THE MYSTERIES OF LONDON.

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BY

GEORGE W. M. REYNOLDS,

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

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

BY G. STIFF.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

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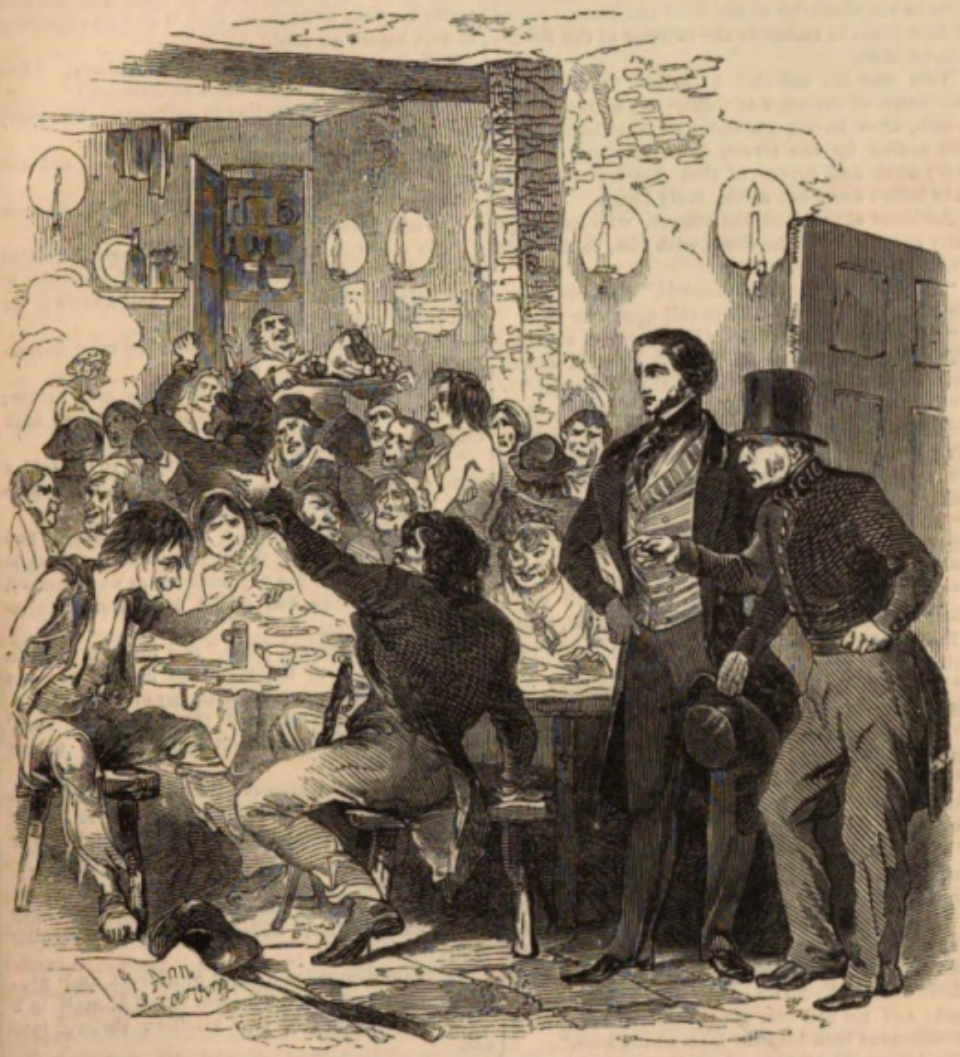

CHAPTER CXXXVII.

RATS' CASTLE.

RICHARD MARKHAM, though perfectly unpretending in manner and somewhat reserved or even sedate in disposition, possessed the most undaunted courage. Thus was it that, almost immediately recovering himself from the sudden check which he had experienced at the hands of the Resurrection Man, he hurried in pursuit of the miscreant, followed by the policeman and the people whom the alarm which he had given had called to his aid.

The people were, however, soon tired of running gratuitously for an object which they could scarcely comprehend; but the police-officer kept close to Markham; and they were speedily reinforced by two other constables, who, seeing that something was the matter, and with characteristic officiousness, immediately joined them.

From an inquiry put to the waterman of the adjacent cab-stand, who had seen a person running furiously along a moment or two before, Markham felt convinced that the object of his pursuit had plunged into the maze of Saint Giles's; and, though well aware of the desperate character of that individual, and conscious that should he encounter him alone in some dark alley or gloomy court, a fearful struggle must ensue between them, he did not hesitate, unarmed as he was, to dash into that thicket of dangerous habitations.

Soon outstripping the officers, who vainly begged

him to keep with them, as they were unacquainted with the person of whom he was in pursuit,—forgetting every measure of precaution in the ardour of the chase, Richard rushed headlong through the dark and ill-paved streets, following the echo of every retreating footstep which he heard, and stopping only to scrutinise the countenances of those who, in the obscurity of the hour and place, seemed at first sight to resemble the exterior of the Resurrection Man.

Vain was his search. At length, exhausted, he sate down on the steps of a door-way to recover his breath, after having expended an hour in his fruitless search up one street, down another, and in every nook and corner of that district which we have before described as the Holy Land.

Accident shortly led the officers, who had originally entered upon the chase with him, to the spot where he was seated.

"Here is the gentleman himself," said one, turning the glare of his bull's-eye full upon our hero.

"No luck, I suppose, sir?" observed another. "You had much better have remained with us and given us some idea of the person that you want."

"Fool that I was!" exclaimed Markham, now perceiving his imprudence in that respect: "I have left you to pursue a shadow, instead of depicting to you the substance. But surely the name of Anthony Tidkins——"

"The Resurrection Man, as they call him," hastily remarked one of the constables.

"The same," answered Markham.

"Why—he blew himself up, along with some others and a number of our men, last year, down in Bethnal Green," said the constable who had last spoken.

"No—he lives, he lives," exclaimed Richard, impatiently. "My God! I know him but too well."

"And it was after him that you gave the alarm just now in Tottenham Court Road?"

"It was. I knew him at once—I could not be mistaken: his voice, laden with a curse, still rings in my ears."

"Well, since the gentleman's so positive, I 'spose it must be so," said the constable: "we musn't sleep upon it, mates. Ten to one that Tidkins has taken to burrow in one of the low cribs about here; and he means to lie quiet for two or three days till the alarm's blown over. I know the dodges of these fellers. You two go the round of Plumptre Street; and me and this gentleman will just take a permiscuous look into the kens about here."

The two constables to whom these words were addressed, immediately departed upon the mission proposed to them, and Richard signified his readiness to accompany the officer who had thus settled the plan of proceedings.

"We'll go first to Rats' Castle, sir, if you please," said the policeman: "that is the most likely place for a run-away to take refuge in at random."

"What is Rats' Castle?" asked Markham, as he walked by the officer's side down a wretched alley, almost as dark as pitch, and over the broken pavement of which he stumbled at every step.

"The night-house where all kind of low people meet to sup and lodge," was the reply. "But here we are—and you'll see all about it in an instant."

They had stopped at the door of a house with an area protected by thick wooden palings. All the upper part of the dwelling appeared to be involved in total darkness: but lights streamed through the chinks of the rude shutters of the area-windows; and from the same direction emanated boisterous merriment, coarse laughter, and wild hurrahs.

"You knock at the door, sir, if you please," said the policeman, "while I stand aside. I 'll slip in after you; for if they twig my coat, and Tidkins really happens to be there, they 'd give him the office to bolt before we could get in."

"Well thought of," returned Markham. "But upon what plea am I to claim admittance?"

"As a stranger, impelled by curiosity. You carry the silver key in your pocket."

The policeman withdrew a few paces; and our hero knocked boldly at the door.

A gruff voice challenged the visitor from the area. "Who's here?"

"No one that will do you any harm," replied Richard. "I am anxious to witness the interior of this establishment; and here is half-a-crown for you if you can gratify my curiosity."

"That 's English, any how," said the voice, softening in its tone. "Stop a minit."

Markham heard a door close in the area below; and in a few moments the bolts were drawn back inside the one at which he was standing.

"Now then, my ben-cull—in with you," said a man, as he opened the front door, and held a candle high up above his head at the same time.

Markham stepped into a narrow passage, and placed his foot against the door in such a way as to keep it open. But the precaution was unnecessary, for the policeman had glided in almost simultaneously with himself.

"Now, no noise, old feller," said the constable, in a hasty whisper to the man who had opened the door: "our business is n't with any of your set."

"Wery good," returned the porter of Rats' Castle: "you know best—it is n't for me to say nothink."

"Go first, sir," whispered the officer to Markham. "You seem to know *him* better than me, for I never saw him but once—and then only for a minute or two."

"Which way?" demanded Richard.

"Straight on—and then down stairs. You keep behind us, old feller," added the policeman, turning to the porter.

Markham descended a flight of narrow and precipitate steps, and at the bottom found himself in a large room formed of two kitchens thrown into one.

Two long tables running parallel to each other the entire length of the place, were laid out for supper,—the preparations consisting of a number of greasy napkins spread upon either board, and decorated with knives and forks all chained to the tables. Iron plates to eat off, galley-pots and chipped tea-cups filled with salt, three or four pepper-boxes, and two small stone jars containing mustard, completed the preparations for the evening meal.

The room was lighted by means of a number of candles disposed in tin shades around the walls; and as no one gave himself the trouble to snuff them, the wicks were long, and infested with what housewives denominate "thieves," while the tallow streamed down in large flakes, dripping on the floor, the seats, or the backs of the guests.

Crowded together at the two tables, and anxiously

watching the proceedings of an old blear-eyed woman, who was occupied at an immense fire at the farther end of the room, were about thirty or forty persons, male and female. And never did Markham's eyes glance upon a more extraordinary—a more loathsome—a more revolting spectacle than that assemblage of rags, filth, disease, deformity, and ugliness.

Mendicants, vagabonds, impostors, and rogues of all kinds were gathered in that room, the fetid heat of which was stifling. The horrible language of which they made use,—their frightful curses,—their obscene jests,—their blasphemous jokes, were calculated to shock the mind of the least fastidious:—it was indeed a scene from which Markham would have fled as from a nest of vipers, had not a stern duty to society and to himself urged him to penetrate farther into that den.

The appearance of himself and the policeman did not produce any remarkable degree of sensation amongst the persons assembled: they were accustomed to the occasional visits of well-dressed strangers, who repaired thither to gratify curiosity; and the presence of the officers of justice was a matter of frequent occurrence when any great robbery had been perpetrated in the metropolis, and while the culprits remained undiscovered.

"He is not here," whispered Markham to his companion, after casting a hasty but penetrating glance around.

"He may come: this is the most likely place in Saint Giles's for him to visit," returned the policeman. "We will wait half-an-hour."

Richard would gladly have retired; but he was ashamed to exhibit a disgust which the officer might mistake for fear. He accordingly seated himself at a small side-table, in compliance with a sign from his companion.

A waiter, wearing an apron which, by its colour, seemed also to do the duty of dish-cloth, now accosted them, and said, "Please to order anythink, gen'lemen?"

"Two glasses of brandy-and-water," replied the constable.

This command was speedily complied with; and, a few minutes afterwards, supper was served up on the two long tables before described. The old woman who presided over the culinary department of the establishment had amply catered for those present. Legs of mutton, both roasted and boiled,—rounds of beef, flanked with carrots,—huge pies,—boiled legs of pork,—immense quantities of sausages,—and sheep's heads, constituted the staple of the banquet. These viands, accompanied by piles of smoking potatoes "in their jackets" and heaps of cabbages, were all served up on iron dishes, from which no thrifty hand ever removed the rust.

Then commenced the clattering of the knives and forks, the din of which upon the iron platters was strangely blended with the rattling of the chains that held them to the tables. The boisterous merriment and coarse conversation were for a time absorbed in the interest occasioned by the presence of the repast.

"What a strange assembly," whispered Markham to the constable.

"Strange to *you*, sir—no doubt," was the answer, also delivered in a tone audible only to him to whom the words were addressed. "That sturdy feller sitting at the head of the nearest table, with the great cudgel between his legs, is one of the class that don't take the trouble to clothe themselves in rags, but trust to their insolence to extort alms from females walking alone in retired parts. That feller next to him, all in tatters, but who laughs louder than any one else, is one of them whining, shivering, snivelling wretches that crouch up in doorways on rainy days, and on fine ones sit down on the pavement with '*Starving, but dare not beg*,' chalked on the stone before them. The man over there in sailor's clothes tumbled down an area when he was drunk, and broke his leg: he was obliged to have it cut off; and so he now passes himself off as one of Nelson's own tars, though he never saw the sea in his life. That chap almost naked who 's just come in, is going to put on his coat and shoes before he sits down to supper; he always goes out begging in that state on rainy days, and is a gentleman on fine ones."

"I do not understand you," said Markham, astonished at this last observation.

"Why, sir," replied the policeman, "there 's certain beggars that always turn out half-naked, on rainy days, or when the snow 's on the ground; and people pity them so much on those occasions that the rogues get enough to keep them all through the fine weather. If they have wives and children to go out with them, so much the better: but that feller there is n't married; and so he goes with a woman who frequents this place, and they hire three or four children from the poor people in this neighbourhood, at the rate of two-pence a day each child, and its grub. To see them go shivering and whining through the streets, with no shoes or stockings, you 'd think they were the most miserable devils on the face of the earth; and then, to make the scene complete, the man and woman always pinch the little children that they carry in their arms, to make them cry, whenever they pass a window where several ladies are looking out."

"Is this possible?" whispered Markham, his face flushing with indignation.

"Possible, sir! Don't I see it all every day of my life? Look at them men and women blowing their hides out with all that good meat; and now look at the pots of porter that 's coming in. Every soul there has sworn a hundred times during the day that he has n't tasted food for forty-eight hours, and will repeat the same story to-morrow. But they all had good suppers here last night, and good breakfasts here this morning; and you see how they are faring this evening."

"But there are real cases deserving of charity?" said Markham, interrogatively,—for he almost felt disposed to doubt the fact.

"Certainly there are, sir," was the reply; "but it 's very difficult for such as you to decide between the true and the false. Look at that man who carves at the second table: he can see well enough to cut himself the tit-bits; but to-morrow he will be totally blind in one of the fashionable squares."

"Totally blind!" said Richard, more and more astonished at what he heard.

"Yes, sir—totally blind; led by a dog, and with a placard upon his chest. He keeps his eyes fast shut, and colours the lids with carmine and vermilion. But that is nothing. That feller next to him, who uses his knife and fork so well, will to-morrow have lost his right arm at the battle of Salamanca."

"But how can that imposture be effected?"

"His right arm is concealed under his clothes, and the coat-sleeve hangs down loose," replied the constable. "That tall stout man who has just jumped so nimbly over the form in his way back to his place, has walked on crutches in the streets for the last twenty years; and when you see him so, you would think he could hardly drag himself along. The feller over there is a frozen-out gardener in winter, and a poor Spitalfields' weaver in summer. The one next to him will have a black patch over his left eye to-morrow; and yet you may see that it is as good as his right. The short man opposite to him bends his left leg back, and has a wooden one to support the knee, when he is in the street. That woman there has been dressed in widows' weeds for the last fifteen years, and always has a troop of six children with her; but the children never grow any bigger, for she hires fresh ones every year or so."

"This is the most extraordinarily combined mass of contradictions and deceptions I ever gazed upon," whispered Markham.

"You may well say that, sir," said the policeman. "The ragged feller down at the bottom of the second table sits as upright as you or me: well, in the streets he crawls along the ground with two iron supporters in his hands. He is the most insolent feller in London. The man next to him goes about on a sort of van, or chaise, and the world believes that he has no legs at all; but they are all the time concealed in the body of the vehicle, and the stumps of the thighs which are seen are false. Those three hulking chaps over there, sitting with the three women that laugh so much, are begging-letter impostors. The eldest of the three men has been seventeen years at the business, and has been in prison twenty-eight times. One day he is a bricklayer who has fallen from a scaffold, and broken his leg, and has a wife and eleven young children dependent on him; another day he is a licensed clergyman of the Church of England, but unemployed for two years—wife and six children totally dependent on him. Then he changes into a stanch Tory, ruined by his attachment to the cause, and proscribed by all his friends on account of his principles: in this shape he addresses himself to the old Tory noblemen, and makes a good harvest. The very next day he becomes a determined and stanch Reformer, who lost his employment through giving his vote for the Tower Hamlets to the liberal candidate at the last election, and has since met with an uninterrupted series of misfortunes—sold up by a Tory landlord,—his wife been dead only a fortnight, and seven motherless children left dependent on him. This kind of letter always draws well. Then he becomes a paralytic with an execution in his house; or a Spitalfields' weaver, with nine children, two of which are cripples, and one blind; or else a poor Scotch schoolmaster, come to London on business, and robbed by designing knaves of the means of returning to his own country. The women are just as bad. They are either wives with husbands in hospitals and bedridden mothers; or daughters with helpless parents and sick brothers and sisters dependent on them; —and so on."

"But if you be aware of all these monstrous impositions, why do you not interfere to protect the public?" inquired Markham.

"Lord, sir!" said the constable, "if we took up all persons that we know to be impostors, we should have half London in custody. We only interfere when specially called upon, or when we see cases so very flagrant that we can't help taking notice of them. Some of these chaps that are eating here so hearty now, will seem to be dying in the streets to-morrow."

"Merciful heavens, what a city of deceit and imposture is this!" observed Richard, painfully excited by the strange details which he had just heard. "Were the interior of this den but once exposed to general view, charity would be at an end, and the deserving poor would suffer for the unprincipled impostor."

"True enough, sir. And now look—the cloth is removed, and every one is ordering in something strong to wash down the supper. There goes a crown-bowl of punch—that's for the begging-letter impostors: and there's glasses of punch, and cold spirits and water, and shrub, and negus. That's the way they do it, you see, sir."

Markham did indeed see, and wondered more and more at what he so saw—until his feelings of surprise changed into sentiments of ineffable abhorrence and disgust; and he longed to leave that odious den.

"The person whom we seek does not appear to come," he said, after a long interval of silence. "Two hours have elapsed—and we are only wasting time here."

"He must have taken refuge in some other crib, sir," returned the constable. "Let us leave this one, and make the round of the other lodging-houses in this street."

Markham was glad to hurry away from Rats' Castle, the mysteries of which had so painfully shocked his generous feelings.

CHAPTER CXXXVIII.

A PUBLIC FUNCTIONARY.

URGED by that sense of duty to which we have before alluded, and which prompted him to neglect no step that might lead to the discovery of a great criminal's lurking-place, Richard accompanied the police-officer to various houses where the dregs of the population herded together.

The inspection of a plague-hospital could not have been more appalling: the scrutiny of a lazar-house could not have produced deeper disgust.

In some the inmates were engaged in drunken broils, the women enacting the part of furies: in others the females sang obscene songs, the men joining in the chorus.

Here a mother waited until her daughter should return with the wages of prostitution, to purchase the evening meal: there a husband boasted that his wife was enabled, by the liberality of a paramour, to supply him with ample means for his night's debauchery.

In one house which our hero and the constable visited, three sisters of the respective ages of eleven, thirteen, and fourteen, were comparing the produce of their evening's avocations,—the avocations of the daughters of crime!

And then those three children, having portioned out the necessary amount for their suppers and their lodging that night, and their breakfast next morning, laughed joyously as they perceived how much they had left to purchase gin!

For GIN is the deity, and INTEMPERANCE is the hand-maiden, of both sexes and nearly all ages in that district of London.

What crimes, what follies have been perpetrated for Gin! A river of alcohol rolls through the land, sweeping away health, honour, and happiness with its remorseless tide. The creaking gibbet, and the prison ward—the gloomy hulk, and the far-off penal isle—the debtors' gaol, and the silent penitentiary—the tomb-like workhouse, and the loathsome hospital—the galling chain, and the spirit-breaking tread-wheel—the frightful mad-cell, and the public dissecting-room—the death-bed of despair, and the grave of the suicide, are indebted for many, many victims to thee, most potent GIN!

O GIN! the Genius of Accidents and the Bad Angel of Offences worship thee! Thou art the Juggernaut beneath whose wheels millions throw themselves in blind adoration.

The pawnbroker points to thee and says, "Whilst thy dominion lasts, I am sure to thrive."

The medical man smiles as he marks thy progress, for he knows that thou leadest a ghastly train,—apoplexy, palsy, dropsy, delirium tremens, consumption, madness.

The undertaker chuckles when he remembers thine influence, for he says within himself, "Thou art the Angel of Death."

And Satan rejoices in his kingdom, well-knowing how thickly it can be populated by thee!

Yes—great is thy power, O GIN: thou keepest pace with the progress of civilisation, and thou art made the companion of the Bible. For when the missionary takes the Word of God to the savage in some far distant clime, he bears the fire-water with him at the same time. While his right hand points to the paths of peace and salvation, his left scatters the seeds of misery, disease, death, and damnation!

Yes—great is thy power, O Gin: a terrible instrument of evil art thou. Thou sweepest over the world with the wing of the pestilence: thy breath is that of a plague:—like the poisonous garment of Dejanira on the burning limbs of the Centaur, dost thou cling around thy victims.

And where the grave-yard is heaped up with mouldering bones—and where disease and death prevail in all their most hideous shapes—and where misery is most keenly felt, and poverty is most pinching—and where the wails of hapless children ascend to heaven in vain appeal against the cruelty of inhuman parents—and where crime is most diabolical,—there are thy triumphs—there are thy victories!

But to continue.

The clock of St. Giles's Church proclaimed the hour of midnight; and though our hero and the constable had visited many of the low dens and lodging-houses in the Holy Land, still their search was without success.

"Unless my mates have been more lucky than us," observed the policeman, halting at the corner of a street, "we must conclude that the bird is flown."

"And even if they should chance to enter a house where the miscreant has taken refuge, how would they be enabled to recognise him?" asked Richard.

"One of them knows him well," replied the constable.

At that moment a violent scream issued from the upper part of the house close to which Markham and the constable were standing.

The dwelling was high, narrow, and, if possible, more gloomy, when viewed by the feeble rays of a watery moon, than the neighbouring houses.

From the uppermost window streamed a strong light, which danced upon the black wall of the building opposite, making the sombre appearance of the locality the more sinister as it was the more visible.

That scream, which expressed both horror and agony, caused Markham to start with momentary consternation.

The constable did not, however, appear surprised; but merely observed with a strange coolness, "Ah! there's Smithers at his old tricks again."

"And who is Smithers?" inquired Richard.

But before the constable could reply to the question, the window, whence the light emanated, was thrown up with crashing violence, and a female voice shrieked for assistance.

"Had we not better ascertain what is the matter here?" exclaimed Markham, hastily.

"I dare not force an entry, unless there's a cry of '*Murder*,'" answered the officer.

Scarcely were these words uttered when the sound of a heavy blow, like that of a thong or leathern strap upon a person's back, echoed along the street; and then terrific shrieks, mingled with cries of "*Murder!*" issued from the open window.

In another instant the female was dragged away from the casement by some one in the room where this scene occurred; then the blows were resumed with frightful severity, and the screams and cries continued in a more appalling manner than at first.

Immediately afterwards, and just as the constable was preparing to force an entry, some one was heard to rush precipitately down the stairs inside the house: the door opened, and a strange-looking being darted madly into the street.

"Now, Gibbet," cried the policeman, catching the hump-backed lad—for such Markham perceived him to be—by the collar, "what's all this about?"

"Oh! you are an officer!" exclaimed the hump-back, in a tone of surprise and delight: "for God's sake come up—father's murdering Kate!"

The screams and the sounds of the blows still continuing up stairs, the constable did not hesitate to comply with the request of the deformed lad whom he had saluted by the singular name of Gibbet; and Markham hastened after him, anxious to render any assistance that might be required at his hands.

The policeman and our hero hurried up the narrow stairs, lighted by the officer's bull's-eye; and speedily reached the room whence the screams had emanated.

But we must pause for a moment to describe that apartment, and to give the reader some idea of the inmates of the house to which we have introduced him.

The room was situated at the top of the house, and bore the appearance of a loft, there being no ceiling to conceal the massive beams and spars which supported the angular roof.

From one of the horizontal beams hung a stuffed figure, resembling a human being, and as large as life. It was dressed in a complete suit of male attire; and a white mask gave it the real but ghastly appearance of a dead body. It was suspended by a thick cord, or halter, the knot of which being fastened beneath the left ear, made the head incline

somewhat over the right shoulder; and it was waving gently backwards and forwards, as if it had been recently disturbed. The arms were pinioned behind; and the hands, which were made more or less life-like by means of dingy white kid gloves, were curled up as it were in a last convulsion. In a word, it presented the exact appearance of a man hanging.

Markham started back when his eyes first fell on this sinister object; but a second glance convinced him that the figure was only a puppet.

This second survey brought to his view other features, calculated to excite his wonder and curiosity, in that strange apartment.

The figure already described was suspended in such a way that its lower extremity was about a foot from the ground; but it was concealed nearly up to the knees by a small scaffold, or large black box, it having been suffered to fall that much through a trap-door made like a drop in the platform of that diminutive stage.

From this strange spectacle,—which, in all respects, was a perfect representation of an execution—Markham's eyes wandered round the loft.

The walls—the rough brick-work of which was smeared over with white-wash,—were covered with rude pictures, glaringly coloured and set in common black wooden frames. These pictures were such as are sold in low neighbourhoods for a few pence each, and representing scenes in the lives of remarkable highwaymen, murderers, and other criminals who had ended their days upon the scaffold. The progress of Jack Sheppard to the gibbet at Tyburn,—the execution of Jonathan Wild,—Turpin's ride to York,—Sawney Bean and his family feasting off human flesh in their cave,—Hunt and Thurtell throwing the body of Mr. Weare into the pond,—Corder murdering Maria Martin at the Red Barn,—James Greenacre cutting up the corpse of Hannah Brown,—such were the principal subjects of that Gallery of Human Enormity.

But as if these pictorial mementos of crime and violent death were not sufficient to gratify the strange taste of the occupants of that apartment, some hand, which was doubtless the agent of an imagination that loved to "sup full of horrors," had scrawled with a burnt stick upon the wall various designs of an equally terrific nature. Gibbets of all forms, and criminals in all the different stages of their last minutes in this life, were there represented. The ingenuity of the draughtsman had even suggested improvements in the usual modes of execution, and had delineated drops, halters, and methods of pinioning on new principles!

Every thing in that spacious loft savoured of the scaffold!

Oh! had the advocates of capital punishment but been enabled to glance upon that scene of horrors, they would have experienced a feeling of dire regret that any system which they had supported could have led to such an exhibition!

But to proceed.

On a rude board which served as a mantel over the grate, was a miniature gibbet, about eight inches high, and suspended to the horizontal beam of which was a mouse—most scientifically hung with a strong piece of pack-thread.

The large silver watch belonging to the principal inmate of the house was suspended to a horizontal piece of wood, with an oblique supporter, projecting from the wall above the fire-place.

In one corner of the room was a bed, over which flowed curtains of a coarse yellow material; and even these were suspended to a spar arranged and propped up like the arm of a gibbet.

A table, on which the supper things still remained, and half a dozen chairs, completed the contents of this strange room.

And now a few words relative to the inmates of that house.

The hump-backed lad who had rushed down the stairs in the manner already described, was about seventeen or eighteen years of age, and so hideously ugly that he scarcely seemed to belong to the human species. His hair was fiery red, and covered with coarse and matted curls a huge head that would not have been unsuitable for the most colossal form. His face was one mass of freckles; his eyes were of a pinkish hue; his eyebrows and lashes were white; and his large teeth glittered like dominoes between his thick and blueish lips. His arms were long like those of a baboon; but his legs were short; and he was not more than four feet and a half high. In spite of his hideous deformity and almost monstrous ugliness, there was an air of good-nature about him, combined with an evident consciousness of his own repulsive appearance, which could not do otherwise than inspire compassion—if not interest.

The moment the policeman, who entered the room first, made his appearance upon the threshold, a young female precipitated herself towards him, exclaiming, "For God's sake protect me—but do not, do not hurt my uncle!"

This girl was about sixteen years of age, and, though not beautiful, possessed a countenance whose plaintive expression was calculated to inspire deep interest in her behalf. She was tall, and of a graceful figure: her hair was light chesnut; her eyes dark blue, and with a deep melancholy characterising their bashful glances; her teeth were small, white, and even. Though clad in humble attire, there was something genteel in her appearance,—something superior to the place and society in which we now find her.

The man from whose cruel blows she implored protection, was of middle height, rather stoutly built, with a pale countenance, and an expression of stern hard-heartedness in his large grey eyes and compressed lips. He was dressed in a suit which evidently had never been made for him,—the blue frock coat being too long in the sleeves, the waistcoat too wide round the waist, and the trousers scarcely reaching below the knees.

"For God's sake protect me!" exclaimed the young girl, as above stated; "but do not—do not hurt my uncle," she added in a tone which proved the sincerity of the prayer.

"Come, come, Master Smithers," said the constable, "this won't do: you musn't alarm the neighbourhood in this manner."

"Why, then, does she interfere between me and Gibbet?" cried the man brutally, at the same time flourishing a thick leathern thong in his right hand.

"She does it out of good-nature, I suppose," observed the constable. "Every one knows how shameful you treat your son Gibbet; and this poor gal takes her cousin's part."

At these words the hump-back cast a timid but affectionate glance towards Katherine, who, on her part, threw a look of profound compassion upon the unfortunate lad.

"She does it out of good-nature, does she?" repeated the man: "then why won't he learn my business? He never can be fit for any other. But, no—the moment I leave him, he is off to the side of Miss there; and she makes him read in her outlandish books, so that he despises his father and the business that he *must* take to, sooner or later."

"But you ought not to beat Miss Katherine, Smithers," reiterated the policeman. "The next time I hear the cry of '*Murder*' in your house I 'll walk you off to the station—and that 's all about it."

"I suppose that I may leather my own son if I choose?" said the man, savagely.

"You ought to remember that he is deformed through your cruelty," cried the constable, "and that his mother died of fright and grief——"

"Hold your tongue, blue-bottle!" interrupted Smithers, his lips quivering with rage. "It isn't for you to come and make mischief in a family. Get out with you!"

"But if we leave this poor girl to the rage of her uncle," said Markham to the constable, whom he drew aside and thus addressed in a whisper, "he will do her some injury."

"What is to be done with her, sir?" demanded the officer. "Smithers says she is his niece——"

"Is it not certain that she stands in such a degree of relationship towards him?" inquired our hero, whose humane heart was moved in favour of the suffering girl.

"Now, then, what are you chattering about there?" ejaculated Smithers. "I want to go to bed: Gibbet, you be off to your room—and, Kate, you go to yours. This is mine—and I should advise the blue-bottle with his spy in plain clothes to make themselves scarce."

"Remember, I shall report you to our serjeant," said the policeman; "and he will tell the Division to keep an eye on you."

"Tell him whatever you like," returned the man doggedly.

The hump-back and Katherine had already left the room in obedience to the command of Smithers.

The constable repeated a caution to the ruffian who had ill-used them, and then took his departure, followed by Richard Markham.

When they were once more in the street, our hero said to his companion, "Who is that man?"

"The PUBLIC EXECUTIONER," was the reply.

CHAPTER CXXXIX.

THE CONFIDENCE.

So astounded was Markham by this information, that for some moments he was unable to utter a word.

"I see that you are surprised, sir," said the policeman; "but couldn't you guess where you was when you saw the room filled with gibbets, real or in pictures?"

"It never struck me who the owner of those terrific symbols might be," answered Richard. "I concluded that some man of morbid taste dwelt there; but not for one moment did I imagine that I was in the presence of the public executioner."

"Did you ever see such a horrible-looking object as his son is?" asked the policeman.

"Poor creature—he is greatly to be pitied! Surely his father cannot in reality have conferred upon him the name by which you called him?"

"I don't suppose that Gibbet is his real name, sir, but it is the only one I ever heard him called by. You see, sir, Smithers wishes to bring the lad up to the same line: he wants an assistant, and he thinks that Gibbet is old enough to help him. Besides, there 's plenty of work always after Assizes in the country; and the London hangman may get the jobs if he likes. He 's considered more skilful than any one else; and, after all, practice makes perfect. As it is, he is forced to refuse a good many offers, because he can't be here, there, and everywhere. Now if Gibbet would only take to the business kindly, he might help his father to earn a fortune!"

"But if the poor lad have a loathing for the horrible avocation—as well he may," observed Markham, with a shudder, "why should he be forced to embrace it?"

"Because he can never do himself good elsewhere," answered the constable. "Who will employ the son of Jack Ketch? Why, will you believe it, sir, that not a soul visits Smithers' family? Although he lives in this neighbourhood, where, God knows, people ain't over nice and partickler, not a human being would cross his threshold.'

"Does that aversion arise from disgust or superstition?" demanded Markham.

"From both, sir," was the reply. "The people that live in this district are of two kinds—the poor and ignorant, and the rogues and vagabonds. The poor and ignorant are afraid of the public executioner; and the rogues and vagabonds hate him, although he 's merely an instrument. Miss Kate goes to market for him; and the shop-keepers that know who she is, are scarcely civil to her. They seem as if they 'd rather she 'd keep away."

"And you say that she is the executioner's niece?" observed Markham.

"Smithers says so himself," was the reply; "and of course I know nothing to the contrary; but it does seem strange that so amiable, genteel, and clever, a young gal should belong to such a family!"

"Her own parents are dead, I presume?"

"Yes, sir,—she is an orphan. When Smithers is very dull and miserable with his lonely situation, he sometimes comes down to the station and has a chat with us constables; and then he 's pretty communicative. He told me one day that Katherine's parents had died when she was very young, and so he was compelled to take care of her. All the while she was a child Smithers let her do pretty well as she liked; and it is a wonder that she has turned out a good gal. But she regularly frequented the School established in the parish of Saint David's by the Rev. Mr. Tracy; and in that way she picked up a tolerable smattering of knowledge. Since then she 's instructed herself as much as she could, and has bought books with the little money that her needle has produced her."

"But who employs her as a sempstress, if, as you say, so terrible a stigma affixes itself to each member of the hangman's family?" inquired Richard.

"The old housekeeper at Mr. Tracy's is very

friendly disposed towards the poor creature, and gives her work," answered the policeman. "Katherine does all she can to console that poor humpback Gibbet; and she has taught him to read and write—aye, and what 's more, sir, to pray."

"Policeman," said Richard, after a pause, "the manner in which you have spoken relative to that poor girl, shows me that you have a good heart. Is there any mode of ameliorating her wretched situation? I feel the deepest compassion for her miserable lot; and all you have told me of her excellent character makes me anxious to see her removed from the vile society of that ruffian under whose roof she lives."

"I believe she is anxious to go out to service, sir, or open a little school," answered the constable; "but her family connection is against her. Or else I don't think that Smithers would care about parting with her."

"What induces you to suppose that such are her wishes?" asked Markham.

"Because she told me so, sir," was the reply. "One evening I went to Smithers' house, with a certain message from the Sheriff of London—you can guess what, I dare say——"

"To acquaint him with the day fixed for some wretch's execution, no doubt?"

"Precisely, sir; but Smithers wasn't at home, and so I sate down and waited for him. It wasn't in Jack Ketch's own room up stairs where we went just now, and where he teaches his son how to hang by means of that puppet; but it was in a little parlour they have got down stairs, and which Miss Kate keeps as clean and comfortable as if they saw no end of company. Well, I got talking to the young gal; and though she never said a single word against her uncle, but spoke of him in a grateful and kind manner, she let out that if he *could* spare her, she should like to earn her own bread by her own exertions. And then the poor creature burst out crying, and said, that no one would take her as a servant, and that she should get no scholars even if she was to open a school."

Markham made no answer; but he reflected profoundly on all that he had just heard.

"Poor gal!" continued the policeman, after a few moments' silence; "she don't deserve to suffer as she does. My beat is about this quarter: and I know pretty well all that 's going on. I see more than other people about here, because I 've opportunity and leisure. Besides, it 's my business. Well, sir, I can assure you that there isn't a more charitable or generous-hearted gal in all London than Miss Katherine. If a poor neighbour 's ill, it 's ten to one but some female muffled up in her shawl knocks at the door of the sick person's house, leaves a parcel, and runs away; and then there 's tea, and sugar, and gruel, for the invalid—and no one knows who brought it, or where it comes from. Or if a family 's in want, the baker calls with bread that 's paid for, but won't say who sent it. Or may be it 's the butcher with a small joint—but always sent in the same quiet manner. Then, while the poor creatures whose hearts are made glad by this unlooked-for charity, are wondering whether it was the parson, or the parson's wife, or this benevolent gentleman, or that good lady, who sent the things, Kate buries herself in her room, and doesn't even think that she has done any thing out of the way."

"Is this possible?" cried Markham.

"I know it, sir—for I 've seen her do it all," answered the policeman, "when she couldn 't see me and little thought that any body noticed her."

"And she the niece of the public executioner!" exclaimed Richard: "a pearl concealed in this horrible swamp!"

The conversation between Markham and the good-hearted constable was cut short by the sudden appearance of the other two policemen, who had undertaken to visit the low houses in Plumptre Street.

"Well, what news?" asked Richard's companion.

"None," was the reply. "We have been in every flash crib down yonder, and can't hear or see any thing of the Resurrection Man."

"Then we must abandon the search for to-night, I presume," said Richard. "The clock has struck one, and I begin to be wearied of this fruitless ramble."

"We will exert ourselves to discover the miscreant that blew up our comrades in Bethnal Green," observed the constable who had been our hero's companion that night. "Should we succeed in capturing him, sir, where can I wait upon you to communicate the tidings?"

"My name is Markham," was the reply, "and I live at Holloway. If you discover the villain Anthony Tidkins, lose not a moment in making me acquainted with the circumstance."

Richard then rewarded the three constables liberally for the trouble they had taken; and ere he parted from them, he drew aside the one who had been his companion.

"My good fellow," he said, slipping an additional sovereign into his hand, "you have too kind a heart for the situation which you fill. Should you ever require a friend, hesitate not to come to me."

"And should you, sir, ever need the humble aid of Morris Benstead, you know the Division I belong to, and a note to the chief station will always command my attention."

Markham thanked the officer for his civility, and then struck into the nearest street leading from the Holy Land to Tottenham Court Road, where he hoped to find a vehicle to take him home.

But scarcely had he proceeded twenty paces, when he heard hasty footsteps behind him; and, turning round, was accosted by a man whose slouched hat almost entirely shaded his countenance.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the man; "but I heard you mention two names a few moments ago that are familiar to me."

"Indeed!" cried our hero, surprised at this strange mode of address.

"Yes:—I was lurking in a court, and I heard you say that you were Mr. Richard Markham," resumed the man: "and you mentioned a certain Anthony Tidkins."

"I did. Do you know him?" demanded Richard.

"But too well," answered the man bitterly.

"Who are you?" inquired Markham.

"No matter who I am: I know *you*—and I know *him*. I was in a certain place at the same time that you were there; though we were not in the same ward. But I heard all about you *then*; and when you mentioned your name just now, I felt sure you was the same person. Has Tidkins ever injured you?"

"Cruelly," replied Richard. "But I am not influenced by petty motives of revenge: I am anxious to deliver a monster into the grasp of justice."

"And what should you say if you heard that Tidkins was beyond your reach in this world?"

"I should rejoice that society was relieved from such a fiend."

"Then I think that I can make your mind easy on that score," said the man.

"What do you mean?" cried Richard, eagerly.

"I mean that this hand has done the law's work," responded the stranger.

"You mean—you mean that you yourself have acted the part of an avenger?" said Markham.

"Precisely what I *do* mean: in plain terms, I 've killed him."

"My God! and you tell me this so coolly!" exclaimed Richard. "Whatever that man's crimes may be, you are not the less a murderer!"

"Pooh—pooh! I should have thought you'd more pluck than to talk in this way. What does it matter whether Jack Ketch or a private enemy did the job?"

"Where did this happen? when?—how long ago?" inquired Markham, not knowing whether to believe the statement thus strangely made to him, or not.

"If you really wish to know all about it" said the man, "step up this court, where we can talk in peace, and I will tell you. What! you think I am going to hurt you too? Well, be it so. Good night—or rather good morning."

At that moment Saint Giles's Church struck two.

"Stay," cried Richard, catching the man by the arm: "I will accompany you."

They walked together into a dark court, our hero keeping himself in readiness to resist any sudden hostility, were such a proceeding intended.

But the man appeared to have no such aim in view, for, leaning himself tranquilly against the wall, he said, "Can you keep a secret?"

"If I promise to do so," answered Richard.

"Then promise not to betray what I am going to tell you."

"I promise," said Markham, after some hesitation.

"You must know," continued the man, satisfied with this assurance, "that I have lately partaken

of the hospitality of a race of persons, at whose head-quarters—not a hundred miles from where we are now standing—I met Anthony Tidkins——"

"When?" demanded Richard impatiently.

"About two hours ago."

"Ah! then it may be true——"

"True! what interest have I to tell you a lie? I have been some time in search of that villain; and accident threw us together to-night. This dagger——" here he took Markham's hand, and made him feel the point of the elastic poniard,—"this dagger drank his life's best blood!"

Richard could not suppress an ejaculation of horror.

The assassin laughed.

"Unhappy man," said our hero, "are you not aware that your life may be forfeited on account of this deed?"

"And this good blade should reach the heart of any one that attempted to take me," was the resolute and indeed significant reply.

"I promised to betray nothing that you might communicate to me, and I shall keep my word," rejoined Markham, in a firm tone, and without retreating a single step. "Did I wish to forfeit my pledge, your dagger would not intimidate me."

"You are a brave fellow," cried the stranger; "and all brave men may be trusted. Would you like to satisfy yourself, with your own eyes, that Anthony Tidkins has received his death wound?"

"I should," answered Markham; "both on my own account and on that of society."

"And you will not betray the place that I shall take you to, or the people that you may see there?"

"Most solemnly will I keep your secret."

"Come with me, then. I will leave you at the door; and your own ingenuity must obtain you admittance. But, one word more: you will not state to any one there that you have met me?"

"I will not even allow my motive for visiting the place you speak of to transpire."

"I believe all you say. Come!"

The man led the way out of the court, accompanied by our hero.

They threaded several narrow streets and alleys, and at length stopped at the door of a large house.

"Knock, and demand shelter: admittance will not, I fancy, be refused."

"Is there any danger to be encountered?" asked Markham: "not that I fear it—but I am unarmed."

"There is no danger. This is the head-quarters of the Gipsies, or Zingarees: they never use the dagger or the pistol. And, once more, remember your promise."

"I shall not forget it," said Richard. "But, before we separate, answer me one question."

"Speak—and be speedy," returned the man.

"In one word, then, why, when you overheard my conversation with the policeman, did you resolve upon making me the confidant of a deed which might send you to the scaffold?"

"Because I am proud of that deed," replied the man, grasping Richard forcibly by the wrist, and grinding his teeth in horrible triumph;—"because it is the result of four years of pent-up yearning after vengeance;—because, in avenging myself, I have avenged all who have suffered through that miscreant;—because I am anxious that those who have been injured by him should know the fate that has overtaken him at last."

With these words, Crankey Jem (whom the reader has doubtless already recognised) disappeared precipitately from the spot.

CHAPTER CXL.

INCIDENTS IN THE GIPSY PALACE.

For a few moments Richard remained rooted to the spot where the returned convict had left him. He was uncertain how to proceed.

Warned by the desperate adventure which had nearly cost him his life at Twig Folly, he feared lest the present occurrence might be another scheme of the Resurrection Man to ensnare him.

Then he reflected that the individual who had just left him, had met him accidentally, and had narrated to him circumstances which had every appearance of truth.

We have before said that Markham was not a coward—far from it; and he moreover experienced a lively curiosity to satisfy himself concerning the fate of an individual whose inveterate malignity had so frequently menaced not only his dearest interests, but his life.

This reflection decided him; and, without farther hesitation, he knocked boldly at the front door of the Gipsies' Palace.

Some minutes elapsed ere his summons appeared to have created any attention within; and he was about to repeat it, when the door slowly moved on its hinges.

But to Markham's surprise no person appeared in the obscure lobby into which the pale moon threw a fitful light; in fact, the front door was opened by means of a simple mechanism which the porter worked in his lodge overhead.

While Markham was lost in wonder at this strange circumstance, the trap was suddenly raised above, and a strong light was thrown through it into the lobby.

"Who are you?" demanded the gruff voice of the porter.

"I seek a few hours' repose and rest," answered Markham.

"Who sent you here?"

"A person who is a friend to you."

"Do you know what place this is?"

"Yes—it is the head-quarters of the Zingarees."

"So far, so good," said the porter. "Well—wait a few moments—I must see."

The trap closed—the lobby was again involved in total darkness; and for the next ten minutes the silence of death appeared to reign within the house.

At the expiration of that time the inner door was opened: and the porter, bearing a light, appeared.

"You may enter," he said. "The Zingarees never refuse hospitality when it can be safely granted."

Markham crossed the threshold without hesitation.

The porter closed both doors with great care.

"Follow me," said the man.

He then led the way up stairs to the first floor, and conducted our hero into a room where there were several beds, all of which were unoccupied.

