other will be more sincere than that existing between many who are really the offspring of the same parents."

Mrs. Arlington gave directions to her servants that she was not "at home" to a soul, save the Earl of Warrington; and the ride in the park—the shopping—the theatre in the evening—all were sacrificed by Diana to the pleasure of Eliza's society.

Miss Sydney dispatched a note to the villa at Upper Clapton, announcing her intention of staying a few days with Mrs. Arlington. In the evening, Louisa, who had just returned from the journey on which the fictitious letter written by Stephens had sent her, made her appearance in Dover Street, with clothes, &c. for her mistress, and she then received instructions relative to the intended departure for the Continent.

CHAPTER LII.

THE BED OF SICKNESS.

RETURN we to the dwelling of Richard Markham on the same day that Eliza Sydney sought her friend Mrs. Arlington, as related in the preceding chapter.

Richard awoke as from a long and painful dream. He opened his eyes, and gazed vacantly around him. He was in his own bed, and Whittingham was seated by his side.

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated the faithful old domestic;—and conceiving it necessary to quote Scripture upon the occasion of this happy recovery, he uttered, in a loud and solemn voice, the first sentence which presented itself to his memory,—"*My tongue is the pen of a ready writer!*"

"How long have I been ill, Whittingham?" demanded our hero, in a faint tone.

"Four blessed days have you been deprived of your sensations, Master Richard," was the reply; "and most disastrous was my fears that you would never be evanescent no more. I have sustained my vigils by day and my diaries by night at your bedside, Master Richard; and I may say, without mitigating against truth, that I haven't had my garments off my back since you was first brought home."

"Indeed, Whittingham, I am deeply indebted to you, my good friend," said Richard, pressing the faithful old domestic's hand. "But have I really been so very ill?"

"Ill!" exclaimed Whittingham; "for these four days you have never opened your eyes, save in delirium, until this moment. But you have been a ravaging in your dreams—and sobbing—and moaning so! I suppose, Master Richard, you haven't the most remotest idea of how you come home again?"

"Not in the least, Whittingham. All I recollect was, running along the Richmond Road, in the middle of the night—with a whirlwind in my brain——"

"And you must have fallen down from sheer fatigue," interrupted the butler; "for two drovers picked you up, and took you to a cottage close by. The people at the cottage searched your pockets and found your card, so they sent off a messenger to your own house, and I went in a po-shay, and fetched you home."

"And I have been ill four whole days!" cried Markham.

"Yes, but you don't know yet what has happened during that period," said the butler, with a solemn shake of the head.

"Tell me all the news, Whittingham; let me know what has passed during my illness."

"I'll repeat to you allegorically all that's incurred," resumed Whittingham, preparing to enumerate the various incidents upon his fingers. "In the first place—let me see—yes, it was the first incurrence of any consequence—the old sow littered. That's annoyant the first. Then come a terrible buffoon—a tifoos, I mean—and down tumbled the eastern stack of chimbleys. That's annoyant the second. Third, the young water-creel gal was confined with a unlegitimated child; and so I told her mother never to let her call here again, as we didn't encourage immoral karikters. That's annoyant the third. Next, there's poor Ben Halliday, who wouldn't pay the pavement rate at Holloway, 'cause he hasn't got any pavement before his house, sold up, stick and stock; and so I gave him a couple of guineas. Annoyant the fourth. And last of all, a gentleman's livery servant—not that villain Yorkminster's, or whatever his name was—come with a horse and shay and left your pokmanty, without saying a word. That's annoyant."

"My portmanteau!" exclaimed Richard, whose countenance was now suddenly animated with a ray of hope: "and have you unpacked it?"

"Not yet: I haven't had no time."

"Bring it to the bed-side, place it upon a couple of chairs, and open it at once," said Markham hastily. "Bestir yourself, good Whittingham: I am anxious to see if there be any note—any letter—any—"

While Richard uttered these words with a considerable degree of impatience, the butler dragged the portmanteau from beneath the bed, where he had deposited it, and placed it close to his master's right hand. It was speedily opened, unpacked, and examined throughout; the clothes and linen were unfolded; and Richard's eyes followed the investigation with the most painful curiosity. But there was no letter—no note from any inmate of the count's abode.

A sudden reminiscence entered his mind. Was the document signed at the *Dark House* amongst his papers? He recollected having handed it to the count; but he could not call to mind what had afterwards become of it. A moment's examination convinced him that it had not been returned to him. At first he was grievously annoyed by this circumstance;—in another minute he was pleased, for it struck him that, after all, its contents might have been perused by the count and his family when the excitement of that fatal night had worn off. But how to wipe away the dread suspicion raised by the Resurrection Man, relative to the burglary—oh! that was the most painful, and yet the most necessary task of all!

Markham sank back upon his pillow, and was lost in thought, when a loud knock was heard at the door of his chamber. Whittingham answered it, and introduced Mr. Monroe.

The old man was the very picture of care and wretchedness;—the mark of famine was, moreover, upon his sunken cheeks. His eyes were dead and lustreless;—his neck, his wrists, and his hands seemed nothing but skin and bone. In spite of the cleanliness of his person, the thread-bare shabbiness of his clothes could not escape the eye of even the most superficial observer.

Markham had not seen him for some months; and now, forgetting his own malady and his own cares, he felt shocked at the dreadful alteration wrought upon the old man's person during that interval. On his part, Mr. Monroe was not less surprised to find Richard upon a bed of sickness.

"My dear sir," said Markham, "you are ill—"

you are suffering—and you do not come to me to—"

"What! you have penetrated my secret, Richard!" exclaimed the old man bitterly. "Well—I will conceal the truth no longer: yes—myself and my poor daughter—we are dying by inches!"

"My God! and you were too proud to come to me! Oh! how sincerely—how eagerly would I have offered you the half of all I possess—"

"How could I come to you, Richard," interrupted the old man, bursting into tears, "when I had already ruined you?"

"No—not you—not you," said Markham: "you were the victim of a scoundrel; and, in acting for the best, you lost all!"

"God knows how truly you speak!" cried the old man fervently. "But tell me—what ails you? and how long have you been upon a bed of sickness?"

"A day or two;—it is nothing! Never mind me—I am now well—at all events, much better;—let us talk of yourself and your own affairs."

"My fate, Richard, is a melancholy one—my destiny is sad, indeed! From the pinnacle of wealth and prosperity I have been dashed down to the lowest abyss of destitution and misery! But it is not for myself that I complain—it is not for myself that I suffer! I am by this time inured to every kind of disappointment and privation:—but my daughter—my poor Ellen! Oh! my God—it was for her sake that I came to you this morning to implore the wherewith to purchase a loaf of bread!"