"You have your choice of the downies," observed

the porter, with a half smile; "and I shall leave you this light. Do you require any food?"

"None, I thank you."

"So I should think," said the man drily, as he surveyed Markham's appearance in a manner which seemed to express a wonder why a person in his situation of life had come thither at all.

We have, however, before observed that curiosity formed but a faint feature of the gipsy character; and, even when it existed, it was not expressed in verbal queries. Moreover, individuals in a respectable sphere not unfrequently sought in the Holy Land a refuge against the officers of the laws which they violated; and hence the appearance of a person had nothing to do with the fact of admission into the gipsies' establishment.

Nevertheless, the porter did survey Markham in a dubious way for a moment; but whether the preceding incidents of the night, or the calm tranquillity of our hero's manner,—so inconsistent with the idea that he was anxious to conceal himself from the eyes of justice,—excited the suspicions of the porter, it is impossible to say.

But that glance of curiosity was only momentary.

Averting his eyes from our hero, the porter placed the light upon the floor, wished him a good night's rest, and retired.

But to the surprise and annoyance of Markham, the gipsy locked the door of the apartment.

As the key turned with a grating sound, a tremor crept over Richard's frame; and he almost repented having sought the interior of an abode the character and inmates of which were almost entirely unknown to him. Indeed, all that he knew of either was derived from the meagre information of the man (and that man an acknowledged assassin!) who had induced him to visit the place where he now found himself.

"How weak I am to yield to this sentiment of fear!" he exclaimed. "Rather let me determine how to act."

He proceeded to examine the room in which he appeared to be a prisoner. The numerous beds seemed to indicate that he really was in a species of barrack, or lodging-house of some kind; and this circumstance, coupled with the fact that the porter who had admitted him was evidently a member of the Egyptian or Bohemian race, reassured him—for he felt convinced that he was actually in the abode of gipsies.

So far the stranger, who had been the means of his visit to that strange tenement, had not deceived him.

But how was he to satisfy himself in regard to the Resurrection Man? He tried the door—it was indeed fastened: he examined the windows—they were not barred, but were of a dangerous height from the back-yard on which they looked.

Markham paced the room uncertain how to act.

Suddenly his reverie was interrupted by the tread of many steps upon the stairs; and then a species of subdued bustle took place throughout the house.

The whispering of voices—the removal of heavy objects overhead—the running of persons hither and thither—and the opening and shutting of doors, announced that some extraordinary movement was taking place.

Richard listened with breathless anxiety.

At length the sounds of several heavy steps, in the landing outside his door, met his ears; and this noise was at short intervals varied by deep groans.

The groans seemed to accompany the tread of the heavy steps just mentioned.

These steps and those expressions of human suffering grew fainter and fainter, as they descended the stairs, until at length they were no longer audible.

Nevertheless Markham kept his ear fixed to the key-hole of his chamber-door.

Silence now once more reigned throughout the house; but in a few minutes the noise and bustle seemed to have been transferred to the yard.

Richard hurried to the window; but the moon had gone down and the darkness without was intense.

He concealed the light in a corner of the room, and then gently raised one of the windows.

But he could distinguish nothing with his eyes; and the sounds that met his ears were those of footsteps bustling to and fro. At length these ceased: a door was closed at the end of the yard; and almost immediately afterwards Richard heard, in the same direction, the rumbling noise of a vehicle moving heavily away.

When that din had ceased, the most profound tranquillity prevailed not only in the house but also in its neighbourhood.

That silence was interrupted only for a few moments by the sonorous bell of St. Giles's Church, proclaiming the hour of three.

"Time wears on," said Markham impatiently; "and no opportunity of satisfying myself upon the one point seems to present itself. To attempt to seek repose is impossible: to pass the dull hours in supense like this is intolerable!"

Then he seated himself on one of the beds, and considered what course he should pursue.

Slowly—slowly passed the time; and though he revolved in his mind many plans, he could fix upon none.

At length the clock struck four.

"The hour for departure will come, and I shall leave this house as full of doubt and uncertainty as when I entered it!" he ejaculated, starting up.

His eye chanced to fall upon a long nail in the wall opposite to the bed from which he had just risen.

A scheme which had already suggested itself to his mind, now assumed a feasible aspect:—he knew that the door was only locked, and not bolted; and that nail seemed to promise the means of egress.

He, however, first examined the candle which had been left him, and which still burned in the corner where he had concealed it:—to his joy he found that there was an inch remaining.

"With the assurance of light for another half hour, and good courage," he said to himself, "I may yet accomplish my purpose."

Having extracted the nail from the wall, he proceeded to pick the lock of the room-door—an operation which he successfully achieved in a few minutes.

Without a moment's hesitation, he issued from the room, bearing the candle in his hand.

As he crossed the landing towards the staircase, which he resolved to ascend, his foot came in contact with some object.

He picked it up: it was an old greasy pocket-book, tied loosely round with a coarse string, and as Markham raised it, a letter dropped out.

Richard was in the act of replacing the document in the pocket-book, which he intended to leave upon the stairs, so as to attract the notice of the inmates of the house, when the address on the outside of the letter caught his eyes.

The candle nearly fell from his hand, so great was the astonishment which immediately seized upon him.

That address consisted simply of the words "ANTHONY TIDKINS!"—but the handwriting—Oh! there was no possibility of mistaking *that!* Markham knew it so well; and though years had elapsed since he had last seen it, still it was familiar to him as his own—the more so, as it remained unchanged in style;—for it was the writing of his brother Eugene!

With a hasty but trembling hand he opened the letter, the wafer of which had already been broken;—he did not hesitate to read the contents;—judging by his own frank and generous heart, he conceived that such a licence was permitted between brothers. Moreover, he experienced a profound and painful anxiety to ascertain what link could connect his brother with the terrible individual to whom the letter was addressed.

But all that the letter contained was this:—

"Come to me to-night without fail, between eleven and twelve. Knock in the usual manner."

Richard examined the handwriting with the most minute attention; and the longer he scrutinized it, the more he became confirmed in his belief that it was Eugene's.

But Eugene a patron or colleague of the greatest miscreant that had ever disgraced human nature! Was such a thing possible?

The letter bore no date—no signature—and was addressed from no place. It had no post-mark upon it, and had, therefore, evidently been delivered by a private hand.

"Oh!" thought Richard within himself, "if my unhappy brother have really been the victim, the associate, or the employer of that incarnate demon, may God grant that the wretch is indeed no more—for the sake of Eugene!"

And then his curiosity to ascertain the truth relative to the alleged assassination of Tidkins, became more poignant.

"It must be so!" reasoned Markham within himself; "that stranger has not deceived me:—the presence of this pocket-book here is an undeniable trace of the miscreant. Oh, how much it now behoves me to convince myself that he is indeed removed from the theatre of his crimes!"

Subduing as much as possible the painful emotions which that letter had suddenly excited within him, Markham secured the pocket-book about his person; for now that accident had revealed to him to whom it belonged, he did not consider himself called upon to part with an object which, in case the statement of Tidkins' death should prove untrue, might contain some paper calculated to afford a clue to his haunts or proceedings.

Scarcely decided in what manner to pursue his investigation in that house, and trusting more to accident than to any settled plan to aid him in testing the truth of the self-accused stranger's statement relative to Tidkins,—Markham stole softly up the staircase.

Arrived on the first landing to which it led, he listened attentively at the various doors which opened from it.

All was silent as death within the rooms to which those doors belonged.

Not even the sound of human respiration met his ears. Could it be possible that the house was deserted? Perhaps the bustle which he had heard ere now was caused by the departure of its occupants?

As this idea grew upon him, he was emboldened to try the latch of one of the doors at which he had already listened. It yielded to his hand: he pushed the door open with great caution, and entered the chamber.

Not a human soul was there.

He visited the other rooms upon that landing, the doors of which were all unlocked: and they were alike untenanted.

There was another storey above; and thither he proceeded.

The first three rooms which he entered were empty, like the preceding ones; but in the fourth there were three men. They were, however, fast asleep in their beds; and Richard's visit was so noiseless that they were not in the least disturbed.

Hastily retreating, and closing the door carefully behind him, Markham descended to the landing on which his own room opened, and where he had found the pocket-book.

On that floor were four apartments, as on each of the upper flats, in addition to the porter's lodge, which, it will be remembered, was precisely over the lobby below.

To avoid elaborate detail, we may state that Markham found the doors of the other three rooms (besides his own) on the first floor unlocked, and the chambers themselves untenanted.

He was about to leave the last room, when the appearance of one of the beds attracted his attention; and on a closer examination, he perceived that it was saturated with blood. Moreover, on a chair close by, there were pieces of linen rag, on which large stains of gore were scarcely dry, together with lint and bandages—unquestionable proofs that a wound had very recently been dressed in that apartment.

"No—that self-accuser has not deceived me!" thought Markham, as he contemplated these objects. "All circumstances combine to bear evidence to the truth of his assertion! Doubtless the gipsies have departed, carrying away the corpse with them!"

He stood gazing on the blood-dyed bed at his feet musing in this manner; and then he thought how fearful was the fate of the miscreant, the evidences of whose death he believed to be beneath his eyes, cut off in the midst of his crimes without a moment's preparation or repentance!

But suddenly he asked himself—"Am I certain that he is no more? That lint to stanch the blood—those bandages to bind the wound,—do they not rather bear testimony to a blow which was not fatal, but left life behind it? And yet, for what purpose could the body be removed—save for secret interment? Oh! if that man be yet alive—and if Eugene be indeed his accomplice or his patron——"

And Markham experienced emotions of the most intense anguish! He loved his brother with the most ardent affection; and the idea that the individual so loved could be a criminal, or the friend of criminals, was harrowing to his soul.

"But, after all," thought Richard, his naturally

upright and almost severe principles asserting their empire in his mind,—"after all, ought I not to rejoice, if this man be indeed still alive, that he has survived the assassin's blow—that he is allowed leisure for repentance! My Maker, who can read all hearts, knows that I am not selfish; and yet it is a principle of our frail human nature to rejoice at the fall of a deadly enemy! Oh! when I think of all the wrongs and injuries I have experienced at the hands of that man,—exposures—persecutions—attempts upon my life,—I cannot pray that he may live to be the scourge of others—and perhaps of my brother—as he has been of me!"

Unwilling to contend longer with the varied emotions which agitated his breast, Markham hurried from the room.

The lower part of the house yet remained to be explored:—perhaps the body—if the Resurrection Man were indeed dead—had been removed to a room on the ground floor?

Determined to leave no stone unturned to satisfy his doubts, Markham cautiously descended the stairs, and visited the refectory-rooms, one after the other.

They were all empty.

His candle was now waxing dim; but he saw that his search was nearly over. A flight of steps, apparently leading to offices in the basement of the building, alone remained for him to visit.

To that part of the house he descended, and found himself in a small place which had the appearance of a scullery.

On one side was a massive door, secured with huge bolts, and evidently leading into a vault or cellar. But scarcely had Markham time to cast one glance around him in the subterranean, when the candle flickered and expired.

At the same moment a hollow groan echoed through the basement.

Richard started: he was in total darkness—and a momentary tremor came over him.

The groan was repeated.

His fears vanished; and he immediately concluded that the Resurrection Man, wounded and suffering, must be somewhere near.

At that idea, all sentiments of aversion, hatred, and abhorrence,—all reminiscence of injury and wrong, fled from the mind of that generous-hearted young man: he thought only that a fellow-creature was in anguish and in pain—perhaps neglected, and left to die without a soul to administer consolation!

Reckless of the danger which he might incur by alarming the inmates of the house, he determined upon rousing the porter in order to obtain a light.

He turned from the scullery, and was rushing up the stone steps in pursuance of his humane intention, when he suddenly came in violent contact with a person who was descending the same stairs.

CHAPTER CXLI.

THE SUBTERRANEAN.

The violence of the concussion threw Richard backwards; and in a moment he felt the rough hand of a man grasp him by the throat.

"Who is it?" was the demand simultaneously put to him.

"I will answer you when we are on equal terms," replied Markham; and, hurling the man away from him, he sprang upon his feet. "Now—stand off," he cried; "for I am not to be injured with impunity."

"I don't want to injure you," said the man. "But who are you? I know by your voice that you're not one of us."

"You then are an inmate of this house?" observed Markham, fencing with the other's question.

At that instant another hollow groan echoed through the subterranean.

"She lives!" cried the man; and in another moment Markham heard him drawing back the bolts of the massive door which he had observed in the scullery.

Richard groped his way towards him, and said, "*She lives?* whom do you allude to? Surely there cannot be a female imprisoned——"

"Be silent, in the name of heaven!" interrupted the man, in a whisper. "The life of an unhappy woman depends upon your secrecy—whoever you may be."

"Then would I rather aid than harm you and her, both," answered Markham.

Another groan was heard; and Richard could now distinguish the direction from which it came.

But still the massive door remained unopened.

"This bolt,—this bolt!" muttered the man in a tone expressive of commingled rage and despair. "Oh! for a light!"

"Can you not procure one?" demanded Richard.

"Stay," said the man—"a good thought! There should be candles somewhere here—and matches. By Jove! here is a candle—and, on this shelf—yes—here are matches also!"

The man struck a light.

By a natural impulse he and Markham immediately cast scrutinising glances at each other.

"Ah! I thought so by your voice—you are a gentleman," said the man: "then you will not betray me?"

"Betray you!" repeated Markham, surprised at this observation.

"I will tell you what I mean presently: there is no time to be lost! Hark—another groan: she is dying!"

The man, who was tall and good-looking, and evidently not a scion of the Bohemian race—gave Markham the candle, and proceeded to open the massive door, the presence of the light enabling him to remove the fastenings with ease.

He then beckoned Richard to follow him into the cellar, where he instantly set to work to draw the bolts of a second door.

This task was speedily accomplished; and as the door grated upon its hinges, another heart-wrung moan emanated from the interior of the second vault.

The man rushed in; Markham followed with the light, and beheld a woman stretched almost lifeless upon the mattress.

The groans had all along emanated from her lips:—then where was the Resurrection Man?

"Margaret—cheer up—it 's me—it 's Skilligalee—I 'm come to save you," said the protector of the Rattlesnake as he bent over her.

"How long has she been immured here?" inquired Markham.

"Only three or four hours," answered Skilligalee;

"and so it must be fright that has half killed her. Pray get some water, sir—there 's plenty in the scullery."

Markham hastened to comply with this request; and Skilligalee bathed the woman's face with the refreshing element.

She opened her eyes, and a smile came over her faded countenance as she caught sight of the friendly face that greeted her fearful glance.

"How long have I been here?" asked the Rattlesnake in a faint tone, while her whole frame was convulsed with terror as recent events rushed to her mind.

"Not many hours, Meg," answered Skilligalee.

"And you will not leave me here any longer?" she said. "Oh! do not let me die in this horrible place!"

"I am come to save you," returned Skilligalee. "Are you able to get up and walk?"

"Yes—for the sake of freedom," cried the Rattlesnake, rising from the mattress. "But who is that?" she added, as her eyes now fell upon Markham for the first time.

"That 's exactly what I don't know myself," said Skilligalee. "The gentleman has, however, behaved himself as such; and that 's enough for us. Hark! there 's the clock on the staircase striking five? We have n't much time to lose: come on."

Markham led the way with the light: Skilligalee followed, supporting the Rattlesnake, who was weak and exhausted with the effects of extreme terror.

"Which way shall we go?" she inquired, as they paused for a moment in the scullery, to listen if all were quiet.

"By the back gate," answered Skilligalee. "I have secured the key. The porter keeps the keys of the front door."

"And what has become of *him*—that dreadful man who was the cause of all this misery?" asked the Rattlesnake. "Was he killed by the blow that the Traveller dealt him with his long dagger?"

These words struck a chord which vibrated to Markham's heart.

"Was any one wounded in this house during the night?" he demanded hastily.

Skilligalee hesitated: he knew not who Markham was, nor what might be the consequences of a reply consistent with the truth.

"Answer me, I conjure you," continued Richard, perceiving this unwillingness to satisfy his curiosity. "I have every reason to believe that a person whose name is Anthony Tidkins——"

"Oh! yes—yes," murmured the Rattlesnake, with a convulsive shudder.

"Then I have not been deceived!" cried Markham. "That individual, who is better known as the Resurrection Man, was dangerously wounded—if not killed—in this house a few hours since. "You," he continued, addressing himself to Skilligalee, "are evidently acquainted with the particulars of the occurrence: as I have assisted you to liberate this woman who seems dear to you, reward me by telling me all you know of that event."

"First tell me who you are," said Skilligalee. "And be quick—I have no time for conversation."

"Suffice it for you to know that I am one whom the Resurrection Man has cruelly injured. Twice has he attempted my life: once at his den in Bethnal Green, and again on the banks of the canal at Twig Folly——"

"Then you, sir, are Mr. Markham?" interrupted the Rattlesnake. "Oh! I know how you have been treated by that fearful man; and there is no necessity to conceal the truth from you! Yes—sir, it is true that the wretch who has persecuted you was stabbed in this house; and—if I did not believe that the wound was mortal——"

Here the Rattlesnake stopped, and leant heavily upon Skilligalee for support—so profoundly was she terrified at the mere possibility of Anthony Tidkins being still in existence.

Her companion perceived her emotion, and fathoming its cause, hastened to exclaim, "But he is no more! You need dread him no longer."

"Are you sure? are you well convinced of this?" demanded Markham.

"I saw him breathe his last," was the answer.

"Where? Not in this house?" cried Richard.

"No," returned Skilligalee. "Between two and three this morning the King, his family, and all the Zingarees, except those who stay to take care of this establishment, took their departure; and I was compelled to go along with them. In consequence of some communication between the person you call the Resurrection Man and Aischa, the Queen of the Zingarees, after he was badly wounded by the Traveller——"

"How do you call the individual who attacked him?" demanded Richard.

"The Traveller," answered the Skilligalee. "But, it appears, that he had another name—Crankey Jem: at least, he said so after he had stabbed the man."

"I should know that name," said Richard, musing. "Oh! I remember! Proceed."

"Well—in consequence of something that the Resurrection Man told Aischa, when she was attending to his wound, it was determined to take him along with us; and four of our men carried him down to the van which was waiting at the back gate. He groaned very much while he was being removed."

"I heard him," said Richard, instantaneously recalling to mind the groans which had met his ears when he was listening at his chamber door to the bustle of the gipsies' departure.

"You heard him?" repeated Skilligalee.

"Yes—I was in the house at the time. Proceed."

"We conveyed him down to the van, where we laid him on a mattress, and he seemed to fall asleep. Then we all divided into twos and threes, and got safe out of London, into a field near the Pentonville Penitentiary. But when the van, with Aischa, Eva, and Morcar,—those are some of our people, sir,—came to the place of appointment, we found," added Skilligalee, his voice assuming a peculiar tone, "that the Resurrection Man was dead."

"God be thanked!" ejaculated the Rattlesnake, with a fervour which made Markham's blood run cold.

"And now that I have told you all I know, sir," said Skilligalee, "you will have no objection if me and my companion here go about our business; for it is dangerous to both our interests to remain here any longer."

Skilligalee uttered these words in his usually jocular manner; for he was anxious to re-assure his female companion, who still laboured under an

excess of terror that seemed ready to prostrate all her energies.

"Yes—let us leave this fearful den," said Markham: "to me it appears replete with horrors of all kinds."

"Skilligalee now took the candle and led the way, still supporting Margaret Flathers on his arm.

They all three effected their egress from the palace without any obstacle.

When they were safe in the alley with which the back gate communicated, Markham said to Skilligalee, "From what I can understand, you have fled from the gipsies in order to return and liberate your companion from the dungeon where we found her."

"That is precisely what I did," answered Skilligalee. "I gave them the slip when they had set up their tents in the field near the Penitentiary."

"It is probable that you are not too well provided with pecuniary resources," said Richard: "the contents of my purse are at your service."

"Thank you kindly, sir—very kindly," returned Skilligalee. "I am not in want of such assistance."

Markham vainly pressed his offer: it was declined with many expressions of gratitude. The truth was that Skilligalee had the greater portion of his share of Margaret's gold still remaining; and there was something so generous and so noble in the manner of Richard Markham, that he could not find it in his heart to impose upon him by taking a sum of which he did not stand in immediate need.

"At all events, let me advise you to avoid such companions as those with whom you appear to have been allied," observed Richard, "and who are cruel enough to immure a female in a subterranean dungeon."

"I shall not neglect your advice, sir," returned Skilligalee; "and may God bless you for it."

"And you," continued Richard, addressing himself to Margaret Flathers, "second your companion in his good intentions. I know not what deed on your part could have led to your incarceration in that cell—neither do I seek to know;—but to you I would give similar advice—avoid those whose ways are criminal, and whose vengeance is as terrific as it is lawless. Farewell."

"May God bless you, sir, for your good counsel!" said Margaret Flathers, weeping.

She had not merely repeated, with parrot-like callousness, the words uttered by her companion: that benediction emanated with fervid sincerity from a heart deeply penetrated by anxiety to renew a long-forgotten acquaintance with rectitude.

"Farewell, sir," said Skilligalee.

He and the Rattlesnake then struck into one of the streets with which the alley at the back of the gipsies' palace communicated.

Richard took another direction on his way homewards.

CHAPTER CXLII.

GIBBET.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the incidents just related.

It was a Monday morning.

The clock of St. Giles's had just struck six, when the faint, flickering gleam of a candle struggled through the uppermost windows of the hangman's house.

The few persons who were passing along at that hour, and on that dark winter's morning, shuddered as they caught a glimpse of the sickly glare through the obscurity and the mist—for they thought within themselves, "The executioner is up early on account of the man that's to be hanged at eight o'clock."

And such was indeed the case.

Smithers rose shortly before six; and, having lighted the solitary candle that stood upon the mantel, proceeded to the floor below to call his son.

"Gibbet, you lazy hound!" he cried, thundering with his fist at the door of the hump-back's room; "get up."

"I'm getting up, father," replied the lad, from the interior of the chamber.

"Well, make haste about it," said the executioner in a savage tone.

He then returned to the loft.

There was something horribly fantastic in the appearance of that place. The dim and sickly light of the candle did but little more than redeem from complete obscurity the various strange objects which we have already described. But as the penetrating eye of the executioner plunged into the visible darkness of the loft, and beheld the ominous figure balancing beneath the beam, while its mask of a livid white hue wore a ghastly appearance in contrast with the black body and limbs which it surmounted,—no sentiment of horror nor of alarm agitated his heart.

The avocations of the man had brutalized him, and blunted every humane feeling which he had once possessed.

He walked up and down the room impatiently for several minutes, until the door opened and his son entered.

The hideous countenance of the lad was ghastly pale, and distorted with horror. His eyes glared fearfully, as if terrific apparitions flitted before them.

"Gibbet," said his father, "you shall try your hand this morning on a living being instead of a puppet."

"This morning!" repeated the lad, his teeth chattering, and his knees knocking together.

"To be sure. Didn't I tell you so last night?" cried the executioner. "Why, you hump-backed scoundrel, you—you ought to have prayed that no reprieve might be sent for the chap that's to be tucked up this morning, instead of working yourself up to this state of cowardly nervousness. But I'll take it out of you, I will."

With these words, Smithers seized his leathern thong, and was advancing towards the hump-back, when the wretched lad threw himself on his knees, clasped his hands together, and cried, "No,—don't, father—don't! I can't bear that lash! You don't know how it hurts:—I'll do all you tell me."

"Well, that's speaking proper—that is," said the executioner, dropping the already uplifted thong. "It's all for your good that I use it now and then, Gibbet. Don't I want to make a man of you? Look at the money you can earn if you'll only make yourself a name like me. D'ye think the sheriffs throughout England would all apply to me to do their work for them, if I was n't celebrated for my skill? Why—even the criminals themselves must look upon it as a regular blessing to have such a

knowing hand as me to tie their last cravat for them. I 'd bet a pound that the man who 's to be turned off presently, is n't half as miserable as people think—'cos why, he 's well aware that I shan't put him to no pain."

"I know you 've got a great name in your business, father——"

"We 'll call it *profession* in future, Gibbet; it 's more genteel. And, after all, it 's as good as a barrister's; for the barrister gets the man hanged—and I hang him. That 's all the difference."

"I know it 's very respectable, father," resumed the lad, submissively; "but—still—I——"

"Still what?" cried Smithers, savagely, and taking up the thong again.

"Nothing—nothing, father," faltered Gibbet.

"So much the better. Now come to the model, and take and pinion the figure—'cos that 's what I mean you to do presently down at Newgate. Begin by degrees, as the saying is; you shall pinion this man to day; you shall let the drop fall for the next—and you shall put the halter on the one that comes arter him, whoever he may be."

"Must I—pin—in—ion the man this morning, father?" inquired the lad, the workings of whose countenance were now absolutely terrific.

"Must you? Of course you must," answered Smithers. "Why, what the devil are you snivelling at now? I 'd wager a crown to a brass farthin' that there 's many a young nobleman who 'd give fifty pounds to be able to do it. Look how they hire the winders opposite Newgate! Lord bless their souls, it does me good to think that the aristocracy and gentry patronises hanging as well as the other fine arts. What would become of the executioners if they didn't? Why—the legislature would abolish capital punishment at once."

Gibbet clasped his hands together, and raised his eyes in an imploring manner, as much as to say, "Oh! how I wish they would!"

Fortunately for him, his father did not perceive this expression of emotion, for the executioner had approached the candle to the model-gallows, and was now busily occupied in arranging the figure for his son's practice.

"I 'll tell you who are the patrons of my business—profession, I mean," continued the executioner; "and if you had a grain of feeling for your father, you 'd go down on your knees night and morning and pray for them. The old Tories and the Clergy are my friends; and, thank God! I 'm a stanch Tory, too. I hate changes. What have changes done? Why swept away the good old laws that used to hang a man for stealing anything above forty shillings. Ah! George the Third was the best king we ever had! He used to tuck 'em up—three, four, five, six—aye, seven at once! Folks may well talk of the good old times—when an executioner could make his twenty or thirty guineas of a morning! I 'd sooner take two guineas for each man under such an excellent system, than have the ten pounds as I do now."

While Smithers was thus talking, he had lowered the figure until it stood upon the drop. He then took off the halter; but the puppet still retained its upright position, because it was well stiffened and had heavy plates of lead fastened to the soles of its feet.

"Now what a cry the rascally radical Sunday papers make against the people they call the *saints*," continued Smithers, as he unfastened the cord which pinioned the arms of the puppet; "and yet those very *saints* are the ones that are most in favour of punishment of death. For my part, I adore the *saints*—I do. When Fitzmorris Shelley brought forward his measure to do away with capital penalty, didn't Dinglis and Cherrytree and all those pious men make a stand against him? And don't they know what 's right and proper? Of course they do! Ah! I never read so much of House of Commons' business before, as I did then:—but I was in a precious fright, it 's true. I thought of calling a public meeting of all the executioners in the kingdom to petition Parliament against the measure; but I didn't do it—because the House of Commons might have thought that we was interested."

Smithers paused for a moment, and contemplated the puppet and the model-gallows with great admiration. He had fashioned the one and built the latter himself; and he was not a little proud of his handiwork.

"Now, come, Gibbet," he at length exclaimed; "it 's all ready. Do you hear me, you infernal hump-back?"

"And if I am a hump-back, father," returned the lad, bursting into tears, "you know——"

"What?" cried the executioner his countenance assuming an expression truly ferocious.

"You know that it is n't my fault," added the unfortunate youth, shrinking from the glance of his savage parent.

"None of this nonsense, Gibbet," said the man, a little softened by the reminiscence that he himself had made his son the object of the very reproach levelled against his personal deformity. "Come and try your hand at this work for a few minutes before breakfast; and then we 'll go down yonder together."

Gibbet approached the model-gallows; but his countenance still denoted the most profoundly-rooted disgust and abhorrence.

"Let 's suppose that the culprit is as yet in his own cell, Gibbet," continued the executioner. "Well, it 's time to pinion him, we 'll say; there 's the sheriffs standing there—and here 's the chaplain. Now, you go for'ard and begin."

Gibbet took the whip-cord which his father handed to him.

"That 's right. Now you won't bounce up to the poor devil just like a wild elephant: remember that he 's more or less in an interesting situation—as the ladies say. You 'll rather glide behind him, and insinivate the cord between his arms, whispering at the same time, '*Beg pardon.*' Mind and don't forget that; because we 're under an obligation to him to some extent, as he 's the means of putting money in our pocket, and we get the reversion of his clothes."

Here Gibbet cast a hasty but terrified glance towards his father's attire.

"Ah! I know what you 're looking at, youngster," said Smithers, with a coarse laugh; "you want to see if I 've got on my usual toggery? To be sure I have. I wear it as a compliment to the gentleman that we 're to operate on this morning. This coat was the one that Pegsworth cut his last fling in: this waistcoat was Greenacre's; and these breeches was William Lees's. But go on—we mustn't waste time in this way."

Gibbet approached the puppet, and endeavoured to manipulate the string as his father instructed him; but his hand trembled so convulsively that he could not even pass it between the arms of the figure.

While he was still fumbling with the cord, and vainly endeavouring to master his emotions, the leathern thong descended with tremendous violence upon his back.

An appalling cry burst from the poor lad; but the executioner only showered down curses on his head.

At length Gibbet contrived, through fear of another blow, to pinion the figure in a manner satisfactory to his brutal parent.

"There!" exclaimed Smithers; "I shall make something of you at last. What virtue there must be in an old bit of leather: it seems to put the right spirit into *you*, at all events. Well, that 's all you shall do this morning down at Newgate; and mind and do it as if the thong was hanging over your head—or it will be all the worse for you when we get home. Try and keep up the credit of your father's name, and show the Sheriffs and the Chaplain how you can truss their pigeon for them. They always take great notice—they do. Last time there was an execution, the Chaplain says to me, says he, '*Smithers, I don't think you had your hand nicely in this morning?*'—'*Don't you, sir?*' says I.—'*No,*' says he; '*I've seen you do it more genteel than that.*'—'*Well, sir,*' says I, '*I'll do my best to please you next time.*'—'*Ah! do, there 's a good fellow, Smithers,*' says the Chaplain; and off he goes to breakfast with the Sheriffs and governor, a-smacking his lips at the idea of the cold fowl and ham that he meant to pitch into. But I only mention that anecdote, to show you how close the authorities take notice—that 's all. So mind and do your best, boy."

"Yes, father," returned Gibbet.

"So now we 've done the pinioning," continued Smithers, once more busying himself with the puppet, which he surveyed with an admiration almost amounting to a kind of love. "Well, we can suppose that our chap has marched from the cell, and has just got on the scaffold. So far, so good. We can't do better than polish him off decently now

that he *is* here," proceeded Smithers, alluding to the figure, and rather musing aloud than addressing himself to his son. "Now all we 've got to do is to imagine that the bell 's a-ringing:—there stands the parson, reading the funeral service. Here I am. I take the halter that 's already tied nicely round the poor devil's neck—I fix the loop on this hook that hangs down from the beam of the gibbet—then I leave the scaffold—I go underneath—I pull the bolt—and down he falls so!"

"O God!" cried Gibbet, literally writhing with mental agony, as the drop fell with a crashing sound, and the jerking noise of the halter met his ear a moment afterwards.

"Now, then, coward!" exclaimed the executioner; and again the leathern thong elicited horrible screams from the hump-back.

The lad was still crying, and his father was in the midst of sundry fearful anathemas, levelled against what he called his son's cowardice, when a knock was heard at the door of the loft.

"Come in!" shouted the executioner.

The invitation was obeyed; and an elderly man, dressed in a shabby suit of black, entered the room with an affected solemnity of gait.

CHAPTER CXLIII.

MORBID FEELINGS.—KATHERINE.

"HOLLOA, Banks!" exclaimed the executioner. "Got scent of the morning's work—eh, old feller?"

"Alas! my dear Mr. Smithers," returned the undertaker, shaking his head in a lachrymose manner, "if men will perpetrate such enormities, they must expect to go to their last home by means of a dance upon nothing."

And, according to a custom which years had rendered a part of Mr. Banks's nature, he wiped his eyes with a dingy white pocket-handkerchief.

"There he is again, the old fool!" ejaculated Smithers, with a coarse guffaw; "always a-whimpering! Why, you don't mean to say, Banks, that you care two straws about the feller that 's going to be tucked up this morning?"

"Ah! Smithers, you don't know my heart: I weeps for frail human natur', and not only for the unhappy being that 's so soon to be a blessed defunct carkiss. But, Smithers—my boy——"

"Well?" cried the executioner.

"How much is it to be this time for the rope?" asked Mr. Banks, in a tremulous tone and with another solemn shake of the head.

"Five shillings—not a mag under," was the prompt reply.

"That 's too much, Mr. Smithers—too much," observed the undertaker of Glebe Lane. "The last one I bought I lost by: times is changed, Mr. Smithers—sadly changed."

"Ain't the *morbid feelings*, as the press calls 'em, as powerful as ever?" demanded the executioner savagely.

"The morbid feelings, thank God, is right as a trivet," answered Banks; "but it 's the blunt that falls off, Smithers—the blunt! And what 's the use of the morbid feelings if there 's no blunt to gratify 'em?"

"Do you mean to tell me, Mr. Banks," cried the executioner, "that you can't get as ready a sale for the halters as you used to do?"

"I 'm afraid that such is the actiwal case, my dear friend," responded Mr. Banks, turning up his eyes in a melancholy manner. "The last blessed victim that you operated on, Mr. Smithers, you remember, I gived you five shillings for the rope; and I will say, in justice to him as spun it and them as bought it, that a nicer, stronger, or compacter bit of cord never supported carkiss to cross-beam. But wain was it that I coiled it neat up in my winder;—wain was it that I wrote on a half sheet of foolscap, '*This is the halter that hung poor William Lees;*'—the morbid feelings was strong, 'cos the crowd collected opposite my house; but the filthy lucre, Smithers, was wanting. Well,—there the damned—I beg its pardon—the blessed cord stayed for a matter of three weeks; and I do believe it never would have gone at all, if some swell that was passing quite promiscuously one day did n't take a fancy to it——"

"Well, and what did he give you?" demanded the executioner impatiently.

"Only twelve shillings, as true as I 'm a woful sinner that hopes to be saved!" answered the undertaker.

"Twelve shillings—eh? And how much would you have had for the rope?"

"When the blunt does n't fall short of the morbid feelings, I calkilates upon a guinea," answered Mr. Banks.

"Why, you old rogue," shouted the executioner, "you know that you sold William Lees's rope a dozen times over. The moment the real one was disposed of, you shoved a counterfeit into your winder; and that went off so well, that you kept on till you 'd sold a dozen."

"No, Smithers—never no such luck as that since Greenacre's business," said the undertaker, with a solemn shake of his head; "and then I believe I really did sell nineteen ropes in less than a week."

"I only wonder people is such fools as to be gulled so," observed Smithers.

"What can they say, when they see your certifikit that the rope 's the true one?" demanded Banks. "There was one old gen'leman that dealt with me for a many—many years; and he bought the rope of every blessed defunct that had danced on nothing at Newgate for upwards of twenty year! I quite entered into his feeling, I did—I admired that man; and so I always sold him the real ropes. But time 's passing, while I 'm chattering here. Come, my dear Smithers—shall we say three shillings for the rope and certifikit this morning?"

"Not a mag less than five," was the dogged answer.

"Four, my dear friend Smithers?" said the undertaker, with a whining, coaxing tone and manner.

"No—five, I tell you."

"Well—five then," said Banks. "I 'll be there at a few minits 'afore nine: I s'pose you 'll cut the carkiss down at the usual hour?"

"Yes—yes," answered Smithers. "I 'm always punctiwal with the dead as well as the living."

The undertaker muttered something about "blessed defuncts," smoothed down the limp ends of his dirty cravat, and slowly withdrew, shaking his head more solemnly than ever.

"See what it is to be a Public Executioner!" cried

Smithers, turning with an air of triumph towards his son: "look at the perk-visits—look at the priweleges! And yet you go snivelling about like a young gal, 'cos I want to make you fit to succeed me in my honourable profession."

"O father!" cried the lad, unable to restrain his feelings any longer: "instead of being respected, we are abhorred—instead of being honoured, our very touch is contamination! You yourself know, dear father, that you scarcely or never go abroad; if you enter the public-house tap-room, even in a neighbourhood so low as this, the people get up and walk away on different excuses. When I step out for an errand, the boys in the streets point at me; and those who are well-behaved, pass me with stealthy looks of horror and dread. Even that canting hypocrite who has just left us—even *he* never crosses your threshold except when his interest is concerned;—and yet he, they say, is connected with body-snatchers, and does not bear an over-excellent character in his neighbourhood. Yet such a sneaking old wretch as that approaches our door with loathing—Oh! I know that he does! You see, father—dear father, that it is a horrible employment; then pray do n't make me embrace it—Oh! do n't—pray do n't, father—dear father: say you won't—and I 'll do any thing else you tell me! I 'll pick up rags and bones from the gutters—I 'll sweep chimnies—I 'll break stones from dawn to darkness;—but do not—do not make me an executioner!"

Smithers was so astounded at this appeal that he had allowed it to proceed without interruption. He was accustomed to be addressed on the same subject, but never to such a length, nor with such arguments; so that the manner and matter of that prayer produced a strange impression on the man who constantly sought, by means of rude sophistries, to veil from himself and his family the true estimation in which his calling was held.

Gibbet, mistaking his father's astonishment for a more favourable impression, threw himself at his feet, clasped his hands, and exclaimed, "Oh! do not turn a deaf ear to my prayer! And think not, dear father, that I confound *you* with that pursuit which I abhor;—think not that I see other in you than my parent—a parent whom——"

"Whom you shall obey!" cried the executioner, now recovering the use of his tongue: "or, by God!" he added, pointing with terrible ferocity towards the model-gallows, "I 'll serve you as I did that puppet just now—and as I shall do the man down in the Old Bailey presently."

Gibbet rose—disappointed, dispirited, and with a heart agitated by the most painful emotions.

But why had not Smithers recourse to the leathern weapon as usual? why had he spared the poor hump-back on this occasion?

Gibbet himself marvelled that such forbearance should have been shown towards him, since he now comprehended but too well that his father was inexorable in his determination with regard to him.

The truth was that Smithers was so far struck by his son's appeal as to deem it of more serious import than any previously manifested aversion to his horrible calling; and he accordingly met it with a menace which he deemed to be more efficacious than the old discipline of the thong.

"Now, mind me," said the executioner, after a few moments' pause, "you need n't try any more of these snivelling antics: they won't succeed with me, I tell you before-hand. If you do n't do as I order you, I 'll hang you up to that beam as soon as yonder mouse in the noose on the mantel. So let one word be enough. Hark! there 's seven o'clock: we 've only just time to get a mouthful before we must be off."

Smithers proceeded down stairs, followed by Gibbet.

They entered a little parlour, where Katherine was preparing breakfast.

It being still dark, a candle stood on the table; and its light was reflected in the polished metal tea-pot, milk-jug, and sugar-basin. The table napkin was of dazzling whiteness: the knives and forks were bright as steel could be;—in a word, an air of exquisite neatness and cleanliness pervaded the board on which the morning's repast was spread.

Nor was this appearance confined to the table. The little room itself was a model of domestic propriety. Not a speck of dust was to be seen on the simple furniture, which was also disposed with taste: the windows were set off with a clean muslin curtain; and the mantel was covered with fancy ornaments all indicative of female industry.

Then Kate herself!—her appearance was in perfect keeping with that of the room which owed its cleanliness and air of simple comfort to her. A neat cap set off her chesnut hair, which was arranged in plain bands: her dark stuff gown was made high in the body and long in the skirt, but did not conceal the gracefulness of her slender form, nor altogether prevent a little foot in a neat shoe and a well-turned ankle in a lily-white cotton stocking from occasionally revealing themselves. Then her hands were so slightly brown, her fingers so taper, and her nails so carefully kept, that no one, to look at them, would conceive how much hard work Katherine was compelled to do.

Though so rigidly neat and clean, Kate had nothing of the coquette about her. She was as bashful and artless as a child; and, besides—whom had she, the executioner's acknowledged niece, to captivate?

Although she endeavoured to greet Smithers and the hump-back with a smile, a profound melancholy in reality oppressed her.

It was one of those mornings when her uncle was to excercise his horrible calling:—this circumstance would alone have deeply affected her spirits, which were never too light nor buoyant. But on the present occasion, another cause of sorrow weighed on her soul—and that was the knowledge that her wretched cousin was that morning to enter on his fearful noviciate!

She entertained a boundless compassion for that unfortunate being. His physical deformities, and the treatment which he experienced from his father, called forth the kindest sympathies of her naturally tender heart. Moreover, he had received instruction and was in the habit of seeking consolation from her: she was the only friend of that suffering creature who was persecuted alike by nature and by man; and she perhaps felt the more acutely on his account, because she was so utterly powerless in protecting him from the parental ferocity which drove him to her for comfort.

She knew that a good—a generous—a kind—and a deeply sensitive soul was enclosed within that revolting form; and she experienced acute anguish

when a brutal hand could wantonly torture so susceptible a spirit.

And to that wounded, smarting spirit she herself was all kindness—all softness—all conciliation—all encouragement.

No wonder, then, if the miserable son of the public executioner was devoted to her: no wonder if she were a goddess of light, and hope, and consolation, and bliss to him! To do her the slightest service was a source of the purest joy which that poor being could know: to be able to convince her by a deed,—even so slight as picking up her thread when it fell, or placing her chair for her in its wonted situation,—this, this was sublime happiness to the hump-back!

He could sit for hours near her, without uttering a word—but watching her like a faithful dog. And when her musical voice, fraught with some expression of kindness, fell upon his ear, how that hideous countenance would brighten up—how those coarse lips would form a smile—how those large dull orbs would glow with ineffable bliss!

But when his father was unkind to her,—unkind to Katherine, his only friend,—unkind to the sole being that ever had looked not only without abhorrence, but with unadulterated gentleness on him,—then a new spirit seemed to animate him; and the faithful creature, who received his own stripes with spaniel-like irresistance, burst forth in indignant remonstrance when a blow was levelled at her. Then his rage grew terrible; and the resigned, docile, retiring hump-back became transformed into a perfect demon.

How offensive to the delicate admirer of a maudlin romance, in which only handsome boys and pretty girls are supposed to be capable of playing at the game of Love, must be the statement which we are now about to make. But the reader who truly knows the world,—not the world of the sentimental novel, but the world as it really is,—will not start when we inform him that this being whom nature had formed in her most uncouth mould,—this creature whose deformities seemed to render him a connecting link between man and monkey,—this living thing that appeared to be but one remove above a monster, cherished a profound love for that young girl whom he esteemed as his guardian angel.

But this passion was unsuspected by her, as its nature was unknown to himself. Of course it was not reciprocated:—how could it be? Nevertheless, every proof of friendship—every testimonial of kind feeling—every evidence of compassion on her part, only tended to augment that attachment which the hump-back experienced for Katherine.

"Well, Kate," said the executioner, as he took his seat at the breakfast-table, "I've drilled Gibbet into the art of pinioning at last."

The girl made no answer; but she cast a rapid glance at the hump-back, and two tears trickled down her cheeks."

"Come, Gibbet," added Smithers; "we've no time to lose. Don't be afraid of your bread-and-butter: you'll get nothing to eat till you come home again to dinner.

"Is John going with you this morning, uncle?" inquired Katherine timidly.

"Why, you know he is. You only ask the question to get up a discussion once more about it, as you did last night."

This was more or less true: the generous-hearted girl hoped yet to be able to avert her uncle from his intention in respect to the hump-back.

"But I won't hear any more about it," continued the executioner, as he ate his breakfast. "And, then, why do you call him John?"

"Did you not give him that name at his baptism?" said Kate.

"And if I did, I've also the right to change it," returned the executioner; "and I choose him to be called *Gibbet*. It's more professional."

"I think the grocer in High Street wants an errand boy, uncle," observed Katherine, with her eyes fixed upon her cup—she dared not raise them to Smithers' face as she spoke: "perhaps he would take John—I mean my cousin—and that would be better than making him follow a calling which he does not fancy."

"Mind your own business, Miss Imperence!" ejaculated the executioner; "and let me mind mine. Now, then—who knocks at the front door?"

Gibbet rose and hastened from the room.

In a few moments he returned, holding in his hand a paper, which he gave to his father.

"Ah! I thought so," said Smithers, as he glanced his eye over the paper: "my friend Dognatch is always in time. Here's the *last dying speech, confession, and a true account of the execution* of the man that I'm to tuck up presently—all cut and dry, you see. Well—it's very kind of Dognatch always to send me a copy: but I suppose he thinks it's a compliment due to my sitiwation."

With these words Smithers tossed off his tea, rose, and exclaimed, "Now, Gibbet, my boy, we must be off."

"Father, I don't feel equal to it," murmured the hump-back, who seemed fixed to his chair.

"Come—without another word!" cried the executioner, in so terrible a tone that Gibbet started from his seat as if suddenly moved by electricity.

"Uncle—uncle, you will not—you cannot force this poor lad—" began Katherine, venturing upon a last appeal in favour of the hump-back.