"Merciful heavens, Mr. Monroe! are you reduced to this?" cried Richard, horror-struck at the piteous tale thus conveyed to him in a few words.

"It is true—we are starving!" answered the old man, sinking into a chair, and sobbing bitterly.

Whittingham walked towards the window, and wiped his eyes more than once.

"Ah! I am glad you have come to me at last," said Markham. "I will assist you to the utmost of my power—I will never let you want again! Oh! that villain Montague! how many hearts has he already broken—how many more will he yet break!"

"He is the cause of all this deep—deep misery," observed Monroe. "But not alone by me is his name mentioned with loathing and horror: others have doubtless been, and will yet be, his victims. I have learnt—by the merest accident—that he has changed his name, and is now pursuing at the West End, the same course he so successfully practised in the City."

"Changed his name!" ejaculated Markham. "And what does he call himself now?"

"Greenwood," answered Mr. Monroe.

"Greenwood! George Montague and Greenwood one and the same person!" cried Richard, suddenly recalling to mind the name of the individual to whom the count had entrusted his capital. "Ah! you talk of new victims—I know one, whose ruin is perhaps by this time consummated. Quick—quick, Whittingham, give me writing materials: I will send a warning—although I am afraid it is already too late!"

While Whittingham was arranging his master's portfolio upon the coverlid of the bed, Markham reflected upon the best means of communicating to Count Alzaroni the character of the man to whom he had confided his fortune, and whom he thought of favourably as a suitor for his daughter's hand. Anonymous letters were detestable to the honourable and open disposition of Richard, and he bei-

tated at the idea of sending a note direct from himself, fearing that it might be thrown into the fire the moment its signature should be perceived, and thus fall in its proposed aim. To call upon the count was impossible: to send Mr. Monroe was disagreeable. To communicate the important intelligence was imperiously necessary. But how was it to be conveyed? An idea struck across his brain in this perplexity:—he would write to the countess, and trust to the natural curiosity of the female disposition to ensure the perusal of his letter. He accordingly penned the ensuing epistle:—

“MADAM,

“Although excommunicated in the presence of Count Alteroni, without being permitted to justify myself; and although ruined in your estimation, without the freedom of explanation,—believe me, I have still the welfare of your family most sincerely at heart. As a proof of this assertion, allow me to inform you that the Mr. Greenwood, to whom Count Alteroni has entrusted his capital, is an adventurer and a villain. I on several occasions casually mentioned to you that I was plundered of all my property, before I became of an age entitled to enjoy it. My guardian Mr. Monroe, employed a certain Mr. Allen to speculate for him; and this Mr. Allen was mercilessly robbed of all he possessed, and all he could raise, and all his friends who backed him could provide him with, by a miscreant of the name of Montague. These particulars, which I never mentioned to you before, I now deem it requisite to acquaint you with. Madam, that same George Montague is your Mr. Greenwood!

“I remain, Madam, your obedient servant,

“RICHARD MARKHAM.”

This letter was dispatched that same evening to Richmond.

CHAPTER LIII.

ACCUSATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS.

It was seven o'clock in the evening.

Count Alteroni was slipping his claret; the countess was reading a new German novel; and the Signora Isabella was sitting in a pensive and melancholy mood, apparently occupied with some embroidery or other fancy-work, but in reality bent only upon her own painful reflections.

The air of this charming girl was languishing and sorrowful; and from time to time a tear started into her large black eye. That crystal drop upon the jet fringe of her eye-lid, seemed like the dew hanging on the ebony frame of a window.

The delicate hue of the rose which usually coloured her cheeks, and appeared as it were beneath the complexion of faint bistre which denoted her Italian origin, had fled; and her sweet vermilion lips were no longer wreathed in smiles.

“Isabel, my love,” said the count, “you are thoughtful this evening. What a silly girl you are to oppose that tyrannical little will of your own to my anxious hopes and wishes for your welfare—especially as I must know so much better than you what is for your good and what is not.”

“I think,” answered Isabella, with a deep sigh, “that I oppose no tyrannical will to your lordship’s commands.”

“Lordship’s commands!” repeated the count, somewhat angrily. “Have I not ordered our rank and station to be forgotten here—in England? And as for commands, Bella,” added the nobleman, softening, “I have merely expressed my wish that you should give Mr. Greenwood an opportunity of proving his disinterested affection and securing your

esteem—especially on the occasion of our approaching visit to our friends the Tremordyns.”

“My dear papa,” answered the signora, “I have faithfully promised you that if Mr. Greenwood should gain my affections, he shall not sue in vain for my hand.”

“That is a species of compromise which I do not understand,” exclaimed the count. “Have you any particular aversion to him?”

“I have no aversion—but I certainly have no love,” replied Isabella firmly; “and where there is not love, dear father, you would not have me wed?”

“Oh! as for love,” said the count, evading a direct reply to this query, “time invariably thaws away those stern resolves and objections which young ladies sometimes choose to entertain, in opposition to the wishes of their parents.”

“My lord, I have no power over volition,” exclaimed Isabella, with difficulty restraining her tears.

“This is very provoking, Isabella—very!” said the count, drinking his claret with rapidity. “This man is in every way worthy of you—rich, genteel, and good-looking. As for his rank—it is true that he has no title: but of what avail to us are rank and title—exiled as we are from our native land—”

“Oh! my dear father!” cried Isabella, wiping her eyes; “do not fancy so ill of me as to suppose that I languish for rank, or care for honour! No—let me either possess that title which is a reflection of your own when in Castile, or let me be plain Signora Isabella in a foreign land. Pomp and banishment—pride and exile, are monstrous incongruities!”

“That is spoken like my own dear daughter,” exclaimed the count. “The sorrows of my own lot are mitigated by the philosophy and firmness with which you and your dear mother support our change of fortunes;—and, alas! I see but little chance of another re-acton in our favour. O my dear country! shall I ever see thee more? Wilt thou one day recognise those who really love thee?”

A profound silence ensued; neither of the ladies chose to interrupt the meditations of the patriot; and he himself rose and paced the room with agitated steps.

“And it is this despair when I contemplate my future prospects,” continued the nobleman, after a long pause, “that induces me to wish to see you speedily settled and provided for, my dearest Isabella. What other motive can I have but your good?”

“Oh! I know it—I know it, my dear father,” cried the charming girl; “and it is that conviction which makes me wretched when I think how reluctant I am to obey you in this instance. But do not grieve yourself, my dear father—and do not be angry with me! I will be as civil and friendly as I can to this Mr. Greenwood; and if—and if—”

The beautiful Italian could say no more: her heart was full—almost to bursting; and throwing herself into her mother’s arms, she wept bitterly.