"Kate," said the executioner, turning abruptly upon her, while his countenance wore so ferocious an expression of mingled determination and rage, that the young girl uttered an ejaculation of alarm, —"Kate, do not provoke me; or——"

He said no more, but darted on her a look of such dark, diabolical menace, that she sank back, annihilated as it were, into her seat.

She covered her face with her hands, and burst into an agony of tears.

For some moments she remained absorbed in profound grief: the fate of the wretched hump-back, and the idea that she herself was doomed to exist beneath the same roof with the horrible man whom she called her uncle, were causes of bitter anguish to her tender and sensitive soul.

When she raised her head, and glanced timidly around, she found herself alone.

CHAPTER CXLIV.

THE UNFINISHED LETTER.

THE dawn was now breaking; and Katherine extinguished the candle.

How gloomily does the young day announce itself to the dwellers in the narrow streets and obscure alleys of the poor districts of the metropolis! The struggling gleam appears to contend with difficulty against the dense atmosphere and noxious vapours which prevail in those regions even in the midst of winter; and as each fitful ray steals through the dingy panes, its light seems leaden and dull, not golden and roseate as that of the orb of day.

Kate wiped away her tears, and set to work to clear the table of the breakfast-things.

Having performed this duty, she slipped on her neat straw bonnet and warm shawl,—purchased by the produce of her own industry,—and repaired to market.

But, alas! poor girl—as she passed rapidly through the streets, she could not help noticing the people, that were lounging at their doors, nudge each other, as much as to say, "There goes the executioner's niece."

And no friendly voice welcomed her with a kind "Good morning:" no human being had a passing compliment,—not even one of those civil phrases which cost nothing to utter, mean perhaps as little, but still are pleasing to hear,—to waste upon the executioner's niece.

Some old women, more hard-hearted than the rest, exclaimed, as she hurried timidly by the spot where they were gossiping, "Ah! her uncle has got business on his hands this morning!"

And when the poor girl reached the shop whither she was going, her eyes were bathed in tears.

The shopkeeper was cool and indifferent in his manner towards her—not obsequious and ready as towards his other customers. He even examined with suspicion the coin which she tendered him in payment for her purchases—as if it were impossible that honesty could dwell in the heart of an executioner's niece!

The ill-conditioned fellow! He saw not the mild blue eyes, with a tear glittering in each like twin-drops of the diamond-dew;—he marked not the pretty lips, apart, and expressive of such profound melancholy;—he observed not the thick folds of the shawl across the gently-budding bosom rise and sink rapidly:—no,—he beheld not that interesting young creature's grief; but he treated her rudely and harshly, because she was the executioner's niece!

Kate retraced her steps homewards. She saw other girls of her own age nod familiarly to their acquaintances at the windows, as they passed;—but she had no friend to receive or return her smile of recognition!

Shrinking within herself, as it were, from the slightest contact with the world which despised her, the poor young creature felt herself an interloper upon the very pavement, and even stepped into the muddy street to make way for those who passed.

With a broken spirit she returned home, her fate weighing upon her soul like a crime!

And so it was with her always on those mornings when her uncle was called upon to exercise his fearful functions.

She was glad to bury herself once more in that dwelling the threshold of which a friendly step so seldom crossed: her little parlour, embellished with her own hands, appeared a paradise of peace after the contumely which she experienced in the bustling streets.

She had returned home in so depressed a state of mind that she had forgotten to close the front door behind her.

She opened her work-box, seated herself at the table, and commenced her toil of pleasure—for that young girl loved her needle, and abhorred idleness.

She then fell into a reverie as she worked.

"To be a hangman is something horrible indeed," she mused aloud; "but to be a member of a hangman's family is far worse. *He* knows that he merits what reproach is levelled against him, if indeed his office deserve reproach at all; but *I*, who abhor the bare idea, and never so much as witnessed an execution—why should shame and obloquy redound upon *me?* It is like suffering for a crime of which one is innocent! O God, is this human justice? What have I done that the vilest and lowest should despise me? Am I not flesh and blood like them? do my clothes carry pollution, that the ragged beggar draws her tatters close to her as she passes me? Oh! give me strength, heaven, to support my wretched fate; for there are moments when I despair!"

"You are wrong to mistrust the goodness of the Almighty," said a mild voice close behind her chair.

Kate started, and looked round.

It was the rector of St. David's who had entered the room, unperceived by the young maiden.

"Pardon me, reverend sir," answered Kate; "I know that I am often forgetful of the wholesome lessons which I have received from your lips; but——"

"Well, well, poor child," interrupted Reginald Tracy, to whose cheeks the phrase "*wholesome lessons*" brought a flush of crimson—for he remembered how he himself had deviated from the doctrines which he had long successfully and sincerely taught: "be consoled! I know how sad must be your lot; and I have called this morning to see if I cannot ameliorate it."

"What? better my condition, sir?" exclaimed Katherine. "Oh! how is that possible?"

"We will see," answered the rector, taking a chair near the young maiden. "You are not altogether so friendless as you imagine."

"I am aware, sir, that through your goodness I received an education at the school which your bounty founded; and your excellent housekeeper, Mrs. Kenrick, has furnished me with needle-work. Oh! sir, I am not ignorant how much I owe to you both!"

Kate raised her mild blue eyes towards the rector's countenance; but her glance drooped again instantaneously, for his looks were fixed upon her in a manner which she had never noticed in him before, and which excited a momentary feeling of embarrassment—almost of alarm—in her mind.

But that feeling passed away as rapidly as it had arisen; and she blushed to think that she should have experienced such a sentiment in the presence of so holy a man and so great a benefactor.

"I did not wish to remind you of any trifling services which myself or my housekeeper may have rendered you, Katherine," said Reginald. "I alluded to another friend who interests himself in you."

"Another friend!" ejaculated the young girl. "Is it possible that I have *another friend* in the whole world?"

"You have," replied Mr. Tracy. "Did not a

gentleman, accompanied by a police-officer, visit this house about a fortnight ago?"

"Yes—I remember—late one night——"

And she stopped short, being unwilling to allude to that instance of her uncle's cruelty which had led to the visit mentioned by the rector.

"Well, that gentleman feels interested in you," continued Reginald. "He saw how you were treated—he knows that you are unhappy."

"And do strangers thus interest themselves in the wretched?" asked Katherine, her eyes swimming in tears.

"Not often," replied the rector. "But this gentleman is one of the few noble exceptions to the general rule."

"He must be indeed!" exclaimed Katherine, with an enthusiasm which was almost pious.

"That gentleman learnt from the policeman enough to give him a favourable impression of your character, and to render him desirous of serving you. He pondered upon the matter for some days, but could come to no determination on the subject. He heard that you were anxious to leave this house and earn your own bread."

"Oh! yes—how willingly would I do so!" exclaimed Katherine fervently. "But——"

"But what?" demanded Reginald, in whose eyes the young maiden had never been an object of peculiar interest until at present;—and *now* he observed, for the first time, that her personal appearance was far—very far from disagreeable.

The truth was, that, since his fall, he had viewed every woman with different eyes from those through which he had before surveyed the female sex. When he himself was chaste and pure, he observed only the feminine mind and manner:—now his glances studied and discriminated between external attractions. His moral survey had become a sensual one.

"But what?" he said, when Katherine hesitated. "Do you object to leave your uncle?"

"I should be a hypocrite were I to say that I object to leave him," was the immediate answer. "Nevertheless, if he demanded my services, I would remain with him, through gratitude for the bread which he gave me, and the asylum which he afforded me, when I was a child and unable to earn either. But he would not seek to retain me, I know; for he does not—he cannot love me! Still, there is one poor creature in this house——"

"My housekeeper has told me of him. You mean your uncle's son?" said Reginald.

"I do, sir. He has no friend in the world but me; and, though my intercessions do not save him from much bad treatment, still I have studied to console him."

"If he be grateful, he will feel pleased to think that you may be removed to a happier situation," said the rector.

"True!" exclaimed Kate. "And if I only earned more money than I do here, I should be able to provide him with a great many little comforts."

"Assuredly," replied the fashionable preacher, who during this colloquy had gradually drawn his chair closer to that of the young maiden. "The gentleman, to whom I have before alluded, called upon me yesterday. It appears he learnt from the policeman that you had been educated at the school in my district, and that my housekeeper was well acquainted with you. He nobly offered to contribute a sum of money towards settling you in some comfortable manner."

"The generous stranger!" exclaimed Kate. "What is his name, sir—that I may pray for him?"

"Mr. Markham——"

"Markham!" cried the young girl, strangely excited by the mention of that name.

"Yes. Have you ever heard of him before?" asked the rector, surprised at the impression thus produced.

Katherine appeared to reflect profoundly for some moments; then, opening a secret drawer of her work-box, she drew forth a small satin bag, carefully sewed all round.

She took her scissors and unpicked the thread from one end of the bag.

The rector watched her attentively, and with as much surprise as interest.

Having thus opened one extremity of the bag, she inserted her delicate fingers, and produced a sheet of letter-paper, folded, and dingy with age.

Handing it to the rector, she observed, with tears streaming down her cheeks, "These were the last words my mother ever wrote; and she had lost the use of her speech ere she penned them."

Reginald Tracy unfolded the letter, and read as follows:——

"Should my own gloomy presages prove true, and the warning of my medical attendant be well founded,—if, in a word, the hand of Death be already extended to snatch me away thus in the prime of life, while my darling child is * * * * and inform Mr. Markham, whose abode is——"

The words that originally stood in the place which we have marked with asterisks, had evidently been blotted out by the tears of the writer.

Reginald folded the letter as he had received it, and returned it to Katherine.

The young girl immediately replaced it in the little bag, which she sewed up with scrupulous care.

It was the poor creature's sole treasure; and she prized it as the last and only memento that she possessed of her mother.

"And you know not to whom that unfinished letter alluded?" said the rector, after a long pause, during which the bag, with its precious contents, had been consigned once more to the secret drawer in the work-box.

"I have not the least idea," answered Kate, drying her tears. "I was only four years old when my mother died, and of course could take no steps to inquire after the Mr. Markham mentioned in the letter. My uncle has often assured me that he took some trouble in the matter, but without success. Markham, you know, sir, is by no means an uncommon name."

"And your father, Katherine—do you remember him?"

"Oh! no, sir—he died before my mother. When I was old enough to comprehend how dreadful it is to be an orphan, Mr. Tracy, I made that little satin bag to preserve the letter which Death would not allow my poor mother to finish."

And again the young maiden wept bitterly.

The rector was deeply affected; and for some minutes his sensual ideas concerning the damsel were absorbed in a more generous sympathy.

"But did not the medical man who attended your mother in her last moments, and who is also alluded to in the letter," asked Reginald,—"did he not afford some clue to unravel the mystery?"

"That question I have asked my uncle more than once," answered Kate; "and he has assured me that the medical man was a perfect stranger who was casually summoned to attend upon my poor mother only the very day before she breathed her last. Since then the medical man has also died."

"Your mother was your uncle's own sister, was she not?" asked the rector.

"She was, sir."

"And she married a person named Wilmot?"

"Yes—for my name is Katherine Wilmot."

"I remember that you were so entered upon the school-books," said the rector. "Your mother must have been a superior woman, for the language of that fragment of a letter is accurate, and the handwriting is good."

"The same thought has often struck me, sir," observed Katherine. "And now how strange it is that a person bearing the name of Markham should interest himself in my behalf!"

"Strange indeed!" exclaimed Reginald, whose eyes were once more fixed upon the interesting girl near him,—fixed, too, with an ardent glance, and not one of tender sympathy. "Mr. Richard Markham—the gentleman of whom I speak—called upon me, as I ere now stated, and besought me to exert myself in your behalf. He seems to think that my position and character enable me to do for you that which, coming from him, might awaken the tongue of scandal. The cause of my visit this morning is now at length explained."

"I am very grateful, sir, for Mr. Markham's good intentions and your kindness," said Katherine. "The coincidence in names, which led me to show you that letter, seems a providential suggestion to me to follow the counsel of such generous—such disinterested friends."

"I thought as I came along," resumed the clergyman, "that I would procure you a situation with some friends of mine in the country. But—" and he cast upon her a burning look brimful of licentiousness—"I have my doubts whether it would not be better for you to come to my house and assist Mrs. Kenrick in her domestic duties—especially as she is getting very old—and——"

He paused for a moment:—he hesitated, because at the back of the offer there was an unworthy motive at which his guilty soul quaked, lest it should betray itself.

But that pure-minded and artless girl only saw in that offer a noble act of kindness; and she frankly accepted it—upon the condition that her uncle approved of her conduct in doing so.

The rector rose—he had no farther excuse for protracting his visit.

The young girl thanked him for his goodness with the most heart-felt sincerity.

He then took his leave.

CHAPTER CXLV.

HYPOCRISY.

REGINALD TRACY proceeded from the dwelling of the hangman to the corner of Tottenham Court Road, where his carriage was waiting for him.

He stepped into the vehicle, and ordered the coachman to drive him to Markham Place near Lower Holloway.

Richard was not at home: he had gone for a short walk with Mr. Monroe, who was yet too feeble to move far without the support of a companion's arm. They were, however, expected to return in a short time;—besides, Miss Monroe was in the drawing-room; and the rector therefore decided upon walking in and waiting for Mr. Markham.

The name of Miss Monroe produced a powerful sensation in the breast of that man whose passions, until lately dormant from his birth, now raged so furiously. He had seen her in a voluptuous *negligee*, attending by the sick-bed of her father;—he had heard her utter words of strange self-accusing import, in connection with that parent's illness;—and his curiosity, as well as his desires, was kindled.

He had been fascinated by that charming girl; and our readers will remember *that he had felt himself capable of making any sacrifice to obtain her love!*

His mind, too, entertained a distant suspicion—a very distant one, but still a suspicion—that she had strayed from the path of virtue;—for of what else could a daughter, whom he had seen hanging like a ministering angel over her father's couch, accuse herself?

This suspicion—and, at all events, that mystery which hung around the accusation alluded to, served to inflame the imagination of a man who now sought to place no bridle upon his passions. The idea suggested itself to him, that if another had revelled in her charms, why should not he? In a word, his heart glowed with secret delight when he learnt from Whittingham that Miss Monroe was alone in the drawing-room.

On his entrance, Ellen rose from the sofa, and welcomed him with a cordiality which originated in a sense of gratitude for the spiritual comfort he had rendered her father during his illness.

At a glance his eyes scanned the fair form of Ellen from head to foot; and his imagination was instantly fired with the thoughts of her soft and swelling charms—those graceful undulations which were all her own, and needed no artificial aids to improve the originals of nature!

"I am pleased to learn from the servant that your father, Miss Monroe, is able to take a little exercise once more," said the rector.

"Oh! all danger is now past," exclaimed Ellen cheerfully. "But at one time, Mr. Tracy, I had made up my mind to lose him."

"I saw how much you were afflicted," observed the rector; "and I was grieved to hear you reproach yourself to some extent——"

"Reproach myself!" interrupted Ellen, blushing deeply. "You heard me reproach myself?"

"I did," answered the rector. "And now, forgive me, if—by virtue of my sacred calling—I make bold to remind you that Providence frequently tries us, through the medium of afflictions visited upon those whom we love, in order to punish us for our neglectfulness, our unkindness, or our errors, towards those so afflicted. Pardon me, Miss Monroe, for thus addressing you; but I should be unfaithful towards Him whom I serve, did I not avail myself of every opportunity to explain the lessons which his wise and just dispensations convey."

"Mr. Tracy," exclaimed Ellen, cruelly embarrassed by this language, "do you really believe that Providence punished my father for some misconduct on my part?"

"Judging by the reproach—the accusation which your lips uttered against yourself—perhaps in an unguarded moment—when you ministered with angelic tenderness at your father's sick-bed——"

"Sir—Mr. Tracy, this is too much!" cried Ellen, tears starting from her eyes, while her cheeks were suffused with blushes: "it is unmanly—it is ungenerous to take advantage of any expressions which might have been wrung from me in a moment of acute anguish."

"Pardon me, young lady," said the rector with apparent meekness: "heaven knows the purity of my intentions in thus addressing you. It is not always that my spiritual aid is thus rejected—that my motives are thus cruelly suspected."

"Forgive me, sir,—I was wrong to excite myself at words which were meant in kindness," said Ellen, completely deceived by this consummate hypocrisy.

"Miss Monroe," continued Reginald, "believe me when I assure you that I feel deep compassion—deep interest, wherever I perceive grief—especially when that sorrow is secret. And, if my eyes have not deceived me, methinks I have read in your young heart the existence of some such secret sorrow. My aim is to console you; for the consolation which I can offer is not human—it is divine! I am but the humble *instrument* of the supernal Goodness; but God imparts solace through even the least worthy of his ministers."

"I thank you sincerely for your friendly intentions towards me," said Ellen, now recovering her presence of mind; "but, since my father is restored to health, I have little to vex me."

"And yet that self-reproach, Miss Monroe," persisted the rector, determined not to abandon the point to which he had so dexterously conducted the conversation,—"that self-accusation which escaped your lips——"

"Is a family secret, Mr. Tracy, which may not be revealed," interrupted Ellen firmly.

"I ask you not for your confidence, Miss Monroe: think not that I seek to pry into your affairs with an impertinent curiosity——"

"Once more, sir, I thank you for the kindness which prompts you thus to address me; but—pray, let us change the conversation."

These words were uttered in so decided a tone, that Reginald dared not persist in his attempt to thrust himself into the young lady's confidence.

An awkward silence ensued; and the rector was thinking how he should break it, when the door opened.

Almost at the same moment, a female voice was heard outside the room, saying, in tender playfulness, "Come to mamma! come to mamma!"

Then, immediately afterwards, Marian entered the apartment, bearing an infant in her arms.

Whittingham had neglected to tell her that there was a visitor in the drawing-room.

Poor Marian, astounded at the presence of the rector, could neither advance nor retreat for some moments.

At length she turned abruptly away.

Ellen sank back upon the sofa, overcome with shame and grief.

The rector threw upon her a glance full of meaning; but she saw it not—for her own eyes were cast down.

This depression, however, lasted only for a moment. Suddenly raising her head, she exclaimed with that boldness and firm frankness which had been taught her by the various circumstances of the last few years of her life, "You now know my secret, sir: but you are a man of honour. I need say no more."

"Who has been base enough to leave this grievous wrong unrepaired?" asked Reginald, taking her hand—that soft, warm, delicate hand.

"Nay—seek to know no more," returned Ellen, withdrawing her hand hastily from what she however conceived to be only the pressure of a friendly or fraternal interest; "you have learnt too much already. For God's sake, let not my father know that you have discovered his daughter's shame!"

"Not for worlds would I do aught to cause you pain!" cried the rector, enthusiastically.

"Thank you—thank you," murmured Ellen, completely deceived in respect to the cause of Tracy's warmth, and mistaking for friendly interest an ebullition of feeling which was in reality gross and sensual.

With these words Ellen hurried from the room.

"I have discovered her secret!" said the rector triumphantly to himself, as he rose and paced the apartment, mad passions raging in his breast; "and that discovery shall make her mine. Oh! no sacrifice were too great to obtain possession of that charming creature! I would give the ten best years of my life to clasp her in my arms, in the revels of love! Happy—thrice happy should I be to feel that lovely form become supple and yielding in my embrace! But my brain burns—my heart beats—my eyes throb—my blood seems liquid fire!"

Reginald threw himself, exhausted by the indomitable violence of his passions, upon the sofa.

Scarcely had he time to compose himself, when Markham entered the room.

The rector communicated to him the particulars of his interview with Katherine Wilmot, and concluded by saying that, as the girl was known to his housekeeper, he had determined upon taking her into his service.

"With regard to the fragment of the letter," observed Richard, "allusion must have been made to some person of the name of Markham who is totally unconnected with our family. We have no relations of that name. I feel convinced that the mention of the name could not in any way refer to my father; and my brother and myself were children at the time when that letter must have been written."

"It is a coincidence—and that is all," observed the rector. "But as you have to some extent constituted yourself the benefactor of this young person, do you approve of the arrangement which I have made for her to enter my household?"

"My dear sir, how can I object?" exclaimed Richard, who, in the natural generosity of his heart, gave the rector credit for the most worthy motives. "I consider myself your debtor for your noble conduct in this instance. Under your roof, Mr. Tracy, the breath of calumny cannot reach that poor creature; and *there* no one will dare to make her family connexions a subject of reproach."

Some farther conversation took place between Reginald Tracy and Richard Markham upon this subject, and when the former rose to depart, they both observed, for the first time during their inter-

view, that a violent shower of rain was pouring down.

Richard pressed the rector to remain to dinner—an invitation which he, whose head was filled with Ellen, did not hesitate to accept.

The rector's carriage and horses were accordingly housed in the stables attached to Markham Place; and Whittingham was desired to make Mr. Tracy's coachman and livery-servant as comfortable as possible—instructions with which the hospitable old butler did not fail to comply.

Dinner was served up at five o'clock; and Reginald had the felicity of sitting next to Miss Monroe.

The more he saw of this young lady, the more did he become enraptured with her,—not, however, experiencing a pure and chaste affection, but one whose ingredients were completely sensual.

The evening passed rapidly away;—the rain continued to pour in torrents.

As a matter of courtesy—indeed, of hospitality, for Richard's nature was generosity itself—the rector was pressed to stay the night at the Place; and, although he had a good close carriage to convey him home (and persons who have such equipages are seldom over careful of their servants), he accepted the invitation.

There was something so pleasing—so intoxicating in the idea of passing the night under the same roof with Ellen!

CHAPTER CXLVI.

THE BATH.—THE HOUSEKEEPER.

It was scarcely light when the rector of Saint David's rose from a couch where visions of a most voluptuous nature had filled his sleep.

Having hastily dressed himself, he descended from his room with the intention of seeking the fine frosty air of the garden to cool his heated brain.

But as he proceeded along a passage leading to the landing of the first flight of stairs, he heard a light step slowly descending the upper flight; and the next moment, the voice of Ellen speaking fondly to her child, fell upon his ear.

For nurses and mothers will talk to babes of even a few months old—although the innocents comprehend them not!

Reginald stepped into the recess formed by the door of one of the bed-chambers in that spacious mansion; and scarcely had he concealed himself there when he saw Ellen, with the child in her arms, pass across the landing at the end of the passage, and enter a room on the other side.

She wore a loose dressing-gown of snowy whiteness, which was confined by a band round her delicate waist, and was fastened up to the throat: her little feet had been hastily thrust into a pair of buff morocco slippers; and her long shining hair flowed over her shoulders and down her back.

The licentious eyes of the clergyman followed her from the foot of the stairs to the room which she entered; and even plunged with eager curiosity into that chamber during the moment that the door was open as she went in.

That glance enabled him to perceive that there was a bath in the apartment to which Ellen had proceeded with her child.

Indeed, the young lady, ever since her residence at Markham Place, had availed herself of the luxury of the bathing-room which that mansion possessed: and every morning she immersed her beautiful person in the refreshing element, which she enjoyed in its natural state in summer, but which was rendered slightly tepid for her in winter.

When the rector beheld her descend in that bewitching *negligee*,—her hair unconfined, and floating at will—her small, round, polished ankles glancing between the white drapery and the little slippers,—and the child, with merely a thick shawl thrown about it, in her arms,—and when he observed the bath in that chamber which she entered, he immediately comprehended her intention.

Without a moment's hesitation he stole softly from the recess where he had concealed himself, and approached the door of the bath-room.

His greedy eyes were applied to the key-hole; and his licentious glance plunged into the depths of that sacred privacy.

The unsuspecting Ellen was warbling cheerfully to her child.

She dipped her hand into the water, which Marian had prepared for her, and found the degree of heat agreeable to her wishes.

Then she placed the towels near the fire to warm.

Reginald watched her proceedings with the most ardent curiosity: the very luxury of the unhallowed enjoyment which he experienced caused an oppression at his chest; his heart beat quickly; his brain seemed to throb with violence.

The fires of gross sensuality raged madly in his breast.

Ellen's preparations were now completed.

With her charming white hand she put back her hair from her forehead.

Then, as she still retained the child on her left arm, with her right hand she loosened the strings which closed her dressing-gown round the neck and the band which confined it at the waist.

While thus occupied, she was partly turned towards the door; and all the treasures of her bosom were revealed to the ardent gaze of the rector.

His desires were now inflamed to that pitch when they almost become ungovernable. He felt that could he possess that charming creature, he would care not for the result—even though he forced her to compliance with his wishes, and murder and suicide followed,—the murder of her, and the suicide of himself!

He was about to grasp the handle of the door, when he remembered that he had heard the key turn in the lock immediately after she had entered the room.

He gnashed his teeth with rage.

And now the drapery had fallen from her shoulders, and the whole of her voluptuous form, naked to the waist, was exposed to his view.

He could have broken down the door, had he not feared to alarm the other inmates of the house.

He literally trembled under the influence of his fierce desires.

How he envied—Oh! how he envied the innocent babe which the fond mother pressed to that bosom—swelling, warm, and glowing!

And now she prepared to step into the bath: but, while he was waiting with fervent avidity for the moment when the whole of the drapery should fall from her form, a step suddenly resounded upon the stairs.

He started like a guilty wretch away from the door: and, perceiving that the footsteps descended the upper flight, he precipitated himself down the stairs.

Rushing across the hall, he sought the garden, where he wandered up and down, a thousand wild feelings agitating his breast.

He determined that Ellen should be his; but he was not collected enough to deliberate upon the means of accomplishing his resolution,—so busy was his imagination in conjuring up the most voluptuous idealities, which were all prompted by the real scene the contemplation whereof had been interrupted.

He fancied that he beheld the lovely young mother immersed in the bath—the water agitated by her polished limbs—each ripple kissing some charm, even as she herself kissed her babe!

Then he imagined he saw her step forth like a Venus from the ocean—her cheeks flushed with animation—her long glossy hair floating in rich undulations over her ivory shoulders.

"My God!" he exclaimed, at length, "I shall grow mad under the influence of this fascination! One kiss from her lips were worth ten thousand of the meretricious embraces which Cecilia yields so willingly. Oh! Ellen would not surrender herself without many prayers—much entreaty—and, perhaps, force;—but Cecilia falls into my arms without a struggle! Enjoyment with her is not increased by previous bashfulness;—she does not fire the soul by one moment of resistance. But Ellen—so coy, so difficult to win,—so full of confidence in herself, in spite of that one fault which accident betrayed to me,—Ellen, so young and inexperienced in the ways of passion,—Oh! she were a conquest worth every sacrifice that man could make!"

The rector's reverie was suddenly interrupted by the voice of Whittingham summoning him to the breakfast-room.

Thither he proceeded; and there Ellen, now attired in a simple but captivating morning-dress, presided.

Little did she imagine that the privacy of her bath had been invaded—violated by the glance of that man who now seated himself next to her, and whose sanctity was deemed to be above all question.

Little, either, did her father and friend suppose that there was one present who had vowed that she should be his, and who, in connection with that determination, had entertained no thought of marriage.

The ramble in the garden had so far cooled the rector's brain, that nothing in his behaviour towards Ellen was calculated to excite observation; but, from time to time, when unperceived, he cast upon her a glance of fervent admiration—a long, fixed, devouring glance, which denoted profound passion.

At length the hour for departure arrived; and his carriage drove round to the front door.

The rain of the preceding evening had changed to frost during the night;—the morning was fine, fresh, and healthy, though intensely cold; there was hence no shadow of an excuse for a longer stay.

The rector expressed his thanks for the hospitality which he had experienced, with that politeness which so eminently characterised his manners; and when he shook hands with Ellen, he pressed hers gently.

She thought that he intended to convey a sort of assurance that the secret which he had detected on the previous day, was sacred with him; and she cast upon him a rapid glance, expressive of gratitude.

Reginald then stepped into the carriage, which immediately rolled rapidly away towards London.

Upon his arrival at home, he proceeded straight to his study, whither he was immediately followed by the old housekeeper.

"Leave me—leave me, Mrs. Kenrick," said the rector; "I wish to be alone."

"I thought something had happened, sir," observed the old woman, fidgetting about the room, for with senile pertinacity she was resolved to say what she had upon her mind: "I thought so," she continued, "because this is the first time you ever stayed out all night without sending me word what kept you."

"I am not aware that I owe you an account of my actions, Mrs. Kenrick," said the rector, who, like all guilty persons, was half afraid that his conduct was suspected by the old woman.

"Certainly not, sir; and I never asked it. But after all the years I have been with you, and the confidence you have always reposed in me—until within the last week or two," added the old housekeeper, "I was afraid lest I had done something to offend you."

"No such thing," said the rector, somewhat softened. "But as the cares of my ministry multiply upon me——"

"Ah! sir, they must have multiplied of late," interrupted the old woman; "for you're not the same man you were."

"How do you mean?" demanded Reginald, now once more irritated.

"You have seemed restless, unsettled, and unhappy, for some two or three weeks past, sir," answered the housekeeper, wiping away a tear from her eye. "And then you are not so regular in your habits as you were: you go out and come in oftener;—sometimes you stay out till very late; at others you come home, send me up to bed, and say that you yourself are going to rest;—nevertheless, I hear you about the house——"

"Nonsense!" ejaculated Reginald, struck by the imprudence of which he had been guilty in admitting Lady Cecilia into his abode. "Do not make yourself unhappy, Mrs. Kenrick: nothing ails me, I can assure you. But—tell me," he added, half afraid to ask the question; "have you heard any one else remark—I mean, make any observation—that is, speak as you do about me——"

"Well, sir, if you wish for the truth," returned the housekeeper, "I must say that the clerk questioned me yesterday morning about you."

"The clerk!" ejaculated Reginald; "and what did he say?"

"Oh! he merely thought that you had something on your mind—some annoyance which worried you——"

"He is an impertinent fellow!" cried the rector, thrown off his guard by the alarming announcement that a change in his behaviour had been observed.

"He only speaks out of kindness, sir—as I do," observed the housekeeper, with a deep sigh.

"Well, well, Mrs. Kenrick," said the rector, vexed at his own impatience: "I was wrong to mistrust the excellence of his motives. To tell the truth, I have had some little cause of vexation—the loss of a large sum—through the perfidy of a pretended friend—and——"

The rector floundered in the midst of his falsehood; but the old housekeeper readily believed him, and was rejoiced to think that he had at length honoured her with his confidence in respect to the cause of that restlessness which she had mistaken for a secret grief.

"But no one else has made any remark, my dear Mrs. Kenrick?" said the rector, in a tone of conciliation; "I mean—no one has questioned you—or——"

"Only Lady Cecilia Harborough sent yesterday afternoon to request you to call upon her, sir."

"Ah!—well?"

"And of course I said to her servant-maid that you were not at home. She came back in the evening, and seemed much disappointed that you were still absent. Then she returned again, saying that her mistress was ill and wished to consult you upon business."

"And what did you tell her, Mrs. Kenrick?"

"That you had not returned, sir," answered the housekeeper, surprised at the question, as if there were any thing else to tell save the truth. "The servant-maid seemed more and more disappointed, and called again as early as eight o'clock this morning."

"This morning!" echoed Reginald, seriously annoyed at this repetition of visits from Lady Cecilia's confidential servant.

"Yes, sir; and when I said that you had not been home all night, she appeared quite surprised," continued the housekeeper.

"And you told her that I had not been home all night?" mused Reginald. "What must Lady Cecilia think?"

"Think, sir?" cried the housekeeper, more surprised still at her master's observations. "You can owe no account of your actions, sir, to Lady Cecilia Harborough."

"Oh! no—certainly not," stammered the rector,

cruelly embarrassed: "I only thought that evil tongues——"

"The Reverend Reginald Tracy is above calumny," said the housekeeper, who was as proud of her master as she was attached to him.

"True—true, Mrs. Kenrick," exclaimed the rector. "And yet—but, after all no matter. I will go and call in Tavistock Square at once; and then I can explain——"

Up to this moment the housekeeper had spoken in the full conviction that annoyance alone was the cause of her master's recent change of behaviour and present singularity of manners; but his increasing embarrassment—the strangeness of his observations relative to Lady Cecilia—his anxiety lest she should entertain an evil idea concerning his absence from home,—added to a certain vague rumour which had reached her ears relative to the lightness of that lady's character,—all these circumstances, united with the fact of Cecilia having sent so often to request Mr. Tracy to call upon her, suddenly engendered a suspicion of the truth in the housekeeper's mind.

"Before you go out again, sir," said the housekeeper, wishing to discard that suspicion, and therefore hastening to change the conversation to another topic, "I should mention to you that yesterday afternoon—between one and two o'clock—Katherine Wilmot arrived here——"

"Indeed! What, so soon?" exclaimed the rector.

"And as she assured me that you had only a few hours before offered her a situation in your household," continued Mrs. Kenrick, "I did not hesitate to take her in. Besides, she is a good girl, and I am not sorry that she should leave her uncle's roof."

"Then you approve of my arrangement, Mrs. Kenrick?" said Reginald.

"Certainly, sir—if I have the right to approve or disapprove," answered the old lady, who, in spite of the natural excellence of her heart, was somewhat piqued at not having been previously consulted upon the subject: then, ashamed of this littleness of feeling, she hastily added, "But the poor girl has a sad story to tell, sir, about the way in which she left her uncle; and, with your permission, I will send her up to you."

"Do so," said the rector, not sorry to be relieved of the presence of his housekeeper, in whose manner his guilty conscience made him see a peculiarity which filled his mind with apprehension.

In a few minutes Katherine Wilmot entered the rector's study.

Her story was brief but painful.

"After you left, sir, I sate thinking upon your very great kindness and that of Mr. Markham, and how happy I should be to have an opportunity of convincing you both that I was anxious to deserve all you proposed to do for me. The hours slipped away; and for the first time I forgot to prepare my uncle's dinner punctually to the minute. I know that I was wrong, sir—but I had so much to think about, both past and future! Well, sir, one o'clock struck; and nothing was ready. I started up, and did my best. But in a few minutes my uncle and cousin came in. My uncle, sir, was rather cross—indeed, if I must speak the truth, very cross; because his son had absolutely refused to assist him in his morning's work. I need not say, sir," continued the girl, with a shudder, "what that work was. The first thing my uncle did was to ask if his dinner was ready? I told him the whole truth, but assured him that not many minutes would elapse before it would be ready. You do not want to know, sir, all he said to me; it is quite sufficient to say that he turned me out of doors. I cried, and begged very hard to part from him in friendship—for, after all, sir, he is my nearest relation on the face of the earth—and, then, he brought me up! But he closed the door, and would not listen to me."

Katherine ceased, and wiped her eyes.

The poor girl had said nothing of the terrific beating which the executioner inflicted upon Gibbet the moment they returned home, and then upon Katherine herself before he thrust her out of the house.

"Have you brought away your mother's letter with you, Katherine?" inquired the rector, who, during the maiden's simple narrative, had never taken his eyes off her.

"My uncle sent round all my things in the evening, by my unfortunate cousin," replied Katherine; "and amongst the rest, my work-box where I keep the letter. It is safe in my possession, sir."

"Take care of it, Kate," observed the rector; "who knows but that it may some day be of service?"

"Oh! sir, and even if it should not," ejaculated the girl, "it is at all events the only memento I possess of my poor mother."

"True—you told me so," said Reginald, prolonging the conversation only because the presence of an interesting female had become his sole enjoyment. "And now, my dear," continued the rector, rising from his seat, and approaching her, "be steady—conduct yourself well—and you will find me a good master."

"I will not be ungrateful, sir," returned Katherine.

"And you must endeavour to relieve Mrs. Kenrick of all onerous duties as much as possible," said the rector. "Thus, you had better always answer my bell yourself, when the footman is not in the way."

"I will make a point of doing so, sir," was the artless reply.

The rector gave some more trivial directions, and dismissed his new domestic to her duties.

He then hastened to Tavistock Square, to appease Lady Harborough, whose jealousy, he suspected, had been aroused by his absence from home.

CHAPTER CXLVII.

THE RECTOR'S NEW PASSION.

To make his peace with Lady Cecilia was by no means a difficult matter; and it was accomplished rather by the aid of the rector's purse than his caresses.

He remained to dinner with the syren who had first seduced him from the paths of virtue, which he had pursued so brilliantly and triumphantly—too brilliantly and triumphantly to ensure stability!

In the evening, when they were seated together upon the sofa, Reginald implored her to be more cautious in her proceedings in future.

"Such indiscretion as that of which you have been guilty," he said, "would ruin me. Why send so

often to request my presence? The most unsuspicious would be excited; and my housekeeper has spoken to me in a manner that has seriously alarmed me."

"Forgive me, Reginald," murmured Cecilia, casting her arms around him; "but I was afraid you were unfaithful to me."

"And to set at rest your own selfish jealousies, you would compromise me," said the rector. "Do you know that my housekeeper has overheard me moving about at night when I have admitted you, or descended the stairs to let you out before daylight? and, although she attributes that fact to restlessness on my part, it would require but little to excite her suspicions."

"Again I say forgive me, Reginald," whispered Cecilia, accompanying her words with voluptuous kisses, so that in a short time the rector's ill-humour was completely subdued. "Tell me," she added, "may I not visit you again? say—shall I come to you to-night?"

"No, Cecilia," answered the clergyman; "we must exercise some caution. Let a week or a fortnight pass, so that my housekeeper may cease to think upon the subject which has attracted her notice and alarmed me; and then—then, dearest Cecilia, we will set no bounds to our enjoyment."

Reginald Tracy now rose, embraced his mistress, and took his leave.

But it was not to return home immediately.

His mind was filled with Ellen's image; and, even while in the society of Lady Cecilia, he had been pondering upon the means of gratifying his new passion — of possessing that lovely creature of whose charms he had caught glimpses that had inflamed him to madness.

Amongst a thousand vague plans, one had struck him. He remembered the horrible old woman of Golden Lane, who had enticed him to her house under a pretence of seeing a beautiful statue, and had thereby led him back to the arms of Lady Cecilia Harborough.

To her he was determined to proceed; for he thought that he might be aided in his designs by that ingenuity of which he had received so signal a proof.

Accordingly, wrapping himself up in his cloak, he repaired directly from Lady Cecilia's house to the vile court in Golden Lane.

It was past seven o'clock in the evening when he reached the old hag's abode.

She was dozing over a comfortable fire; and her huge cat slept upon her lap. Even in the midst of her nap, the harridan mechanically stretched forth her bony hand from time to time, and stroked the animal down the back; and then it purred in acknowledgment of that caress which to a human being would have been hideous.

Suddenly a knock at the door awoke the hag.

"Business—business," murmured the old woman, as she rose, placed the cat upon the rug, and hastened to answer the door: "no idle visitor comes to me at this time."

The moment she opened the door the rector rushed in.

"Gently, gently," said the old hag: "there is nothing to alarm you in this neighbourhood. Ah!" she cried, as Reginald Tracy laid aside his hat and cloak; "is it you, sir? I am not surprised to see you again."

"And why not?" demanded the rector, as he threw himself into a chair.

"Because all those who wander in the mazes of love, sooner or later require my services," answered the hag; "be they men or women."

"You have divined my object in seeking you," said the rector. "I love a charming creature, and know not how to obtain possession of her."

"You could not have come to a better place for aid and assistance, sir," observed the harridan, with one of her most significant and, therefore, most wicked leers.

"But can I trust you? will you be faithful? what guarantee have I that you will not betray me to Lady Harborough, whose jealousy is so soon excited?" cried Reginald.

"If you pay me well I am not likely to lose a good patron by my misconduct," answered the old woman boldly. "In a word, my left hand knows not what my right hand does."

"Well spoken," said the rector; and, taking gold from his purse, he flung it upon the table, adding, "Be this your retaining fee; but it is as nothing compared to what I will give you if you succeed in a matter on which I have set my heart."

"You must be candid with me, and tell me every particular, sir," said the hag, as she gathered up the gold with avidity.

"I have seen the young lady to whom I allude, but on three or four occasions," continued the rector; "and yet I have discovered much concerning her. She has been weak already, and has a child of some six or seven months old. That child was not born in wedlock; nor, indeed, has its mother ever borne the name of wife."

"Then the conquest cannot be so difficult," murmured the hag.

"I am not sure of that," said Reginald Tracy. "Without knowing any thing of her history, I am inclined to believe that some deep treachery—some foul wrong must have entrapped that young lady into error. She lives in the most respectable way; and neither by her manner nor her looks could her secret be divined. Accident alone revealed it to me."

"It may serve our purpose—it may serve our purpose," cried the harridan, musing.

"She dwells with her father, at the house of a friend—a very young man——"

"Ah!" cried the hag, struck by this information. "What is her name?"

"Ellen Monroe," replied the rector.

"I thought so," exclaimed the old woman.

"You know her, then?" cried Reginald Tracy in astonishment. "Are you sure she is the same whom you imagine her to be?"

"She resides at the house of Mr. Markham in Holloway—does she not?"

"She does. But how came you to be acquainted with her? what cause of intimacy could exist between you and her?" demanded the rector.

"My left hand never knows what my right hand does," said the hag. "If I reveal to you the affairs of another, how could you put confidence in me when I declare that your own secrets shall not be communicated to Lady Harborough or any one else who might question me?"

"True!" said the rector: "I cannot blame your discretion. "But tell me—have you any hope that I may succeed?"

"The business is a difficult one," answered the hag. "And yet greater obstacles than I can here see have been overcome—aye, and by me, too. Did I not tell Lady Harborough that I would bring you back to her arms? and did I not succeed? Am I then to be foiled now. Show me the weakness of a human being, and I direct all my energies against that failing. Ellen Monroe has two vulnerable points——"

"Which are they?" asked the rector eagerly.

"Her vanity and her love for her father," replied the harridan. "Leave her to me: when I am ready for you I will call upon you."

"And you will lose no time, good woman?" said the rector, overjoyed at the hopes held out to him.

"I will not let the grass grow under my feet," returned the hag. "But you must have patience; for the girl is stubborn—sadly stubborn. Art, and not entreaties, will prevail with her."

"In any case, manage your matters in such a way that I cannot be compromised," said the rector; "and your reward shall be most liberal."

"Trust to me," murmured the hag.

Reginald Tracy once more enveloped himself in his cloak, and took his departure.

"And so I have made a discovery this evening!" mused the hag, when she was once more alone. "Miss Ellen is a mother—she has a child of six or seven months old! She never told me that when she came to seek my aid, and I gave her the card of the Mesmerist;—she never told me that when she sought me after that, and I sent her to the Manager;—she never told me that when I met her at Greenwood's house in the country, and from which she escaped by the window. The cunning puss! She does not even think that I know where she lives;—but Lafleur told me that—Lafleur told me that! He is the prince of French valets—worth a thousand such moody, reserved Italians as Filippo! So now the rector must possess Miss Ellen? Well—and he shall, too, if I have any skill left—if I have any ingenuity to aid him!"

Then the hag concealed the five pieces of glittering gold which the rector had given her, in her Dutch clock; and having thus secured the wages of her iniquity, she proceeded to mix herself a steaming glass of gin-and-water to assist her meditations concerning the business entrusted to her.

"Yes," she said, continuing her musings aloud," "I must not fail in this instance. The rector is a patron who will not spare his gold; and Ellen may not be the only one he may covet. I warrant he will not keep me unemployed! These parsons are terrible fellows when once they give way; and I should think the rector has not been long at this game, or he could scarcely have contrived to maintain his reputation as he has. How the world would be astonished did it know all! But I am astonished at nothing—not I! No—no—I have seen too much in my time. And if I repent of any thing—but no I do not repent:—still, if I *did* sometimes think of *one* more than *another*, 'tis of that poor Harriet Wilmot! I should like to know what became of her. It must be sixteen or seventeen years since *that* occurred;—but the mention of the name of Markham just now, brought it all fresh back again to my mind. Well—it cannot be helped: it was in the way of business like any thing else!"

Let us leave the horrible old hag at her musings, and relate a little incident which occurred elsewhere, and which, however trivial the reader may deem it now, is not without importance in respect to a future portion of our narrative.

The rector had reached the door of his own house, after his interview with the old hag, and was about to knock when he perceived, by the light of the gas lamp, a strange-looking being standing on the step.

"What do you want, my good lad?" asked Reginald.

"Please, sir, I want to speak to Kate Wilmot, my cousin," answered Gibbet—for it was he.

"Indeed! I suppose, then, that you are the son of —of——" and Reginald stopped; for he did not like to wound the hump-back's feelings by saying "of the hangman," and at that moment he had forgotten the name of Katherine's uncle.

"My name is Smithers, sir," said the lad.

"Ah! Smithers—so it is," cried the rector. "Well, my good lad, I cannot think of preventing Katherine's relations from coming to see her if they choose; but, as she is now in a good place and respectably settled, it would perhaps be prudent that those visits should occur as seldom as possible—I mean, not too often."

"I 'm sure, sir, I 'm very sorry if I have offended you, by coming," sobbed the poor hump-back; "and I would not for all the world injure Kate in the opinion of those friends who have been so kind as to provide for her."

"You have done no harm—I am not angry with you," said the rector. "Only Mrs. Kenrick, my housekeeper, is very particular, and does not like the servants to have many visitors."