The count, who was passionately attached to his daughter, was deeply affected and greatly shocked by this demonstration of her feelings. He had flattered himself that her repugnance to Mr. Greenwood was far from being deeply rooted, and was merely the result of a young girl’s fears and anxieties when she found that she was not romantically attached to her suitor. But he little suspected that she cherished a sincere and tender passion for another—a passion which she might essay in vain to conquer.

"Bella, my darling," he exclaimed, "do not give way to grief; you cannot think that I would sacrifice you to gold—mere gold? No—never, never! Console yourself—you shall never be dragged a victim to the altar!"

"My dearest father," cried Isabella, turning towards the count and embracing him fondly,—“God, who reads all my actions, knows that I would make any sacrifice to please you—to spare you one pang—to forward your views! Oh! believe me, I am too well aware of the deep responsibility under which I exist towards my parents—too deeply imbued with gratitude for all your kindness towards me, not to be prepared to obey your wishes!”

"I will exact no sacrifice, dearest girl," said the count. "Compose yourself—and do not weep!"

At that moment a loud double knock at the front door resounded through the house; and scarcely had Isabella, recovered her self-possession, when Mr. Greenwood was announced.

"Ladies, excuse this late visit," said the financier, sailing into the room with his countenance wreathed into the blandest smiles; "but the truth is, I had business in the neighbourhood, and I could not possibly pass without stopping for a few moments at a mansion where there are such attractions."

These last words were addressed pointedly to Isabella, who only replied to the compliment by a cold bow.

"Count," said Mr. Greenwood, now turning towards the nobleman, "I have not seen you since your adventure upon the highway! But I was delighted to learn that I had received no injury."

"My only regret is that I did not shoot the villains," answered the count. "Have you had another deed prepared, to replace the one stolen from me on that occasion?"

"I have given my solicitors the necessary instructions," answered Greenwood. "In a few days—"

"Every thing with you is in a few days, Greenwood," interrupted the count, somewhat pointedly. "That deed would not occupy one day to engross, now that the copy is at my attorney's office; and it would have been a mark of goodwill on your part—"

"Pray do not blame me!" exclaimed the financier, smiling so as to display his very white teeth, of which he seemed not a little proud. "I believe that for a man who has so much business upon his hands, and the interests of so many to watch and care for, I am as punctual to my appointments as most people."

"I do not speak of want of punctuality in keeping appointments," said the nobleman; "but I allude to the neglect of a matter which to you may appear trivial, but which to me is of importance."

"Oh! my dear count—we will repair this little error the day after to-morrow—or the next day," answered Mr. Greenwood: "I wish that every body was as regular and as punctual with me, as I endeavour to be with others; and that punctuality on my part, my dear sir, has been the origin of my fortune. I do not like to speak of myself, ladies—I hate egotisms—but really," he added with another smile, "when one is attacked, you know—"

At that moment a domestic entered the room, and handed a letter to the countess, who immediately opened it, glanced towards the signature, and exclaimed almost involuntarily, "From Richard Markham!"

"Richard Markham!" cried Mr. Greenwood: "I thought I understood you that that gentleman had ceased to visit or correspond with you?"

"So I said—and so I shall maintain!" exclaimed the count. "My dear, we will return that letter without reading it."

"But I have already commenced the perusal of it," said the countess, without taking her eyes off the paper: "and—"

"Then read no more," cried the count, angrily.

"Excuse me—I shall read it all," answered the countess significantly: "and so will you."

"What means this?" ejaculated the count. "Have I lost all authority in my own house? Madam, I command you—"

"There—I have finished it, and I implore you to read it yourself. Its contents are highly important, and do not in any way relate to certain recent events. Indeed he has purposely avoided any thing which may appear obtrusive, either in the shape of explanation or apology."

The count took the letter with a very ill grace, and requested Mr. Greenwood's permission to read it. This was of course awarded; and the nobleman commenced the perusal. He had not, however, read many lines, before he gave a convulsive start, and looked mistrustfully upon Mr. Greenwood (who noticed his emotion), and hastily ran his eye over the remainder of the letter's contents.

He then folded up the letter, and appeared to be absorbed in deep thought for several moments. Mr. Greenwood saw that the note bore some allusion to himself, and prepared his mind for any explanation, or any storm.

The countess sat, pale and unhappy, in deep meditation; and the eyes of Isabella wandered anxiously from one to the other.

At length the count, in a tone which showed with how much difficulty he suppressed an outbreak of his irritated feelings, turned abruptly towards Mr. Greenwood, exclaiming, "Pray, sir, how long is it since you were acquainted with one George Montague?"

Mr. Greenwood was not taken at all aback. This was a question to which he was always liable, and for which he was constantly prepared. He accordingly answered, with his usual smile of complaisance, in the following manner:—

"Oh! my dear sir, I presume you are acquainted with the fact that my name was once Montague, since you ask me that question. I may also suppose that some one has communicated that circumstance to you with a desire to prejudice me in your opinion; but I can assure you that I have not changed my name for any sinister purpose. My only motive was the request of an old lady, who left me a considerable property some time ago, upon that condition."

"And you can also explain, perhaps, the nature of your dealings with a certain Mr. Allen?" demanded the count, staggered at the assurance with which Mr. Greenwood met an accusation that the nobleman imagined would have overwhelmed him with confusion.

"My dear sir," replied the financier, very far from betraying any embarrassment, whatever he might have felt, "I can explain that and every other action of my life. I was myself misled—I was duped—I was involved in an enterprise which entailed ruin upon myself and all connected with me. I suffered along with the others, and gave up all to the creditors. I have, however, been enabled to build up my fortunes again by means of the property left to me, and a series of successful operations. All people in commercial and financial affairs are liable to disappointment and embarrassment: the most

cautious may over-speculate or miscalculate; and how can I be blamed more than another?"

"I will admit that a particular enterprise may fail," said the count: "but the writer of this letter explained to me on one or two occasions, enough to enable me to comprehend the whole machinery of fraud which you put into motion to obtain money from the public; and though he never mentioned any names until to-day, in his letter, I might—"

"Every man has his enemies," said Mr. Greenwood, calmly: "I cannot hope to be without mine. They may assert what they choose: upright and impartial men never listen to one-sided statements. But perhaps the writer of that letter—"

"He is the Mr. Markham of whom I have often spoken to you, and concerning whom you were always asking me questions. I could not conceive," proceeded the count, "why you were so curious to pry into his affairs, especially as when I mentioned you to him by the name of Greenwood, he did not seem to know any thing about you. But I can now well understand why you should wish to know something of a man whom you ruined!"

"I ruined!" cried Mr. Greenwood, now excited for the first time since the commencement of this dialogue, and speaking with an air of unfeigned astonishment. "There must be some mistake in this! I never had any dealings with him in my life, which could either cause his ruin or establish his prosperity."

"You took very good care, it would appear, not to do the letter," said the count. "But probably Mr. Markham's letter will explain to you that which you appear to have forgotten."

Count Alteroni handed the letter to Mr. Greenwood, who perused its contents with intense interest and anxiety.

The count, the countess, and the signora watched his countenance as he read it. Proficient in the art of duplicity as he was,—skilled in all the wiles of hypocrisy and deceit, he could not conceal his emotions now. There was something in that letter which chased the colour from his cheeks, and convulsed his whole frame with extreme agony.

"This is indeed singular!" he murmured, turning the letter over and over in his hand. "Who would have suspected that Allen was merely an agent? who could have foreseen *where that blow was to strike?* Strange—unaccountable concatenation of unfortunate circumstances!"

"Is the writer of that letter correct in his statement?" demanded the count imperiously.

"The information given to you by Mr. Markham, relative to the losses experienced by a certain Mr. Allen, is correct," returned Mr. Greenwood, apparently labouring under considerable excitement. "But, I take my God to witness, that, until this moment, I was unaware that either Mr. Monroe or Mr. Markham were in the remotest way connected with that affair; and I also solemnly protest that I would have given worlds sooner than have been the means of injuring either of them!"

"You admit, then, that you defrauded the people who at that time placed their funds in your hands?" said the count.

"I admit nothing of the kind," returned the financier, now recovering his presence of mind: "I admit nothing so base as your insinuation implies."

"Then wherefore were you so agitated when you perused that letter from Mr. Richard Markham?"

"Count Alteroni, I am not aware that I owe you any explanation of my own private feelings. It is true, I was agitated—and I am still deeply grieved,

to think that my want of judgment and foresight in a certain speculation should have involved in ruin those whom I wish well! But I suffered as well as they—I lost as many thousands as they did," continued Mr. Greenwood, passing once more into that system of plausible, specious, and deceptive reasoning, which lulled so many suspicions, and closed the eyes of so many persons with regard to his real character: "and although I have done nothing for which I can be blamed by the world, I may still reproach myself when I find that others whom I care for have suffered by my speculations."

The count was staggered at this expression and honourable manifestation of feeling on the part of one whom he had a few minutes ago begun to look upon as a selfish adventurer, callous to all humane emotions and philanthropic sentiments.

Mr. Greenwood continued:—

"When that unfortunate speculation of mine took place, I was not so experienced in the sinuosities of the commercial and financial worlds as I am now.—I lost my all, and poverty stared me in the face."

Mr. Greenwood's voice faltered, although he was now once more uttering a tissue of falsehoods.

"But by dint of some good fortune and much hard toil and unwearied application to business, I retrieved my circumstances. Now, answer me candidly, Count Alteroni: is there any thing dishonourable in my career? Will you judge a man upon an *ex-parte* statement? Is not one story very good until another be told? Why, if all persons viewed their affairs constantly in the same light, would there be any business for the civil tribunals? Do not plaintiff and defendant invariably survey the point at issue between them under discrepant aspects? If they did not, wherefore do they go to law? You may allow Mr. Markham and Mr. Monroe to entertain their views; you will also permit me to enjoy mine?"

"Mr. Greenwood," said the count, "I am afraid I have been too severe—say, even rude in my observations. You will forgive me?"

"My dear sir, say not another word," ejaculated the financier, checking inwardly at the triumphant victory which he had thus gained over the suspicious of the Italian nobleman.

At that moment a servant entered the room, and informed Count Alteroni "that the Earl of Warrington was in the drawing-room, and requested an interview, at which his lordship would not detain the count above ten minutes."

The count, having desired Mr. Greenwood not to depart until his return, and apologising for his temporary absence, proceeded to the drawing-room, where the Earl of Warrington awaited him.

The earl rose when the count entered the apartment; and that proud, wealthy, and high-born English peer wore an air of profound respect and deference, as he returned the salutation of the Italian exile.

"Your lordship," said the earl, "will, I hope, pardon this intrusion at so unseemly an hour—"

"The Earl of Warrington is always welcome," interrupted Count Alteroni; "and if I cannot give him so princely a reception in England as I was proud to do in Italy, it is my means and not my will, which is the cause."

"My lord, I beseech you not to allude to any discrepancy in that respect—a discrepancy which I can regret for your lordship only, and not for myself," said the earl. "Indeed, I am so far selfish on the present occasion, that I am come to ask a favour."



"Name the matter in which my poor services can avail your lordship," returned the count, "and I pledge myself in advance to meet your wishes."

"My lord," said the Earl of Warrington, "I must inform your lordship that I am somewhat interested in a cousin of mine of the name of Eliza Sydney. This lady loved a man who was unworthy of her—a wretch whose pursuits are villany, and who enriches himself at the expense of the unwary and confiding. The heartless scoundrel to whom I allude, and the fell measure of whose infamy was only exposed to me this day, has endeavoured to possess himself of the person of Eliza in a manner the most atrocious and cowardly. My lord, he employed a confederate to administer soporific drugs to her; but Providence moved that confederate's heart, and frustrated the damnable scheme."

"And can such conduct go unpunished in this land of excellent laws and unerring justice?" inquired the count.

"Ah! my lord," replied the earl, "this man is possessed of great wealth, and consequently of great influence; for, in England, money is power! Moreover, the complete chain of evidence is wanting; and then exposure to the female in such a case is

almost equal to a stigma and to shame! To continue my brief tale, my lord—this man, with a demon heart, is one who will persecute my cousin Eliza to the very death. A lady of my acquaintance, who can also tell a tale of the unequalled villany of this George Montague Greenwood—"

"What!" ejaculated the count; "do I hear aright? or do my ears deceive me? What name did you give the miscreant who administered opiate drugs to a woman with the feeblest of motives?"

"George Montague Greenwood," repeated the earl.

"O God!" ejaculated the count, sinking back in his chair, and covering his face with his hands; "I thank thee that thou hast intervened: ere it was too late, to prevent that fearful sacrifice of my daughter!"

"Pardon me, my lord," exclaimed the earl, "if I have awakened any disagreeable reminiscences, or produced impressions—"

"Your lordship has done me an infinite service, in fully opening my eyes to the villany of a man whose damnable sophistry glosses over his crimes with so deceptive a varnish, that the sight is dazzled when contemplating his conduct."