"Then I won't come any more, sir," murmured Gibbet, whose heart was ready to break at this cruel announcement.

"Yes—you may come and see your cousin every Sunday evening."

"Oh! thank you, sir—thank you kindly, sir!" ejaculated the hump-back, in a tone of touching sincerity.

"Every Sunday evening, then, let it be," continued the rector. "And now go round by the back way, and see her to-night, since you wish to do so."

The hump-back literally bounded with joy off the steps, and hurried to the stable-yard, whence there was a means of communication with the servants' offices attached to the rector's house.

As he drew near the back-door, he observed lights through the kitchen-windows; and he stopped for a moment to observe if Katherine were within.

In order to see into the kitchen, which, with its offices, formed a sort of out-house joining the main dwelling, the hump-back was compelled to climb upon a covered dust-hole standing in an obscure nook on the opposite side of the yard, and so shrouded in darkness that no one passing through the yard could observe a person concealed there.

The idea of ascertaining if Kate were in the kitchen at that moment, was not a mere whim on the part of the hump-back: he was afraid that, if she were not, he might not be allowed to return, and was therefore apprehensive of not seeing her that evening at all.

Accordingly, he clambered upon the dust-bin, which stood in a nook formed by the irregularity of the high wall that separated the yard of the rector's house from that of the stables; and from this point of observation, which his quick eye had thus detected,

he commanded a full view of the interior of the kitchen.

Yes—Kate was there, seated at the table, and occupied with her needle.

She was alone too.

Gibbet remained in his hiding-place for some minutes, contemplating, with melancholy pleasure, the interesting countenance of the young girl.

At length it struck him that it was growing late, and that his visit must not last long.

He let himself gently down from the eminence to which he had clambered; and as he was about to turn away, to cross the yard to the kitchen door, he stopped short, as if an idea had suddenly entered his mind.

Casting a look back upon the obscure place from which he had just emerged, he muttered between his teeth, "No, Kate—they shall not prevent me from seeing you of an evening when I will—and when, too, you will little suspect that I am so near."

He then walked over to the kitchen door, and knocked gently.

Kate herself rose to open it, and with unfeigned pleasure admitted the hump-back.

"Mr. Tracy says that I may come and see you every Sunday evening, Kate," were Gibbet's first words: "you won't say no—will you, Kate?"

"Certainly not, John," answered the maiden. "I shall always be glad to see you, my poor cousin," she added compassionately.

"Oh! I know you will, Kate," exclaimed the hump-back. "I have missed you so all yesterday afternoon, and all to-day; and father is more unkind to me than ever," he added, the tears trickling down his cheeks.

"We must hope that better times await you, John," said Katherine, in a soothing tone.

"Never for me," observed Gibbet, with a profound sigh. "Father does not cease to upbraid me for my conduct yesterday morning. But I could not help it. I went down to Newgate with the intention to do my best; but when I got there, and found myself face to face with the miserable wretch who was about to suffer,—when I saw his awful pale face, his wild glaring eyes, his distorted features, his quivering limbs,—and when I heard him murmur every other moment, '*O Lord! O Lord!*' in a tone scarcely audible and yet expressive of such intense anguish,—I could not lay a finger upon him! When my father gave me the twine to pinion him, it fell from my hands; and I believe I felt as much as the unfortunate man himself. Oh! heavens—his face will haunt me in my dreams as long as I live. I never shall forget it—it was so ghastly, so dreadful! I would not have had any thing to do with taking that man's life away—no, not for all the world. I did not see a criminal before me—I only saw a fellow-creature from whom *his* fellow-creatures were about to take away something which God alone gave, and which God alone should have the right to recall. I thought of all this; and I was paralysed. And it was because my nature would not let me touch so much as the hem of that man's garment to do him harm, that my father upbraids and beats me. Oh! it is too cruel, Kate—it is too cruel to bear!"

"It is, my poor cousin," answered the girl; "but let me entreat you to submit patiently—as patiently as you can. Times must change for you—as they have for me."

These last words she uttered in a half-tone of self-reproach, as if she upbraided herself with having left her unfortunate cousin to the mercy of his brutal father.

But how could she have done otherwise, poor girl?

The conversation between that interesting young creature and the hump-back continued in pretty much the same strain for about half-an-hour, when Gibbet took leave of his cousin.

"You will come and see me next Sunday, John," said Katherine, as she shook him warmly by the hand.

"Next Sunday evening, dear Kate," he replied, and then departed.

CHAPTER CXLVIII.

THE OLD HAG'S INTRIGUE.

On the morning after she had received the visit from the Reverend Reginald Tracy, the old hag rose early, muttering to herself, "I must lose no time—I must lose no time."

She then proceeded to dress herself in her holiday attire, each article of which was purchased with the wages of her infamous trade.

Female frailty—female shame had clothed the hag: female dishonour had produced her a warm gown, a fine shawl, and a new bonnet

When she was young she had lived by the sale of herself: now that she was old she lived by the sale of others.

And she gloried in all the intrigues which she successfully worked out for those who employed her, as much as a sharp diplomatist triumphs in outwitting an astute antagonist.

It is said that when Perseus carried the hideous head of the Gorgon Medusa through the air, the gore which dripped from it as he passed over the desert of Libya turned into frightful serpents: so does the moral filth which the corruption of great cities distils, engender grovelling and venomous wretches like that old hag.

Well—she dressed herself in her best attire, and contemplated herself with satisfaction in a little mirror cracked all across.

Then, having partaken of a hearty breakfast, she sallied forth.

By means of a public conveyance she soon reached the vicinity of Markham Place.

She had never been in that neighbourhood before; and when she beheld the spacious mansion, with its heavy but imposing architecture, she muttered to herself, "She is well lodged—she is well lodged!"

The hag then strolled leisurely round Richard's miniature domain, debating within herself whether she should knock boldly at the front door and inquire for Miss Monroe, or wait in the neighbourhood to see if that young lady might chance to walk out alone.

The day was fine, though cold; and the hag accordingly resolved to abide by the latter alternative.

Perceiving a seat upon the summit of the hill, whereon stood the two trees, she opened the gate at the foot of the path which led to the top.

Then she toiled up the hill, and seated herself between the two ash trees—now denuded of their foliage.

Presently, as her eyes wandered hither and thither, they fell upon the inscriptions engraved on the stem of one of the trees. Thus they stood:—

EUGENE.
Dec. 25, 1836.

EUGENE.
May 17*th*, 1838.

The old woman marvelled what that name, twice inscribed, and those dates could mean.

But she did not trouble herself much with conjecture on that point: she had other business on hand, and was growing impatient because Ellen did not appear.

At length her penetrating eyes caught a glimpse of a female form approaching from the direction of the garden at the back of the mansion.

The hag watched that form attentively, and in a few moments exclaimed joyfully, "It is she!"

Ellen was indeed advancing up the hill. She had come forth for a short ramble; and the clearness of the day had prompted her to ascend the eminence which afforded so fine a view of the mighty metropolis at a little distance.

When she was near the top, she caught sight of a female seated upon the bench between the trees, and was about to retreat—fearful that her presence might be deemed a reproach for what was in fact an intrusion upon private property.

But, to her surprise, she observed the female beckoning familiarly to her; and she continued her way to the summit.

Then, with profound astonishment and no little annoyance, she recognised the old hag.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Ellen, hastily.

"Resting myself, as you see, miss," answered the harraind. "But how charming you look this morning! That black velvet bonnet sets off your beautiful complexion; and the fresh air has given a lovely glow to your cheeks."

"You have not uttered that compliment without a motive," said Ellen, vainly endeavouring to suppress a half-smile of satisfaction. "But you must not suppose that your flattery will make me forget the part which you played when Mr. Greenwood had me conveyed to his house somewhere in the country."

"My dear child, do not be angry with me on that account," said the old hag. "Mr. Greenwood thought that you would prefer me as your servant instead of a stranger."

"Or rather, he hired you to talk me over to his wishes—or, perhaps, because he knew that you would wink at any violence which he might use. But I outwitted you both," added Ellen, laughing.

"Ah! now I see that you have forgiven me, my child," cried the hag. "And when I behold your sweet lips, red as cherries—your lovely blue eyes, so soft and languishing—and that small round chin, with its charming dimple, I feel convinced——"

"Nay—you are determined to flatter me," interrupted Ellen; "but I shall not forgive you the more readily on that account."

"How well this pelisse becomes your beautiful figure, my child," said the hag, affecting not to notice Ellen's last observation.

"Cease this nonsense," cried Miss Monroe; "and tell me what brings you hither."

"To see you once more, my child."

"How did you discover my abode?"

"A pleasant question, forsooth!" ejaculated the hag. "Do you think that I am not well acquainted with all—yes, *all* that concerns you?" she added significantly.

"Alas! I am well aware that you know much—too much," said Ellen, with a profound sigh.

"Much!" repeated the hag. "I know *all*, I say,—even to the existence of the little one that will some day call you mother."

"Who told you that? Speak—who told you *that?*" demanded Ellen, greatly excited.

"It cannot matter—since I know it," returned the hag: "it cannot matter."

"One question," said Ellen,—"and I will ask you no more. Was Mr. Greenwood your informant?"

"He was not," answered the hag.

"And now tell me, without circumlocution, what business has brought you hither—for that you came to meet with me I have no doubt."

"Sit down by me, my child," said the hag, "and listen while I speak to you."

"Nay—I can attend to you as well here," returned Ellen, laughing, as she leant against one of the trees—an attitude which revealed her tiny feet and delicate ankles.

"You seem to have no confidence in me," observed the hag; "and yet I have ever been your friend."

"Yes—you have helped me to my ruin," said Ellen, mournfully. "And yet I scarcely blame you for all that, because you only aided me to discover what I sought at the time—and that was *bread at any sacrifice*. Well—go on, and delay not: I will listen to you, if only through motives of curiosity."

"My sweet child," said the harridan, endeavouring to twist her wrinkled face into as pleasing an expression as possible, "a strange thing has come to my knowledge. What would you think if I told you that a man of pure and stainless life, who is virgin of all sin,—a man who to a handsome exterior unites a brilliant intellect,—a man whose eloquence can excite the aristocracy as well as produce a profound impression upon the middle classes,—a man possessed of a fine fortune and a high position,—what would you think, I say, if I told you that such a man has become enamoured of you?"

"I should first wonder how such a phœnix of perfection came to select you as his intermediate," answered Ellen, with a smile, which displayed her brilliant teeth.

"A mere accident made me acquainted with his passion," said the hag. "But surely you would not scorn the advances of a man who would sacrifice every thing for you—who would consent to fall from his high place for one single hour of your love—who would lay his whole fortune at your feet as a proof of his sincerity."

"To cut short this conversation, I will answer you with sincerity," returned Ellen. "Mr. Greenwood is the only man who can boast of a favour which involves my shame: he is the father of my child. I do not love him—I have no reason to love him: nevertheless, he is—I repeat—the father of my child! That expresses every thing. Who knows but that, sooner or later, he may do me justice? And should

such an idea ever enter his mind, must I not retain myself worthy of that repentant sentiment on his part?"

"You cherish a miserable delusion, my child," said the hag; "and I am surprised at your confidence in the good feelings of a man of whom you have already seen so much."

"Ah! there is a higher power that often sways the human heart," observed Ellen; and, as she spoke, her eyes were fixed upon the inscriptions on the tree, while her heart beat with emotions unintelligible to the old hag.

"You will then allow this man of whom I have spoken, and who has formed so enthusiastic an attachment towards you, to languish without a hope?" demanded the woman.

"Men do not die of love," said Ellen, with a smile.

"But he is rich—and he would enrich you," continued the old harridan: "he would place your father in so happy a position that the old man should not even experience a regret for the prosperity which he has lost."

"My father dwells with a friend, and is happy," observed Ellen.

"But he is dependant," exclaimed the old hag; "for you yourself once said to me, '*We are dependant upon one who cannot afford to maintain us in idleness.*' How happy would you be—for I know your heart—to be enabled to place your father in a state of independence!"

"Would he be happy did he know that he owed the revival of his prosperity to his daughter's infamy?"

"Did he divine whence came the bread that was purchased by your services to the statuary, the artist, the sculptor, and the photographer? You yourself assured me that you kept your avocations a profound secret."

"Were I inclined to sell myself for gold, Greenwood would become a liberal purchaser," said Ellen. "All your sophistry is vain. You cannot seduce me from that state of tranquil seclusion in which I now dwell."

"At least grant your unknown lover an interview, and let him plead his own cause," exclaimed

the hag, who did not calculate upon so much firmness on the part of the young lady.

"Ah! think not that he is unknown," cried Ellen, a light breaking in upon her mind: "a man of pure and stainless life, virgin of all sin,—a man endowed with a handsome person, and a brilliant intellect,—a man whose eloquence acts as a spell upon all classes,—a man possessed of a large fortune and enjoying a high position,—such is your description! And this man must have seen me to love me! Now think you I cannot divine the name of your phœnix?"

"You suspect then, my child——"

"Nay—I have something more than mere suspicion in my mind," interrupted Ellen. "Oh! now I comprehend the motive of that apparent earnestness with which he implored me to reveal the secret sorrow that oppressed me! In a word, old woman," added the young lady, in a tone of superb contempt, "your phœnix is the immaculate rector of St. David's!"

"And do you not triumph in your conquest, Miss?" demanded the hag, irritated by Ellen's manner.

"Oh! yes," exclaimed the young lady, with a sort of good-humoured irony; "so much so, that I will meet him when and where you will."

"Are you serious?" inquired the hag, doubtfully.

"Did I ever jest when I agreed to accept the fine offers which you made me on past occasions?" asked Ellen.

"No: and you cannot have an object in jesting now," observed the old woman. "But when and where will you meet him who is enamoured of you?"

"You say that he will make any sacrifice to please me?"

"He will—he will."

"Then he cannot refuse the appointment which I am about to propose to you. On Monday evening next there is to be a masked ball at Drury Lane Theatre. At ten o'clock precisely I will be there, dressed as a Circassian slave, with a thick veil over my face. Let him be attired as a monk, so that he may be enabled to shroud his features with his cowl. We shall not fail to recognise each other."

"Again I ask if you are in earnest?" demanded the old woman, surprised at this singular arrangement.

"I was never more so," answered Ellen.

"But why cannot the appointment take place at my abode?" said the hag.

"Oh! fie—the immaculate rector in your dirty court in Golden Lane!" ejaculated Ellen.

"That court was once good enough for you, my child," muttered the old woman.

"We will not dispute upon that point," said the young lady. "If I am worth having, I am worth humouring; and I must test the sincerity of the attachment which your phœnix experiences for me, by making him seek me at a masked ball."

"Oh! the caprices of you fair ones!" ejaculated the hag. "Well, my child, I will undertake that it shall be as you desire."

"Next Monday evening at ten o'clock," cried Ellen; and with these words she tripped lightly down the hill in the direction of the mansion.

The old hag then took her departure by the path on the opposite side; and, as she went along, she chuckled at the success of her intrigue.

CHAPTER CXLIX.

THE MASQUERADE.

THE evening of the masquerade arrived.

It is not our intention to enter into a long description of a scene the nature of which must be so well known to our readers.

Suffice it to say that at an early hour Old Drury was, within, a blaze of light. The pit had been boarded over so as to form a floor level with the stage, at the extremity of which the orchestra was placed. The spacious arena thus opened, soon wore a busy and interesting appearance, when the masques began to arrive; and the boxes were speedily filled with ladies and gentlemen who, wearing no fancy costumes, had thronged thither for the purpose of beholding, but not commingling with, the diversions of the masquerade.

To contemplate that blaze of female loveliness which adorned the boxes, one would imagine that all the most charming women of the metropolis had assembled there by common consent that night; and the traveller, who had visited foreign climes, must have been constrained to admit that no other city in the universe could produce such a brilliant congress.

For the fastidious elegancies of fashion, sprightliness of manners, sparkling discourse, and all the refinements of a consummate civilization, which are splendid substitutes for mere animal beauty, the ladies of Paris are unequalled;—but for female loveliness in all its glowing perfection—in all its most voluptuous expansion, London is the sovereign city that knows in this respect no rival.

In sooth, the scene was ravishing and gorgeous within Old Drury on the night of which we are writing.

The spacious floor was crowded with masques in the most varied and fanciful garbs.

There were Turks who had never uttered a "Bismillah," and Shepherdesses who had seen more of mutton upon their tables than ever they had in the fields;—Highlanders who had never been twenty miles north of London, and Princesses whose fathers were excellent aldermen or most conscientious tradesmen;—Generals without armies, and Flower-Girls whose gardens consisted of a pot of mignonette on the ledge of their bed-room windows;—Admirals whose nautical knowledge had been gleaned on board Gravesend steamers, and Heathen Goddesses who were devoted Christians;—Ancient Knights who had not even seen so much as the Eglintoun Tournament, and Witches whose only charms lay in their eyes;—and numbers, of both sexes, attired in fancy-dresses which were very fanciful indeed.

Then there was all the usual fun and frolic of a masquerade;—friends availing themselves of their masks and disguises to mystify each other,—witticism and repartee, which if not sharp nor pointed, still served the purpose of eliciting laughter,—and strange mistakes in respect to personal identity, which were more diverting than all.

There was also plenty of subdued whispering between youthful couples; for Love is as busy at masquerades as elsewhere.

The brilliancy of the dresses in the boxes, and the variety of those upon the floor, combined with the blaze of light and the sounds of the music,

formed a scene at once gay, exhilarating, and ravishing.

At about a quarter before ten o'clock, a masque, attired in the sombre garb of a Carmelite Friar, with his cowl drawn completely over his face, and a long rosary hanging from the rude cord which girt his waist, entered the theatre.

He cast a wistful glance, through the slight opening in his cowl, all around; and, not perceiving the person whom he sought, retired into the most obscure nook which he could find, but whence he could observe all that passed.

At five minutes to ten, a lady, habited as a Circassian slave, and wearing an ample white veil, so thick that it was impossible to obtain a glimpse of her countenance, alighted from a cab at the principal entrance of the theatre.

Lightly she tripped up the steps; but as she was about to enter the vestibule, her veil caught the buttons of a lounger's coat, and was drawn partly off her face.

She immediately re-adjusted it—but not before a gentleman, masked, and in the habit of a Greek Brigand, who was entering at the time, obtained a glimpse of her features.

"What? Ellen *here!*" murmured the Greek Brigand to himself: "I must not lose sight of her!"

Ellen did not however notice that she had been particularly observed; much less did she suspect that she was recognised.

But as she hastened up the great staircase, the Greek Brigand followed her closely.

Although her countenance was so completely concealed, her charming figure was nevertheless set off to infinite advantage by the dualma which she wore, and which, fitting close to her shape, reached down to her knees. Her ample trousers were tied just above the ankle where the graceful swell of the leg commenced; and her little feet were protected by red slippers.

The Brigand who had recognised her, and now watched her attentively, was tall, slender, well made, and of elegant deportment.

Ellen soon found herself in the midst of the busy scene, where her graceful form and becoming attire immediately attracted attention.

"Fair eastern lady," said an Ancient Knight in a buff jerkin and plumed tocque, "if thou hast lost the swain that should attend upon thee, accept of my protection until thou shalt find him."

"Thanks for thy courtesy, Sir Knight," answered Ellen, gaily: "I am come to confess to a holy father whom I see yonder."

"Wilt thou then abjure thine own creed, and embrace ours?" asked the Knight.

"Such is indeed my intention, Sir Knight," replied Ellen; and she darted away towards the Carmelite Friar whom she had espied in his nook.

The Ancient Knight mingled with a group of Generals and Heathen Goddesses, and did not offer to pester Ellen with any more of his attentions.

"Sweet girl," said Reginald Tracy (whom the reader has of course recognised in the Carmelite Friar), when Ellen joined him, how can I sufficiently thank you for this condescension on your part?"

"I am fully recompensed by the attention you have shown to the little caprice which prompted me to choose this scene for the interview that you desired," answered Ellen.

Both spoke in a subdued tone—but not so low as to prevent the Greek Brigand, who was standing near, from overhearing every word they uttered.

"Mr. Tracy," continued Ellen, "why did you entrust your message of love to another? why could you not impart with your own lips that which you were anxious to communicate to me?"

"Dearest Ellen," answered the rector, "I dared not open my heart to you in person—I was compelled to do so by means of another."

"If your passion be an honourable one," said Ellen, "there was no need to feel shame in revealing it."

"My passion is most sincere, Ellen. I would die for you! Oh! from the first moment that I beheld you by your father's sick-bed, I felt myself drawn towards you by an irresistible influence; and each time that I have since seen you has only tended to rivet more firmly the chain which makes me your slave. Have I not given you an unquestionable proof of my sincerity by meeting you *here?*"

"A proof of your desire to please me, no doubt," said Ellen. "But what proof have I that your passion is an honourable one? You speak of its sincerity—you avoid all allusion to the terms on which you would desire me to return it."

"What terms do you demand?" asked the rector. "Shall I lay my whole fortune at your feet? Shall I purchase a splendid house, with costly appointments, for you? In a word, what proof of my love do you require?"

"Are you speaking as a man who would make a settlement upon a wife, or as one who is endeavouring to arrange terms with a mistress?" demanded Ellen.

"My sweet girl," replied Reginald, know you not that, throughout my career, I have from the pulpit denounced the practice of a man in holy orders marrying, and that I have more than once declared—solemnly declared—my intention of remaining single upon principle? You would not wish me to commit an inconsistency which might throw a suspicion upon my whole life?"

"Then, sir, by what right do you presume that I will compromise my fair fame for your sake, if you tremble to sacrifice your reputation for mine?" asked Ellen. "Is every compromise to be effected by poor woman, and shall man make no sacrifice for her? Are you vile, or base, or cowardly enough to ask me to desert home and friends to gratify your selfish passion, while you carefully shroud your weakness beneath the hypocritical cloak of a reputed sanctity? Was it to hear such language as this that I agreed to meet you? But know, sir, that you have greatly—oh! greatly mistaken *me!* By the most unmanly—the most disgraceful means you endeavoured to wring from me, a few days ago, a secret which certain expressions of mine, incautiously uttered over what I conceived to be my father's death-bed, had perhaps made you more than half suspect. Those words, which escaped me in a moment of bitter anguish, you treasured up, and converted them into the text for a sermon which you preached me."

"Ellen," murmured the rector; "why these reproaches?"

"Oh! why these reproaches?—I will tell you," continued the young lady, whose bosom palpitated violently beneath the dualma. "Do you think that you did well to press me to reveal the secret of my

shame? Do you think that you adopted an honourable means to discover it? When you addressed me in that saintly manner—a manner which I now know to have been that of a vile hypocrisy—I actually believed you to be sincere; for the time I fancied that a man of God was offering me consolation. Nevertheless, think you that my feelings were not wounded? But an accident made you acquainted with that truth which you vainly endeavoured to extort from me! And now you perhaps believe that I cannot read your heart. Oh! I can fathom its depths but too well. You cherish the idea that because I have been frail once, I am fair game for a licentious sportsman like you. You are wrong, sir—you are wrong. I never erred but once—but once, mark you;—and then not through passion—nor through love—nor in a moment of surprise. I erred deliberately—no matter why. The result was the child whom you have seen. But never, never will I err more—no, not even though tempted, *as I have been*, by the father of my child! You sent to me a messenger—the same filthy hag who pandered to my first, my only disgrace,—you sent her as your herald of love. Ah! sir, you must have already plunged into ways at variance with the sanctity of your character—or you could not have known *her!* I told her—as I now assure you—that I do not affect a virtue which I possess not;—but if I henceforth remain pure and chaste, it is because I am a mother—because I love my child—because I will keep myself worthy of the respect of *him* who is the father of that child, should God ever move his heart towards me. Say then that I am virtuous upon calculation—I care not: still I am virtuous!"

The individual in the garb of the Greek Bandit drew a pace or two nearer as these words met his ears.

Neither the rector nor Ellen observed that he was paying any attention to them: on the contrary, he appeared to be entirely occupied in contemplating the dancers from beneath his impervious mask.

"Ellen, what means all this?" asked Reginald: "are you angry with me? You alarm me!"

"Suffer me to proceed, that you may understand me fully," said Ellen. "You mercilessly sought to cover me with humiliation, when you rudely probed that wound in my heart, the existence of which an unguarded expression of mine had revealed to you. Your conduct was base—was cowardly; and, as a woman, I eagerly embraced the opportunity to avenge myself."

"To avenge yourself!" faltered Reginald, nearly sinking with terror as these words fell upon his ears.

"Yes—to avenge myself," repeated Ellen hastily. "When your messenger—that vile agent of crime—proposed to me that I should grant you an interview, I bethought myself of this ball which I had seen announced in the newspapers. It struck me that if I could induce you—you, the man of sanctity—to clothe yourself in the mummery of a mask and meet me at a scene which you and your fellow-ecclesiastics denounce as one worthy of Satan, I should hurl back with tenfold effect that deep, deep humiliation which you visited upon me. It was for this that I made the appointment here to-night—for this that I retired early to my chamber, and thence stole forth unknown to my father and my benefactor—for this that I now form one at an assembly which has no charms for me! My intention was to seize an opportunity to tear your disguise from you, and allow all present to behold amongst them the immaculate rector of Saint David's. But I will be more merciful to you than you were to me: I will not inflict upon you that last and most poignant humiliation!"

"My God! Miss Monroe, are you serious?" said the rector, deeply humbled; "or is this merely a portion of the pastime?"

"Does it seem sport to you?" asked Ellen: "if so, I will continue it, and wind it up with the scene which I had abandoned."

"For heaven's sake, do not expose me, Miss Monroe!" murmured Reginald, now writhing in agony at the turn which the matter had taken. "Let me depart—and forget that I ever dared to address you rudely."

"Yes—go," said Ellen: "you are punished sufficiently. You possess the secret of my frailty—I possess the secret of your hypocrisy: beware of the use you make of your knowledge of me, lest I retaliate by exposing you."

There was something very terrible in the lesson which that young woman gave the libidinous priest on this occasion; and he felt it in its full force.

Cowering within himself, he uttered not another word, but stole away, completely subdued—cruelly humiliated.

Ellen lingered for a few moments on the spot where she had so effectually chastised the insolent hypocrite; and then hastily retired.

The Greek Brigand made a movement as if he were about to follow her; but, yielding to a second thought, he stopped, murmuring, "By heavens! she is a noble creature!"

CHAPTER CL.

MRS. KENRICK.

THE rector of Saint David's returned home a prey to the most unenviable feelings.

Rage—disappointment—humiliation conspired to make him mad.

The old hag had raised his hopes to the highest pitch; and at the moment when the cup of bliss seemed to approach his lips, it was rudely dashed away.

A woman had triumphed over him—mocked his passion—spurned his offers—read him a lesson of morality—taught him that proud man must not always domineer over feminine weakness.

Oh! it was too much for that haughty—that vain—that self-sufficient ecclesiastic to endure!

As he returned home in a hired cab, he threw from the window of the vehicle the Carmelite gown and cowl which he had worn; and bitterly did he reproach himself for his folly in having been seduced into the degradation of that masqued mummery.

Arrived at his own house, he rushed past the housekeeper who opened the door, and was hurrying up-stairs to the solitude of his chamber, when the voice of the old lady compelled him to pause.

"Mr. Tracy—Mr. Tracy," she exclaimed; "here is a note from Lady Harborough."

"Tell Lady Harborough to go to the devil, Mrs. Kenrick!" cried the rector, goaded almost to madness by this new proof of Cecilia's indiscretion.

The old housekeeper dropped the candle and the note, as if she were thunderstruck.

Was it possible that she had heard aright? could such an expression have emanated from the lips of her master—of that man whom the world idolized?

"What is the matter now, Mrs. Kenrick?" asked the rector, suddenly recovering his presence of mind, and perceiving the immense error into which his excited feelings had betrayed him.

"Nothing, sir—nothing," answered the housekeeper, as she re-lighted her candle by means of a lamp which was standing on the hall-table; "only I thought that something very terrible had occurred to annoy you."

"Yes—yes—I have indeed been grievously annoyed," said Reginald; "and you must forgive my hasty conduct. I was wrong—very wrong. Do not think anything more of it, Mrs. Kenrick. But did you not observe that Lady Harborough had sent a message——"

"A note, sir. Here it is."

And as the housekeeper handed her master the perfumed *billet*, she cast a scrutinizing glance upon his countenance.

He was as pale as death—his lips quivered—and his eyes had a wild expression.

"I am afraid, sir, that something very dreadful has happened to you," she observed timidly. "Shall I send for the physician?"

"No—no, Mrs. Kenrick: I shall be quite well in the morning. I have received a violent shock—the sudden communication of ill news—the death of a dear friend——"

"Ah! sir, I was convinced that all was not right," observed the housekeeper. "If you would follow my advice you would take something to compose you—to make you sleep well——"

"An excellent thought, Mrs. Kenrick! If it be not too late, I wish you would send and procure me a little laudanum: I will take a few drops to ensure a sound slumber."

"I will do so, sir," answered the housekeeper.

She then repaired to the kitchen, while Reginald hurried up to his own chamber to read Lady Cecilia's letter, the contents of which ran as follow:—

"Nearly a week has elapsed, dearest Reginald, and I have not seen you! neither have I heard from you. What is the meaning of this? Is it neglect, or extreme caution? At all events the interval which you enjoined for the cessation of my visits to you, has nearly expired; and my impatience will brook no longer delay. I must see you to-night! Precisely as the clock strikes twelve, I will be at your front-door, when you must admit me as on previous occasions—or I shall imagine that you are already wearied of your

"CECILIA."

"After all," said the rector, "the presence of Cecilia will in some degree console me for my disappointment of this evening! I cannot remain alone with my reflections—it drives me mad to think of what I am, and what I have been! And laudanum is a miserable resource for one who dreads a sleepless night: it peoples slumber with hideous phantoms. Yes—I will admit Cecilia at the appointed hour:—my housekeeper does not suspect me—my guilty conscience alone makes me think at times that she reads the secrets of my soul?"

The rector seated himself before the cheerful fire which burnt in the grate, and fell into a long train of voluptuous meditation.

He had become in so short a time a confirmed sensualist; and now that his long pent-up passions had broken loose, they never left him a moment of repose.

His reverie was interrupted by a knock at the door; and Mrs. Kenrick entered.

"Kate was fortunate enough to find a druggist's shop open, sir," she said, "and procured some laudanum. But pray be cautious how you use it."

"Never fear," returned the rector: "I may not avail myself of it at all—for I feel more composed now."

The housekeeper wished her master a good night's rest, and withdrew.

The rector then took a decanter of wine from a cupboard, and tossed off two glasses full, one immediately after the other.

The idea that Cecilia would shortly be there and the effects of the wine inflamed his blood, and brought back the colour to his cheeks.

Midnight soon sounded: the rector threw off his shoes, took a candle in his hand, and hastened down stairs.

He opened the front-door with the utmost caution; and a female, muffled in an ample cloak, darted into the hall.

"Cecilia?" whispered the rector.

"Dearest Reginald," answered the lady, in the same under tone.

They then stole noiselessly up stairs, and reached the rector's chamber without having scarcely awakened the faintest echo in the house.

The remainder of the night was passed by them in the intoxicating joys of illicit love. Locked in Cecilia's arms, the rector forgot the humiliation he had received at the hands of Ellen, and abandoned himself to those pleasures for which he risked so much!

It was still dark—though at a later hour in the morning than Cecilia had been previously in the habit of quitting the rector's house—when the guilty pair stole softly down stairs, without a light.

"Hasten, Cecilia," murmured the rector: "it is later than you imagine."

"My God!" whispered the lady: "I hear a step ascending!"

The rector listened for a moment, and then said in a faint tone, "Yes: we are lost!"

A light flashed on the wall a few steps beneath those on which they were standing: it was too late to retreat; and in another moment Mrs. Kenrick made her appearance on the stairs.

"What! Mr. Tracy?" ejaculated the housekeeper, her eyes glancing from the rector in his dressing-gown to the lady in her cloak.

Then the good woman stood motionless and silent—her tongue tied, and her feet rooted to the spot, with astonishment.

Lady Cecilia drew her veil hastily over her countenance; but not before Mrs. Kenrick had recognised her.

A thousand ideas passed rapidly through the rector's brain during the two or three moments that succeeded this encounter.

At first he thought of inventing some excuse for his awkward situation;—next he felt inclined to spring upon his old housekeeper and strangle her;—then he conceived the desperate idea of rushing back to his room and blowing his brains out.

"Mrs. Kenrick," at length he exclaimed, "I hope you will say nothing of this."

The housekeeper made no reply to her master; but, turning a contemptuous glance upon the lady, said, "Madam, allow me to conduct you to the front door."

Cecilia followed her mechanically; and Reginald rushed up the stairs to his room, a pray to emotions more readily conceived than described.

The housekeeper preceded Lady Cecilia in silence, and opened the front door.

"My dear Mrs. Kenrick," said the frail patrician, who had now nearly recovered her presence of mind, "I hope you will take no notice of this unpleasant discovery."

"I shall remain silent, madam," answered the housekeeper; "but through no respect for you. I however value the reputation of a master whom I have served for many years, too much to be the means of ruining him."

She then closed the door unceremoniously, and, seating herself on one of the mahogany benches in the hall, burst into tears.

That good woman loved her master with a maternal affection; and she was shocked at this dread confirmation of the faint suspicions which she had already entertained, and which had so sorely afflicted her.

"It is then true!" she thought within herself. "He has fallen! He is a living, breathing falsehood. His eloquence is a mere talent, and not the spontaneous outpouring of holy conviction! The world adores an idle delusion—worships a vain phantom. Oh! what a discovery is this! How can I ever respect him more? how can I ever talk with others of his virtues again? And yet he may repent—oh! God grant that he may! Yes—he must repent: he must again become the great, the good man he once was! It behoves me, then, to shield his guilt:—at the same time all temptation should be removed from his presence. Ah! now I bethink me that he has cast wistful eyes upon that poor girl whom he has taken into the establishment. I must remove her: yes—I will remove her, upon my own authority. He will thank me hereafter for my prudence."

Thus did the good woman reason within herself.

When she had somewhat recovered from the first shock which the unpleasant discovery of her master's criminality had produced upon her, she repaired to her domestic avocations.

Kate was already in the kitchen, occupied with her usual duties.

"Katherine, my dear child," said Mrs. Kenrick, "I am going to give you my advice—or rather to propose to you a plan which I have formed—relative to you——"

"To me, ma'am?" exclaimed the young maiden, desisting from her employment, and preparing to listen with attention.

"Yes, my dear girl," continued the housekeeper; "and when I tell you that it is for your good—entirely for your good—you would thank me——"

"Oh! I do, ma'am—I thank you in advance," said Kate; "for I have already experienced too much kindness at your hands not to feel convinced that all you propose is for my good."

"Well, then, my dear—without giving you any reasons for my present conduct—I am anxious that you should leave this house——"

"Leave, ma'am?" cried Kate, astonished at this unexpected announcement.

"Yes, Katherine: you must leave this house," proceeded Mrs. Kenrick. "But think not that you will be unprovided for. I have a sister who resides a few miles from London; and to her care I shall recommend you. She will be a mother to you."

"But why would you remove me from the roof of my benefactor?" asked Kate: "why would you send me away from London, where my only relations on the face of the earth reside?" she added, bursting into tears; for she thought of her poor persecuted cousin the hump-back.

"Do not ask me, my good child," returned Mrs. Kenrick: "my reasons are of a nature which cannot be communicated to you. And yet—if you knew them, and could rightly understand them—you would not object——"

"Alas! ma'am, I am afraid that I understand them but too well," interrupted the girl: "the executioner's niece brings discredit upon the house of her benefactor."

"Oh! no—no," exclaimed the good-natured housekeeper; "do not entertain such an idea! Not for worlds would I have you labour under such an error. You know I would not tell a falsehood; and I declare most solemnly that you have totally misunderstood me and my motives."

There was an earnestness in the way in which Mrs. Kenrick spoke that immediately removed from Katherine's mind the suspicion she had entertained.

"Why should you send the poor girl away, Mrs. Kenrick?" said the footman, now suddenly emerging from the pantry, which joined the kitchen.

"Have you overheard our conversation, then, Thomas?" exclaimed Mrs. Kenrick, angrily.

"I could n't very well avoid it," answered the footman, "since I was in there all the time."

"It would have been more discreet on your part to have let us know that you were there, when you heard a private conversation begin," remarked the housekeeper.

"How should I know the conversation was private?" exclaimed Thomas. "I suppose you 're jealous of the girl, and want to get rid of her."

"You must value your place very little by speaking to me in this way," said Mrs. Kenrick. "However, I scorn your base allusions. And you, my dear," she continued, now addressing herself to Katherine, "look upon me as your friend—your very sincere friend. What I am doing is for your good: to-day I will write to my sister—and to-morrow you shall, proceed to her abode."

The housekeeper then resumed her avocations with the complacency of one conscious of having performed a duty.

"Thomas," she said, after a pause, "go up and inquire if your master will have breakfast served in his own chamber, or in the parlour."

The footman hastened to obey this order.

"Master says he is very unwell, and desires no breakfast at all," was the information which the man gave on his return to the kitchen.

The housekeeper made no reply: she was however pleased when she reflected that the rector felt his situation—a state of mind which she hoped would lead to complete repentance and reform.

The morning passed: the afternoon arrived: and still Reginald Tracy kept his room.

The housekeeper sent the footman up to ask if he required any thing.

Thomas returned with a negative answer, adding

"Master spoke to me without opening the door, and seemed by his tone of voice to be very unwell."

Again the housekeeper remained silent, more convinced than before that contrition was working its good effects with her master.

Hour after hour passed; the sun went down; and darkness once more drew its veil over the mighty city.

Mrs. Kenrick again sent up Thomas with the same inquiry as before.

The servant returned to the kitchen with a letter in his hand.

"This time master opened the door," he said; "and gave me this letter to take up to Mr. Markham at Holloway. But I shall take the omnibus there and back."

Thomas then departed to execute his commission.

Shortly after he was gone, the bell of the rector's room rang.

Mrs. Kenrick hastened to answer it.

She found Mr. Tracy sitting in a musing attitude before the fire in his bed-room.

"My dear Mrs. Kenrick," he said, "I wish to have some conversation with you—I need scarcely now explain upon what subject. I have sent Thomas out of the way with an excuse: do you get rid of Katherine for an hour; I am faint—and require refreshment; and I will take my tea with you in the kitchen."

"In the kitchen, sir!" exclaimed the housekeeper, in surprise.

"Yes—if you will permit me," answered the rector: "I can then converse with you at the same time.

Mrs. Kenrick left the room to execute her master's wishes; and, as she descended the stairs, she thought within herself, "I am right! he has repented: he will become the virtuous and upright man he once was!"

And the good woman experienced a pleasure as sincere as if any one had announced to her that she was entitled to a princely fortune.

To send Katherine out of the way for an hour was no difficult matter. The old housekeeper gave her leave to repair to Saint Giles's to visit her relatives; and the young girl, thinking that her uncle might repent of his recent harshness towards her, now that she was no longer dependant upon him, gladly availed herself of this permission.

Katherine accordingly proceeded to Saint Giles's; and the moment she had left the house Mrs. Kenrick spread the kitchen table with the tea-things.

CHAPTER CLI.

A MYSTERIOUS DEED.

KATHERINE tripped lightly along towards Saint Giles's; but as she drew near her uncle's door, she relaxed her speed, and her heart grew somewhat heavy.

She was afraid of experiencing an unkind reception.

It was, therefore, with a pleasure the more lively as it was unexpected, that the poor girl found herself welcomed by a smile on the part of her dreaded relative.

"Come in, Kate," said he, when he perceived his niece; "I felt myself dull and lonely, and was just thinking of you as you knocked at the door. I'm almost sorry that I ever parted with you; but as you're now in a place that may do you good I shall not interfere with you."

"I am very much obliged to you for thinking so kindly of me, uncle," said Kate, wiping away a tear, as she followed Smithers into the little parlour, which, somehow or another, did not look so neat as it had been wont to do in her time.

"I can't help thinking of you now and then, Kate," continued Smithers. "But, I say," he added abruptly, "I hope you've forgotten all about the manner in which we parted t'other day?"

"Oh! indeed I have, uncle," answered the girl, more and more astonished at this unusual urbanity of manner.

"I am not happy—I'm not comfortable in my mind, somehow," said Smithers, after a short pause. "Since the night before last I have n't been myself."

"What ails you?" asked Kate, kindly.

"I think my last hour's drawing nigh, Kate," returned the public executioner, sinking his voice to a low and mysterious whisper; but, at the same time, his countenance grew deadly pale, and he cast a shuddering look around him.

"You are low-spirited, uncle—that's all," said Kate, surveying him attentively—for his peculiarity of manner alarmed her.

"No—that's not it, Kate," continued the executioner; then, drawing his chair closer towards that on which his niece was seated, he added, "I have had my warning."

"Your warning, uncle! What mean you?"

"I mean what I say, Kate," proceeded Smithers, in a tone of deep dejection: "I have had my warning; and I s'pose it will come three times."

"Uncle—dear uncle, I cannot understand you. You must be unwell. Will you have medical advice? Say—shall I fetch a physician?"

"Do n't be silly, Kate: there's nothink the matter with my body;—it's the mind. But I'll tell you what it is," continued Smithers, after a few moments of profound reflection. "It was the night before last. I had been practising—you know how——"

"Yes—yes, uncle," said Katherine, hastily.

"And it was close upon midnight, when I thought I would go to bed. Well—I undressed myself, and as there was only a little bit of candle left, I did n't blow the light out, but put the candlestick into the fire-place. I then got into bed. In a very few minutes I fell into a sort of doze—more asleep than awake though, because I dreamt of the man that I hanged yesterday week. I did n't, however, sleep very long; for I woke with a start just as Saint Giles's was a striking twelve. The light was flickering in the candlestick, for it was just dying away. You know how a candle burnt down to the socket flares at one moment, and then seems quite dead the next, but revives again immediately afterwards?"

"Yes, uncle," answered Katherine; "and I have often thought that in the silent and solemn midnight it is an awful thing to see."

"So it struck me at that moment," continued the executioner. "I felt a strange sensation creeping all over me; the candle flared and flickered; and I thought it had gone out. Then it revived once more, and threw a strong but only a momentary light around the room. At that instant my eyes were

fixed in the direction of the puppet; and, as sure as you are sitting there, Kate, *another face* looked at me over its shoulder!"

"Oh! my dear uncle, it was the imagination," said the young girl, casting an involuntary glance of timidity around.

"Is a man like me one of the sort to be deluded by the imagination?" asked Smithers, somewhat contemptuously. "Haven't I been too long in a certain way to have any foolish fears of that sort?"

"But when we are unwell, uncle, the bravest of us may perceive strange visions, which are nothing more than the sport of the imagination," urged Kate.

"I tell you this had nothing to do with the imagination," persisted the executioner. "I saw *another face* as plain as I see yours now; and—more than that—its glassy eyes were fixed upon me in a manner which I shall never forget. It was a warning—I know it was."

Kate made no reply: she saw the inutility of arguing with her uncle upon the subject; and she was afraid of provoking his irritable temper by contending against his obstinacy.

"But we won't talk any more about it, Kate," said the executioner, after a pause. "I know how to take it; and it does n't frighten me; it only makes me dull. It has n't prevented me from sleeping in my old quarters; nor will it, if I can help it. But you want to be off—I see you are getting fidgetty."

"I only received permission to remain out one hour," answered Kate. "Is my cousin at home?"

"The young vagabond!" ejaculated the executioner, whose irritability this question had aroused in spite of the depression of spirits under which he laboured; for he could not forget the unwearied repugnance which Gibbet manifested towards the paternal avocations:—"the young vagabond! he is never at home now of an evening."

"Never at home of an evening!" exclaimed Kate, surprised at this information.

"No," continued the executioner; "and at first I thought he went to see you."

"He can only visit me on Sunday,evenings," observed the young maiden.

"So he told me yesterday. Howsumever, he goes out regular at dusk, and never comes back till between nine and ten—sometimes later."

"Then I am not likely to see him this evening?" exclaimed Kate, in a tone of disappointment.

"That you are not," replied the executioner. "But I must put a stop to these rovings on his part."

"Oh! pray be kind to him, uncle," said Katherine, rising to depart.

"Kind indeed!" grumbled the man, some of his old surliness returning.

Katherine then took leave of her uncle,and hurried towards Mr. Tracy's residence.

She reached her destination as the clock struck nine, and entered the house as usual, by the back way.

She proceeded to the kitchen, where, to her surprise, she observed Mrs. Kenrick sitting in her armchair, but apparently fast asleep. The old housekeeper's arms reposed upon the table, and formed a support for her head which had fallen forwards.

"Strange!" thought Katherine; "this is the first time I have known her sleep thus."

The young maiden moved lightly about the kitchen, while she threw off her bonnet and cloak, for fear of awaking the housekeeper.

Then she sate down near the fire, and fell into a profound reverie concerning the strange tale which her uncle had told her.

Presently it struck her that she did not hear the housekeeper breathe; and an awful suspicion rushed like a torrent into her mind.

For some moments she sate, motionless and almost breathless, in her chair, with her eyes fixed upon the inclined form of the housekeeper.