As the count uttered these words he wrung the

hands of the English peer with the most friendly and grateful warmth.

"Another time, my lord," continued the Italian noble, "I will explain to you the cause of my present emotions. You will then perceive how confirmed a miscreant is this Greenwood. In the meantime tell me how I can aid your lordship?"

"I was about to inform you, my lord," continued the Earl of Warrington, "that Miss Sydney, alarmed and appalled at the persecution of this man, who seems to spare neither expense nor crime to accomplish any purpose upon which he has once set his mind, has determined to sojourn for a time upon the Continent. Your lordship is aware that I possess a humble villa in the suburbs of Montoni —"

"A beautiful residence, on the contrary," said the count; "and where," he added with a sigh, "in happier times I have partaken of your hospitality."

"Yes, your lordship has honoured me with your society at that retreat," said the earl, with a low and deferential bow. "It is to that villa that I now propose to despatch my cousin, in order that she may escape the persecutions and the plots of this vile Greenwood. The object of my present visit is to solicit your lordship for a few letters of introduction for Miss Sydney to some of those families in Montoni with whom she may experience the charms of profitable and intellectual society."

"With much pleasure," answered the count, "When does Miss Sydney propose to leave England?"

"The day after to-morrow, my lord."

"To-morrow evening your lordship shall receive the letters which Miss Sydney requires. They will of course be sealed—both in observance of the rules of etiquette, and on account of the custom-house officers in the continental states; but your lordship will take care that they be not opened in England."

"I comprehend you, my lord. The incognito which your lordship chooses to preserve in this country shall not be disturbed by any indiscretion on the part of myself or of those connected with me."

The Earl of Warrington then took his leave.

The moment he had departed, the count rang the bell, and said to the servant who answered the summons, "Request Mr. Greenwood to favour me with his company in this room—*Arre!*"

In another minute the financier was introduced into the saloon which the count was pacing with uneven and agitated steps.

"Mr. Greenwood," said the Italian nobleman, "I think you recollect the subject of our conversation when I was called away by the visit of the Earl of Warrington?"

"Perfectly," answered the financier, who perceived that there was again something wrong. "I remember that you made many accusations against me, all of which I most satisfactorily explained—inasmuch that you very handsomely apologised for the severity of your language."

"Then, sir," continued the count, with difficulty restraining his impatience while Mr. Greenwood thus delivered himself, "if you be really such an honourable and such an injured man as you would represent, and if you be really grieved when you hear that a fellow-creature has been ruined by the failure of your speculations, have the kindness to return me the money which I have confided to you, and I shall be inclined to think of you as you choose to think of yourself. To tell the truth, I am

already sick of the uncertainty of speculation; and would rather withdraw from the enterprise altogether."

"Really, my dear sir," said Mr. Greenwood, "this demand is so very irregular—so exceedingly unbusiness-like —"

"We will not place it upon the footing of *business*, sir," interrupted the count emphatically; "we will place it upon the basis of *honour*."

"Honour and business with me, my dear sir, are synonymous," said the financier with a smile.

"So much the better!" ejaculated the count; "I see that we shall not dispute over this matter. The whole is summed up in a few words: return me the money I have placed in your hands."

"These things cannot be done in a hurry, my dear sir," said Mr. Greenwood, playing with a very handsome gold guard-chain which fastened over his waistcoat.

"Either you have made away with my money, or you have it in your possession still," exclaimed the count. "If you have it, give me a cheque upon your banker for the amount; if you have placed it out at interest, give me security."

"I must observe to you that the whole proceeding is most irregular," said Mr. Greenwood; "and the business requires mature reflection. Moreover, all my funds are locked up for the moment."

"Then how would you carry out the enterprise for which I embarked my capital?" demanded the count.

"You must be aware," replied the financier, "that capitalists—like me—always lay out their cash to the greatest advantage, and make use of bills and negotiable paper of various descriptions. Thus, I could build a dozen steam-packets in a few weeks, and pay for them all without actually encroaching upon my capital!"

"I understand you, sir," said the count; "and in order to meet your convenience, I am ready to receive the securities you mention, payable at early dates, instead of specie."

"Oh! well—that alters the question," cried Mr. Greenwood, an idea apparently striking him at that moment. "I am acquainted with one of the richest bankers in London—intimately acquainted with him: would you have any objection for him to take my place in respect to you, and become the holder of your capital—say for a period of six months?"

"Who is the banker?" asked the count.

"James Tomlinson," answered the financier.

"I know the name well. Are you serious in your proposal?"

"Call upon me to-morrow at twelve o'clock, and we will proceed together to Mr. Tomlinson's banking house in the City. I will have the whole affair arranged for you in the course of an hour after our arrival at his establishment."

"I rely upon your word, Mr. Greenwood," returned the count.

The financier then took his departure.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE BANKER.

THE native of London is as proud of the City as if it were his own property. He can afford to be called a cockney for having been born within the sound of the bells, for there are merchant-princes, and the peers and monopolists of the commerce of the world, who bear the nickname as well as he.

And well may the Londoner be proud of his city in numerous respects. It is the richest and the most powerful that the world has ever seen! The dingy back parlours in Lombard Street, the upstairs business rooms in Cheapside, and the warehouses with shutters half up the windows in Wood Street and its neighbourhood, are the mysterious places in which the springs of the finance and trade of a mighty empire are set in motion? Half a dozen men in the City can command in an hour more wealth than either Rome or Babylon had to boast of at the respective periods of their greatest prosperity. And neither Rome nor Babylon possessed drapers who cleared their fifty thousand a-year by selling gowns and shawls, nor sugar-bakers with a million in hard cash, nor grocers with a plum in each hand, nor brewers to whom the rise or fall of one halfpenny per pot in the price of beer makes a difference of forty thousand pounds *per annum*? Rome, Babylon, Thebes, and Carthage, could all have been purchased by the East India Company—with perhaps a mortgage upon the India Docks!

But the reader must not imagine that all which glitters is gold. Amongst the most splendid establishments in London, and those most wealthy in appearance, there are some in a hopeless state of insolvency. To one of these we shall now introduce those who may choose to accompany us thither.

The well-known banking-house of James Tomlinson was situated in Lombard Street. The establishment was not extensive; nor were there a great many clerks, because it did little agency business for country banks, but was chiefly a house of deposit. It enjoyed a high reputation, and was considered as safe as the presumed wealth, integrity, and experience of its proprietor were likely to render it. It was moreover believed that the father of James Tomlinson was a sleeping partner; and as the old gentleman had retired from the business of oilman with an immense fortune, the bank was presumed to possess every guarantee of stability. It had existed for upwards of sixty years, having been founded and most successfully carried on by an uncle of James Tomlinson. James himself had originally entered the establishment as a clerk, whence he rose to be a partner, and finally found himself at the head of the concern at his uncle's death.

James Tomlinson was not an extravagant man; but he was not possessed of the ability and experience for which the world gave him credit. In the year 1826, and at the age of forty, he found himself at the head of a flourishing and respectable establishment. He was indeed the sole proprietor, for his father was in reality totally unconnected with it as a partner. James was intimately acquainted with the mechanical routine of the bank business; but he was deficient in those powers of combination and faculties of foresight which were necessary to enable him to lay out to the best advantage the moneys deposited in his hands. With good intentions, he lacked talent. He was an excellent head clerk or junior partner; but he was totally unfitted for supreme management. Thus was it that in two or three years he experienced serious reverses; and, although he carefully concealed the failure of his operations from all human eyes, the very safety of his establishment was seriously compromised. The French Revolution of 1830 ruined a Paris house to which Tomlinson had advanced a considerable sum; and this blow consummated the insolvency of his bank.

He was then compelled to make a confidant of his

cashier, an old and faithful servant of his uncle, and of frugal habits, and kind but eccentric disposition. Michael Martin was this individual's name. He was of very repulsive appearance, stooping in his gait, blear-eyed, and dirty in person. He took vast quantities of snuff; but as much lodged upon his shirt-collar and waistcoat as was thrust up his nose. Thus his linen was invariably filthy in the extreme. His dress was a suit of seedy black; and the right thigh of his trousers was brown and grimy with the marks of snuff—for upon that part of his attire did he invariably wipe his finger and thumb after taking a pinch of his brown rappee.

Such was the individual whom Tomlinson took into his confidence, when the affairs of the bank grew desperate. Old Martin was as close and reserved as if he were both deaf and dumb; and he was moreover possessed of a peculiar craftiness and cunning which admirably fitted him for the part that he was now to enact. Although it was next to impossible to retrieve the affairs of the bank, so great was the deficiency,—still Michael Martin assured his master that it was quite probable that they might be enabled to carry on the establishment for a length of time—perhaps even many years, the chances that the draughts upon the bank would not equal the deposits being in their favour.

Thus was this insolvent and ruined establishment carried on, with seeming respectability and success, by the perseverance of Tomlinson, and the skill and craft of old Martin.

We shall now introduce our readers into the parlour of the bank, at ten o'clock in the morning after the incidents related in the preceding chapter.

James Tomlinson had just arrived, and was standing before the fire, glancing over the City Article of *The Times*. He was a fine, tall, good-looking man, plainly dressed, and without the slightest affectation either in manner or attire. The bluntness and apparent straightforwardness of his character had won and secured him many friends amongst a class of men who regard frankness of disposition and plainness of demeanour as qualities indicative of solidity of position and regular habits of business. Then he was always at his post—always to be seen; and hence unlimited confidence was placed in him!

Having glanced over the newspaper which he held in his hand, he rang the bell. A clerk responded to the summons.

"Is Mr. Martin come yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell him to step this way."

The clerk withdrew; and the old cashier entered the room, the door of which he carefully closed.

"Good morning, Michael," said the banker.

"What news?"

"Worse and worse," answered the old man, with a species of savage grunt. "We have had a sad time of it for the last three months."

"For the last seven or eight years, you may say," observed Tomlinson, with a sigh; and then his countenance suddenly wore an expression of ineffable despair—as evanescent as it was poignant.

"At first the work was easy enough," said Michael; "a little combination and tact enabled us to struggle on; but latterly the concern has fallen into so desperate a condition, that I really fear when I come in the morning that it will never last through the day."

"My God! my God! what a life!" exclaimed Tomlinson. "And there are hundreds and thousands who pass up the street every day, and who say within themselves, '*How I wish I was James Tom-*

inson?" Heavens! I would that I were a beggar in the street—a sweeper of a crossing—a pauper in a workhouse——"

"Come—this is folly," interrupted the old cashier impatiently. "We must go on to the end."

"What is the state of your book this morning?" demanded the banker, putting the question with evident alarm—almost amounting to horror.

"Three thousand four hundred pounds, eighteen shillings, in specie—sixteen hundred and thirty-five in notes," answered the cashier.

"Is that all?" ejaculated Tomlinson. "And this morning we have to pay Greenwood the two thousand pounds he lent me six weeks ago."

"We can't part with the money," said the cashier rudely. "Greenwood knows the circumstances of the bank, and must give time."

"You know what Greenwood is, Michael," exclaimed the banker. "If we are not punctual with him, he will never lend us another shilling; and what should we have done without him on several occasions?"

"I know all that. But look at the interest he makes you pay," muttered the cashier.

"And look at the risk he runs," added the banker.

"He finds it worth his while. I calculated the other day that we paid him three thousand pounds last year for interest only: we can't go on much longer at that rate."

"I had almost said that the sooner it ends the better," cried Tomlinson. "What low trickery—what meanness—what abominable craft, have we been compelled to resort to! Oh! if that affair with the Treasury three years ago had only turned up well—if we could have secured the operation, we should have retrieved all our losses, enormous as they are—we should have built up the fortunes of the establishment upon a more solid foundation than ever."

"That was indeed a misfortune," observed the cashier, taking a huge pinch of snuff.

"And how the Chancellor of the Exchequer obtained his information about me—at the eleventh hour—after all previous inquiries were known to be satisfactory," continued Tomlinson. "I never could conjecture. At that time the secret was confined to you and me, and my father, to whom I communicated it, you remember, in that letter which I wrote to him soliciting the fifty thousand pounds."

"Which sum saved the bank at that period," observed Michael.

"Never shall I forget the day when I called at the Treasury for the decision of the government relative to my proposal," returned Tomlinson. "The functionary who received me, said in so pointed a manner, 'Mr. Tomlinson, you have not dealt candidly with us relative to your true position; your secret is known to us; but rest assured that, although we decline any negotiation with you, we will not betray you.' This announcement came upon me like a thunder-stroke: I was literally paralysed. The functionary added with a sort of triumphant and yet mysterious smile, 'There is not a secret connected with the true position of any individual of any consequence in the City which escapes our knowledge. The government, sir, is omniscient!' God alone can divine the sources of this intimate acquaintance with things locked up, as it were, in one's own bosom!" added the banker, thoughtfully.

"And this is not the only case in which such secrets have been discovered by the government," said the old cashier, again regaling his nose with a copious pinch of snuff.