"My God!" at length Kate exclaimed; "she does not breathe—she does not move;—and her hands—oh! how pale they are!"

Then, overcoming her terror, the young maiden bent down her head so as to obtain a glimpse of Mrs. Kenrick's countenance.

"Oh! heavens—she is dead—she is dead!" cried the horror-struck girl, as her eyes encountered a livid and ghastly face instead of the healthy and good-humoured one which was familiar to her.

And Katherine sank back in her seat, overcome with grief and terror.

Suddenly the thought struck her that, after all, the housekeeper might only be in a fit.

Blaming herself for the delay which her fears had occasioned ere she administered succour, Kate hastened to raise the old lady's head.

But she let it fall again when she had obtained another glance of that ghastly countenance;—for the eyes were fixed and glazed—the under jaw had fallen—and the swollen tongue was lolling, dark and livid, out of the mouth.

Then Kate rushed into the yard, screaming for help.

The rector's groom (who also acted as coachman) was in the stable adjoining; and he immediately hastened to the spot.

"What is the matter?" he demanded, alarmed by the wildness of Katherine's manner and the piercing agony of her cries.

"Mrs. Kenrick is dead!" replied Katherine, sobbing bitterly.

"Dead!" ejaculated the man; and he instantly rushed into the kitchen.

In a few moments afterwards the rector made his appearance, and inquired the cause of the screams which had alarmed him.

"Mrs. Kenrick is dead, sir," said the groom.

Katherine had flung herself into a chair, and was giving full vent to her grief for the loss of her benefactress.

"Dead!" cried the rector. "No—let us hope not. Run for the nearest surgeon—it may only be a fit!"

"I 'm afraid it 's too late, sir," said the groom, who had now raised the housekeeper from her procumbent posture, and laid her back in the chair.

"Who knows? Run—run," exclaimed the rector impatiently.

The groom instantly departed; and during his short absence the rector was most assiduous in bathing the housekeeper's forehead with vinegar and water, and chafing her hands between his own.

In a few minutes the groom returned, accompanied by a surgeon; and the rector was found in the midst of his vain attentions.

The surgeon's examination was brief; but his

words were decisive, as he said, "All human aid is vain, sir; and those appearances are most suspicious."

"What do you mean?" demanded Reginald.

"That your servant is poisoned," replied the surgeon.

"Poisoned!" exclaimed the rector. "Oh! no—you must mistake. She would not take poison herself, and I do not believe she has an enemy on the face of the earth."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Tracy," said the surgeon positively, "she is poisoned."

At these words Kate's sobs became more convulsive.

"But is it too late?" cried the rector: "can nothing be done? Is she past recovery?"

"Past all human succour, I repeat."

"My poor servant—my faithful friend," exclaimed Reginald Tracy, burying his face in his hands: "Oh! what could have induced her to commit suicide?"

"Suicide!" echoed Katherine, starting from her seat, and coming forward: "Oh! no, sir—do not wrong her memory thus! She was too good—too pious—too much bent upon the mercy of her Redeemer, to commit such a crime."

"Alas! suicide it must have been, my poor girl," said the rector; "for who could have administered poison to so harmless, so charitable, so humane a creature? Some secret grief, perhaps——"

At this moment Thomas returned from his mission to Markham Place. The poor fellow was deeply affected when the dreadful spectacle in the kitchen met his eyes, and when the few particulars yet known concerning the death of the housekeeper, or rather the first discovery of her death—were communicated to him.

"I never shall forgive myself as long as I live," exclaimed Thomas, "for having spoken cross to her, poor lady, this morning."

"Spoken cross to her!" cried the rector.

"Yes, sir," answered the man; "I said something to her—but I forget exactly what—because she told Katherine that she should send her away from London."

"Send Katherine away!" said Reginald, in unfeigned surprise.

"Yes, sir; and because I saw the girl did n't like it, I took her part against Mrs. Kenrick; and I 'm now heartily sorry for it," rejoined Thomas, wiping away an honest tear.

"Young woman," said the surgeon, who had been attentively examining Katherine for some moments, "did you not visit my shop last evening?"

"I, sir!" exclaimed the young girl, who was too deeply absorbed in grief at the death of her benefactress to have her ideas very clearly distributed in the proper cells of her brain.

"Yes," continued the surgeon: "the more I look at you, the more I am convinced you came last night to my establishment and purchased a small phial of laudanum."

"Oh! yes—I remember, sir," said Katherine: "Mrs. Kenrick sent me for it, and told me that it was for my master."

The surgeon threw an inquiring glance towards Reginald.

"For me!" ejaculated the rector.

"So Mrs. Kenrick said, sir," returned Katherine: "and the moment I brought it in, she went up stairs with it."

"You can in one moment set at rest that point, sir," said the surgeon, with another glance of inquiry towards the rector.

"The laudanum was not for me," answered Mr. Tracy, calmly: "nor did I order my poor housekeeper to obtain any."

"O Katherine!" ejaculated Thomas; "surely—surely, you have not done this dreadful deed!"

"I——a murderess!" almost shrieked the poor girl: "Oh! no—no. God forbid!"

And she clasped her hands together.

The surgeon shook his head mysteriously.

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed the rector, who was evidently excited to a painful degree, "you do not suspect—you cannot suppose—you do not—cannot imagine that—this young person——"

"I regret to state that the matter is to my mind most suspicious," observed the surgeon, with true professional calmness. "This morning the housekeeper informs that young person she must leave your establishment——"

"But, according to your own admission, the laudanum was purchased last night," interrupted the rector.

"Your humanity in pleading on behalf of that young woman does honour to your heart, Mr. Tracy," said the surgeon; "but was it not likely that she knew *yesterday* of some circumstance which would induce the housekeeper to give her warning *to-day?* and ——"

"Oh! my God!" cried the rector, striking his forehead forcibly with the open palm of his right hand.

"To a virtuous mind like yours I know that such a suspicion must be abhorrent," said the surgeon.

He then whispered a few words to the groom.

The groom immediately went out.

"Mr. Tracy—sir—you cannot surely entertain a suspicion against me!" cried Katherine, in a tone of the most piercing anguish. "Oh! that poor creature was my benefactress; and I would sooner have died myself than have done her wrong!"

"I believe you," exclaimed the rector,—"believe you from the bottom of my heart!"

"Thank you, Mr. Tracy," cried the poor girl, falling upon her knees before him, and grasping his hands convulsively in her own.

"You are too good—too generous," muttered the surgeon. "Be not deluded by that tragic acting. At all events I must do my duty."

"What do you mean?" cried the rector. "You cannot say that suspicion attaches itself to this young girl. I would stake my existence upon her innocence!" he added emphatically.

"You know not human nature as I know it," returned the surgeon coolly.

At this moment the groom returned, followed by a police-officer.

"A person has met with her death in a most mysterious manner," said the surgeon; "and strong suspicions point towards that young female."

Then followed one of those heart-rending scenes which defy the powers of the most graphic pen to delineate.

Amidst the wildest screams—and with cries of despair which pierced even to the stoic heart of the surgeon, who had acted in a manner which he had deemed merely consistent with his duty, the unhappy girl was led away in the custody of the officer.

"My God! who would have thought that it would have come to this?" exclaimed Reginald Tracy, as he precipitated himself from the kitchen.

"The surgeon is right," observed Thomas to the groom; "master is too good a man to believe in guilt of so black a nature."

CHAPTER CLII.

THE DEATH BED.

EARLY on the morning which succeeded the arrest of Katherine Wilmot, Mr. Gregory paid a visit to Markham Place.

The moment he entered the room where Richard received him, our hero observed that some deep affliction weighed upon the mind of his friend.

"Mr. Markham," said the latter, in a tone of profound anguish, "I am come to ask you a favour—and you will not refuse the last request of a dying girl."

"My dear sir—what do you mean?" exclaimed Richard. "Surely your daughter——"

"Mary-Anne will not long remain in this world of trouble," interrupted Mr. Gregory, solemnly. "Hers will soon be the common lot of mortals—perhaps to-day, perhaps to-morrow! She must die soon—God will change her countenance and take her unto himself. Oh! where shall I find consolation?"

"Consolation is to be found in the conviction that the earth is no abiding place," answered Markham; "and that there is a world beyond."

"Yes, truly," said the afflicted father. "We stand upon the border of an ocean *which has but one shore*, and whose heavings beyond are infinite and eternal."

There was a pause, during which Mr. Gregory was wrapped up in painful reflections.

"Come," said he, at length breaking that solemn silence, and taking Richard's hand; "you will not refuse to go with me to the death-chamber of my daughter? You will not offend against the delicacy of that devotion which you owe to *another*; for she herself is also there."

Richard gazed at Mr. Gregory in astonishment as he uttered these words.

"Yes, my young friend," continued the wretched father; "within the last four and twenty hours, Mary-Anne and I have had many explanations. By a strange coincidence, it was at the abode of Count Alteroni that Mary-Anne passed a few days at the commencement of last month, and to which visit I alluded the last time I saw you, but without particularising names. I did not then know that you were even acquainted with the Alteroni family—much less could I suspect that your affections were fixed upon the Lady Isabella."

"And your daughter and Isabella are acquainted?" ejaculated Markham, more and more surprised at what he heard.

"They are friends—and at this moment the Lady Isabella is by the bed-side of Mary-Anne. It seems that the young maidens made confidants of each other, during my daughter's visit to the Count's mansion; and they then discovered that they both loved the same individual."

"How strange that they should have thus met!" cried Markham.

"Then was it," continued Mr. Gregory, "that my daughter learnt how hopeless was her own passion! Oh! I need not wonder if she returned home heart-broken and dying! But your Isabella, Richard, is an angel of goodness, virtue, and beauty!"

"She is worthy of the loftiest destinies!" said Markham enthusiastically.

"She was present when my daughter poured forth her soul into my bosom," resumed Mr. Gregory; "and Mary-Anne was guilty of no breach of confidence in revealing to me the love which existed between the Signora and yourself. And Isabella, with the most becoming modesty, confirmed the truth of Mary-Anne's recital. But your secret, Mr. Markham, remains locked up in my breast. You are too honourable and the Lady Isabella is too pure-minded to act in opposition to the will of her father: but God grant that events may prove favourable to you, and that you may be happily united!"

Richard pressed the hand of his respected friend in token of gratitude for this kind wish.

"And now you cannot hesitate to take a last farewell of my daughter," said Mr. Gregory; "for all danger of contagion from her malady has passed."

Markham instantly prepared himself to accompany the unhappy parent.

Few were the words that passed between them as they proceeded to the dwelling which was the abode of sorrow.

On their arrival Markham was shown into the drawing-room for a short time; and then the nurse came to introduce him into the sick-chamber.

The room was nearly dark; the curtains of the bed were close drawn; and thus the dying girl was completely concealed from our hero.

But near the foot of the bed was standing a beauteous form, whose symmetrical shape Markham could not fail to recognise.

Isabella extended her hand towards him: he pressed it in silence to his lips.

Mary-Anne had heard his footsteps; and she also gave him her hand between the folds of the curtains.

"Sit down by the bed-side, Richard," whispered Isabella: "our poor friend is anxious to speak to you."

And Isabella wept—and Richard also wept; for those noble-minded beings could not know, without the liveliest emotion, that one so sweet, so innocent, and so youthful, was stretched upon the bed from which she was destined never to rise again.

Markham seated himself by the side of the bed; and Isabella was about to withdraw.

"Stay with us, my dear friend," said Mary-Anne, in a plaintive but silver tone of voice, which touched a chord of sympathy that vibrated to their very souls.

Alas! that dulcet voice could not move the tuneless ear of Death!

Isabella obeyed her friend's wish in silence.

"This is kind of you—very kind," continued Mary-Anne, after a brief pause, and now evidently addressing herself to Richard. "I longed to speak to you once again before I left this earthly scene for ever; and that angel who loves you, and whom you love, earnestly implored my father to procure for me that last consolation. And now that you are both here together—you and that angel, by my bed-side,—I may be allowed to tell you, Richard, how fondly—how devotedly I have loved you; and I know you to be the noble, the enduring, the patient, the high-minded, and the honourable being I always believed you to be. Oh! how rejoiced I am that you have not loved me in return; for I should not like to die and leave behind me one who had loved me as tenderly as I had loved him."

"You will not die—you will recover!" exclaimed Markham, deeply affected, while Isabella's ill-suppressed sobs fell upon his ears. "Yes—yes—you will recover, to bless your father and brothers, and to make *us*, who are your friends, happy! It is impossible that Death can covet one so young, so innocent, and so beautiful——"

"Beautiful!" cried Mary-Anne, with a bitterness of accent which surprised our hero, and which served to elicit a fresh burst of sorrow from the sympathising bosom of Isabella: "beautiful—no, not now!"

Then there was another solemn pause.

"Yes—I shall die; but you will be happy," resumed Mary-Anne, again breaking silence. "Something assures me that providence will not blight the love which exists between Isabella and yourself—as it has seen fit to blight mine! Such is my presentiment; and the presentiments of the dying are often strangely prophetic of the future truth. Oh!" continued the young maiden, in a tone of excitement, "brilliant destinies await you, Richard! All your enduring patience, your resignation under the oppression of foul wrong, will meet with a glorious reward. Yes—for I know all:—that angel Isabella has kept no secret from me. She is a Princess, Richard; and by your union with her, you yourself will become one of the greatest Princes in Europe! Her father, too, shall succeed to his just rights; and then, Richard, then—" she said, with a sort of holy enthusiasm and sybilline fervour,—"*then* how small will be the distance between yourself and the Castelcicalan throne!"

At that solemn moment, Isabella extended her hand towards Richard, who pressed hers tenderly; and the lovers thus acknowledged the impression which had been wrought and the happy augury

which was conveyed by the fervent language of the dying girl.

"Oh! do not think my words are of vain import," continued Mary-Anne, in the same tone of inspiration. "I speak not of my own accord—something within me dictates all I now say! Yes—you shall be happy with each other; all obstacles shall vanish from the paths of your felicity; and when, in your sovereign palace of Montoni, you shall in future years retrospect over all you have seen and all you have passed through, forget not the dying girl who predicted for you all the happiness which you will then enjoy!"

"Forget you!" exclaimed Richard and Isabella in the same breath; "never—never!"

And the tears streamed down their cheeks.

"No—never forget me," said Mary-Anne; "for if it be allowed to the spirits of the departed to hover round the dwellings of those whom they loved and have left in this world, then will I be as a guardian angel unto you—and I shall contemplate your happiness with joy!"

"Oh! speak not thus surely of approaching death," exclaimed Richard. "Who knows that your eyes may not again behold the light!"

"My eyes!" repeated the invalid, with an evident shudder. "But for what could I live?" demanded the young maiden: "what attractions could life now offer to me?"

"You are young," returned Markham: "and hope and youth are inseparable. You can mingle with society,—you can appear in the great world—a world that will be proud of you——"

"Oh! Richard, Richard," murmured the soft tones of Isabella; "you know not what you say!"

At the same time that the Signora thus spoke in a low whisper, deep and convulsive sobs emanated from behind the curtains.

"Pardon me, Mary-Anne," said Richard, not comprehending the meaning of Isabella's words; "I have probably touched a chord——"

"Oh! I do not blame you," said Miss Gregory; "but my father ought to have told you all!"

"All!" echoed Richard. "What fresh misfortune could he have communicated?"

"Did he not tell you that I had been attacked with a grievous malady? that——"

"I remember! He spoke of a dangerous malady which had assailed you; and he remarked that all fear of contagion was now past. But I was so occupied at the time with the afflicting intelligence of your severe illness—so surprised, too, when I learnt that Isabella was here with you,—that I paid but little attention to that observation."

"Alas!" said Mary-Anne, in a faint and deeply-melancholy tone, "I have been assailed by a horrible malady—a malady which leaves its fatal marks behind, as if the countenance had been seared with red-hot iron—which disfigures the lineaments of the human face—eats into the flesh—and—and——"

"The small-pox!" cried Markham with a shudder.

"The small-pox," repeated Mary-Anne. "But you need not be alarmed: all danger of infection or contagion is now past—or I should not have sent to Isabella to come to me yesterday."

"I am not afraid," answered our hero: "I shuddered on your account. And even if there were any danger," he added, "I should not fly from it, if my presence be a consolation to you."

"You now understand," said the dying girl, "the reason why I could not hope for happiness in this world, even if I were to recover from my present illness,—and why death will be preferable to existence in a state of sorrow. How could I grope about in darkness, where I have been accustomed to feast my eyes with the beauties of nature and the wonderful fabrics raised by men? How could I consent to linger on in blindness in a world where there is so much to admire?"

"Blindness!" echoed our hero: "impossible! You cannot mean what you say!"

"Alas! it were a folly to jest upon one's death-bed," returned the young lady, with a deep sigh. "What I said ere now was the truth. The malady made giant strides to hurry me to the tomb: never had the physicians before known its ravages to proceed with such frightful celerity. It has left its traces upon my countenance—and it has deprived me of the blessing of sight. Oh! now I am hideous—a monster,—I know, I feel that I am,—revolting, disgusting," continued Mary-Anne, bitterly; "and not for worlds would I allow you to behold that face which once possessed some attraction."

"The marks left by the scourge that has visited you will gradually become less apparent," said Richard, deeply afflicted by the tone, the manner, and the communications of the invalid; "and probably the eye-lids are but closed for a time, and can be opened again by the skill of a surgeon."

"Never—never!" cried Mary-Anne, convulsively; and, taking Richard's hand, she carried it to her countenance.

She placed his fingers upon her closed eye-lids.

He touched them; they yielded to his pressure.

The sockets of the eyes were empty.

The eye-balls were gone!

"Oh! wherefore art thou thus afflicted—thou who art so guiltless, so pure, so innocent?" exclaimed our hero, unable to contain his emotions.

"Question not the will of the deity," said Mary-Anne. "I am resigned to die; and if, at times, a regret in favour of the world I am leaving enters my mind, or is made apparent in my language, I pray the Almighty to pardon me those transient repinings. Of the past it is useless now to think;—the present is here;—and the future is an awful subject for contemplation. But upon that I must now fix my attention!"

Markham made no answer; and during the long silence which ensued, the dying girl was wrapt up in mental devotion.

At length she said, "Give me your hand, Richard—and yours, Isabella."

Her voice had now lost all its excitement; and her utterance was slow and languid.

The lovers obeyed her desire.

Mary-Anne placed their hands together, and said, "Be faithful to each other—and be happy."

Richard and Isabella both wept plentifully.

"Adieu, my kind—my dear friends," murmured Mary-Anne. "You must now leave me; and let my father come to receive the last wishes of his daughter."

"Adieu, dearest Mary-Anne: we shall meet in heaven!" said Isabella, in a tone expressive of deep emotion.

"We will never—never forget you," added Richard.

He then led the weeping Isabella from the apartment.

As they issued from the chamber of death, they met Mr. Gregory in the passage: he wrung their hands, and said, "Wait in the drawing-room until I come."

The unhappy parent then repaired to the death-bed of his daughter.

Markham and Isabella proceeded in silence to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER CLIII.

PROCEEDINGS IN CASTELCICALA.

THE scene, which they had just witnessed, produced a most painful impression upon the minds of the lovely Italian lady and Richard Markham.

For some moments after they were alone in the drawing-room together, they maintained a profound silence.

At length Richard spoke.

"It is a mournful occurrence which has brought us together to-day, Isabella," he said.

"And although this meeting between us be unknown to my father," answered Isabella, "yet the nature of the circumstance which caused it must serve as my apology in your eyes."

"In my eyes!" ejaculated Markham. "Oh! how can an apology be necessary for an interview with one who loves you as I love you?"

"I am not accustomed to act the prude, Richard," returned Isabella; "and therefore I will not say that I regret having met you,—apart from the sad event which led to our meeting."

"Oh! Isabella, if I do not now renew to you all my former protestations of affection, it is because it were impious for us to think of our love, when death is busy in the same house."

"Richard, I admire your feeling in this respect. But you are all our poor dying friend proclaimed you—high-minded, honourable, and generous. O Richard! the prophetic language of Mary-Anne has produced a powerful impression upon my mind!"

"And on mine, also," answered Markham. "Not that I esteem the prospective honours displayed to my view; but because I hope—sincerely hope—that my adored Isabella may one day be mine."

The Princess tendered him her hand, which he kissed in rapture.

"Do you know," said Isabella, after a few moments' silence, "that events are taking a turn in Castelcicala, which may lead to all that poor Mary-Anne has prophesied? There was a strong party in the state opposed to the marriage of the Grand Duke; and the military department was particularly dissatisfied."

"I remember that in the accounts which I read of the celebration of that marriage, it was stated that the ducal procession experienced a chilling reception from the soldiery."

"True," answered Isabella; "and early last month—a few days after the commencement of the new year—that spirit showed itself more unequivocally still. Three regiments surrounded the ducal palace, and demanded a constitution. The Grand Duke succeeded in pacifying them with vague promises; and the regiments retired to their quarters. It then appears that his Serene Highness wished to make an example of those regiments, and drew up a decree ordaining them to be disbanded, the officers to be cashiered, and the men to be distributed amongst other corps."

"That was a severe measure," remarked Richard.

"So severe," continued Isabella, "that General Grachia, the Minister of War, refused to sign the ducal ordinance. He was accordingly compelled to resign, the Duke remaining inflexible. The whole of the Cabinet-Ministers then sent in their resignations, which the Grand Duke accepted. Signor Pisani, the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was charged with the formation of a new ministry—a fact which shows how completely the Duke has alienated from himself all the great statesmen of Castelcicala."

"So that he has been compelled to have recourse to an Under Secretary as his Prime Minister," observed Richard.

"Precisely," answered Isabella. "Signor Pisani formed an administration; and its first act was to carry into force the decree already drawn up against the three discontented regiments. The second proceeding of the new ministry was to banish General Grachia from the country."

"This was madness!" ejaculated Markham. "Does the Grand Duke wish to seal his own ruin?"

"It would appear that he is desperate," continued Isabella, "as I shall show you in a moment. General Grachia left Montoni, accompanied by his family, and followed by immense multitudes, who cheered him as the well-known friend of the Prince my father. The troops also crowded in his way, to show their respect for the veteran chief who had so often led them to conquest. The next morning a ducal ordinance appeared, which showed that the Grand Duke was resolved to throw off the mask, and proclaim a despotism. I have the *Montoni Gazette* in my reticule."

Isabella produced the newspaper, and, opening it, said, "I will translate the ordinance to you."

"Nay—rather allow me to read it for myself," returned Markham.

"How? But it is in Italian," exclaimed the Signora.

"And I will read it in that tongue," said Richard.

"I was not aware—I knew not until now——"

"No, dearest Isabella: until lately the Italian language was as Chinese to me," interrupted Richard: "but I have studied it intensely—without aid, without guidance; and if I cannot speak it fluently nor with the correct pronunciation, I can understand it with ease, and—I flatter myself—speak at least intelligibly."

The lovely Italian girl listened to this announcement with the most tender interest. She received it as a proof of boundless love for her; and sweet—ineffably sweet was the glance of deep gratitude which she threw upon her lover.

Richard took the *Montoni Gazette* from the fair hand which tendered it to him, and then read, with ease and fluency, the following translation of the ducal ordinance alluded to:—

"ANGELO III., BY THE GRACE OF GOD, GRAND DUKE OF CASTELCICALA,

"To all present and to come, Greeting:

"We have ordered and do order that which follows:—

"I. The censorship of the press is restored from this

date: and no newspaper nor periodical work shall be published in our dominions, without the consent of the Minister of the Interior.

"II. Offences against this law, as well as all others connected with the press, shall henceforth be brought before the cognizance of the Captain-General of the province where such offences may occur, instead of before the ordinary tribunals.

"III. No assembly of more than seven persons will henceforth be allowed to take place, without the consent of the local authorities, save for the purposes of religious worship and ceremonial.

"IV. Our Captains-General are hereby authorised to declare martial law in their provinces, or any part of their province s, should signs of insubordination appear.

"V. Our Minister Secretary of State for the Department of the Interior will see to the execution of this our ordinance.

"*By the Grand Duke*, ANGELO III.
"RAPALLO PISANI,
"Minister of the Interior.
"*January 10th*, 1840."

"The Grand Duke has thus destroyed the freedom of the press, promulgated a law to suppress political meetings, and menaced the country with martial law," said Richard, when he had terminated the perusal of this ordinance.

"And it would appear, by the newspapers and by private letters which my father has received," added Isabella, "that the Grand Duke would have proceeded to extremes far more dangerous to his throne, had not his amiable Duchess softened him. But even her intercessions—and I understand she is a most deserving princess—were ineffectual in a great measure."

"Know you the results of that despotic ordinance?" asked Markham.

"Several riots have taken place at Montoni," answered the Signora; "and the Captain-General of the province of Abrantani has proclaimed martial law throughout the districts which he governs."

"Matters are then becoming serious in Castelcicala," observed Richard. "What has become of General Grachia?"

"No one knows. He left Montoni within twenty-four hours after the receipt of the decree of exile; but my father has received no information of his progress or intentions. Oh! my beloved country," she exclaimed, in a tone of pious fervour, "may God grant that thou wilt not be the scene of anarchy, bloodshed, and civil strife!"

Richard surveyed his beautiful companion with the most enraptured admiration, as she uttered that holy wish,—a wish that spoke so eloquently of the absence of all selfishness from her pure soul.

The above conversation had been carried on in a subdued tone; and its topic had not excluded from the minds of the young lovers the recollection of the sad scene which they had ere now witnessed.

Indeed they only pursued their discourse upon that particular subject, because it was connected with the chain of events which seemed adapted to carry out the prophetic hopes of the dying girl.

Nearly an hour had passed since they had left the chamber of death.

At length the door opened slowly, and Mr. Gregory entered the drawing-room.

His countenance was deadly pale; and yet it wore an expression of pious resignation.

Isabella and Richard knew that all was over.

Mr. Gregory advanced towards them, and taking their hands, said, "She is gone—she died in my arms! Almost her last words were, '*Tell Isabella and Richard sometimes to think of Mary-Anne.*'"

The bereaved parent could subdue his grief no longer: he threw himself upon the sofa and burst into tears.

Nor were the cheeks of Isabella and Richard unmoistened by the holy dew of sweet sympathy.

"Richard," said Mr. Gregory, after a long pause, "you must write to my sons and tell them of this sad affliction. Desire them to return home immediately from college: I was wrong not to have sent for them before; but—my God! I knew not that my sweet child's death was so near!"

Markham instantly complied with Mr. Gregory's request, and despatched the letter to the post.

Scarcely was this duty accomplished, when Count Alteroni's carriage drove up to the door. It was, however, empty, having been merely sent to fetch Isabella home.

The Signora took leave of Mr. Gregory, and bade a tender adieu to Richard, who handed her into the vehicle.

The carriage then drove away.

Richard passed the remainder of the day with Mr. Gregory, and returned home in the evening deeply affected at the misfortune which had overtaken an amiable family.

But Markham, on his arrival at his own house, was doomed to hear tidings of a most unpleasant nature.

"Mr. Tracy's footman has been here with very disagreeable news," said Ellen, the moment Markham entered the sitting-room. "Had I known whither you were gone, I should have directed him on to you."

"Mr. Tracy's footman!" exclaimed Richard. "Why—he was here last evening, with a letter from his master inviting me and Mr. Monroe to dine with him next Monday——"

"I am aware of it," interrupted Ellen. "And you declined the invitation."

"Yes—because I do not seek society," observed Richard. "I wrote a proper answer: what, then, did his servant require to-day?"

"It appears that a young person in whom you felt some interest——"

"Katherine Wilmot?" said Richard.

"That is the name," returned Ellen.

"What about her?" asked our hero.

"She has committed a crime——"

"A crime!"

"A crime of the blackest dye: she has poisoned Mr. Tracy's housekeeper."

"Ellen you are deceived—you are mistaken: it is impossible!" exclaimed Markham. "I never saw her but once, it is true: and still the impression she made upon me was most favourable. I did not mention any thing concerning her to either you or your father, because I sought to do an act of humanity in tearing her away from a wretched home; and I am not one who speaks of such a deed as that."

"I am not deceived—I am not mistaken, Richard," answered Ellen. "The footman came and narrated to me the particulars: and he said that his master was too unwell, through horror and excitement, to write to you upon the subject."

Ellen then related the few particulars yet known

in connexion with the case, but the nature of which is already before the reader.

Richard remained silent for a long time, after Ellen had ceased to speak.

"If that innocent-looking girl be a murderess," he exclaimed at length, "I shall never put faith in human appearances again. But, until she be proved guilty, I will not desert her."

"Do you know," said Ellen, "that I do not like your Mr. Tracy at all! Not that I suppose him capable of falsely accusing any one of so heinous a crime as murder; but—I do not like him."

"A female caprice, Ellen," observed Richard. "The world in general adores him."

"Ah! those who stand upon the highest pinnacles often experience the most signal falls," said Ellen.

"The breath of calumny has never tainted his fair fame," cried Richard.

"Alas! we have so many—many instances of profound ecclesiastical hypocrisy," persisted Miss Monroe.

"Ellen, you wrong an excellent man," said Markham, somewhat severely. "I will call upon him to-morrow morning, and learn from his own lips the particulars of this most mysterious deed."

CHAPTER CLIV.

REFLECTIONS.—THE NEW PRISON.

RICHARD MARKHAM passed an uneasy night.

His thoughts wandered from topic to topic until the variety seemed infinite.

He pondered upon his brother, and again reflected for the thousandth time what connexion could possibly exist between him and the Resurrection Man. The fatal letter, desiring this terrible individual to call upon him, was too decidedly in Eugene's handwriting to be doubted. The other contents of the pocket-book, which Richard had found in the Gipsies' Palace, threw no light upon the subject; indeed, they only consisted of a few papers of no consequence to any one.

Then Richard's thoughts travelled to the Resurrection Man himself. Was this individual really no more? Had the truth been told relative to his death at the Gipsies' encampment near Pentonville prison?

Next our hero's imagination wandered to the death-bed of the innocent girl who had entertained so unfortunate a passion for him. What fervent love was that! what disinterested affection! And then to perish in such a manner,—with the darkness of the tomb upon her eyes, long ere death itself made its dread appearance!

But with what inspiration had she prophesied the most exalted destinies for him she loved! With her sybilline finger she had pointed to a throne!

And then how speedily were those predictions followed by the communication of events which portended grand political changes in Castelcicala,—changes which threatened the reigning sovereign with overthrow, and the inevitable result of which must be the elevation of Prince Alberto to the ducal throne!

And Isabella—how many proofs of her unvaried love for our hero had she not given? She had confessed her attachment to the deceased maiden—she had avowed it to that deceased maiden's father. Then, when Mary-Anne had prophesied the exalted rank which Isabella would be destined to confer, by the fact of marriage, upon Richard, the lovely Italian had ratified the promise by the gentle pressure of her hand!

Next our hero pondered upon the awful deed which had been ascribed to Katherine Wilmot; and here he was lost in a labyrinth of amaze, distrust, and doubt. Could it be possible that the blackest heart was concealed in so fair a shrine? or had circumstantial evidence accumulated with fearful effect to enthral an innocent girl in the meshes of the criminal law? Richard remembered how he himself had suffered through the overwhelming weight of circumstantial evidence; and this thought rendered him slow to put faith in the guilt of others.

Then, amidst other topics, Richard meditated upon the mysterious instructions which were conveyed to him in the document left behind by Armstrong, and which seemed to promise much by the solemn earnestness that characterised the directions relative to the circumstances or the time that would justify him in opening the sealed packet.

Thus, if some of our hero's thoughts were calculated to produce uneasiness, others were associated with secret hopes of successful love and dazzling visions of prosperity.

In three years and a half the appointment with his brother was to be kept. How would they meet? and would Eugene appear on the day named, and upon the hill where the two trees stood? Why had he not written in the meantime? Was he progressing so well that he wished to surprise his brother with his great prosperity? or was he so wretched that his proud heart prevented him from seeking the assistance of one of whom he had taken leave with a species of challenge to a race in the paths which lead to fortune? That Eugene was alive, Richard felt convinced, because the inscriptions on the tree—*Eugene's own tree*—and the letter to the Resurrection Man, proved this fact. The same circumstances also showed that Eugene had been several times in London (even if he did not dwell in the metropolis altogether) since he parted with Richard upon the hill.

Then Richard reflected that if he himself were eventually prosperous, his success would be owing to fair and honourable means; and he sincerely hoped that his brother might be pursuing an equally harmless career. Such an idea, however, seemed to be contradicted by the mysterious note to the Resurrection Man. But our hero remembered that bad men often enjoyed immense success; and then he thought of Mr. Greenwood—the man who had robbed him of his property, but whom, so far as he knew, he had never seen. That Greenwood was rising rapidly, Richard was well aware; the newspapers conveyed that information. So well had he played his cards, that a baronetcy, if not even a junior post in the administration, would be his the moment his party should come to power. All this Richard knew: the Tory journals were strenuous in their praise of Mr. Greenwood, and lauded to the skies his devotion to the statesmen who were aspiring to office. Then the great wealth of Mr. Greenwood had become proverbial: not a grand enterprise of the day could be started without his name. He

was a director in no end of Railway Companies; a shareholder in all the principal Life Insurance Offices; a speculator in every kind of stock; chairman of several commercial associations; a ship-owner; a land-owner; a subscriber to all charitable institutions which published a list of its supporters; President of a Bible Society which held periodical meetings at Exeter Hall; one of the stanchest friends to the Society for the Suppression of Vice; a great man at the parochial vestry; a patron of Sunday Schools; a part-proprietor of an influential newspaper; an advocate for the suppression of Sunday trading and Sunday travelling; a member of half a dozen clubs; a great favourite at Tattersal's; a regular church-goer; a decided enemy to mendicity; an intimate friend of the Poor Law Commissioners; and an out-and-out foe to all Reform. All this Richard knew; for he took some interest in watching the career of a person who had risen from nothing to be so great a man as Mr. Greenwood was. Then, while he reflected upon these facts, our hero was compelled to admit that his brother Eugene might appear, upon the appointed day, the emblem of infinite prosperity, and yet a being from whom the truly honest would shrink back with dismay.

But we will not follow Richard Markham any further in his reflections during that sleepless night.

He rose at an early hour, and anxiously awaited the arrival of the morning's newspaper.

From that vehicle of information he learnt that Katherine Wilmot had been examined, on the previous day, before the magistrate at the Marylebone Police Court, and had been remanded for one week, in order that the depositions might be made out previous to her committal to Newgate to take her trial for the murder of Matilda Kenrick.

We need not now dwell upon the evidence adduced on the occasion of that preliminary investigation, inasmuch as we shall be hereafter compelled to detail it at some length.

We must, however, observe that when Richard Markham perused all the testimony adduced against the girl before the magistrate, he was staggered; for it seemed crushing, connected, and overwhelming indeed.

Nevertheless, he remembered his own unhappy case; and he determined not to desert her.

He called upon Mr. Tracy, and found that gentleman unwilling to believe that so young and seemingly innocent a girl could be capable of so enormous a crime; yet the reverend gentleman was compelled to admit not only that the evidence weighed strongly against her, but that it was difficult to conceive how the housekeeper had come by her death unless by Katherine's hands.

Richard took his leave of the rector, in whom he saw only a most compassionate man—ready to allow justice to take its course, but very unwilling to utter a word prejudicial to the accused.

From Mr. Tracy's house our hero proceeded to the New Prison, Clerkenwell, to see Katherine.

The New Prison is situate in the midst of the most densely populated part of Clerkenwell. It was originally established in the reign of James I.; but in 1816 it was considerably improved and enlarged, at the enormous cost of £40,000. It is now destined to be levelled with the ground, and a new prison is to be built upon the same site, but upon a plan adapted for the application of the atrocious *solitary system*.

The infamy of the English plan of gaol discipline is nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in the New Prison, Clerkenwell. Between five and six thousand prisoners pass annually through this gaol; and not the slightest attempt at classification, save in respect to sex, is made. The beds are filthy in the extreme, and often full of vermin from the last occupant: thus prisoners who arrive at the prison in a cleanly state, find themselves covered with loathsome animalculæ after one night's rest in that disgusting place. A miserable attempt at cleanliness is made by bathing the prisoners; but the generality of them dislike it, and bribe the wardsmen to allow them to escape the ordeal. And no wonder—for the gaol authorities compel every six individuals to bathe one after the other in the same water, and it frequently happens that a cleanly person is forced into a bath containing the filth and vermin washed from the person of a beggar. The reader must remember, that highly respectable persons—even gentlemen and ladies—may become prisoners in this establishment, for breaches of the peace, assaults, or menaces, until they be released by bail; and yet the gentlemen are compelled to herd with felons, beggars, and misdemeanants—and the ladies with the lowest grade of prostitutes and the filthiest vagrants!

The prisoners pilfer from each other; and the entire establishment is a scene of quarrelling, swearing, fighting, obscenity, and gambling. The male prisoners write notes of the most disgusting description, and throw them over with a coal into the female yard. Riots and disturbances are common in the sleeping wards; and ardent spirits are procured with tolerable facility.

The degradation of mingling with the obscene and filthy inmates of the female Reception Ward was, however, avoided by poor Katherine Wilmot. The Keeper took compassion upon her youth and the deep distress of mind into which she was plunged, and sent her to the Female Infirmary.

When Richard Markham called at the New Prison, he was permitted to have an interview with Katherine in the Keeper's office.

The hapless girl flew towards our hero, as if to a brother, and clasping her hands fervently together, exclaimed, "Mr. Markham, I am innocent—I am innocent!"

"So I choose to believe you—unless a jury should pronounce you to be guilty," replied Richard; "and even then," he added, in a musing tone, "it is possible—I mean that juries are not infallible."

"Oh! Mr. Markham, I am most unfortunate—and very, very unhappy!" said Katherine, the tears rolling down her cheeks. "I have never injured a human being—and yet, see where I am! see how I am treated!"

At that moment Richard recalled to mind all that the policeman had told him relative to the unpretending charity of the poor girl,—her goodness even to the very neighbours who despised her,—her amiability towards her unfortunate cousin,—the pious resignation with which she had supported the ill-treatment of her uncle,—and her constant anxiety to earn her own bread in a respectable manner.

All this Richard remembered; and he felt an invincible belief in the complete innocence of the poor

creature with respect to the awful deed now laid to her charge.

"It is not death that I fear, Mr. Markham," said Katherine, after a pause; "but it is hard—very hard to be accused of a crime which I abhor! No—I do not fear death: perhaps it would be better for me to die even at my age—than dwell in a world which has no charms for me. For I have been unhappy from my birth, Mr. Markham: I was left an orphan when I was young—so very young—oh! too young to lose both parents! Since then my existence has not been blest; and at the very moment when a brighter destiny seemed opened to me, through the goodness of yourself and Mr. Tracy, I am suddenly snatched away to a prison, and overwhelmed with this terrible accusation!"

"Katherine," said Richard, deeply affected by the young girl's tone and words, "I believe you to be innocent—as God is my judge, I believe you to be innocent!"

"And may that same Almighty Power bless you for this assurance!" exclaimed Katherine, pressing our hero's hands with the most grateful warmth.

"Although in asserting my conviction of your innocence, Katherine," continued Richard, "I leave the deed itself enveloped in the darkest mystery, still I *do* believe that you are innocent—and I will not desert you."

Richard remembered how grateful to *his* ears had once sounded those words, "I believe that you are innocent,"—when Thomas Armstrong uttered them in the prison of Newgate.

"Yes, Katherine—you *are*, you *must be* innocent," he continued; "and I will labour unceasingly to make your innocence apparent. I will provide the ablest counsel to assist in your defence; and all that human agency can effect in your behalf shall be ensured at any cost."

The poor girl could not find words to express her deep gratitude to this young man who so generously constituted himself her champion, and on whom she had not the slightest claim;—but her looks and her tears conveyed to our hero all she felt.

"Has your uncle been to see you?" he inquired.

"No, sir—nor my cousin," replied Katherine, with melancholy emphasis upon the latter words.

"Perhaps they are unaware of your situation. I will call and communicate to them the sad tidings. As your relatives, it is right that they should know the truth."

He then took leave of the young creature, who now felt less forlorn since she knew that she possessed at least one friend who would not only exert himself in her behalf, but who also believed in her innocence.

From the New Prison Richard proceeded to Saint Giles's, and knocked at the door of the Public Executioner's abode.

But his summons remained unanswered.

He repeated it again: all was silent within.

At length a neighbour,—a man who kept a coal and potato shed,—emerged from his shop, and volunteered some information concerning the hangman and his son.

"It 's no use knocking and knocking there, sir," said the man: "Smithers and his lad left London early yesterday morning for some place in the north of Ireland—I do n't know the name—but where there 's some work in his partickler line. The postman brought Smithers a letter, asking him to start off without delay; and he did so. He took Gibbet with him to give him another chance, he said, of trying his hand. Smithers told me all this before he went away, and asked me to take in any letters that might come for him, or answer any one that called. That 's how I came to know all this."

"Do you happen to be aware when he will return?" asked Richard.

"I 've no more idea than that there tatur," answered the man, indicating with his foot a specimen of the vegetable alluded to.

Richard thanked the man for the information which he had been enabled to give, and then pursued his way towards the chief police station in the neighbourhood.

Arrived at that establishment, he inquired for Morris Benstead.

The officer happened to be on the premises at the moment.

Markham led him to a short distance, and then addressed him as follows:—

"You have doubtless heard of the extraordinary position in which poor Katherine Wilmot is placed. I, for one, firmly believe her to be innocent."

"So do I, sir," exclaimed the officer, emphatically.

"Then you will prove the more useful to my purposes in consequence of that impression," said Richard. "When I saw you on a former occasion, you offered me your services if ever I should require them. Little did I then suppose that I should so soon need your aid. Are you willing to assist me in investigating this most mysterious affair?"

"With pleasure, sir—with the sincerest pleasure," answered Benstead. "You know the respect I entertain for Miss Kate."

"And I know your goodness of heart," said our hero. "You must then aid me in collecting proofs of her innocence. Spare no expense in your task: hesitate not to apply to me for any money that you may need. Here are ten pounds for immediate purposes. To-morrow I will let you know whom I shall decide upon employing to conduct the poor girl's defence; and you can then communicate direct with the solicitor and barrister retained. Are you willing to undertake this task?"

"Need you ask me, sir?" cried the policeman. "I would do any thing to serve Miss Kate."

"Prudence renders it necessary for me to keep myself in the background in this affair," said Richard; "for fear lest scandal should attach an unworthy motive to my exertions in her behalf, and thus prejudice her cause by injuring her character. Upon you, then, I throw the weight of the investigation."

"And I accept it cheerfully," returned Benstead.

Markham then took leave of the officer, and having paid a visit to Mr. Gregory, returned home.

CHAPTER CLV.

PATRIOTISM.

It was late in the evening of the day on which Richard adopted the measures just recorded to ensure the most complete investigation into the case of Katherine Wilmot, that a foreigner called at Markham Place and requested a few moments' private conversation with our hero.

The request was immediately acceded to; and the foreigner was shown into the library.

He was a man of middle age, with a dark complexion, and was dressed with considerable taste. His air was military, and his manners were frank and open.

He addressed Richard in bad English, and tendered an apology for thus intruding upon him.

Markham, believing him, by his accent and appearance, to be an Italian, spoke to him in that language; and the foreigner immediately replied in the same tongue with a fluency which convinced our hero that he was not mistaken relative to the country to which his visitor belonged.

"The object of my visit is of a most important and solemn nature," said the Italian; "and you will excuse me if I open my business by asking you a few questions."

"This is certainly a strange mode of proceeding," observed our hero; "but you are aware that I must reserve to myself the right of replying or not to your queries, as I may think fit."

"Undoubtedly," said the Italian. "But I am a man of honour; and should our interview progress as favourably as I hope, I shall entrust you with secrets which will prove my readiness to look upon you in the same light."

"Proceed," said Richard: "you speak fairly."

"In the first place, am I right in believing that you were once most intimate with a certain Count Alteroni who resides near Richmond?"

"Quite right," answered Richard.

"Do you, or do you not, entertain good feelings towards that nobleman?"

"The best feelings—the most sincere friendship—the most devoted attachment," exclaimed our hero.

"Are you aware of any particulars in his political history?"

"He is a refugee from his native land."

"Does he now bear his true name?"

"If you wish me to place confidence in you," said Richard, "you will yourself answer me one question, before I reply to any farther interrogatory on your part."

"Speak," returned the Italian stranger.

"Do you wish to propose to me any thing whereby I can manifest my attachment to Count Alteroni, without injury to my own character or honour?" demanded Richard.

"I do," said the stranger solemnly. "You can render Count Alteroni great and signal services."

"I will then as frankly admit to you that I am acquainted with *all* which relates to *Count Alteroni*," said Richard, dwelling upon the words marked in italics.

"With *all* which relates to *Prince Alberto of Castelcicala?*" added the stranger, in a significant whisper. "Do we understand each other?"

"So far that we are equally well acquainted with the affairs of his Highness the Prince," answered Richard.

"Right. You have heard of General Grachia?" said the foreigner.