"Yes, I myself have heard of other instances," observed the banker, with a shudder. "I have known great firms expend large sums of money to obtain particular information from Paris, Frankfurt, and Madrid, by means of couriers; and this information has been despatched by letter to their agents at Liverpool and Manchester, and elsewhere, to answer certain commercial or financial purposes. Well, that information has been known to government within a few hours, and the government broker has bought or sold stock accordingly!"

"But how could the government obtain that information?" demanded Martin. "Some treachery——"

"No—impossible! The government has gleaned its knowledge when every human precaution against treachery and fraud was adopted. Look at my own case!" continued Tomlinson. "You, my father, and myself alone, knew my secret. On you I can reckon as a man can reckon upon his own self: my father was incapable of betraying me; and I of course should not have divulged my own ruin. And yet the secret became known to the government. I shudder, Michael—oh! I shudder when I think that we dwell in a country which vaunts its freedom, yet where there exists the secret, dark, and mysterious element of the most hideous despotism!"

At this moment a clerk entered, and informed the cashier that he was wanted in the public office.

As soon as Michael had disappeared, the banker walked up and down his parlour, a prey to the most maddening reflections. There were but five thousand pounds left in the safe; two thousand were to be paid to Greenwood; and every minute a cheque, or two or three cheques might be presented, which would crush the bank at one blow.

"One hundred and eighty thousand pounds of liability," murmured Tomlinson to himself, "and five thousand pounds to meet it!"

Ah! little thought those who passed by the banking-house at that moment, what heart-felt, horrible tortures were endured by the master of the establishment in his own parlour!

At length Martin returned.

His countenance never revealed any emotions; but he took snuff wholesale—and that was a fearful omen.

"Well?" said Tomlinson, in a hoarse and hollow voice.

"Alderman Phipps just drawn for twelve hundred pounds, and Colonel Brown for eight hundred," replied the cashier.

"Two thousand gone in a minute!" ejaculated the banker.

"Shall I pay any more?" asked the cashier.

"Yes—pay, pay up to the last farthing!" answered Tomlinson. "An accident—a chance may save us, as oftentimes before! And yet methinks, Michael, that we never stood so near the verge of ruin as we do to-day."

"Never," said the old man coldly.

"And is there no expedient by which we can raise a few thousands, or even a few hundreds, for immediate wants?"

"None that I know of," returned Martin, taking more snuff.

At that moment Mr. Greenwood was announced, and Michael withdrew from the parlour.

"You have called for your two thousand pounds?" said the banker, after the usual interchange of civilities.

"Yes: I require that sum particularly this morning," replied the financier; "for I am pledged to

pay fifteen thousand at twelve o'clock to Count Alteroni."

"This is very unfortunate," observed Tomlinson. "I am literally in this position—take the money, and I must stop payment the next moment."

"That is disagreeable, no doubt," said Greenwood; "but the count is urgent, and I cannot put him off."

"My God!" cried Tomlinson; "what can I do? Greenwood—my good friend—I know you are rich—I know you can raise any amount you choose: pray do not push me this morning."

"What am I to do, my dear fellow?" said the financier: "I must satisfy this count—and I really cannot manage without the two thousand. I could let you have them again in a fortnight."

"A fortnight!" ejaculated the banker, clenching his fists; "to-morrow it might be too late. Can you suggest no plan? can you devise no scheme? Let me keep these two thousand pounds for six weeks longer—a month longer; and ask me—ask me what you will! I am desperate—I will do any thing you bid me!"

"Tell me how I can satisfy this ravenous Italian," said Greenwood, "and I will let you keep the money for six months."

"You say you have to settle with this count for fifteen thousand pounds?" inquired the banker.

Greenwood nodded an affirmative.

"And does he require it all in hard cash?"

"No—he will take the security of any responsible person, or apparently responsible person," added the financier, with a significant smile, "payable in six months."

Tomlinson appeared to reflect profoundly.

His reverie was interrupted by the entrance of old Martin, taking snuff more vehemently than ever.

The cashier whispered something in the banker's ear, and then again retired.

"Seven hundred and fifty more gone!" cried Tomlinson: "and now, Greenwood, there remains in the safe but a fraction more than your two thousand pounds. Dictate your own terms!"

This was precisely the point to which the financier was anxious to arrive.

"Listen," he said, "playing with his watch-chain. "This Count Alteroni will accept of you as his debtor instead of me. Take the responsibility off me on to your own shoulders, and I make you a present of the two thousand pounds!"

"What!" ejaculated Tomlinson; "incur a liability of fifteen thousand to this count! Greenwood, you never can be serious!"

"I never was more serious in my life," returned the financier coolly. "If you fail before the six months have elapsed, fifteen thousand more or less on your books will be nothing; if you contrive to carry on the establishment until the expiration of that period, I will help you out of the dilemma."

"You are not reasonable—you are anxious to crush me at once!" cried Tomlinson. "Well, be it so, Mr. Greenwood! Take your two thousand pounds—"

"And leave you to put up a notice on your doors—eh?" said Greenwood, still playing with his watch-chain.

"Ah! my God—has it come to this?" exclaimed the banker. "Ruin—disgrace—and beggary, all in one day! But better that than submit to such terms as those which you dictate."

With these words he rang the bell violently.

Old Martin immediately made his appearance.

"Mr. Martin," said Tomlinson, affecting a calm-

ness which he was far from feeling, "bring two thousand pounds for Mr. Greenwood."

"It can't be done," growled Michael, taking a huge pinch of snuff.

"Can't be done?" ejaculated the banker.

"No," answered the old man, doggedly: "just paid away four hundred and sixty-five more. There isn't two thousand in the safe."

Tomlinson walked once up the room; then, turning to Greenwood, he said, "I will accept your proposal. Mr. Martin," he added, addressing the cashier, "you can retire: I will settle this matter with Mr. Greenwood."

The old man withdrew.

"When, where, and how is this business to be arranged?" demanded Tomlinson, after a short pause.

"The count is to call at my house at twelve. I have left a note to request him to come on hither."

"You had, then, already arranged this matter in your mind?" said the banker, ironically.

"Certainly," answered Greenwood, with his usual coolness. "I knew you would relieve me of this obligation; because I shall be enabled in return to afford you that assistance of which you stand so much in need."

"I must throw myself upon your generosity," said Tomlinson. "It is now twelve: the count will soon be here."

Half an hour passed away; and the Italian nobleman made his appearance.

"You see that I have kept my word, count," exclaimed Mr. Greenwood, with an ironical smile of triumph. "Mr. Tomlinson holds in his hands certain funds of mine, which, according to the terms of agreement between us, he is to retain in his possession and use for a period of six months and six days from the present day, at an interest of four per cent. If you, Count Alteroni, be willing to accept a transfer of fifteen thousand pounds of such funds in Mr. Tomlinson's hands from my name to your own, the bargain can be completed this moment."