"He is also an exile from Castelcicala," returned Markham.

"He is in England," continued the foreigner. "I had the honour to be his chief aide-de-camp, when he filled the post of Minister of War; and I am Colonel Morosino."

Richard bowed an acknowledgment of this proof of confidence.

"General Grachia," proceeded Morosino, "reached England two days ago. His amiable family is at Geneva. The general visited Prince Alberto yesterday, and had a long conversation with his Highness upon the situation of affairs in Castelcicala. The Grand Duke is endeavouring to establish a complete despotism, and to enslave the country. One province has already been placed under martial law; and several executions have taken place in Montoni itself. The only crime of the victims was a demand for a Constitution. General Grachia represented to his Highness Prince Alberto the necessity of taking up arms in defence of the liberties of the Castelcicalans against the encroachments of despotism. The reply of the Prince was disheartening to his friends and partizans. '*Under no pretence,*' said he, '*would I kindle civil war in my native country.*'"

"He possesses a truly generous soul," said Richard.

"He is so afraid of being deemed selfish," observed the Colonel; "and no one can do otherwise than admire that delicacy and forbearance which shrink from the idea of even appearing to act in accordance with his own personal interests. The Prince has every thing to gain from a successful civil war: hence he will not countenance that extremity."

"And what does General Grachia now propose?" asked Markham.

"You are aware that when Prince Alberto was exiled from Castelcicala for having openly proclaimed his opinions in favour of a Constitution and of the extension of the popular liberties, numbers of his supporters in those views were banished with him. *We know* that there cannot be less than two thousand Castelcicalan refugees in Paris and London. Do you begin to comprehend me?"

"I fear that you meditate proceedings which are opposed to the wishes of his Highness Prince Alberto," said Markham.

"The friends of Castelcicalan freedom can undertake what in them would be recognised as *pure patriotism*, but which in Prince Alberto would be deemed the result of his own *personal interests* or *ambition*."

"True," said Richard: "the distinction is striking."

"The Prince, moreover, in the audience which he accorded to General Grachia yesterday evening, used these memorable words:—'*Were I less than I am, I would consent to take up arms in defence of the liberties of Castelcicala; but, being as I am, I never will take a step which the world would unanimously attribute to selfishness.*'"

"Those were noble sentiments!" ejaculated Markham: "well worthy of him who uttered them."

"And worthy of serving as rules and suggestions for the patriots of Castelcicala!" cried Colonel Morosino. "There are certain times, Mr. Markham," he continued, "when it becomes a duty to take up arms against a sovereign who forgets *his duty* towards his subjects. Men are not born to be slaves; and they are bound to resist those who attempt to enslave them."

"Those words have often been uttered by a deceased friend of mine—Thomas Armstrong," observed Richard.

"Thomas Armstrong was a true philanthropist," said the Colonel; "and were he alive now, he would tell you that subjects who take up arms against a bad prince are as justified in so doing as the prince himself could be in punishing those who violate the laws."

"In plain terms," said Richard, "General Grachia intends to espouse the popular cause against the tyranny of the Grand Duke?"

"Such is his resolution," answered Colonel Morosino. "And now that you have heard all these particulars, you will probably listen with attention to the objects of my present visit."

"Proceed, Colonel Morosino," said Richard. "You must be well aware that, as one well attached to his Highness Prince Alberto, I cannot be otherwise than interested in these communications."

"I shall condense my remarks as much as possible," continued the officer. "General Grachia purports to enter into immediate relations with the Castelcicalans now in London and Paris. Of course the strictest secresy is required. The eventual object will be to purchase two or three small ships which may take on board, at different points, those who choose to embark in the enterprise; and these ships will have a common rendezvous. When united, they will sail for Castelcicala. A descent upon that territory would be welcomed with enthusiasm by nine-tenths of the population; and the result," added Morosino, in a whisper,—"the inevitable result must be the dethronement of the Grand Duke and the elevation of Alberto to the sovereign seat."

"That the project is practicable, I can believe," said Markham; "that it is just, I am also disposed to admit. But do you not think that a bloodless revolution might be effected?"

"We hope that we shall be enabled successfully to assert the popular cause without the loss of life," returned Morosino. "But this can only be done by means of an imposing force, and not by mere negotiation."

"You consider the Grand Duke to be so wedded to his despotic system?" said Markham interrogatively.

"What hope can we experience from so obstinate

a sovereign, and so servile an administration as that of which Signor Pisani is the chief?" demanded the Colonel. "And surely you must allow that patriotism must not have too much patience. By allowing despots to run their race too long, they grow hardened and will then resist to the last, at the sacrifice of thousands of lives and millions of treasure."

"Such is, alas! the sad truth," said Richard. "At the same time a fearful responsibility attaches itself to those who kindle a civil war."

"Civil wars are excited by two distinct motives," returned the Colonel. "In one instance they are produced by the ambition of aspirants to power: in the other, they take their origin in the just wrath of a people driven to desperation by odious tyranny and wrong. The latter is a sacred cause."

"Yes—and a most just one," exclaimed Markham. "If then, I admit that your projects ought to be carried forward, in what way can my humble services be rendered available?"

"I will explain this point to you," answered Colonel Morosino. "General Grachia, myself, and several stanch advocates of constitutional freedom, met to deliberate last evening upon the course to be pursued, after the General had returned from his interview with the Prince at Richmond. We sat in deliberation until a very late hour; and we adopted the outline of the plans already explained to you. We then recognised the necessity of having the co-operation of some intelligent, honourable, and enlightened Englishman to aid us in certain departments of our preliminary arrangements. We must raise considerable sums of money upon certain securities which we possess; we must ascertain to what extent the laws of this country will permit our meetings, or be calculated to interfere with the progress of our measures; we must purchase ships ostensibly for commercial purposes; and we must adopt great precautions in procuring from outfitters the arms, clothing, and stores which we shall require. In all these proceedings we require the counsel and aid of an Englishman of honour and integrity."

"Proceed, Colonel Morosino," said Richard, seeing that the Italian officer paused.

"We then found ourselves at a loss where to look for such a confidential auxiliary and adviser; when one of our assembly spoke in this manner:—'I came to this country, as you well know, at the same time as his Highness the Prince. From that period until the present day I have frequently seen his Highness; and I became aware of the acquaintance which subsisted between his Highness and an English gentleman of the name of Richard Markham, who was introduced to his Highness by the late Thomas Armstrong. I am also aware that a misunderstanding arose between the Prince and Mr. Markham: the nature of that misunderstanding I never learnt; but I am aware that, even while it existed, Richard Markham behaved in the most noble manner in a temporary difficulty in which his Highness was involved. I also know that the motives which led to that misunderstanding have been completely cleared away, and that the Prince now speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Richard Markham. Address yourselves, then, to Mr. Markham: he is a man of honour; and with him your secret is safe, even if he should decline to meet your views.'—Thus spoke our friend last night; and now the cause and object of my visit are explained to you."

"You have spoken with a candour and frankness which go far to conquer any scruples that I might entertain in assisting you," said Richard. "At the same time, so important a matter demands mature consideration. Should I consent to accept the office with which you seek to honour me, I should not be a mere lukewarm agent: I should enter heart and soul into your undertaking; nor should I content myself with simply succouring you in an administrative capacity. Oh! no," added Richard, enthusiastically, as he thought of Isabella, "I would accompany you on your expedition when the time came, and I would bear arms in your most righteous cause."

"Generous young man!" cried the Colonel, grasping our hero's hand with true military frankness: "God grant that your answer may be favourable to us. But pray delay not in announcing your decision."

"This time to-morrow evening I will be prepared to give you an answer," returned Markham.

The Colonel then took his leave, saying, "To-morrow evening I will call again."

CHAPTER CLVI.

THE DECISION.

RICHARD MARKHAM retired to rest, but not to immediate slumber.

The proposal of Colonel Morosino was of a most perplexing nature.

Our hero longed to be enabled to show his devotion to Isabella by exerting himself in what must eventually prove her father's cause; but he was afraid of acting in a manner which might displease the Prince.

Then he reflected that the Prince had uttered those expressive words, "*Were I less than I am, I would consent to take up arms in defence of the liberties of Castelcicala.*"

The more Richard pondered upon these words, the more was he inclined towards the service proposed to him; and when he remembered that he should be associated with some of the most gallant and disinterested of Italian patriots, he felt a generous ardour animate his bosom.

"Oh! if I could but achieve some deed that would render me worthy of Isabella," he thought, "how should I bless the day when I adopted the cause of those brave exiles who now seek my aid: Yes—I will join them, heart and soul; and in me they shall have no lukewarm supporter! The die is cast;—and this resolution must either make or mar me for ever!"

Richard then gradually fell into a profound slumber: but the subjects of his latest thoughts became the materials of which his dreams were woven.

Imagination carried him away from his native land, and whirled him on board a vessel which was within sight of the Castelcicalan coasts. Presently a descent upon the land was effected; and then Richard fancied himself to be involved in the thickest of a deadly fight. Next he saw himself entering Montoni at the head of a victorious army; and it seemed to him as if he were the object of attraction

—as if the salutations of countless multitudes were addressed to him—and as if he returned them! Then the scene changed, by one of those rapid transitions so peculiar to dreams; and he found himself standing at the altar, the lovely Isabella by his side. A tiara of diamonds adorned her brow and on his own was a princely coronet. Then the ceremony was completed; and friends with smiling countenances gathered around to congratulate him and his lovely bride; and the swelling words "Your Highness" and "My Lord" echoed upon his ears. He turned to address his thanks to those who thus felicitated him—and awoke!

"A dream—a dream!" he exclaimed, as the gay pageantry of the vision yet dwelt vividly in his mind: "but will the most happy episode therein ever be fulfilled?"

Richard rose with depressed spirits; for a dream of that nature—by raising us to the highest eminence to which our aspirations ever soared, and then dashing us back again to the cold realities of earth—invariably leads to a powerful reaction.

The day passed without any incident of importance; and by the time the evening arrived, Richard had recovered his mental serenity.

Punctual to his appointment, Colonel Morosino made his appearance.

He came in a chaise, accompanied by another individual; but the latter did not alight from the vehicle.

"Mr. Markham," said the Colonel, when he was alone with our hero, in the library, "have you made up your mind?"

"I have," answered Richard, in a decided tone.

"And your decision——"

"Is to join you, heart and soul—to throw myself with enthusiasm into your cause—to co-operate with you as if I were a Castelcicalan subject," said Richard, his handsome countenance glowing with animation, his fine dark eyes flashing fire, and his nostrils dilating with the ardour which filled his soul.

"I am no prophet, if you ever repent this decision," said Colonel Morosino, pressing Richard's hands warmly. "Will you now permit me to introduce a gentleman who has accompanied me?"

"With much pleasure," answered Markham,

The Colonel stepped out, and at the expiration of a few moments returned, accompanied by a tall, thin, military-looking man, whose lofty bearing and eagle eye bespoke him as one who had been accustomed to command.

"Mr. Markham," said the Colonel, "may you soon become better acquainted with General Grachia."

The veteran proffered Richard his hand with true military frankness, and observed, "I rejoice to find that your decision is favourable to our views."

"You will also find that I shall be zealous and unwearied in your service," rejoined Markham.

"Our proceedings," continued General Grachia, "must be conducted with caution, so that no rumour prejudicial to our measures may reach Castelcicala."

"I believe it to be understood," said Markham, "that should the Grand Duke change his policy to such an extent that the Castelcicalans may obtain their just rights and privileges by means of his concessions, before our own projects shall be ripe for execution,—that, in this case, we at once abandon them."

"Assuredly," replied General Grachia. "God knows the purity of my motives, and that I would not plunge my country into civil war without the pressure of a dire necessity. Neither am I adopting extreme measures from vindictive motives because the Grand Duke has banished me not only from office but also from the territory. Had I assented to his despotic decrees I might have retained my high position in the cabinet, and aggrandized my own fortunes at the same time. As a proof of my integrity, Mr. Markham, read this document."

The General produced from his pocket-book a letter which had been sealed with the ducal signet, and was addressed "*To His Excellency General Grachia, Minister Secretary of State for the Department of War.*"

This document he handed to Richard, who found that it was an autograph letter from the Grand Duke to the General, written at the time when the military disturbances occurred at Montoni. It remonstrated with General Grachia for refusing to countersign the ordinance decreeing the disbandment of the three regiments, and promising him the rank of Marquis and the Premiership if he would but consent to aid his Serene Highness in carrying out the proposed rigorous measures.

"To this letter I replied by sending in my resignation," said General Grachia; "and thus I wrecked my own fortunes, and made my wife and children exiles."

"You acted nobly—like a true patriot," cried Markham, contemplating the veteran with admiration. "If for one instant I entertained a scruple in embracing your cause, it is now annihilated; for you have honoured me with the most convincing proofs of your patriotism."

"I served the Grand Duke faithfully," said the General; "and I cannot reproach myself for any measure which I ever recommended to his Serene Highness. Although deeply attached to Prince Alberto, I did not oppose the marriage of the Grand Duke; because I believed that, upon principle, sovereigns are entitled to as much freedom in affairs so nearly touching their domestic happiness, as any of their subjects. I saw in the present Grand Duchess an amiable lady; and I knew that she was a virtuous one from the strong recommendations which she received from his Highness Prince Alberto and the Earl of Warrington to myself and my family. I supported, then, that marriage upon principle—upon a conviction which I entertain. I believe that sovereigns have a right to consult their own happiness in marriage; but I never will admit that they have a right to enslave their subjects. I will maintain the privileges of princes, when I consider them encroached upon by the people: with equal readiness will I protect the people against the tyranny of princes."

Richard listened with admiration to these noble sentiments; and he could not help exclaiming, "How blind sovereigns often seem to the merits and honesty of those who would counsel them wisely!"

"Such is too frequently the case," observed Colonel Morosino.

"The plan upon which I propose to act is simply this," resumed General Grachia:—"one of the most humble, but not the least sincere, of those

refugees who support us, will take a house in London in his own name; and there shall our head-quarters be fixed. There shall we hold our meetings; and thence will our correspondence be expedited to those whom we can trust, and on whose support we can rely. In order to avoid all cause of suspicion, I shall take a house for myself and suite at the West End, where I shall, however, lead a comparatively secluded life. Fortunately, the greater portion of my property consisted in money in the public funds of Castelcicala; and for that I obtained securities which may be easily realised in London. My friend Morosino stands in the same position. Between us we can muster some twenty thousand pounds; and other exiles, who are favourable to our views, can throw ten thousand more into the common stock."

"To which I shall also be permitted to contribute my *quota*," interrupted Richard.

"Not if we can manage without it," answered General Grachia; "and I have no doubt that pecuniary resources will not be wanting in this good cause."

The General then proceeded to a more detailed development of his plans; but as we shall have to deal with them fully hereafter, we will take leave of the subject for the present.

Before we conclude this chapter we must record two or three little incidents that maintain the continuous thread of our narrative.

A week after the demise of Miss Gregory, the funeral took place at a suburban cemetery. The bereaved father and afflicted brothers were the chief mourners; but Richard also followed the remains of the departed girl to the tomb. An elegant but chaste and unassuming monument marks the spot where she reposes in her narrow bed.

At the expiration of the seven days during which she had been remanded, Katherine was examined a second time before the magistrate, and was fully committed for trial.

A Coroner's Inquest had in the meantime recorded a verdict of *Wilful Murder* against her.

She was accordingly conveyed to Newgate.

But Richard Markham did not neglect her interests; and Morris Benstead was busy in adopting every possible measure to fathom the deep mystery in which the awful deed was still shrouded.

CHAPTER CLVII.

THE TRIAL OF KATHERINE WILMOT.

THE March sessions of the Central Criminal Court commenced upon a Monday morning, as usual.

On the Wednesday Katherine Wilmot was placed in the dock, to take her trial for the murder of Matilda Kenrick.

The particulars of the case had produced a great sensation; and the door-keepers of the gallery of the court reaped a rich harvest by the fees for admission.

Katherine was deadly pale; but she had made up her mind to conduct herself with fortitude; and her demeanour was resigned and tranquil.

Richard Markham was in the gallery of the court; but his manner was uneasy and anxious:—he had heard nothing of Benstead, the policeman, for the preceding forty-eight hours; and not a fact had that individual communicated to the counsel for the prisoner which might tend to prove her innocence or even throw a doubt upon her guilt!

When called upon to answer to the indictment, Katherine pleaded, in a firm tone, "*Not Guilty.*"

The counsel for the prosecution then stated the case, which was supported by the following testimony:—

Henry Massey deposed: "I am a surgeon, and reside in Great Coram Street. One evening, early in February, a young female came to my shop and purchased two ounces of laudanum. She brought no phial with her. I gave it to her in a phial of my own, which I labelled *Poison*. On the following evening I was summoned to the house of the Rev. Mr. Tracy. I was introduced into the kitchen, where I found the deceased lying back in her chair quite dead. A young female was there; and I recognised her to be the one who had purchased the poison at my shop. She is the prisoner at the bar. From this circumstance and others which transpired, I suspected her to have poisoned the deceased; and I had her given into custody. The Rev. Mr. Tracy was in the kitchen when I arrived. He was doing all he could to recover the deceased. He was deeply affected. On the following day I examined the deceased, and found that she had died by poison. That poison was laudanum. I discovered so large a quantity in her, by the usual tests, that she must have experienced a deep lethargy almost immediately after taking the poison, and could not have lived many minutes. I cannot say that she did not take it voluntarily, and with the object of committing suicide. There was nothing upon the table near her—no cup, glass, nor any drinking vessel. The phial produced is the one in which I sold the poison."

Thomas Parker deposed: "I am footman to the Rev. Mr. Tracy. On the morning of the day when the housekeeper was poisoned, I overheard a conversation between her and Katherine Wilmot. The deceased informed Katherine that she must leave the house, but would not assign any reason. Deceased, however, said that she would provide for Katherine at a sister's in the country. Katherine objected to leave London, because her relations live here. I thought Mrs. Kenrick was jealous of Katherine, and wished to get rid of her. I mean that deceased thought that Katherine would perhaps be entrusted to fulfil some of her duties as housekeeper. I came out of the pantry, where I was cleaning the plate, and observed that I supposed Mrs. Kenrick was jealous of Katherine. The housekeeper cut the matter short by saying that Katherine should leave. Katherine was very miserable all day afterwards. In the evening my master sent me with a letter to a gentleman at Holloway. When I came back, I found the housekeeper dead. The first witness was there, in the kitchen. So were my master, Katherine, and the groom. I alluded to the conversation which had taken place between the deceased and the prisoner in the morning. The surgeon mentioned about Katherine having bought the laudanum at his house. Katherine seemed very much confused. She was then given into custody."

James Martin deposed: "I am groom and coachman to the Rev. Mr. Tracy. On the evening in question I heard screams in the yard. I was in the stable adjoining. There is a communication between the yard of the house and the stable yard. I

hastened to the yard of the house where the screams came from. I saw Katherine wringing her hands and crying. I asked her what was the matter? She said, '*Mrs Kenrick is dead.*' I hurried into the kitchen. Almost immediately afterwards Mr. Tracy came in. He had been alarmed by the screams too, he said. I found the housekeeper lying forward on the table, with her face resting on her arms, as if she had fallen asleep. I raised her, and laid her back in her chair. She seemed quite dead. Mr. Tracy was greatly affected. Katherine did not offer to help, but withdrew to the farther end of the kitchen. She cried very much. Mr. Tracy sent me for a surgeon. When I came back with the first witness, we found Mr. Tracy bathing deceased's head with vinegar, and doing all he could to recover her. Katherine was not assisting him." This witness then confirmed the previous statement relative to the immediate circumstances which led to Katherine's arrest. He concluded his testimony thus: "When I first went into the kitchen, there were no cups, nor glasses, nor any drinking vessels on the table. All the tea-things had been washed and put into their proper place."

The Rev. Reginald Tracy deposed: "I received the prisoner into my service through charity. I had no character with her. I had known her before, because she had attended the St. David's Sunday Schools. I considered her to be a most exemplary young person. I was not aware that Mrs. Kenrick intended to send her away. Mrs. Kenrick had the power, if she chose to do so, as she managed my household for me. I cannot say that Katherine had done any thing to offend Mrs. Kenrick. She had done nothing to offend me. In the evening I was alarmed by screams. I went down into the kitchen, and found the housekeeper in the position described by the last witness. I sent him for a surgeon, and adopted all the remedies within my reach to recover the housekeeper. I think I had observed that something had been preying upon the mind of the deceased. She had lately been melancholy and abstracted."

Cross-examined: "I am not aware that Katherine went out on the evening in question. I do not know that she visited her uncle on that evening. I cannot say that she did not. She would not have asked me for permission to do so. She would have applied to Mrs. Kenrick. I was unwell all day, and did not leave my room until I heard the screams. I was very loath to believe that Katherine could have perpetrated such a deed. I told the surgeon so."

A policeman deposed: "I was summoned to Mr. Tracy's house on the evening in question. I took the prisoner into custody. When I had conveyed her to the station-house, I returned to Mr. Tracy's house. I searched the kitchen. I found the phial, produced in court, upon a shelf. It was empty."

This testimony closed the case for the prosecution.

The general impression which prevailed amongst the auditory was unfavourable to the prisoner.

Richard Markham trembled for her: still his confidence in her innocence was unshaken.

But time wore on: the case was drawing to a close;—and not a sign of Morris Benstead!

Markham knew not what to think.

The manner in which Reginald Tracy gave his evidence was the subject of much comment in the gallery.

"What an amiable man he appears to be!" said one.

"How he endeavoured to create an impression in favour of the prisoner," observed another.

"He said that he was loath to believe her guilty," remarked a third, "and considered her to be an exemplary young person.

"Hush! hush!" said the first speaker: "the case is about to be resumed."

This was the fact. The Judges, having retired for a few minutes, had now returned to the bench.

The counsel for the defence rose.

He began by calling upon the jury to dismiss from their minds any prejudice which the statements in the newspapers in connexion with the case might have created. He then dissected the evidence for the prosecution. He insisted much upon the importance of the fact that the poison had been purchased the evening before the conversation took place between the deceased and the prisoner, relative to the removal of the latter from the house. His instructions were that the prisoner had purchased that poison by order of the deceased, and, as the prisoner understood at the time, for the use of her master who had returned home unwell. There was no proof that Katherine had done any thing wrong, and that she might have anticipated receiving warning from the housekeeper, and thus have actually contemplated murder when she procured the laudanum. It was stated that there was no cup nor glass upon the table—no drinking vessel in which poison could be traced. The inference thence drawn by the counsel for the prosecution was that the prisoner must have administered the poison—most probably in deceased's tea, and had then washed the cup. But might not the deceased have taken the poison with the intention of committing suicide, by drinking it from the phial which was found upon the shelf? Would not the prisoner have concealed or destroyed the phial, had she really administered the poison? The prisoner's account of the case was this. Mrs. Kenrick of her own accord had given her permission to visit her friends for an hour on the fatal evening. The prisoner availed herself of this kindness, and proceeded to her uncle's residence in St. Giles's. He (the counsel) hoped to have been able to prove the important fact of this visit, because it would show that the housekeeper had purposely sent Katherine Wilmot out of the way: but, unfortunately, the prisoner's uncle had not yet returned to town; and although a letter had been sent to the place whither it was supposed that he had proceeded——"

At this moment a great bustle was observed in the body of the court; and a man, elbowing his way through the crowd, advanced towards the learned counsel for the defence.

Richard's heart leapt within him: at the first glance he recognised, in that man, his agent, Morris Benstead, dressed in plain clothes.

Benstead whispered to the barrister for some minutes, and then handed him a letter which the learned gentleman perused rapidly.

The most breathless suspense prevailed throughout the court.

"My lords," at length exclaimed the barrister, retaining the letter in his hand, and addressing the Judges, "this case is likely to take a most unexpected turn."

"Heaven be thanked!" murmured Richard to

himself: "the poor creature's innocence will be made apparent—I feel that it will!"

Meantime Morris Benstead again forced his way through the crowd, and took his stand close by Reginald Tracy.

Poor Katherine knew not what all this meant; but her heart beat violently with mingled emotions of hope, uncertainty, and apprehension.

"My lords," continued the barrister, "I need not continue my speech in defence of the prisoner. I shall at once proceed to call my witnesses."

The anxiety of the audience grew more and more intense.

"Jacob Smithers!" cried the barrister.

The Public Executioner instantly ascended into the witness-box.

He deposed as follows: "The prisoner is my niece. She called at my house on the evening alluded to. She remained with me at least half an hour. She did not complain of Mrs. Kenrick; nor did she say that she was to leave the Rev. Mr. Tracy's house. I remember that I was very low-spirited myself that evening; and so I suppose she did not choose to annoy me by saying that she was to leave. Or else, perhaps, she thought that I should wish her to return home to me if I knew that she was to leave Mr. Tracy's service. I have been to Belfast where I was detained some days: then I accepted an engagement to go to the Isle of Man. I never received any letter informing me of what had occurred to my niece. The fact is, I do not go by my right name when I travel in that way, because I have to stop at inns, and do not like to be known. That is probably the reason why a letter addressed to me by the name of Smithers did not reach me. I did not see the account of this business in the newspapers until a few days since, when I was in the Isle of Man; and I returned home as quick as possible. I only reached London an hour ago."

"You may stand down," said the barrister: then, after a pause, he exclaimed, "Rachel Bennet!"

An elderly woman, decently attired in mourning, but evidently in a very sickly state of health, slowly ascended into the witness-box.

She deposed: "I am the sister of the deceased, and reside about three miles from Hounslow. I received a letter from my sister early in February. The letter now shown me is the one." (This was the same letter which Benstead had given to the barrister.) "On the following day I received a letter from Mr. Tracy informing me of my sister's death, and stating that it was supposed she had been poisoned by a young person then in custody. I was bed-ridden with illness at the time, and was supposed to be dying. I could not therefore come to London, or take any steps in the matter. Some one came to me yesterday, and induced me to come to town."

The counsel for the defence then passed the letter, which had been placed in his hands by Benstead, to the clerk of the court, by whom it was read.

Its contents were as follow:—

"MY DEAR RACHEL,

"I hope this will find you much improved in health: at the same time I am somewhat anxious at not having heard from you. My present object in writing to you is to request you to receive at your house a young person in whom I am interested, and who is at present in Mr. Tracy's service. Katherine Wilmot is a pretty and interesting girl; and it would be unsafe for her to remain here. You know, dear Rachel, that you and I have never had any secrets between us; and I am not now going to break through that rule of mutual confidence which has been the basis of our sincere attachment. The truth is, Mr. Tracy is not what he was. He has fallen from the pinnacle of virtue which he once so proudly occupied; and it was only this morning that I had the most convincing proof of his weakness and folly! O Rachel—I met him and his mistress face to face upon the stairs! But I will not dwell upon this: I sincerely pray to heaven that he may repent, and become the good man he once was. I know that this secret will be sacred with you. But I am determined to remove from him all temptations, as far as lies in my humble power; and you may now comprehend my motives for sending Katherine Wilmot away from this house. In a word, I shall despatch her to you by to-morrow's coach; and will write at greater length by her.

"Your affectionate Sister,

"MATILDA KENRICK."

This letter produced a most extraordinary sensation in the court.

The Judges, the barrister, the prisoner, and the audience were astounded at this revelation of the weakness of that man whom the world almost worshipped as a saint.

"Ellen was right!" murmured Richard Markham to himself: "he is a hypocrite! But I never could have thought it!"

And what of Reginald himself?

The moment the clerk reached that paragraph which proclaimed the astounding fact of his unworthiness, a cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead; and he turned to leave the court.

But Morris Benstead caught him by the arm, and pointing to a seat, said, "You must remain here, if you please, sir: I am an officer."

The rector cast a look of unutterable dismay upon the policeman, and fell upon the bench in a state of mind bordering on distraction.

Meantime the case proceeded.

The counsel for the prosecution said that he should like to ask Rachel Bennet a few questions.

That witness accordingly returned to the box.

"Why did you not empower some one to produce that letter when the prisoner was examined before the magistrate?" inquired the prosecuting counsel.

"Because, sir, I did not conceive that it could be of any use. I never for a moment suspected that any other person besides the one accused could have taken away my poor sister's life. My husband proposed to send the letter to the magistrate; but as my sister had written to me in strict confidence, I would not consent to that step. And now, since you have asked me, sir, I will tell you what I really *did* think; and God forgive me if I have been unjust."

"We do not want to hear what you thought," exclaimed the prosecuting counsel. "You may stand down."

"No," cried the barrister for the defence: "as we are upon the subject, we *will* have the witness's impressions."

"I really thought, sir," continued the woman, "that the Katherine Wilmot alluded to was perhaps no better than she should be, and had become more intimate with Mr. Tracy than my poor sister suspected. That, I thought, was the reason why she had poisoned my sister in order to get her out of the way, and for herself to remain at Mr. Tracy's house. But I did not think that Mr. Tracy himself had any hand in the murder; and so I did not

see the good of producing a letter which would only expose Mr. Tracy."

"Now you may stand down," said the counsel for the prisoner: then, in a loud tone, he called, "John Smithers!"

And Gibbet entered the witness-box.

His first glance was towards the dock; and that look, rapid, and imperceptible to others, conveyed a world of hope to the bosom of poor Katherine.

Richard Markham was at a loss to conceive what testimony the hump-back could bring forward in the prisoner's favour.

Every one present felt the deepest interest in the turn given to the proceedings.

The hump-back stood upon a stool that there was in the witness-box; and even then his head was alone visible. His hideous countenance, pale and ghastly through his intense feelings for Katherine's situation, was nevertheless animated with confidence and hope.

Amidst a dead silence of awe-inspiring solemnity, he deposed as follows:—

"I am the prisoner's cousin. She has ever been most kind to me; and I was always happy in her society. When she went to live at Mr. Tracy's house. I thought that I should be able to see her every evening; but on one occasion Mr. Tracy met me, and said that I might only visit her on Sundays. I had, however, discovered an obscure corner in his yard, where I could hide myself and see all that passed in the kitchen of his house. I went to that corner regularly every evening, Sunday excepted; and remained there an hour—sometimes more. I did not want to pry into what was going on in Mr. Tracy's house: all I cared about was to see Katherine."

A murmur, expressive of deep feeling—mingled surprise, sympathy, and admiration—on the part of the audience, followed this ingenuous announcement. Many an eye was moistened with a tear; and even the Judges did not look angrily when that murmur met their ears.

Gibbet continued:—

"One evening when I was concealed in the corner, I saw Mrs. Kenrick address something to Katherine, which I could not hear; but immediately afterwards Katherine put on her bonnet and went

out. As I had sometimes seen her do so before, and return very shortly afterwards, I thought she had merely gone to execute some little commission; and I remained where I was. Although Katherine used to pass through the yard, and close by me, when she went out in that manner, I never spoke to her, for fear she should reprove me for what she might think was watching her actions. Immediately after she was gone, Mrs. Kenrick laid the tea things; and in a few minutes Mr. Tracy entered the kitchen. He and the housekeeper sate down to tea. Mrs. Kenrick was pouring out the tea, when Mr. Tracy said something which made her pause. She then put down the tea-pot, fetched a coffee-biggin, and made some coffee. She filled two cups, and then turned towards the shelves to fetch a small jug, which I thought contained milk. But while her back was turned, I saw Mr. Tracy hastily put his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and then as rapidly advance his hand to Mrs. Kenrick's cup. All that was the work of only one moment; and I could not distinctly see why he did so. In fact I did not think much of it, until afterwards. Mrs. Kenrick resumed her seat; and she and Mr. Tracy drank their coffee. I observed that Mrs. Kenrick took no milk, and drank hers very quickly. In a short time I saw her head begin to nod as if she was sleepy: she got up, and walked about. Then she sate down again, and placed her arms on the table as if to support herself. In a short time her head fell forward on her arms. I felt a little alarmed; but still scarcely knew why. Mr. Tracy watched her for some minutes after she had fallen forward in that manner, and then bent down his head to look at her face. In another moment he rose, and to my surprise washed up all the things on the table and placed them upon the shelves. Then I began to fear that something was wrong; and I stole away. When I got home I found my father rather cross with me for staying out; and I was afraid to tell him what I had seen. Early the next morning we left for Ireland; and I never had courage to speak to my father upon this subject until we read the account of the murder and of Katherine's arrest. That was in the Isle of Man."

The reader may imagine the profound sensation which this narrative created.

Richard Markham was literally astounded.

Katherine Wilmot wept abundantly.

Reginald Tracy was crushed, as it were, to the very dust, by this overwhelming exposure of his guilt.

The jury whispered together for a few moments; and the foreman rose and said, "My lords, it is rather as a matter of form than as the result of any deliberation, that we pronounce a verdict of *Not Guilty*."

"The prisoner is discharged," said the senior judge. "It will be the duty of the police to take charge of Reginald Tracy."

"I have him in custody, my lord," exclaimed Morris Benstead in a loud tone.

CHAPTER CLVIII.

A HAPPY PARTY.

In a private room up stairs, at a tavern nearly opposite the Court-house of the Old Bailey, a happy party was assembled.

And yet the group was somewhat motley.

It consisted of Richard Markham, Katherine Wilmot, the Public Executioner, Gibbet, Rachel Bennet, and Morris Benstead.

The best luncheon which the house afforded was spread upon the table.

"And so you really thought I was lost, sir?" said Benstead. "I am not the man to neglect the business that is entrusted to me; neither do I excite hopes unless I know that they 'll be realised."

"But you have not yet told me how you came to bring all your witnesses into court at one and the same moment," said Richard Markham.

"Well, sir, I 'll soon satisfy your curiosity on that head," returned the policeman. "I made every exertion to sift the entire matter to the bottom; but the farther I went into it, the more mysterious it seemed. At last I was pretty nearly inclined to give it up in despair. One of the principal measures that I adopted was to endeavour to trace, step by step, all that either Mrs. Kenrick or Katherine did on the day when the murder took place. I have seen, in my time, so much important evidence come out of the most trivial—really the most ridiculous things, that I resolved to glean every minute particular I could relative to the motions of both the deceased and the accused on that day. My firm idea was that the housekeeper had committed suicide—saving your presence, ma'am," added Benstead, turning towards Mrs. Bennet. "Well, I found out the principal shops where Mr. Tracy dealt; and I visited them all to ascertain if Mrs. Kenrick had been there on that day; and if so, whether her words or manner had betrayed any thing strange. But I could learn nothing material. Various other schemes I thought of, and put into execution; but as they all failed, there 's no use in mentioning them. At length, yesterday evening I happened to call at the post-office near Mr. Tracy's house. I got into conversation with the post-mistress, who seemed to be well acquainted with the late Mrs. Kenrick. In the course of comment and observation upon the mysterious event, the post-mistress said, 'I do really think there 's some ground for supposing that the poor dear woman committed suicide; for she came here to pay a letter to her sister only a few hours before she was found dead; and then I saw that she was n't as she usually was. Something appeared to hang upon her mind.'"

"That was no doubt the sorrow she experienced at having discovered the hypocrisy of her master," observed Richard.

"Most likely, sir," said Benstead. "Well, the moment I heard that Mrs. Kenrick had written to her sister only a few hours before her death, I felt more convinced than ever that it was a case of suicide. It was then nine o'clock; but I was determined to start off at once to investigate the business. The post-mistress knew that Mrs. Bennet lived at Hounslow; and this was fortunate. I thanked her for this information, and hurried away. I was obliged to go to St. Giles's, before I started for the country, to ask my Inspector's leave. As I passed by Mr. Smithers' house, I knocked to see if he had come home. But the green-grocer next door answered me, as on several former occasions when I had called. He told me that Mr. Smithers had not come back. I knew it was important for Miss Kate to prove that she had visited her uncle on the

night of the supposed murder; and so I scribbled a note to Mr. Smithers, desiring him, in case he should return home in time to-day, to lose not a minute in coming to this very tavern and sending over into the Old Court to fetch me. This note I left with the green-grocer; and I then hastened to the station. I obtained permission to absent myself, and lost no time in hiring a post-chaise. But it was midnight before I reached Hounslow; and then I learnt that Mrs. Bennet lived three miles away from that town. So I was obliged to wait till the first thing this morning before I could see her. Then a great deal of time was wasted, because Mrs. Bennet and her husband could not rightly understand why I came, or on whose side I was engaged. I do not blame them for their caution:—I only mention the fact to account for our being so late in court. At length I succeeded in persuading Mrs. Bennet to show me her sister's letter to her; and when I read it, the whole affair wore another appearance in my mind. I saw through it in a moment. Then I resolved upon bringing Mrs. Bennet up to London with me; and to her credit, she did not hesitate an instant to accompany me, when I had communicated to her the suspicions which that letter had awakened in my mind, and impressed upon her the necessity of hastening to save an innocent person from the weight of an unjust accusation. To conclude this long and rambling story, we came up in the post-chaise; and, as luck would have it, just as we drove up to this tavern, Mr. Smithers and his son were stepping out of a cab at the door."

"Ah! Mr. Markham," said Katherine, "how can I ever sufficiently express my gratitude towards you; for it was by means of your generosity that Mr. Benstead was enabled to make those exertions which led to this happy result."

"I felt convinced of your innocence from the first," returned our hero; "and it was not probable that I should abandon you when such were my sentiments."

"A life devoted to your service, sir, could not repay the debt which I owe you," said Kate. "And you, my dear cousin," she continued, turning towards Gibbet, who was seated next to her,—"you also have been no unimportant instrument in rescuing me from infamy and death."

"Do not speak of it, Kate," said the hump-back, whimpering like a mere child. "I hope you won't scold me for watching you like a cat every evening as I did."

"Scold you, John! Oh! how can you make use of such words to me—and after the service you have rendered me?" exclaimed Kate, tears also streaming down her own cheeks. "I ought to bless God—and I do—to think that your friendship towards me led you to adopt a step to see me, which has turned so wonderfully—so providentially to my advantage."

"And now, Kate," said the executioner, "tell me one thing: why didn't you mention to me that evening when you called, that you were going to leave the rector's service?"

"Because, my dear uncle," answered the young maiden, "you made one observation to me which showed that you were pleased at the idea of me being in Mr. Tracy's service; and as you were so dull and low-spirited, I did not like to tell you any thing that might occasion you additional vexation. You said—oh! I shall never forget your words—they made me weep as I followed you from the street door into the parlour——"

"Yes—because I so seldom spoke kindly to you, poor Kate," exclaimed the executioner, as if struck by a sudden remorse.

"Do not say that, dear uncle! I owe so much—so very much to you, that even if you have been harsh to me now and then, I never think of it—and then, perhaps I have deserved it," she added slowly; for the amiable girl was anxious to extenuate her uncle's self-accusation in the eyes of those present.

"No—you did *not* deserve it, Kate!" cried the executioner, with resolute emphasis; "you are a good girl—too good ever to have been in such a den as mine!"

Smithers threw himself back in his chair, and compressed his lips together to restrain his emotions.

But nature asserted her empire.

A tear trickled from each eye, and rolled slowly down the cheeks of that man whose heart had been so brutalized by his fearful calling.

Kate rose from her chair, and threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, "Uncle—dear uncle, if you speak kindly to me, I am indeed happy!"

Gibbet cried, and yet laughed—sobbed, and yet smiled, in so strange a manner, as he contemplated that touching scene, that the result of his emotions presented the most ludicrous aspect.

"Sit down, Kate dear," said Smithers: "I am not used to be childish;—and yet, I don't know how it is, but I don't seem ashamed of dropping a tear now. I know I 'm a harsh, brutal man: but what has made me so? God, who can read all hearts, has it written down in his book that I was once possessed of the same kind feelings as other people. However—it 's no use talking: what I am I must remain until the end."

"Believe me," exclaimed Richard Markham, who was ever sensibly alive to the existence of generous feelings in others, —"believe me," he cried, grasping Smithers' hand, "society lost a good man when you undertook your present avocation."

"What, sir!" ejaculated Smithers, unfeignedly surprised; "do you shake hands with the Public Executioner?"

"Yes—and unblushingly would I do so before the whole world," replied Markham, "when I discover at the bottom of his soul a spark—aye, even the faintest spark of noble and exalted feeling yet unquenched."

The Public Executioner fixed upon the animated and handsome countenance of our hero a glance of the deepest gratitude—a glance of respect, almost of veneration!

He then cast down his eyes, and appeared to plunge into profound rumination.

"You were going to tell us, Miss Katherine," said Benstead, "what observation it was that prevented you from communicating to your uncle the notice Mrs. Kenrick had given you to leave."

"Oh! I remember," exclaimed the young maiden, upon whose heart the noble conduct of Richard Markham towards her despised and degraded relative had made a deep impression: "my uncle said to me, '*I am almost sorry that I ever parted with you; but as you are now in a place that may do you good, I shall not interfere with you.*'"

"Ah! my dear young friend," exclaimed Mrs. Bennet, "how fatal might that place have been to

you after all? But where are you going to live now? If you can make yourself happy with me, I will offer you a home and show you the kindness of a mother."

Katherine turned a look of deep gratitude upon the good woman who made her this generous offer; and then she glanced timidly towards her uncle and Richard Markham.

"If I may be allowed to speak my thoughts in this matter," said our hero, "I should counsel Katherine to accept a proposition so kindly, so frankly made; and it shall be my duty to see that she becomes not a burden upon the friend who will provide her with a home."

"I can give no opinion in the matter, sir," observed the executioner: "there is something about you which compels me to say, '*Deal with me and my family as you will.*' Command, sir, and we will obey."

"I never command—but I advise as a friend," said Richard, touched by the strange gentleness of manner which was now evinced by one lately so rude, so brutal, so self-willed. "Katherine, then, has your consent to accompany Mrs. Bennet to Hounslow?"

"And I sincerely thank Mrs. Bennet for her goodness towards that poor girl who has undergone so much," said the executioner.

Mrs. Bennet now suggested that her husband would be uneasy if she remaind long absent from home; and Richard immediately summoned the waiter, to whom he gave orders to procure a post-chaise.

This command was speedily executed. Katherine took leave of her relatives, Markham, and Benstead, with streaming eyes.

"God bless you, my girl," said the executioner, in a tone the tremulousness of which he could not altogether subdue.

Gibbet could say nothing: his voice was choked with sobs.

Katherine, however, whispered words of kindness in his ears; and the poor hump-back smiled as he wrung her hand with all the fervour of his affection.

"To you, Mr. Markham," said Kate, "no words can convey the gratitude—the boundless gratitude and respect which I entertain for you."

"Be happy, Katherine," returned Richard, shaking her warmly by the hand; "and remember that in me you have a sincere friend, always ready to aid and advise you."

The young maiden then tendered her thanks to the good-hearted policeman for the interest he had manifested in her favour.

The farewells were all said; good wishes were given and returned; and Mrs. Bennet hurried Katherine from the room. Those who remained behind, watched their departure from the window.

The moment the post-chaise had rolled away from the door of the tavern, Smithers accosted our hero, and said, "I am no great hand at making speeches, sir; but I can't take my leave of you, without saying something to convince you that I 'm not ungrateful for what you 've done for my niece. Your goodness, sir, has saved her from death; and more than that, has proved her innocence. You are the best man I ever met in my life: you are more like an angel than a human being. I did n't think that such men as you could be in existence. It makes me have a better opinion of the world when I look upon you. How happy would a country be if it had such a person as yourself for its sovereign! I cannot understand my own feelings in your presence: I seem as if I could fall at your feet and worship you. Then I think that I am unworthy even to breathe the same air that you do. But your words have made me happy to some extent: for years I have not felt as I feel to-day. I can say no more, sir: I don't know how I came to say so much!"

And the executioner turned abruptly aside; for he was weeping—he was weeping!

Markham had not interrupted him while he spoke, because our hero knew that it was well for that man to give way to the good feelings which the contemplation of humanity and philanthropy in others had so recently awakened.

But Richard did not perceive that, while the executioner was giving utterance to the invincible promptings of nature, Gibbet had drawn near,—had listened to his father with indescribable interest,—had drunk in with surprise and avidity every word that fell from his lips,—and had gradually sunk upon his knees in the presence of that benefactor whom even a rude, brutalized, and savage disposition was now compelled to believe to be something more than man!

"This, sir," said Benstead, glancing his eyes around, and touching Markham's arm to direct his attention to the scene,—"this, sir, is doubtless a welcome reward for all your goodness."

Richard hastily brushed away a tear, and raising Gibbet from his adoring posture, said, "You, my good lad, possess a heart worthy of a nobleman. Look upon me as your friend!"

Then our hero caught Smithers by the hand, and drawing him into the recess of a window, whispered in a low and rapid tone, "You are not insensible to the charms of being useful to one's fellow-creatures. I implore you to renounce your fearful calling—and I will supply you with the means to enter upon some other pursuit."

Smithers did not answer for a few moments: he appeared to reflect profoundly.

"Yes—I will follow your advice, sir," he at length said: "but not quite yet! I must hang up that rector—and then, *then* I will abandon the calling for ever!"

With these words the executioner turned abruptly away, caught Gibbet by the hand, and hurried from the room.

A few minutes afterwards Richard Markham and Benstead also took their departure, each in a different direction; but the police-officer's pocket contained substantial proofs of our hero's liberality.