"I cannot hesitate, Mr. Greenwood," said the count, "to accept a guarantee of such known stability as the name of Mr. Tomlinson."

"Then all that remains to be done," exclaimed the financier, "is for you to return me my acknowledgment for the amount specified, and for Mr. Tomlinson to give you his in its place. Mr. Tomlinson has already received my written authority for the transfer."

The business was settled as Mr. Greenwood proposed. The count returned the financier his receipt, and accepted one from the banker.

"Now, that this is concluded, count," said Mr. Greenwood, placing the receipt in his pocket-book, "I hope that our friendship will continue uninterrupted."

"Pardon me, sir," returned the count, his features assuming a stern expression: "although I am bound to admit that you have not wronged me in respect to money, you have dared to talk to me of my daughter, who is innocence and purity itself."

"Count Alteroni," began Mr. Greenwood, "I am not aware—"

"Silence, sir!" cried the Italian noble, imperatively: "I have but one word more to say. Circumstances have revealed to me your profligate character; and never can I be too thankful that my daughter should have escaped an alliance with a man who bribes his agents to administer opiate drugs to an unprotected female for the vilest of purposes. Mr. Tomlinson," added the count, "pardon me for

having used such language in your apartment, and in your presence."

Count Altironi bowed politely to the banker, and, darting a withering glance of mingled contempt and indignation upon the abashed and astounded Greenwood, took his departure.

"He talks of things which are quite new to me," said Greenwood, recovering an outward appearance of composure, though inwardly he was chagrined beyond description.

Tomlinson made no reply: he was too much occupied with his own affairs to be able to afford attention to those of others.

Greenwood shortly took his leave—delighted at having effectually settled his pecuniary obligation with the count, in such a manner that it could never again be the means of molestation in respect to himself,—but vexed at the discovery which the Italian nobleman had evidently made in respect to his conduct towards Eliza Sydney.

Immediately after Mr. Greenwood had left the bank-parlour, old Michael entered. This time he carried his snuff-box open in his left hand; and at every two paces he took a copious pinch with the fore-finger and thumb of his right. This was a fearful omen; and Tomlinson trembled.

"Well, Michael—well?"

"Not a deposit this morning. Draughts come in like wild-fire," said the old cashier. "There is but a hundred pounds left in the safe!"

"A hundred pounds!" ejaculated the banker, clasping his hands together: "and is it come to this at length, Michael?"

"Yes," said the cashier, gruffly.

"Then let us post a notice at once," cried Tomlinson: "the establishment must be closed without another moment's delay."

"Will you write out the notice of stoppage of payment, or shall I?" inquired Michael.

"Do it yourself, my good old friend—do it for me!" said the banker, whose countenance was ashy pale, and whose limbs trembled under him, as if he expected the officers of justice to drag him to a place of execution.

The old cashier seated himself at the table, and wrote out the announcement that the bank was unfortunately compelled to suspend its payments. He then read it to the ruined man who was now pacing the apartment with agitated steps.

"Will that do?"

"Yes," answered the banker; "but, in mercy, let me leave the house ere that notice be made public."

Tomlinson was about to rush distractedly out of the room, when the cashier was summoned into the public department of the establishment.

Five minutes elapsed ere his return—five minutes which appeared five hours to James Tomlinson.

At length the old man came back; and this time he did not carry his snuff-box in his hand.

Without uttering a word, he took the "notice of stoppage" off the table, crushed it in his hand, and threw it into the fire.

"Saved once more," he murmured, as he watched the paper burning to tinder; and when it was completely consumed, he took a long and hearty pinch of snuff.

"Saved!" echoed Tomlinson: "do you mean that we are saved again?"

"Seven thousand four hundred and sixty-seven pounds just paid in to Dobson and Dobbins's account," answered the cashier, coolly and leisurely, as if he himself experienced not the slightest emotion.

In another hour there were fifteen thousand pounds in the safe; and when the bank closed that evening at the usual time, this sum had swollen up to twenty thousand and some hundreds.

This day was a specimen of the life of James Tomlinson, the banker.

Readers, when you pass by the grand commercial and financial establishments of this great metropolis, pause and reflect ere you envy their proprietors! In the parlours and offices of those reputed emporiums of wealth are men whose minds are a prey to the most agonising feelings—the most poignant emotions.

There is no situation so full of responsibility as that of a banker—no trust so sacred as that which is confided to him. When he fails, it is not the ruin of one man which is accomplished: it is the ruin of hundreds—perhaps thousands. The effects of that one failure are ramified through a wide section of society: widows and orphans are reduced to beggary—and those who have been well and tenderly nurtured are driven to the workhouse.

And yet the law punishes not the great banker who fails, and who involves thousands in his ruin. The petty trader who breaks for fifty pounds is thrown into prison, and is placed at the tender mercy of the Insolvents' Court, which perhaps remands him to a debtor's goal for a year, for having contracted debts without a reasonable chance of paying them. But the great banker, who commenced business with a hundred thousand pounds, and who has dissipated five hundred thousand belonging to others, applies to the Bankruptcy Court, never sees the inside of a prison at all, and in due time receives a certificate, which clears him of all his liabilities, and enables him to begin the world anew. The petty trader passes a weary time in goal, and is then merely emancipated from his confinement—but not from his debts. His future exertions are clogged by an impending weight of liability. One system or the other is wrong:—decide, O ye legislators who want "the wisdom of your ancestors," which should be retained, and which abolished,—or whether both should be modified!

In the course of the evening the Earl of Warrington called upon Mrs. Arlington, with whom he passed a few minutes alone in the drawing-room.

When his lordship had taken his departure, Diana returned to Eliza whom she had left in another apartment, and, placing a quantity of letters, folded, but unsealed, in her hands, said, "These are the means of introduction to some of the first families in Menton. They are written, I am informed, by an Italian nobleman of great influence, and whose name will act like a talisman in your behalf. They are sent unsealed according to usage; but the earl has earnestly and positively desired that their contents be not examined in this country. He gave this injunction very seriously," added Diana, with a smile, "doubtless because he supposed that he has to deal with two daughters of Eve whose curiosity is invincible. He, however, charged me to deliver this message to you as delicately as possible."

"These letters," answered Eliza, glancing over their superscriptions, "are addressed to strangers and not to me; and although I know that they refer to me, I should not think of penetrating into their contents, either in England or elsewhere. But did you express to the earl all the gratitude that I feel for his numerous and signal deeds of kindness?"

"The earl is well aware of your grateful feelings,"