CHAPTER CLIX.

THE INTERVIEW.

A WEEK passed away, during which the examination of Reginald Tracy took place before the police-magistrate, and terminated in the committal of the rector to Newgate.

The whole town rang with the extraordinary events which had led to this crisis in the career of a man whose very name had so lately inspired respect.

The clergy were horror-struck at the disgrace

brought upon their cloth by this terrific explosion; for people grew inclined to look upon real ecclesiastical sanctity as nothing more nor less than a garb of rank hypocrisy.

Some ministers of the gospel, more daring and enthusiastic than the rest, boldly proclaimed from their pulpits that Reginald Tracy was a saint and a martyr, against whom a horrible conspiracy had been concocted in order to remove the imputation of murder from the young female who had been discharged, and fix it on him.

Other clergymen entered into learned disquisitions to prove that Satan must have obtained especial leave from God, as in the case of Job, to tempt the most holy and pious of men; and that, having failed to seduce him from the right path, the Evil One had accomplished a series of atrocities all so artfully arranged as to fix the stain upon the rector of St. David's.

But there were some reverend gentlemen, who, having always been jealous of Reginald Tracy's popularity, descanted in significant terms upon the shallowness of mere eloquence in the pulpit, and the folly of running after "fashionable preachers." One venerable and holy gentleman, who had been married three times, and had received from his wives an aggregate of seventeen pledges of their affection, bitterly denounced in his sermon the "whitened sepulchre," "tinkling cymbal," and "unclean vessel," who had dared to set his face against the sacred institution of matrimony.

The fashionable world was powerfully excited by the exposure of Reginald Tracy. Some wiseacres shook their heads, and observed that they had always suspected there was something wrong about the rector; others plainly asserted that they had even prophesied what would happen some day. The fair sex all agreed that it was a great pity, as he *was* such a charming preacher and such a handsome man!

The press was not idle in respect to the business. The newspapers teemed with "Latest Particulars;" and all the penny-a-liners in London were on the alert to collate additional facts. Nine out of ten of these facts, however, turned out to be pure fictions. One journal, conducted on more imaginative principles than its contemporaries, promulgated a new discovery which it had made in respect to the rector's history, and coolly fixed upon his back all the murders which had occurred in the metropolis during the previous dozen years, and the perpetrators of which had never yet been detected.

Heaven knows Reginald Tracy was bad enough; but if one believed all which was now said of him in the public journals, no monster that ever disgraced humanity was so vile as he.

Some of the cheap unstamped periodicals treated their readers with portraits of the rector; and as very few of the artists who were employed to draw them had ever seen their subject, and were now unable to obtain access to him, their inventive faculties were put to the most exciting test. And, as a convincing proof that no two persons entertain the same idea of an object which they have never seen, it may be observed that there was a most extraordinary variety in the respective characteristics of these portraits.

In a word, the rector's name engrossed universal attention:—a cheap romance was issued, entitled "The Murdered Housekeeper; or the Corrupt Clergyman;"—one of the minor theatres attracted crowded houses by the embodiment of the particulars of the case in a melodrama;—and Madame Tussaud added the effigy of Reginald Tracy to her collection of wax-works.

But what were the feelings of Lady Cecilia Harborough when the terrible announcement of the rector's arrest met her ears!

We must observe that when she first heard of the death of the housekeeper, she entertained a faint suspicion that Reginald, and not Katherine Wilmot, was the author of the deed. But while the young girl was yet in prison, before the trial, and when Cecilia and the rector met, the latter so eloquently expatiated upon the case, that Cecilia's suspicions were hushed; and she learnt to look upon the housekeeper's death following so shortly on the exposure of the rector's hypocrisy to that female, as a remarkable coincidence only. Moreover, the rector had all along declared his impression that the housekeeper had committed suicide, and that the innocence of Katherine would be made apparent before the judges.

Thus Cecilia's mind had been more or less tranquillised during the interval which occurred between the housekeeper's death and the day of trial.

But when, in the afternoon of the day on which that trial took place, the appalling news of Katherine's acquittal and Reginald's arrest reached her ears, she was thrown into a state of the most painful excitement.

It was true that she could not in the slightest degree be implicated in the enormous crime of which he was accused: but would her guilty connexion with him transpire?

Her conscience entertained the worst forebodings in this respect.

At one moment she thought of hastening to visit him in his prison: then she reflected that such a course would only encourage a suspicion calculated to proclaim that scandal which she was so anxious to avoid.

Fortunately Sir Rupert Harborough was still away from home, with his friend Chichester; and thus Lady Cecilia had no disagreeable spy to witness her distressing emotions and embarrassment.

Day after day passed; Reginald had been committed, as before stated, to Newgate; and Cecilia heard nothing from him.

At length at the expiration of a week from the day of his arrest, a dirty, shabby-looking lad called in Tavistock Square, and requested to see Lady Cecilia Harborough alone.

He was accordingly admitted to her presence.

"Please, ma'am," he said, "I 've come with a message from Mr. Tracy, which is in Newgate. He is a wery nice gen'leman, and is certain sure to be hung, they say."

"Who are you?" demanded Cecilia, with ill-concealed disgust.

"Please, ma'am, I belong to an eating-house in the Old Bailey," returned the boy; "and I takes in Mr. Tracy's meals to him."

"And what do you want with me?"

"Please, ma'am, Mr. Tracy says will you go and see him to-morrow morning between ten and eleven?"

"In Newgate!" ejaculated Lady Cecilia, with an unaffected shudder.

"Oh! yes, ma'am: I goes in there three times

every day o' my life; and so I'm sure you need n't be afraid to wisit it just for vonce."

"Well—I will think of it. Have you any thing else to say to me?"

"Please, ma'am, Mr. Tracy says that you've no call to give your own name at the gate; but if you pass yourself off as his sister, just come up from the country, you can see him alone in his cell. But if you don't do that you'd on'y be allowed to speak to him through the bars of his yard. He would have wrote to you, but then the letters must be read by the governor before they goes out; and so it would have been known that he sent to you. He never thought of speaking about it to me till this morning; and I promised to do his arrand faithful. That 's all, ma'am."

"And enough too," said Lady Cecilia, in a tone of deep disgust, as she threw the lad a few shillings across the table in the room where she received him.

"Is there any message, ma'am, to take back to Mr. Tracy?" asked the boy; "'cos I shall see him the first thing in the morning."

"You may say that I will do as he desires," answered Cecilia: "but beware how you mention to a soul that you have been here. Forget my name as if you had never heard it."

"Yes, ma'am—to be sure," replied the boy; "and thank'ee kindly."

He then pocketed the money, and took his departure.

"Newgate, Newgate!" thought Lady Cecilia, when she was once more alone: "there is something chilling—menacing—awful in that name! And yet I must penetrate into those gloomy cells to see—whom? A murderer! Oh! who would have thought that the rich, the handsome, the renowned, the courted, the flattered rector of St. David's would become an inmate of Newgate? A murderer! Ah—my God, the mere idea is horrible! And that uncouth boy who said coolly that he was certain to be hanged! Reginald—Reginald, to what have you come? Would it not have been better to dare exposure—contumely—infamy—reproach, than to risk such an appalling alternative? But reputation was dearer to this man than aught in the world beside! And he is rich:—what will he do with his wealth? Perhaps it is for *that* he desires my presence? Who knows?"

This idea determined Lady Cecilia upon visiting Newgate on the following day.

She did not reflect that she herself was the first link in that chain which had so rapidly wound itself around the unhappy man, until it paralysed his limbs in a criminal gaol. She often asked herself how he could have been so mad as to commit the deed that menaced him with the most terrible fate; but beyond the abstract event itself she never thought of looking.

The morning dawned; Lady Cecilia rose, and dressed herself in as unpretending a manner as possible.

At half-past nine she went out, took a cab at the nearest stand, and proceeded to Newgate.

She ascertained, by inquiry, which was the prison entrance, and ascended the steps leading to the half-door, the top of which was garnished with long iron spikes.

A stout, red-faced turnkey, with a good-tempered countenance, admitted her into the obscure lobby, behind which was a passage where a gas-light burns all day long.

"Who do you want, ma'am?" said the turnkey.

"Mr. Tracy," was the reply.

"Are you any relation to him?"

"His sister. I have just arrived from the country."

"Please to write your name down in this book."

Lady Cecilia, who seldom lost her presence of mind, instantly took up the pen, and wrote down "ANNE TRACY."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said the turnkey, "but if you have any knife in your pocket you must leave it here."

"I have none," answered Cecilia.

"Take that passage, ma'am, and you will find a turnkey who will admit you to Tracy's cell."

All titular distinctions are dropped in Newgate.

Lady Cecilia proceeded along the passage as she was desired, and at length reached a large stone vestibule, from which several doors opened into the different yards in that part of the building.

She accosted a turnkey, informing him whom she came to visit; and he bade her follow him.

In a few moments he stopped at a massive door, opened it, and said, "Walk in there, ma'am."

She advanced a few steps: the door closed behind her; and she found herself in the presence of Reginald Tracy.

But how changed was he! His cheeks were ghastly pale—his eyes sunken—his hair was in disorder—his person dirty and neglected.

"This is kind of you, Cecilia," he said, without rising from his chair. "Sit down, and lose no time in conversing—we have not much time to be together."

"Oh, Reginald!" exclaimed Cecilia, as she took a seat, "what a place for us to meet in!"

"Now do not give way to ejaculations and laments which will do no good," said Reginald. "If you can maintain your tranquillity it will be advantageous to yourself. You know that I am possessed of some property?"

"The world always believed you to be rich," observed Cecilia.

"I have lately been extravagant," continued Reginald: "still I have a handsome fortune remaining. As I am not *yet* condemned," he added bitterly, "I can leave it to whom I choose. Do you wish to be my heiress?"

"Ah! Reginald—this proof of your affection——"

"No superfluous words, Cecilia," interrupted the rector impatiently. "If you wish to possess my wealth you must render me a service—an important service, to merit it."

"Any thing in the world that I can do to benefit you shall be performed most faithfully," said Lady Cecilia.

"And you will not shrink from the service which I demand? The condition is no light one."

"Name it. Whatever it be, I will accept it—provided that it do not involve my safety," returned Cecilia.

"Selfishness!" exclaimed the rector contemptuously. "Listen attentively. To-morrow my solicitor will attend upon me here. To him I shall make over all my property—in trust for the person to whom I choose to bequeath it. He is an honourable man, and will faithfully perform my wishes. I have not a relation nor a friend in the world who

has any particular claim upon me. I can constitute you my heiress: at my death," he added slowly, "all I possess may revert to you,—the world remaining in ignorance of the manner in which I have disposed of my wealth. But if I thus enrich you, I demand from your hands the means of escaping an infamy otherwise inevitable."

"I do not understand you," said Cecilia, somewhat alarmed.

The rector leant forward, fixed a penetrating glance upon his mistress, and said in a hollow and subdued tone, "I require poison—a deadly poison!"

"Poison!" echoed Cecilia, with a shudder.

"Yes: do you comprehend me now? Will you earn wealth by rendering me that service?" he asked eagerly.

"What poison do you require?" demanded Cecilia greatly excited.

"Prussic acid: it is the most certain—and the quickest," answered the rector. "If you are afraid to procure it yourself, the old hag in Golden Lane will assist you in that respect."

"And must it really come to this?" said Cecilia. "Is all hope dead?"

"My doom is certain—if I live to meet it," answered Reginald, who only maintained the composure which he now displayed by the most desperate efforts to subdue his emotions. "The evidence is too damning against me. And yet I imagined that I had adopted such precautions!" he continued, in a musing tone. "I felt so confident that the poor, old woman would appear to have died by her own hand! I sent the footman out of the way, not upon a frivolous cause, but on an errand which would bear scrutiny. I made the housekeeper herself get rid of Katherine. I did all that prudence suggested. But never—never did I anticipate that *another* would be charged with the crime! And yet, when suspicion attached itself so strongly to that poor innocent girl, what could I do? I had but two alternatives—to allow her to suffer, or to immolate myself by proclaiming her guiltlessness. Oh! Cecilia, you know not—you cannot conceive all that I have suffered since that fatal evening! Often and often was I on the point of going forward and confessing all, in order to save that innocent girl. But I had not the courage! When I gave my testimony, I rendered it as favourable towards her as possible. I laboured hard to encourage the suspicion that the deceased had been her own destroyer. But fate had ordained that all should transpire."

He paused, and buried his face in his hands.

A sob escaped his breast.

"This is childish—this is foolish in the extreme," he suddenly cried. "Time is passing—and you have not yet decided whether you will render me the service I require, upon the consideration of inheriting all my wealth."

"I will do what you ask of me," said Cecilia, in a low but decided tone.

"And do not attempt to deceive me," continued Reginald; "for if you bring me a harmless substitute for a deadly poison, you will frustrate my design, it is true—but I shall live to revoke the bequest made in your favour."

"I will not deceive you, Reginald—if you be indeed determined," said his mistress.

"I *am* determined. We now understand each other: to me the poison—to you the wealth."

"Agreed," was the answer.

"The day after to-morrow you will return—provided with what I require?" said Reginald.

"You may rely upon me."

"Then farewell, Cecilia, for the present."

The rector offered the lady his hand: Cecilia pressed it with affected fervour, though in reality she almost recoiled from the touch.

Profligate as she was, she had no sincere sympathy for a murderer.

Nor was she sorry when she once more found herself beyond the terrible walls of Newgate.

CHAPTER CLX.

THE RECTOR IN NEWGATE.

REGINALD TRACY awoke early on the morning when Cecilia was to return to him.

He had been dreaming of delicious scenes and voluptuous pleasures; and he opened his eyes to the fearful realities of Newgate.

He clasped his hands together with the convulsiveness of ineffable mental agony; and the smile that had played upon his lips in his elysian dream, was suddenly changed into the contortion of an anguish that could know no earthly mitigation.

"Fool—madman that I have been!" he exclaimed aloud, in a piercing tone of despair. "From what a brilliant position have I fallen! Wealth—pleasure—fame—love—life, all about to pass away! The entire fabric destroyed by my own hands! Oh! wretch—senseless idiot—miserable fool that I have been! But is it really true?—can it be as it seems to me? Have I done the deed? Am I here—*here*, in Newgate? Or is it all a dream? Perhaps I have gone suddenly mad, and my crime and its consequences are only the inventions of my disordered imagination? Yes—it may be so; and this is a mad-house!"

Then the rector sate up in his bed, and glanced wildly around the cell.

"No—no!" he cried with a shriek of despair; "I cannot delude myself thus. I am indeed a *murderer*—and *this* is Newgate!"

He threw himself back on the rude bolster, and covered his face with his hands.

But though he closed his eyes, and pressed his fingers upon the lids until the balls throbbed beneath, he could not shut out from his mind the horrors of his position.

"Oh! this is insupportable!" he cried, and then rolled upon his bed in convulsions of rage: he gnashed his teeth—he beat his brow—he tore his hair—he clenched his fists with the fury of a demon.

His emotions were terrible.

He seemed like a wild beast caught in a net whose meshes were inextricable.

Then a rapid reaction took place in that man of powerful passion; and he grew exhausted—humble—and penitent.

"O God, have mercy upon me!" he said, joining his hands in prayer. "I have grievously offended against thee: oh! have mercy upon me. Why didst thou permit me to fall? Was I not enthusiastic in thy cause? O heaven, have mercy upon me!"

This short prayer, in which reproach and intercession were commingled, was said with profound sincerity.

But the image of Cecilia suddenly sprang up in the rector's imagination; and then his entire form once more became convulsed with rage.

"That wretch—that adulteress was my ruin!" he exclaimed, clenching his fist so violently that the nails of his fingers almost penetrated into his palms. "I was virtuous and untainted until I knew her. She led me astray: she taught me the enjoyment of those pleasures which have proved so fatal to me! The wretch—the adulteress! And to be condemned the day before yesterday to maintain a forced calmness towards her! Oh! I could tear her limb from limb: I could dig my nails into the flesh whose dazzling whiteness and whose charms were wont to plunge my soul in ecstacies. The foul—the vile creature! May she die in a dungeon, as I shall die: no, may she rot upon the straw—may she perish by degrees—of starvation,—a cruel, lingering death of agony! Had I never known her, I should yet be on the pinnacle of pride and fortune,—yet be respected and adored! Ah! these thoughts drive me mad—mad."

And again he beat his forehead and his breast: again he tore his hair, and writhed convulsively on his bed.

"Senseless idiot that I have been!" he continued. "Better—better far were it to have thrown off the mask—to have dared the world! I was rich—and I was independent. I might have lived a life of luxury and ease, pleasure and enjoyment;—but I was too weak to risk exposure. And that poor old woman whom I destroyed—was she not devoted to me! would she have proclaimed my hypocrisy? My conscience made me behold every thing in its worst light. I anticipated complete security in her death. And now I must die myself,—give up this bright and beautiful world in the prime of my existence,—abandon all earth's pleasures and enjoyments in the vigour of my days! Senseless idiot that I was to suppose that murder could be perpetrated so easily—to imagine that the finger of God would not point to me, as much as to say '*That is the man.*' Yes—though millions be assembled together in one vast crowd, the hand of the Almighty will single out the ruthless murderer!"

The rector ceased, and lay for some instants still and motionless.

But his mind was fearfully active.

"Had not all this occurred," he thought within himself, "I should now be awaking, in my comfortable chamber, to a day which would be marked with the same happiness and security that other men are now enjoying. I should be free to go out and come in at will—free to walk hither and thither as I might choose. I should not have death staring me in the face, as at present! I should be able to say with confidence, '*To-morrow I will do this,*' and '*Next day I will do that.*' I should be my own master, possessed of all that can make man happy. But, now—*now* what a wretch I am! Confined to these four walls—a mere automaton that must eat and drink when a gaoler chooses!"

These thoughts were too heart-rending for the miserable man to endure; and, starting from his bed, he threw on his clothes with a rapidity that denoted the feverish state of his mind.

The clock struck eight; and his breakfast was brought to him.

"How many times more shall I hear that sound?" he asked himself. "Once how welcome were the notes of bells to my ears! With what happiness did I obey their summons to that church to which crowds flocked to hear me! Oh! what calm, what peaceful enjoyments were mine *then*—in the days of my innocence! And those days are gone—never to return! No human power can restore me to those enjoyments and to that innocence; and God will not do it!"

Thus passed the time of this truly wretched man.

At length the clock struck nine—next ten.

"Will she come?" he said, as he paced his cell with agitated steps. "Or will she be afraid of compromising herself? And yet she must have confidence in me: I have acted in a manner to inspire it. I suffered her to believe that it was out of regard for her that I did not write to her, and that I recommended her to pass in as my sister. The vile wretch! she little knows that all this was the result of calculation on my part! If I had shown myself indifferent to her reputation—careless of her name,—she would not have so readily consented to do my bidding. Perhaps she would never have come to me at all! Now she believes that I am anxious to avert the breath of scandal from herself; and she will serve me: yes—I feel convinced that she will come!"

Nor was Reginald mistaken.

Scarcely had he arrived at that point in his musings, when the bolts of his cell were drawn back, and Lady Cecilia entered the dungeon.

"You are true to your promise," said the rector.

"Yes—I would not fail you," answered Cecilia, throwing herself into a chair: "but I tremble—oh! I tremble like a leaf."

"Have you brought—*it?*" asked Reginald in a hollow tone.

Cecilia drew from her bosom a small crystal phial, and handed it to the rector.

He greedily withdrew the cork, and placed the bottle to his nostrils.

"Yes—you have not deceived me! Now—now," he exclaimed, as he carefully concealed the phial about his person, "I am the master of my own destinies!"

And, as he spoke, his countenance was animated with an expression of diabolical triumph.

Cecilia was alarmed.

"My God, what have I done?" she cried; "perhaps I have involved myself——"

"Set aside these selfish considerations," said the rector; "you have earned wealth—for I have kept my promise—I have bequeathed all my fortune to you."

"Do not imagine that I shall ever receive enjoyment from its possession, dear Reginald," returned Cecilia, affecting a tenderness of tone and manner which she did not feel.

"Oh! I know your good heart, beloved Cecilia," exclaimed the rector; and as she cast down her eyes beneath his looks, he glared upon her for a moment with the ferocity of a tiger. "But you will be surprised—yes, agreeably surprised," he added composedly, "when you call upon my solicitor—which you must do to-morrow! Here is his address."

"To-morrow!" echoed Cecilia, turning deadly pale. "You cannot mean to——to——"

"To take this poison to day?" said Reginald. "Yes—this evening at seven o'clock you may pray for my soul!"

"Oh! this is, indeed, dreadful!" cried Cecilia. "Give me back that phial—or I will raise an alarm!"

"Foolish woman! Will you not be worth twenty thousand pounds!" ejaculated Reginald. "And fear not that you will be compromised. I shall leave upon this table a letter that will exculpate you from any suspicion of having been the bearer to me of the means of self-destruction—even if it be discovered who it was that visited me here as my alleged sister."

"This consideration on your part is truly generous, Reginald," said Cecilia, in whose breast the mention of the twenty thousand pounds had stifled all compunction.

"We must now part, Cecilia—part for ever," observed the rector. "Go—do not offer to embrace me—I could not bear it!"

"Then farewell, Reginald—farewell!" exclaimed Cecilia, who was not sorry to escape a ceremony which she had anticipated with horror—for the idea that her paramour was a murderer was ever present in her mind.

"Farewell, Cecilia," added the rector; and he turned his back to the door.

In another moment she was gone.

"Thank heaven that I was enabled to master my rage," cried Reginald, when he was once more alone. "Oh! how I longed to fall upon her—to tear her to pieces! The selfish harlot—as if I could not read her soul *now*—as if I were any longer her dupe. But I shall be avenged upon her—I shall be avenged! My death will be the signal of her exposure—my dissolution will be the beginning of her shame! Oh! deeply shall she rue every caress she has lavished upon me—every accursed wile that she practised to ensnare me! Her blandishments will turn to moans and tears—her smiles to the contortions of hell. The fascinating syren shall become the mark for every scornful finger. Fool that she is—to think I would die unavenged! If my existence be cut short suddenly—hers shall be dragged out in sorrow and despair."

Then the rector paced his cell, while from his breast escaped a hoarse sound like the low growling of a wild beast.

But we will not dwell upon the wretched man's thoughts and words throughout that long day.

Evening came.

Six o'clock struck; and Reginald feared no farther interruption from the turnkeys.

He then sate down to write two letters.

Having occupied himself in this manner for a short time, he sealed the letters, and addressed them.

When this task was accomplished, he felt more composed and calm than he had done during the day.

He walked three or four times up and down his cell.

Then he fell upon his knees, and prayed fervently.

Yes—fervently!

Seven o'clock struck.

"Now is the hour!" he exclaimed, rising from his suppliant posture near the bed.

He took the bottle from his pocket: a convulsive shudder passed over him as he handled the fatal phial whose contents were to sever the chain which bound his spirit to the earth.

Then he felt weak and nervous; and he sate down.

"My courage is failing," he said to himself: "I must not delay another moment."

But he still hesitated for a minute!

"No—no!" he exclaimed, as if in answer to an idea which had occupied him during that interval; "there is no hope! My fate would be——the scaffold!"

This thought nerved him with courage to execute his desperate purpose.

He raised the phial to his lips, and swallowed the contents—greedy of every drop.

In a few seconds he fell from his chair—a heavy, lifeless mass—upon the floor of the dungeon.

CHAPTER CLXI.

LADY CECILIA HARBOROUGH.

CECILIA passed a sleepless and agitated night.

Wild hopes and undefined fears had banished repose from her pillow.

She thought the morning would never come.

At length the first gleam of dawn struggled through the windows of her bed-room; and she instantly arose.

She was pale—yet fearfully excited; and there was a wildness in her eyes which denoted the most cruel suspense.

The minutes seemed to be hours; for she was now anxiously awaiting the arrival of the morning paper.

She descended to the breakfast parlour; but the repast remained untouched.

At length the well-known knock of the news-boy at the front door echoed through the house.

The moment the journal was placed on the table by her side, Cecilia took it up with trembling hands, and cast a hasty glance over its contents.

In another instant all suspense relative to the rector's fate ceased.

The following words settled that point beyond a doubt:—

"SUICIDE OF THE REV. REGINALD TRACY.

"Shortly after eight o'clock last evening a rumour was in circulation, to the effect that the above-mentioned individual, whose name has so recently been brought before the public in connection with the murder of Matilda Kenrick, had put a period to his existence by means of poison. It appears that the turnkey, on visiting his cell, according to custom, at eight o'clock, found him stretched upon the floor, to all appearances quite dead. Medical aid was immediately procured; but life was pronounced by the gaol-surgeon to be totally extinct. We have been unable to learn any further particulars."

"It is better so, than to die upon the scaffold," said Cecilia to herself. "Now to the lawyer's: Reginald expressly told me that I was to call upon him this morning."

The heartless woman did not drop a tear nor heave a sigh to the memory of her paramour.

She rang the bell and desired the servant to fetch a cab without delay.

By the time it arrived Cecilia was ready.

During the rapid drive to the City, she arranged a thousand plans for the employment and enjoyment of the wealth which she believed herself to be now entitled to, and the bequest of which she was resolved to conceal from her husband.

When she alighted at the solicitor's door, she assumed a melancholy and solemn air, which she thought decorous under the circumstances.

The solicitor, who was an elderly man, and whose name was Wharton, received her in his private office, and politely inquired the nature of her business.

"Did you not expect a visit from Lady Cecilia Harborough this morning?" asked the frail woman.

"Lady Cecilia Harborough!" exclaimed the lawyer, his countenance assuming a severe tone the moment that name fell upon his ears. "Are you Lady Cecilia Harborough?"

"I am Lady Cecilia Harborough," was the reply.

"So young—and yet so powerful to work evil!" observed Mr. Wharton, in a musing tone, and with a sorrowful air.

"I do not understand you, sir," exclaimed Cecilia somewhat alarmed, yet affecting a haughty and offended manner.

"Do not aggravate your wickedness by means of falsehood," said the lawyer sternly. "Think you that I am a stranger to your connexion with that unhappy man who died by his own hands last night? I have known him for many years—I knew him when he was pure, honourable, and respected: I have seen him the inmate of a dungeon. The day before yesterday I was with him for the last time. He then revealed to me every particular connected with his fall. He told me how you practised your syren arts upon him—how you led him on, until he became an adulterer! He explained to me how he repented of his first weakness, and how you practised a vile—a detestable artifice, by the aid of an old hag in Golden Lane, to bring him back to your arms."

"Spare me this recital, sir, which has been so highly coloured to my prejudice," exclaimed Lady Cecilia. "I confess that I was enamoured of that unhappy man; but——"

"You cannot palliate your wickedness, madam," interrupted Mr. Wharton, sternly. "Mr. Tracy detailed to me every blandishment you used—every art you called into force to subdue him. And as for *your* love for him, Lady Cecilia Harborough—even that excuse cannot be advanced in extenuation of your infamy."

"Sir—that is a harsh word!" cried Cecilia, red with indignation, and starting upon her chair.

"Nay, madam—sit still," continued the solicitor: "you may yet hear harsher terms from my lips. I say that you cannot even plead a profound and sincere attachment to that man as an excuse for the arts which you practised to ensnare and ruin him:—no, madam—it was his gold which you coveted!"

"Sir—I will hear no more—I——"

"Your ladyship must hear me out," interrupted the lawyer, authoritatively motioning her to retain her seat. "When alone in his gloomy cell, your victim pondered upon all that had passed between him and you, until he came to a full and entire comprehension of the utter hollowness of your heart. He then understood how he had been duped and deluded by you! Moreover, madam, it was by your desire that he admitted you into his own house—that fatal indiscretion which, being often repeated, at length led to the terrible catastrophe. Now, then, madam," cried Mr. Wharton, raising his voice, "who was the real cause of my friend's downfall? who was the origin of his ruin? who, in a word, is the murderess of Reginald Tracy?"

"My God!" ejaculated the wretched woman, quivering like an aspen beneath these appalling denunciations; "you are very severe—too, too harsh upon me, sir!"

"No, madam," resumed the lawyer; "I am merely placing your conduct in its true light, and giving your deeds their proper name. You had no mercy upon my unfortunate friend;—you sacrificed him to your base lust after gold;—you hurried him on to his doom. Why should I spare you? You have no claims upon my forbearance as a woman—because, madam, your unmitigated wickedness debars you from the privilege of your sex. To show courtesy to you, would be to encourage crime of the most abhorrent nature."

"Was it to be thus upbraided, sir—thus reviled," demanded Lady Cecilia, endeavouring to recover her self-possession, "that I was desired to call upon you this morning?"

"Desired to call upon me, madam!" exclaimed the solicitor: "who conveyed to you such instructions?"

"Mr. Tracy himself," answered Cecilia in a faint tone—for she now trembled lest Reginald had deceived her.

"Then my poor friend must have been aware of the reception which you would meet at my hands—of the stern truths that you would hear from my lips," said Mr. Wharton; "for to no other purpose could this visit have been designed."

"But—are there no written instructions—with which you may be as yet unacquainted—no papers, the contents of which you have not read——"

"Madam, I am at a loss to comprehend you," said the lawyer. "If you allude to any papers of Mr. Tracy's now in my hands, I can assure you that they bear no reference to any affairs in which you can possibly be interested."

"And you have read *all* those papers—every one—*the last* that was placed in your hands, as well as any others?" inquired Cecilia, in a tone of breathless excitement.

"Merciful heavens, madam!" ejaculated the lawyer, on whose mind a light seemed suddenly to break: "surely—surely *you* cannot be in expectation of a legacy or a boon from that man whom you hurried to his ruin—aye, even to murder and suicide? Surely your presumption is not so boundless as all that?"

Cecilia sank back, almost fainting in her chair: her sole hope was now annihilated; and in its stead there remained to her only the bitter—bitter conviction that she had been deceived by Reginald in that last transaction which took place between them.

"No, madam—no," continued the lawyer, with a smile of the most cutting contempt: "if that unhappy man had bequeathed you any thing, it would have been his curse—his withering, dying curse!"

"Oh! do not say *that*," screamed Cecilia, now really appalled by the energetic language of that man who was so unsparing in his duty to the memory of his friend.

"Ah! I am rejoiced that your ladyship at last feels the full force of that infamy which has accomplished the ruin of a man once so good, so upright, so honourable, so happy! But you are, no doubt, curious to know how your victim has disposed of that wealth of which you would have plundered him had he not been so suddenly stopped in his mad career? I will tell you. He has bequeathed it to that young girl who so nearly suffered for *his* crime—to Katherine Wilmot, who was so unjustly accused of the enormity which *he* perpetrated!"

Lady Cecilia wept with rage, shame, and disappointment.

"Weep, madam, weep," rang the iron voice of that stern denunciator once more in her ears: "weep—for you have good cause! Not for the wealth of the universe would I harbour the feelings which ought to be—*must* be yours at this moment."

A pause ensued, which was interrupted by the entrance of a clerk who whispered something in the lawyer's ear, and then withdrew.

"I request your ladyship to have the goodness to remain here until my return," said Mr. Wharton. "I shall not keep you long."

The lawyer passed into the outer office; and Cecilia was now alone.

The reader can scarcely require to be reminded that this lady was not one who was likely to remain long depressed by a moral lesson, however severe its nature.

Scarcely had the lawyer left her, when she raised her head, and thought within herself, "I have been deceived—cruelly deceived; and if I did Reginald any wrong, he is amply avenged. One thing seems certain—he has retained the secret of the means by which he obtained the poison. He has not compromised me there; or else this harsh man would have been only too glad to throw *that* also in my teeth. Thus, my position might have been worse!"

Such was the substance of Lady Cecilia Harborough's musing during the absence of the lawyer.

This absence lasted nearly a quarter of an hour; and then he returned to the office.

He held an open letter in his hand.

"Lady Cecilia Harborough," he said, in a tone of increased sternness, "the measure of your guilt is now so full, that justice demands an explanation at your hands."

"Justice, sir!" faltered the frail woman, an icy coldness striking to her heart.

"Yes, madam," answered the lawyer; "and even from the grave will the wrongs of Reginald Tracy cry out against you."

"My God! what do you mean?" she exclaimed, her pallor now becoming actually livid.

"Before Reginald Tracy took the poison which

hurried him to his last account," continued the solicitor in a low and solemn tone, "he wrote two letters. These were found upon the table in his cell. One was to Katherine Wilmot—the other was to me. The governor of Newgate has just been with me, and has delivered to me this last communication from my poor friend."

"The governor of Newgate!" repeated Cecilia, now overwhelmed with vague terrors.

"Yes, madam: and the contents are to inform me that you—*you*, madam, with an assumed name, and passing yourself off as Mr. Tracy's sister, visited him twice in his cell, and, on the latter occasion, furnished him with the means of self-destruction."

"Heaven protect me! it is but too true!" cried Cecilia; and, throwing herself upon her knees before the lawyer, she almost shrieked the words, "You would not give me up to justice, sir—you will not betray me?"

"No, madam," answered Mr. Wharton; "I had punished you sufficiently when these tidings arrived."

"Thank you, sir—thank you," cried Cecilia, rising from her knees. "But the governor of Newgate——"

"Is gone, madam. I did not tell him that you were here. I must, however, warn you that I communicated to him, as in duty bound, the contents of this letter."

"Then he is aware that I——"

"He is aware that you conveyed the poison to Reginald Tracy; and the officers of justice will be in search of you in another hour," replied the lawyer, coldly.

"My God! what will become of me?" ejaculated Cecilia, now pushed to an extremity which she never had contemplated.

"I would not say that you were here, madam," continued the lawyer, "because Reginald Tracy had contemplated making me the means of handing you over to the grasp of justice; and I am sorry that he should so far have misunderstood me. I now comprehend why he directed you to come hither. He thought that his letter would reach me earlier—before you came, and that I should be the willing instrument of his vengeance. I will not show you the letter, because he has mistaken me—he has misunderstood me; and for this reason alone—and for no merciful feeling towards *you*—have I shielded you thus far. Now go, madam: when once you are away from this house, you must adopt the best measures you can devise to ensure your safety."

"But can you not counsel me, sir—will you not direct me how to act?" cried Cecilia: "I am bewildered—I know not what step to take!"

"I have no counsel to offer, madam," returned the lawyer, briefly.

Cecilia could not mistake the meaning conveyed by this tone.

She rose; and bowing in a constrained manner to the solicitor, left the office.

But when she found herself in the street, she was cruelly embarrassed how to act.

She dared not return home; the paternal door had long been closed against her; she had not a friend—and she had not a resource.

A few sovereigns in her purse were all her available means.

She thought of quitting the country at once, and proceeding to join her husband, whom she knew to be in Paris.

But how would he receive her? The newspapers would soon be busy with her name; and Sir Rupert was not the man to burden himself with a woman penniless in purse and ruined in reputation.

For an instant she thought of Greenwood; but this idea was discarded almost as soon as entertained. She was aware of his utter heartlessness, and felt confident that he would repulse her coldly from his dwelling.

To whom could she apply? whither was she to betake herself?

And yet concealment was necessary—oh! she must hide somewhere!

The feelings of this woman were terrible beyond description.

And now she was walking rapidly along the streets towards London Bridge; for the idea of quitting the country was uppermost in her mind.

Her veil was drawn carefully over her countenance; and yet she trembled at every policeman whom she passed.

She was hurrying down Gracechurch Street, when she heard herself called by name.

She knew the voice, and turned round, saying to herself, "Help may come from this quarter!"

It was the old hag who had spoken to her.

"My good woman," said Lady Cecilia hastily, "all is known—all is discovered!"

"What is known?" asked the old hag, in her usual imperturbable tone.

"It is known that I conveyed the poison, which *you* procured for me, to Reginald Tracy," replied Cecilia, in a hoarse whisper. "You have heard that he is dead?"

"I heard *that* last evening," said the hag. "What are you going to do?"

"To hide myself from the officers of justice," returned Cecilia. "But step into this court, or we shall be observed."

The old woman followed the unhappy lady under an archway.

"I must conceal myself—at least for the present," resumed Cecilia. "Will you grant me an asylum?"

"I! my dear lady!" ejaculated the hag, shaking her head ominously: "I am in danger myself—I am in danger myself! Did I not procure you the poison?"

"True. But I would not betray you."

"No—we must each shift for ourselves—we must each shift for ourselves, as best we can," replied the hag flatly. "Indeed, I may as well remind you, Lady Cecilia, that your day is gone—you are ruined—and, if you had any spirit, you would not survive it!"

"My God! what do you mean?" faltered Cecilia, in a faint tone.

"The river is deep, or the Monument is high," answered the hag, in a significant tone; "and you are near both!"

The wrinkled old harridan then hobbled out of the court as quickly as her rheumatic limbs would carry her.

"Even *she* deserts me!" murmured Cecilia to herself, and with difficulty suppressing an ebullition of feeling which would have attracted notice, and probably led to her detection: "even *she* deserts

me! My God—is there nothing left to me but suicide? No—nothing!"

Her countenance wore, beneath her veil, an expression of blank despair, as she arrived at this appalling conviction; and for some moments she stood as if rooted to the spot.

"No—nothing left but *that*," she murmured, awaking from her temporary stupefaction: "nothing—nothing!"

And although these words were uttered in the lowest whisper, still it seemed as if she shrieked them *within herself*.

Then she hurried from the court.

"The river—or the Monument," she said, as she continued her rapid way: "the river is near—but the Monument is nearer. Drowning must be slow and painful—*the other* will be instantaneous. From the river I might be rescued; but no human power can snatch me from death during a fall from that dizzy height."

And she glanced upwards to the colossal pillar whose base she had now reached.

At that moment two men, evidently belonging to the working classes, passed her.

A portion of their conversation met her ears.

"And so she was not his sister, then?" said one.

"No such thing," replied the other. "I heard the governor of Newgate tell all about it to one of the City officers scarcely half an hour ago. The governor was coming out of a lawyer's house—Tracy's lawyer, I believe—and the City officer was waiting for him at the door. He then told him that it was a lady of fashion—with a name something like Cecilia Scarborough, I think——"

The men were now too far for the wretched woman to hear any more of their conversation.

"Merciful heavens!" she said, scarcely able to prevent herself from wringing her hands; "even at this moment I am not safe!"

Then, without farther hesitation, she passed round the base of the Monument, and crossed the threshold.

"Sixpence, if you please, ma'am," said the man who received the fees from visitors.

Lady Cecilia exercised an almost superhuman power over her distracted feelings, so as to appear composed, while she drew forth the coin from her purse.

"It's a fine day to view London, ma'am," said the man, as he took the money.

"Beautiful," answered Cecilia.

She then began the tedious ascent.

And now what awful emotions laboured in her breast as she toiled up that winding staircase.

"My God! my God!" she murmured to herself; "is it indeed come to this?"

Once she was compelled to stop and lean against the wall for support.

Then she wrung her hands in agony—indescribable agony of mind.

"And yet there is no alternative!" she thought; "none—none! But my mother—my poor mother! what will be her feelings? Oh! better to know that I am dead, than an inmate of Newgate!"

And, somewhat encouraged in her dreadful purpose by this idea, she pursued her way.

In a few moments the fresh air blew in her face.

She was near the top!

A dozen more steps—and the brilliant sun-light burst upon her eyes.

It was indeed a lovely morning; and the Thames appeared like a huge serpent of quicksilver, meandering its way amidst the myriads of buildings that stretched on either side, far as the eye could reach.

The din of the huge city reached the ears of the wretched woman who now stood upon that tremendous eminence.

All was life—bustle—business—activity below!

And above was the serene blue sky of an early spring, illuminated by the bright and cloudless sun.

"But yesterday," thought Cecilia, as she surveyed the exciting scene spread beneath her, "had any one said to me, '*Thou wilt seek death to-morrow*, I should have ridiculed the idea. And yet it has come to this! Oh! it is hard to quit this world of pleasure—to leave that city of enjoyment! Never more to behold that gorgeous sun—never more to hear those busy sounds! But if I hesitate, my heart will turn coward; and then—Newgate—Newgate!"

These last words were uttered aloud in the shrill and piercing tones of despair.

She clasped her hands together, and prayed for a few moments.

Then, as if acting by a sudden impulse,—as if afraid to trust herself with the thoughts that were crowding into her mind,—she placed her hands upon the railing.

One leap—and she stood upon the rail.

For a single instant she seemed as if she would fall backwards upon the platform of the Monument; and her arms were agitated convulsively, like the motions of one who endeavours to gain a lost balance.

Then she sprang forwards.

Terrific screams burst from her lips as she rolled over and over in her precipitate whirl.

Down she fell!

Her head dashed against the pavement, at a distance of three yards from the base of the Monument.

Her brains were scattered upon the stones.

She never moved from the moment she touched the ground:—the once gay, sprightly, beautiful patrician lady was no more!

A crowd instantaneously collected around her; and horror was depicted on every countenance, save one, that gazed upon the sad spectacle.

And that one wretch who showed no feeling, was the old hag of Golden Lane.

"She cannot now betray me for procuring the poison," thought the vile harridan, as she calmly contemplated the mangled corpse at her feet.

CHAPTER CLXII.

THE BEQUEST.

Two days after the suicide of Lady Cecilia Harborough,—an event which created a profound sensation in the fashionable world, and plunged the Tremordyn family into mourning,—Richard Markham was a passenger in a coach that passed through Hounslow.

At this town he alighted, and inquired the way to the residence of Mr. Bennet, a small farmer in the neighbourhood.

A guide was speedily procured at the inn; and after a pleasant walk of about three miles, across a

country which already bore signs of the genial influence of an early spring, Richard found himself at the gate of a comfortable-looking farm-house.

He dismissed his guide with a gratuity, and was shortly admitted by a buxom servant-girl into a neat little parlour, where he was presently joined by Katherine.

The young maiden was rejoiced to see her benefactor; and tears started into her eyes, though her lips were wreathed in smiles;—but they were tears of pleasure and gratitude.

"This is kind of you, Mr. Markham," she said, as he shook her hand with friendly warmth.

"I am come to see you upon important business, Katherine," observed Richard. "But first let me inquire after the good people with whom you reside?"

"I am sorry to say," answered Katherine, "that Mrs. Bennet experienced a relapse after her return from London; and she is not able to leave her chamber. She is, however, much better. Her husband is a kind-hearted, good man, and he behaves like a father to me. He is now occupied with the business of his farm, but will be in presently."

"And now, Katherine, listen to the tidings which I have to communicate," said Markham. "Have you received any news from London within the last day or two?"

"No—not a word," returned Katherine, already alarmed lest some new misfortune was about to be announced to her.

"Compose yourself," said Richard; "the news that I have for you are good. But first I must inform you that your late master, Mr. Reginald Tracy, is no more."

"Dead!" exclaimed Katherine.

"He put a period to his own existence," continued Markham; "but not before he made you all the amends in his power for the deep injury which his own guilt entailed upon you."

"Then he confessed his crime, and thus established my innocence beyond all doubt?" said Katherine.

"And he has bequeathed to you his whole fortune, with the exception of a small legacy to Mrs. Bennet, whom his guilt deprived of a sister," added our hero.

"Oh! then he died penitent!" exclaimed Katherine, weeping—for her goodness of heart prompted her to shed tears even for one who had involved her in such a labyrinth of misery as that from which she had only so recently been extricated.

"He died by his own hands," said Richard; "and the world will not generally admit that such an act can be consonant with sincere penitence. That he attempted to make his peace with heaven ere he rushed into the presence of the Almighty, let us hope:—that he did all he could to recompense those whom his crime had injured, is apparent. But this letter will probably tell you more on that head."

Richard handed to Katherine a letter, as he uttered these words.

It was addressed, "*Miss Katherine Wilmot.*"

With a trembling hand the young girl opened it; and with tearful eyes she read the following words:—

"To you, Katherine Wilmot, a man about to appear before his Maker appeals for pardon. That man is deeply imbued with a sense of the injury—the almost irreparable injury which his enormous guilt caused you to sustain. But in confessing that this guilt was all and solely his own,—in proclaiming your complete innocence,—and in offering you the means of henceforth enjoying independence, and fulfilling the dictates of your charitable disposition,—that great criminal entertains a hope that you will accord him your forgiveness, and that you will appreciate his anxiety to do you justice in his last moments. My solicitor is already acquainted with my intentions; and he will faithfully execute my wishes. This letter will be forwarded to him, to be delivered to you, through your benefactor—that noble-hearted young man, Mr. Richard Markham. The bulk of my fortune, amounting to eighteen thousand pounds, I have made over to my solicitor in trust for yourself, and under certain conditions which I have devised exclusively for your benefit. The sum of five hundred pounds I have, in addition, bequeathed to Rachel Bennet, with the hope that she will extend *her* pardon also to the man who deprived her of an affectionate sister. This letter is written in a hurried manner, and under circumstances whose appalling nature you may well conceive. May heaven bless you! Refuse not to pray for the soul of

"REGINALD TRACY."

Katherine perused this letter, and then handed it to Richard Markham.

While he read it, the young maiden prayed inwardly but sincerely for the eternal welfare of him whose course had been dazzling like a meteor, but had terminated in a cloud of appalling blackness.

"Those conditions, to which the unhappy man alluded, I can explain to you," said Richard, after a long interval of silence, during which he allowed Katherine to compose her thoughts. "This letter was placed in the hands of Mr. Tracy's solicitor, by the governor of Newgate, the day before yesterday. The lawyer immediately wrote to me, being unacquainted with your address. I saw him yesterday afternoon; and he gave me the letter to convey to you, entrusting me at the same time with the duty of communicating to you this last act of Reginald Tracy. Mr. Wharton acquainted me with the conditions which Mr. Tracy had named. These are that you shall enjoy the interest of the money until you attain the age of twenty-one, when the capital shall be placed at your whole and sole disposal; but should you marry previous to that period, then the capital may also be transferred to your name. And now I must touch upon a more delicate point—inasmuch as it alludes to myself. Mr. Tracy was pleased to place such confidence in me, as to have stipulated that should you contract any marriage previous to the attainment of the age of twenty-one, without my approval of the individual on whom you may settle your affections, you will then forfeit all right and title to the fortune, which is in that case to be devoted to purposes of charity specified in the instructions given by Mr. Tracy to his solicitor."

"Oh! I should never think of taking any step—however trivial, or however important—without consulting you, as my benefactor—my saviour!" exclaimed Katherine.

"You are a good and a grateful girl, Katherine," said Richard; "and never for a moment did I mistake your excellent heart—never did I lose my confidence in your discretion and virtue."

"No—for when all the world deserted me," said the maiden, "you befriended me!"

"I have yet other matters of business to consult you upon," continued Markham. "Yesterday evening your uncle called upon me. Never—never have I seen such an alteration so speedily wrought in any living being! He said that certain representations which I had made to him at the tavern in the

Old Bailey, after you had departed with Mrs. Bennet, had induced him to reflect more seriously upon the course of life which he had been for years pursuing."

"Oh! these news are welcome—welcome indeed!" ejaculated Katherine, clasping her hands together in token of gratitude.

"I communicated to him your good fortune, Katherine," proceeded Markham; "and he wept like a child."

"Poor uncle! His heart was not altogether closed against me!" murmured Katherine.

"I desired him to call upon me to-morrow, and I assured him that in the meantime I would devise some project by which he should be enabled to earn a livelihood whereof he need not be ashamed."

"You are not content with being my benefactor, Mr. Markham; you intend to make my relatives adore your name!" cried Katherine, her heart glowing with gratitude towards our hero.

"I now intend that *you* shall be the means of doing good, Katherine," said Richard, with a smile.

"Oh! tell me how!" exclaimed the amiable girl, joyfully.

"You shall draw upon the first year's interest of your fortune, for a sufficient sum to enable your uncle to retire to some distant town, where, under another name, he may commence a business at whose nature he will not be forced to blush."

"Oh! that proposal is indeed a source of indescribable happiness to me," said Katherine.

"Then I will carry the plan into effect to-morrow," continued Richard. "Your uncle and cousin shall both visit you here, when they leave London."

"Poor John!" said Katherine. "Do you think that his father——"

"Will treat him better in future?" added Markham, seeing that the maiden hesitated. "Yes: I will answer for it! A complete change has taken place in your uncle: he is another man."

"He contemplated your benevolence, and he could not do otherwise than be struck by the example," said Kate.

"I asked him if he desired you to live with him in future; and he replied, '*Not for worlds!*' He then continued to say that dwell where he might, conceal his name how he would, there would be danger of his ancient calling transpiring; and he would not incur the chance of involving you in the disgrace that might ensue. This consideration on his part speaks volumes in favour of that change which has been effected within him."

"The tidings you have brought me concerning my uncle, Mr. Markham," said Katherine, "far outweigh in my estimation the news of my good fortune."

"Your uncle and your cousin will yet be happy—no doubt," observed Richard. "In reference to yourself, what course would you like to adopt? Would you wish me to seek some respectable and worthy family in London, with whom you can take up your abode in entire independence? or——"

"Oh! no—not London!" exclaimed Katherine, recoiling from the name in horror.

"My counsel is that you remain here—in this seclusion,—at least for the present," said Richard. "The tranquillity of this rural dwelling—the charms of the country—the unsophisticated manners of these good people, will restore your mind to its former composure, after all you have passed through."

"This advice I have every inclination to follow," said Katherine; "and even were I otherwise disposed—which I could not be—your counsel would at once decide me."

"Remember, Katherine," resumed Markham, "I do not wish you to pass the best portion of your youth in this retirement. With your fortune and brilliant prospect, such a proceeding were unnatural—absurd. I only feel desirous that for a short time you should remain afar from society—until recent events shall be forgotten, and until your own mind shall become calm and relieved from the excitement which past misfortunes have been so painfully calculated to produce."

"I will remain here until you tell me that it is good for me to go elsewhere," said Katherine.

At this moment an old man, dressed in a rustic garb, but with a good-natured countenance and venerable white hair, entered the room.

This was the farmer himself.

Katherine introduced Richard to him as her benefactor; and the old man shook hands with our hero in a cordial manner, saying at the same time, "By all I have heard Miss Kate tell of you, sir, you must be an honour to any house, whether rich or poor, that you condescend to visit."

Richard thanked the good-natured rustic for the well-meant compliment, and then communicated to him the fact that his wife was entitled to a legacy of five hundred pounds, which would be paid to her order in the course of a few days.

The old man was overjoyed at these tidings, although his countenance partially fell when he heard the source whence the bequest emanated; but Richard convinced him that it would be unwise and absurd to refuse it.

Mr. Bennet hastened up-stairs to communicate the news to his wife.

While he was absent, the farmer's servant-girl entered to spread the table for the afternoon's repast.

On the return of the old man to the room, the dinner was served up; and our hero sat down to table with the farmer and Katherine.

A happy meal was that; and in the pure felicity which Katherine now enjoyed, Richard beheld to a considerable extent the results of his own goodness. How amply did the spectacle of that young creature's happiness reward him for all that he had done in her behalf!

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when our hero took his leave of the old farmer and Miss Wilmot, in order to retrace his steps to Hounslow.

CHAPTER CLXIII.

THE ZINGAREES.

THE old farmer had offered to convey Richard to Hounslow in his own spring-cart, or to provide him with a guide to conduct him thither; but our hero felt so confident of being enabled to find his way back to the town, that he declined both offers.

He walked on, across the fields, pondering upon various subjects,—Isabella, his brother, Katherine, Reginald Tracy's crimes, and the frightful suicide of Lady Cecilia Harborough,—and with his mind so

intent upon these topics, that some time elapsed ere he perceived that he had fallen into a wrong path.

He looked around; but not an object of which he had taken notice in the morning, when proceeding to the farm, could he now discover.

Thus he had lost the only means which could assist his memory in regaining the road.

As he stood upon a little eminence, gazing around to find some clue towards the proper direction which he should follow, a light blue wreath of smoke, rising from behind a hill at a short distance, met his eyes.

"There must be a dwelling yonder," he said to himself; "I will proceed thither, and ask my way; or, if possible, obtain a guide."

Towards the light blue cloud which curled upwards, Markham directed his steps; but when he reached the brow of the hill, from the opposite side of which the smoke at first met his eye, he perceived, instead of a cottage as he expected, an encampment of gipsies.

A covered van stood near the spot where two men, two women, and a boy were partaking of a meal, the steam of which impregnated the air with a powerful odour of onions.

The caldron, whence the mess was served up in earthenware vessels, was suspended by means of stakes over a cheerful wood-fire.

We need attempt no description of the persons of those who were partaking of the repast: it will be sufficient to inform the reader that they consisted of King Zingary, Queen Aischa, Morcar, Eva, and this latter couple's son.

They were, however, totally unknown to Richard: but the moment he saw they were of the gipsy tribe, he determined to glean from them any thing which they might know and might choose to reveal concerning the Resurrection Man.

He therefore accosted them in a civil manner, and, stating that he had lost his way, inquired which was the nearest path to Hounslow.

"It would be difficult to direct you, young gentleman, by mere explanation," answered Zingary, stroking his long white beard in order to impress Richard with a sense of veneration; "but my grandson here shall show you the way with pleasure."

"That I will, sir," exclaimed the boy, starting from the ground, and preparing to set off.

"But perhaps the gentleman will rest himself, and partake of some refreshment," observed Morcar.

"If you will permit me," said Markham, whose purpose this invitation just suited, "I will warm m self for a short space by your cheerful fire; for the evening is chilly. But you must not consider me rude if I decline your kind hospitality in respect to food."

"The gentleman is cold, Morcar," said Zingary: "produce the rum, and hand a snicker."

The King's son hastened to the van to fetch the bottle of spirits; and Markham could not help observing his fine, tall, well-knit frame, to which his dark Roman countenance gave an additional air of manliness—even of heroism.

Richard partook of the spirits, in order to ingratiate himself with the gipsies; and King Zingary then called for his "broseley."

"You appear to lead a happy life," observed Richard, by way of encouraging a conversation.

"We are our own masters, young gentleman," answered Zingary; "and where there is freedom, there is happiness."

"Is it true that your race is governed by a King?" asked Markham.

"I am the King of the united races of Bohemians and Egyptians," said Zingary, in a stately manner. "This is my beloved Queen, Aischa: that is my son, Morcar; here is my daughter-in-law, Eva; and that lad is my grandson."

Richard started when these names fell upon his ears; for they had been mentioned to him by Skilligalee in the Palace of the Holy Land. He also remembered to have been informed that it was in consequence of something which the Resurrection Man told Aischa, when she was attending to his wound, that the gipsies took him with them when they removed from the Palace to the encampment near the Penitentiary at Pentonville.

"I feel highly honoured by the hospitality which your Majesty has afforded me," said Richard, with a bow—an act of courtesy which greatly pleased King Zingary. "On one occasion I was indebted to some of your subjects for a night's lodging at your establishment in St. Giles's."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the King; and now all the gipsies surveyed Richard with some interest.

"Yes," continued our hero; "and I may as well state to you frankly and candidly under what circumstances I became your guest—for you were all inmates of the house at the time I entered it."

"Speak, young gentleman," said Zingary: "we will listen with attention to all you may please to tell us; but we do not seek your confidence of our own accord, as curiosity is forbidden to our race."

"I must inform you," resumed Richard, "that I have sustained great and signal injuries at the hands of a miscreant, whom I one night traced to your dwelling in St. Giles's."

"Call it the Palace, young gentleman," said Zingary, smoking his pipe, and listening with great complacency.

"On that night, the man to whom I allude was desperately wounded——"

"Ah!" ejaculated the gipsies, as it were in a breath.

"And you removed him with you, away from the Palace during the night—or rather very early in the morning."

"Then you, young gentleman," said the King, "were the stranger whom the porter locked in the room to which you were shown, and who escaped from the Palace by some means or other? The matter was duly reported to us by letter."

"It is perfectly true that I liberated myself from the room in which I was imprisoned," said Markham. "But, answer me—I implore you—one question; did that vile man die of the wound which he received?"

"Before I reply to you," observed Zingary, "you will have the goodness to inform me why you left the Palace by stealth on that occasion, and whether you saw or heard any thing remarkable *after* we had taken our departure?"

"I will answer you frankly," returned Markham. "I left my room on that occasion, because I wished to discover whether Anthony Tidkins, to whom I have alluded, was in the house——"

"The Palace," said Zingary.

"I beg your Majesty's pardon—the Palace," continued Richard; "and I thank God that I was more

or less instrumental in releasing from a horrible dungeon a poor woman——"

"We know whom you mean," interrupted Zingary, sternly. "Did you see a tall young man——"

"Who called himself by the strange name of Skilligalee?" added Markham, concluding the King's question for him. "I did;—I helped him to release that woman he named Margaret."

"And whom the laws of the Zingarees had condemned to the penalty from which you freed her," said the King. "Was it right, young man, thus to step between the culprit and the decree of justice?"

"I acted in accordance with the dictates of humanity," replied Richard firmly; "and under such circumstances I should act in a similar way again."

"The young gentleman speaks well," said Morcar, who admired the resolution evinced in our hero's tone and manner.

"And he showed a good heart," observed Eva, now speaking for the first time since Richard's arrival, and displaying her brilliant teeth.

"Well—well," exclaimed Zingary: "I will not upbraid the young man more, since even my pretty Eva takes his part. You see," he continued, addressing himself especially to the gipsies, "it is as we thought. Skilligalee deserted us in order to liberate Margaret Flathers. I always believed that such was the case, from the moment we received the account of her escape. But I have one more question to ask our guest. Let him satisfy us how he traced Anthony Tidkins *to* the Palace, and how he learnt that Anthony Tidkins was wounded *in* the Palace."

"On that head I must remain silent," said Richard. "I will not invent a falsehood, and I cannot reveal the truth. Be you, however, well assured that I never betrayed the secrets and mysteries of your establishment in Saint Giles's."

"Our guest is an honourable man," observed Morcar. "We ought to be satisfied with what he says."

"I am satisfied," exclaimed the King. "Aischa, answer you the questions which it is now the young man's turn to put to us."

"I wish to know whether Anthony Tidkins died of the wound which he received?" said Richard.

"It was my lot to attend to his wound," began Aischa. "When he was so far recovered as to be able to speak—which was about half an hour after the blood was stanched—he implored me to have him removed from the Palace. He told me a long and pathetic story of persecutions and sufferings which he had undergone; and he offered to enrich our treasury if we would take him beyond the reach of the person who had wounded him. His anxiety to get away was extreme; and it was in consequence of his representations and promises that I prevailed upon the King to issue orders to those who were to leave London with us, to hurry the departure as much as possible. That accounts for the abrupt manner in which we left at such an hour, and for the removal of the wounded man with us. In answer to your direct question, I must inform you that he did *not* die of the wound which he received."

"He did **not** die!" repeated Markham. "Then he is still alive—and doubtless as active as ever in purposes of evil."

"Is he such a bad man?" asked Aischa.

"He belongs to the atrocious gang called *Burkers*," answered Richard emphatically.

"Merciful heavens!" cried Eva, with a shudder. "To think that we should have harboured such a wretch!"

"And to think that I should have devoted my skill to resuscitate such a demon!" exclaimed Aischa.

"The vengeance of the Zingarees will yet overtake him," said the King calmly.

"Wherever I meet him, there will I punish him with the stoutest cudgel that I can find ready to hand," cried Morcar, with a fierce air.

"Have you then cause to complain against him?" asked Richard.

"The wretch, sir," answered Morcar, "remained nearly a month in our company, until his wound was completely healed by the skill of my mother. We treated him with as much kindness as if he had been our near and dear relative. One morning, when he was totally recovered, he disappeared, carrying away my father's gold with him."

"The ungrateful villain!" ejaculated Richard. "And he was indebted to your kindness for his life?"

"He was," returned Morcar. "Fortunately there was but little in the treasur at the time—very little;—nevertheless, it was all we had—and he took our all."

"And you have no trace of him?" said Richard, eagerly.

"Not yet," replied Morcar. "But we have adopted measures to discover him. The King my father has sent a description of his person and the history of his treachery to every chief of our race in the kingdom; and thousands of sharp eyes are on the look-out for him through the length and breadth of the land."

"Heaven be thanked!" exclaimed Markham. "But when you discover him, hand him over to the grasp of justice, and instantly acquaint me with the fact."

"The Zingarees recognise no justice save their own," said the King, in a dignified manner. "But this much I promise you, that the moment we obtain a trace of his whereabouts, we will communicate it to you, and you may act as seemeth good to yourself. We have no sympathy in common with a cowardly murderer."

"None," added Morcar, emphatically.

"I thank you for this promise," said Richard, addressing himself to the King. "Here is my card; and remember that as anxious as I am to bring a miscreant to justice, so ready shall I be to reward those who are instrumental in his capture."

"You may rely upon us, young gentleman," said Zingary. "We will not shield a man who belongs to the miscreant gang of *Burkers*. To-morrow morning I will issue fresh instructions to the various district chiefs, but especially to our friends in London."

"And is it possible that, with no compulsory means to enforce obedience, you can dispose of thousands of individuals at will?" exclaimed Markham.

"Listen, young man," said the King, stroking his beard. "When the great Ottoman monarch, the Sultan Selim, invaded Egypt at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and put to death the Mameluke sovereign Toumanbai,—when the chivalry of Egypt was subdued by the overwhelming multitudes of warriors who fought beneath the banner of Selim and his great Vizier Sinan-Pacha,—then did a certain Egyptian chief place himself at the head of a chosen body of Mamelukes, and proclaim death and destruction to the Ottomans. This chief was Zingarai. For some time he successfully resisted the troops of Selim; but at length he was compelled to yield to numbers; and Selim put him to death. His followers were proscribed; and those who did not fall into the hands of the Turkish conquerors escaped into Europe. They settled first in Bohemia, where their wandering mode of life, their simple manners, their happy and contented dispositions, and their handsome persons soon attracted notice. Then was it that the Bohemian maidens were proud to bestow their hands upon the fugitive followers of Zingarai; and many Bohemian men sought admittance into the fraternity. Hence the mixed Egyptian and Bohemian origin of the gipsy race. In a short time various members of this truly patriarchal society migrated to other climes; and in 1534 our ancestors first settled in England. Now the gipsy race may be met with all over the globe: in every part of Asia, in the interior of Africa, and in both the Americas, you may encounter our brethren, as in Europe. The Asiatics call us *Egyptians*, the Germans *Zinguener*, the Italians *Cingani*, the Spaniards *Gitanos*, the French *Bohemians*, the Russians *Saracens*, the Swedes and Danes *Tartars*, and the English *Gipsies*. We most usually denominate ourselves *the united races of Zingarees*. And Time, young gentleman, has left us comparatively unchanged; we preserve the primitive simplicity of our manners; our countenances denote our origin; and, though deeply calumniated—vilely maligned, we endeavour to live in peace and tranquillity to the utmost of our power. We have resisted persecution—we have outlived oppression. All Europe has promulgated laws against us; and no sovereigns aimed more strenuously to extirpate our race in their dominions than Henry the Eighth and Elizabeth of England. But as the world grows more enlightened, the prejudice against us loses its virulence; and we now enjoy our liberties and privileges without molestation, in all civilised states."

"I thank you for this most interesting account of your origin," said Richard.

"Henceforth you will know how to recognise the real truth amongst all the wild, fanciful, and ridiculous tales which you may hear or read con-

cerning our race," proceeded Zingary. "From the two or three hundred souls who fled from Egypt and took refuge in Bohemia, as I have ere now explained to you, has sprung a large family, which has increased with each generation; and at the present moment we estimate our total number, scattered over all parts of the earth, at one million and a half."

"I was not aware that you were so numerous," said Richard, much interested by these details. "Permit me to ask whether the members in every country have one sovereign or chief, as those in England?"

"There is a King of the Zingarees in Spain; another in France; a third in Italy; and a fourth in Bohemia. In the northern provinces of European Turkey, in Hungary, and in Transylvania, there is a prince with the title of a Waiewode: the Zingarees of Northern Europe are governed by a Grand, or Great Lord."

Richard now rose to take leave of the hospitable and entertaining family in whose society he had thus passed an hour; and, as it was growing dark, Morcar himself offered to conduct our hero as far as Hounslow.

This proposal was gladly accepted; and Markham, having taken leave of the King, Aischa, and Eva, set out with Morcar.

In the course of three-quarters of an hour they reached the precincts of the town.

Richard forced a handsome remuneration upon the gipsy, and reminded him of the promise made by his father concerning the Resurrection Man.

"You may rely upon us," said Morcar: "it cannot be very long before you will hear from us, for there are many on the alert to discover the haunt of the villain."

The gipsy then turned to retrace his steps towards the encampment; and Richard proceeded to the inn, where he obtained a conveyance for London.

CHAPTER CLXIV.

THE EXECUTIONER'S HISTORY.

On the following evening Smithers presented himself, according to appointment, at Markham Place.

Richard received him in the library, and treated him altogether with a condescension and a degree of kindness which made a deep impression on the mind of the executioner.

Our hero then proceeded to acquaint him with the good fortune of Katherine, and the arrangement which had been made to supply him with the means to establish him in business.

"But do not imagine that this is all which you are to expect at Katherine's hands," said Richard. "As time progresses, and I find that you are determined not only to persevere in a respectable course of life, but also to make amends, by your altered manner, for the harshness which you have exhibited towards your son on so many occasions,—it will be my pleasing duty to recommend Katherine's trustee, who is disposed to place implicit confidence in me, to grant you such occasional pecuniary succour as may enable you to extend the business, whatever it may be, in which you intend to embark."

"I cannot find words to express my gratitude to you, sir," said Smithers; "and I hope that when you see Kate again, you will ask her forgiveness in my name for all the unkindness I have shown her at different times."

"You shall see her yourself—she wishes you and your son to call upon her," answered Richard; "and Mr. Bennet, to whom I communicated every thing, has sent you both an invitation to pass an entire day at his farm so soon as you can find leisure to avail yourself of the offer."

"Then that shall be to-morrow, sir," exclaimed Smithers; "for now that Katherine has such good prospects, I may as well communicate something to her which she probably will not regret to hear."

And for a few moments Smithers appeared to be absorbed in deep thought.

"And I don't know why I should keep any secret away from you, sir," he continued, suddenly breaking silence; "you have done so much for Kate, and you have produced so great a change in my mind, that I ought to conceal nothing from you. In one word, then, sir—Katherine Wilmot is no more my niece than she is yours."

"Not your niece!" ejaculated Richard.

"No relation whatever in the world to me," replied Smithers. "I never had either brother or sister; neither had my wife: and thus you see, sir, Kate cannot be my niece."

"But she believes herself to be so related to you," said Markham, who was not altogether displeased to learn that the young female for whom he experienced a fraternal interest, was not even a connexion of the Public Executioner.

"The story is somewhat a long one—and to me a melancholy subject," continued Smithers; "but if you will have patience to listen to it, I shall have nerve to relate it."

"Proceed," said Markham. "I feel deeply interested in the topic which now occupies us."

"You will then excuse me, sir, if I begin by telling you something about myself," resumed Smithers; "because it is more or less connected with Kate's early history."

Smithers settled himself in a comfortable position in his chair, and then related the following history:—

"My father was a grocer, in a large way of business, at Southampton. He was a widower; and I was his only son. I was considered to be a steady, exemplary young man; and I can safely say that I attended studiously to my father's business. I never frequented public-houses, but went to church regularly of a Sunday, and was fond of reading good books. Next door to us there lived a corn-dealer of the name of Wilmot;—he also was a widower, and had one child. This was a beautiful girl, about a year or two younger than myself, and whose name was Harriet. The two families had been acquainted for a long, long time; and Harriet and myself were playmates in our infancy. We were therefore very intimate together; and the friendship of childhood ripened into love as we grew up. And, oh! how I did adore that girl! From amidst all the coarse, worldly, and abominable ideas which have of late years crowded in my brain, I have ever singled out that one bright—pure—and holy sentiment as a star that points to a blissful episode in my life. And she loved me in return! Our parents were pleased when they saw our attachment; and it was understood that our marriage should take place on the day that I attained my one-and-twentieth year. It only wanted seven or eight months to that period,

when an event occurred which quite changed the prospect of affairs. The local bank failed, and old Wilmot was ruined."

Smithers paused for a moment, heaved a deep sigh, and then continued thus:—

"Wilmot immediately came to my father and addressed him in these words: '*The failure of the bank will throw me into the Gazette, if I cannot raise twelve or fifteen hundred pounds within a week to sustain my credit. That difficulty being overcome, I have no doubt of retrieving myself altogether.*' My father expressed his great delight at hearing this latter announcement, but instinctively buttoned up his breeches-pockets. Wilmot proceeded to state that he could raise the sum he required if my father would guarantee its repayment. My father was a money-making, close man; and this proposal astounded him. He refused it point blank: Wilmot begged and implored him to save him from ruin;—but all in vain. In the course of ten days the name of Joseph Wilmot, corn-dealer, figured in the list of Bankrupts."

Again Smithers paused for a few moments.

"I must tell you, sir," he continued, "that I did all I could to persuade my father to help Wilmot in this business; but my prayers and entreaties had been poured forth entirely without effect. I, however, took an opportunity of seeing Harriet, and assuring her that my affection was based upon no selfish motive, but that her father's misfortunes endeared *her* more than ever to me. My father viewed matters in quite a different light, and spoke to me openly of the impossibility of my marrying a girl without a penny. I remonstrated with him on the cruelty, injustice, and dishonour of such conduct; but he cut me very short by observing that '*his money was his own—he had made it by his industry—he could leave it to whom he chose—and that if I insisted upon marrying Harriet Wilmot I need not darken his threshold afterwards.*' I replied that I was resolved to consult my own inclinations, and also to do honour to my vows and promises towards Harriet."

"You acted in a generous manner," observed Markham; "although you opposed the wishes of your own father."

"I had no secrets from Harriet," said Smithers; "and I assured her that if she would espouse a man who had nothing but his honest name and exertions to depend upon, I was ready to make her mine. She answered me, with tears in her eyes, that she could never consent to be the cause of marring all my prospects in life, and that, much as she loved me, she would release me from my vows. I wept in concert with her;—for I was not *then* hard-hearted, sir,—nor had my countenance become impressed with that brutal severity which I know—I feel, it has long, long worn."

"As the countenance is more or less the index of the soul," said Markham, "so will yours resume all its former serenity of expression."

"Well—well, sir: let me hope so! I do not wish to die with the word 'EXECUTIONER' traced upon my features. But I will continue my story. Harriet seemed firm in her generous purpose not to be the cause of my ruin: I however implored her to reflect upon the misery into which her decision would plunge me. I then left her. The next morning I heard that Wilmot and his daughter had departed from their house, and had gone—no one knew whither. Malignant people said that the old man was afraid to face his creditors in the local Bankruptcy-court: I thought otherwise. I felt persuaded that Harriet had prevailed upon her father, by some means or another, to leave;—and I now considered her lost to me for ever. My sorrow was great; but I redoubled my attention to business in order to distract my mind from contemplating the misfortune that had befallen me. Weeks and months passed away; and the wound in my heart was closed, but it was still painful. One day, during a temporary indisposition which confined my father to his room, I was turning over some papers in his desk, seeking for an invoice which I required, when I perceived a letter addressed to my father and signed *Joseph Wilmot*. The date especially attracted my attention, because I remembered that this letter must have been written on the very day that I had the last interview with Harriet. I hesitated not a moment to read it; and its contents revealed to me the cause of that precipitate departure which has so distressed me. Indeed, the letter was in answer to one which Wilmot acknowledged to have just before received from my father. It appears that my father had written to offer old Wilmot two hundred pounds if he would quit the town, with his daughters, and that Wilmot should give a note of hand for this amount, which security my father engaged himself not to enforce so long as Wilmot remained away and left me in ignorance of his future place of residence. Wilmot consented to this arrangement: he was a ruined man without a shilling; and he gladly availed himself of the means of embarking in business elsewhere. This stratagem on the part of my father I discovered through Wilmot's letter. I said nothing about the letter to my father: I concluded that he had merely acted under the impression that he was consulting my welfare; and moreover the injury appeared to be irrevocable. Well, sir—six months passed away after the departure of Wilmot and his daughter, and my father, who was usually so cautious and prudent, was induced to embark some money in the purchase of smuggled goods. The excise officers discovered the transaction; and a fine was imposed which swept away every farthing of the sum which my father had been accumulating by the industry and toil of years. It broke his heart: he died, and left me a ruined business, instead of a decent competence. I struggled on for a year, just keeping my head above water, but dreadfully crippled for want of capital. At length I learnt, from a friend, that I had found favour in the sight of a wealthy neighbour's daughter, who was some six or seven years older than myself. I made the best of this circumstance; and, to save myself from total ruin, in a short time married the female alluded to. The fruit of this union was a son—the poor deformed creature whom you have seen. He was not, however, so afflicted at his birth: how he came to be so, I will presently tell you."

Smithers uttered these words in a tone of deep feeling.

"I had married for money, sir," he continued; "and I married unhappily. My wife was of a temper befitting a demon. Then she was addicted to drink; and in her cups she was outrageous. My home grew miserable: and I began to neglect the business; and, to avoid my wife in her drunken humours, I went to the public-house. Then also my temper was

so sorely tried that it gave way under the accumulated weight of domestic wretchedness. I grew harsh and uncourteous to my customers; I retaliated against my wife in her own fashion of ill-treatment—by means of stormy words and heavy blows; and, when I was weary of all that, I rushed to the public-house, where I endeavoured to drown my cares in strong drink. In a word, three years after my marriage, I was compelled to abandon my business in Southampton; and, with about a hundred pounds in my pocket—the wrecks of all that my wife had brought me—I removed, with her and the child, to London. On our arrival, I took a small tobacconist's shop in High Street, St. Giles's, and exerted myself to the utmost to obtain an honest livelihood; and for some time my wife seemed inclined to second me. The ruin which our disputes and evil courses had entailed upon us appeared to have made a deep impression upon her mind. She carefully avoided strong drink, and declared her resolution never to take any thing stronger than beer. But one day she was prevailed upon by a female friend to accept a little spirits; and a relapse immediately followed. She came home intoxicated; we had fresh quarrels—renewed disputes; and I myself went in an evil hour to the nearest public-house. From that moment we pursued pretty well the same courses that had ruined us in Southampton; and this conduct led to similar results. I was forced to give up the snuff and cigar shop; and we moved into that identical house in St. Giles's which I now inhabit, and where you first saw me."

Smithers passed his hand over his forehead, as if to alleviate the acuteness of painful recollections.

He then pursued his narrative in the following manner:—

"Our sole hope and only resource now consisted in being able to let the greater portion of the house; and as we had managed to save our little furniture from the wreck of the business in High Street, we had still a decent prospect before us. My wife again promised reformation; and, as I never took to drink except when driven to it by her conduct, I was by no means unwilling to second her in her resolutions of economy. We soon let our lodgings, and I did a little business by selling groceries on commission for a wholesale house to which I managed to obtain an introduction. In this way we got on pretty well for a time; and now I come to the most important part of my story."

Richard drew his chair, by a mechanical movement as it were, closer to that of the executioner, and prepared to listen with redoubled attention, if possible.

"It was twelve years ago last January," continued Smithers, "that I returned home one evening, after a hard day's application to business, when the first thing my wife told me was that our back room on the second floor, which had long been to let, was at length taken. She added that our new lodger was a female of about eight-and-twenty or thirty, and had a little girl of four years old. My wife also stated that she was afraid the poor creature was in a dreadful state of health, and was not very comfortably off, as all her own and her child's things were contained in a small bundle which she brought with her. When my wife asked for a reference she evaded the inquiry by paying a week's rent in advance; and this pittance was taken from a purse containing a very slender stock of money. I inquired if the new lodger had given any name; but my wife replied that she had not asked her for it. The next day I was taken unwell, and was compelled to stay at home; but my wife went out with our boy, who was then six years old, to pass a few hours with a friend. I was sitting in the little parlour all alone, and thinking of the past, when I heard a gentle knock at the door. I opened it, and saw a nice little girl, about four years old, standing in the passage. She asked me to let my wife step up to her mother, who was very ill. I took the child in my arms, and went up to my new lodger's room, to say that my wife was out, but that if I could render any assistance I should be most happy to do so. I knocked at the door; it opened—but the female who appeared uttered a piercing scream, and fell back senseless on the floor. She had recognised me; and I, too, had recognised her,—recognised her in spite of her altered appearance and her faded beauty. It was Harriet Wilmot!"

The executioner paused, averted his head for a moment, and wiped away a tear.

He then continued his narrative.

"I instantly did my best to recover her. I fetched vinegar, and bathed her forehead; and in a few minutes she opened her eyes. I laid her upon the bed; and she motioned me to give her the child. This I did; and she pressed it rapturously to her bosom. I stood gazing upon the affecting scene, with tears in my eyes; but I said nothing. She extended her hand towards me, and murmured in a faint tone, '*Is it then in your house that I am come to breathe my last?*'—I implored her to compose herself, and assured her that she should meet with every attention. She glanced tenderly upon her child, and large tears rolled down her faded cheeks. Oh! she was so altered that it was no wonder if my wife, who had known her years before at Southampton, had not recognised her! I asked her if I should procure medical attendance. She could not answer me: a dreadful faintness seemed to come over her. I told her that I would return immediately; and I hurried for a doctor. The medical man came with me; and we found the poor creature speechless, but still sensible. He shook his head with significant hopelessness at me: I understood him—she was dying! The surgeon hastened back home, and speedily returned with various drugs and medicines. But all was of no avail; the poor creature was on the threshold of the grave. The doctor told me what to do, and then took his leave, promising to return in a couple of hours. I seated myself by the side of the bed, and anxiously watched the patient, who had gradually sunk into a deep slumber. I also amused myself with, and pacified the little girl. In this way hour after hour passed; and at length my wife came home. But in what a state did she return? Her friend—the same, as I afterwards learnt, who had before seduced her away from the paths of temperance—had accomplished this feat a second time. My wife was in a disgusting state of intoxication. Not finding me in our sitting-room, she came up stairs to search for me. The moment I heard her, I stepped out of Harriet's chamber to meet her, and request her assistance in behalf of the dying woman—for as yet I knew not the state in which my wife had returned. But when she saw me come from that room, she rushed upon me like a tigress: her jealousy was suddenly excited to an ungovernable fit of passion. She tore

my face with her nails, and dragged out my hair by handfuls. I implored her to hear me; she raved—she stormed—she declared she would have the life of the woman in whose chamber I had been. Then my own anger was fearfully roused: I caught her by the throat, and I do believe that I should have strangled her, had not John—our boy—at that instant caught hold of my legs and begun to kick and pinch me with all his might—for he always took his mother's part. I was now rendered as infuriate as a goaded bull: I hurled my wife away from me, and with one savage blow—may God forgive me!—I knocked the child backwards down the stairs."

Here Smithers covered his face with his hands, and the tears trickled through his fingers.

"The lodgers rushed up to the floor where this horrible scene took place," he continued, after a long pause; "and I, in that moment of my excited and bewildered senses, justified my conduct by declaring that the woman who lay dying in the next room was my own sister. My wife was insensible, and could not contradict me; and thus the tale was believed. The lodgers removed my wife and my child to their bed-room; and the same surgeon who had attended upon Harriet was instantly sent for. Alas! his skill was all in vain. My wife never rallied again, save to give way to dreadful hysterical fits: in a few weeks, during which she lingered in that manner, she breathed her last;—and my son became deformed, as you have seen him!"

Again the miserable man paused, and gave way to his emotions.

Several minutes elapsed ere he continued his narrative; and Markham also remained wrapped in a profound silence.

At length the executioner proceeded thus:—

"The condition into which my rage had thrown my wife and child on that memorable day, did not prevent me from watching by the death-bed of Harriet Wilmot. I even attended to her little girl as if she had been my own. I felt my heart yearn towards that poor woman whom I had once known so beautiful and had loved so tenderly. She slept on,—slept throughout that long and weary night; and there I remained, watching by her bed-side. In the morning the doctor came: Harriet awoke, and smiled when she saw me. Then she made signs that she wished to write. Her powers of speech had deserted her. The medical man addressed her in a kind tone, and said that if she had any thing to communicate she had better do so, as she was very, very ill. She thanked him with a glance for his candour, and for the delicate manner in which he bade her prepare for death. I placed writing materials before her; and she wrote a few lines, which were, however, so blotted by tears——"

"I have already been made acquainted with the contents of the only legible portion which still remains of that letter," interrupted our hero.

"And you are, then, aware, sir, that allusion is made to a certain Mr. Markham?" said Smithers.

"Perfectly," replied Richard. "The late Mr. Reginald Tracy communicated that fact to me."

"The poor creature breathed her last ere she could terminate that letter," continued the executioner. "She suddenly dropped her pen, turned one agonising glance upon her child, fell back, and expired. I buried her as decently as my means would permit; and I determined to take care of Katherine. I repeated my original statement that the little girl was my niece; and, in order not to throw shame upon the memory of her mother, I represented her as having been a widow when she came to my house. I have before said that my wife never sufficiently recovered her senses to contradict this story; and my son John was too young at the time to be aware that it was a fiction."

"And did you never institute any inquiries into the meaning of that allusion to Mr. Markham in the letter?" inquired Richard.

"I obtained various *Directories* and *Guides*, and found that there were thirty or forty persons of that name residing in London, and whose addresses were given in those books. I called upon several; but none knew any thing of the business which took me to them. Then I abandoned the task as hopeless: for I reflected that there might be others of the same name who were *not* to be found in the *Directories*; and I was not even assured that the Mr. Markham alluded to dwelt in London."

"Thus you never obtained any farther clue to Katherine's parentage?"

"Never," answered Smithers. "The little child herself, when questioned by me soon after her mother's death, did not recollect having ever seen any one whom she called *Papa*; and from all I could learn from the orphan girl, her mother must have been living for some time in London before she came to my house. But where this residence was, I could not ascertain. One thing, however, I discovered, which seemed to proclaim the illegitimacy of Katherine's birth: she said that her mamma's name was Wilmot. That was her maiden name!"

"Poor Katherine!" said Richard.

"And now I have told you all, sir, that concerns her early history—at least all that I know. Some time after my wife's death, evil reports got abroad concerning me. It was said that my brutality had produced her death; and my son was a living reproach against me. No one would employ me—no one would lodge in my house. It was then that I accepted the office of Public Executioner,—to save myself from starving, and to give bread to my own son and the little orphan girl. By degrees my temper, already ruined by the conduct of my wife, became confirmed in its ferocity and cruel callousness. I grew brutal—savage—inhuman. I felt the degradation of my calling—I saw that I was shunned by all the world. I was looked upon as a monster who had murdered his wife and made his son deformed;—but the provocation and the circumstances were never mentioned to palliate the enormity of that double crime. At length I heard all the reproaches, and did not take the trouble to state facts in order to justify myself. But all this was enough to brutalize me,—especially when added to the duties of my new calling. In time I even began to ill-treat that poor orphan girl whom I had at first looked upon as my own child. But, bad as I have been towards her when I thought that she encouraged my son to thwart my will,—shamefully as I used her at times, I never would have abandoned her;—for when she thought that I turned her out of my house the day she went to Mr. Tracy's, it was only my brutal way of letting her go to a place which I knew would be creditable to her, and which, by what she told me, I saw she wished to take. Then I thought within myself, '*Yes, even she will now gladly leave me*;'—and, in order to conceal what I felt at that idea—and I *did* feel deeply—I took refuge

in my own brutalized temper. But I sent her round all her things in the evening—not forgetting her work-box, which I knew contained the fragment that her poor mother wrote upon her death-bed. Moreover, when she came to see me, I received her with no constrained kindness; for I always liked her—even when I ill-used her;—and I was sorry to have parted with her."

"The world, my good friend, has not altogether read your heart correctly," said Richard.

"Thank you, sir,—thank you for that assurance," exclaimed Smithers; "and when you *good friend* me, sir—you, who are so noble-hearted, so generous, so truly grand in your humanity—I could burst into tears."

"If my example please you," said Markham, kindly, "you will make me happy by profiting by it. Oh! you shall yet live long to convince the world that the human heart never can be so deadened to all good feelings as to be beyond redemption!"

"I do not think I shall live to an old age, sir," observed Smithers, sinking his voice to a mysterious whisper: "I have already had one warning!"

"One warning!" repeated Richard, surprised at this strange announcement.

"Yes, Mr. Markham. One night I was lying in bed;—the candle was flickering in the fire-place;—I happened to turn my eyes towards that puppet which hangs in the loft where I used to sleep until within the last few days,—and I saw *another face* looking over its shoulder at me."

"Another face!" ejaculated Markham: "what do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, *that Harriet Wilmot's countenance appeared above the shoulder of the figure!*" answered Smithers, with a shudder.

"My good friend," said Markham, "your imagination was disordered at the moment. The days of spectres and apparitions are gone by. The Almighty does not address himself to man by means of terrors which nurses use to frighten children. I will show you, by a simple process of reasoning, that it is *impossible* to *see* a ghost—even if such a thing should exist. You do not see with the eye precisely in the way in which you may imagine. Strictly speaking, the eye does not see at all. The effect is this: substantial objects are reflected in the retina of the eye as in a mirror; and the impression is conveyed from the retina into the brain, where it assumes a proper and suitable shape in the imagination or conception. But in order that objects should so strike the retina of the eye, they *must* be *substantial*: they must have length, breadth, and thickness;—they must displace so much air as to leave the void filled up by their own forms. Now, even if the spirits of the departed be allowed to revisit this earth, *no mortal eye can see them*, because they are *unsubstantial*, and they cannot be reflected in the retina of the eye. I have only entered into this explanation to convince you that an unsettled mind or a disordered imagination—arising from either moral or physical causes—can *alone* conjure up phantoms."

"Well, sir, we will not talk any more upon *this* subject, if you please," said Smithers. "I understand what you say; and I thank you for your goodness in explaining the matter to me. I now wish to ask you whether you would rather that I should communicate all I have told you to Katherine; or whether you will yourself?"

"My good friend," said Richard, "you acted so noble a part towards her mother that this duty will better become you. Katherine will thank you for your goodness towards her parent—especially as that goodness arose from no interested motives; and you will rejoice in the grateful outpourings of the heart of that orphan whom you reared, and to whom you gave a home. To-morrow you and your son can visit her: the day after to-morrow, in the evening, I wish both of you—yourself and your son—to call upon me."

Smithers promised to obey our hero's desires in all respects, and then took his leave,—wondering how any human being could possess such influence over the heart, to humanize and reclaim it, as Richard Markham.

CHAPTER CLXV.

THE TRACE.

In order to avoid unnecessary details we shall now concisely state that Smithers and his son paid the visit agreed upon to Katherine Wilmot.

Smithers communicated to her, when they were alone together for half an hour, so much of his own history as involved all the particulars with which he was acquainted concerning her parentage.

The grateful girl expressed a deeper sense of obligation than she had ever yet experienced towards the individual who had supported her for so many years, although she had no claims of relationship upon him.

After one of the most agreeable days which the *late* executioner and his son had ever passed in their lives, they took leave of Katherine and the worthy people of the farm, and returned to London.

Poor Katherine Wilmot! she had that day learnt more concerning her parentage than she had ever known before; but she would have been happier, perhaps, had her original impressions on that subject never been disturbed!

Still Markham had conceived it to be a duty which was owing to the young maiden, to permit Smithers thus to reveal to her those circumstances which seemed to fix her with the stigma of illegitimacy.

That night her pillow was moistened with abundant tears, as she lay and reflected upon her lamented mother!

On the appointed evening Smithers and his son called at Markham Place.

They were conducted by Whittingham to a parlour, where the table was spread with a handsome collation, places being arranged for three persons.

"Sit down, my friends," said Richard Markham, who received them with a warmth far more encouraging than mere courtesy: "after supper we will transact the business for which I have requested your presence here."

"What, sir!" ejaculated Smithers; "can you condescend to have *me* at your table?"

"Not as you lately were," answered Richard: "I receive you as a regenerated man."

John Smithers (for we shall suppress his nickname of *Gibbet*, as his father had already done so) cast a glance of profound gratitude upon our hero, in acknowledgment of a behaviour that could not do otherwise than confirm his father in his anxious endeavours to adopt a course of mental improvement.

Smithers' confidence increased, when he had imbibed a glass or two of generous wine; and he re-

lated to Markham the particulars of his interview with Katherine.

Then was it for the first time the hump-back learnt that Katherine was not his cousin.

He said nothing; but, as he drank in all that fell from his father's lips, two large tears rolled down his cheeks.

When the supper was over, Richard addressed Smithers in the following manner:—

"The narrative which you revealed to me the day before yesterday materially alters the position in which Katherine stands with respect to you. When I first proposed that she should advance you at once a small sum, I believed her to be your near relative. But as she is in no way akin to you, it results that you have for years supported one who had no claim upon you. Accident has made her rich; and it is but fair and just that you should be adequately rewarded for your generosity. I have communicated with Katherine's trustee upon the subject; and we have agreed to furnish you with five hundred pounds at once, to enable you to embark in a respectable and substantial line of business. This pocket-book," proceeded Markham, "contains that sum. Take it, my worthy friend—it is your due; and, should you succeed in the career that you are now about to enter upon, you can with satisfaction trace your prosperity to the humanity which you showed to a friendless orphan."

After some hesitation, Smithers received the pocket-book. He and his son then took leave of Richard Markham, with the most sincerely felt expressions of gratitude, and with a promise from the father to write to him soon to state where and how they had settled themselves.

Scarcely had those two individuals, now both made happy, taken their departure, when Whittingham informed his master that a person with a dark complexion, and who gave the name of Morcar, requested to speak to him.

Richard ordered the gipsy to be instantly admitted to his presence.

Morcar was accordingly shown into the parlour.

The moment he found himself alone with Markham, he said in a low and somewhat solemn tone, "We have traced him!"

"I expected as much, the moment your name was announced," said Richard. "Where is he?"

"He has taken refuge in a barge on the river," answered Morcar. "That is all I have been able to learn; but I am confident he is there."

"And do you know where the barge is moored?" asked Richard.

"Close by Rotherhithe. But there are several other barges off the same wharf; and I cannot single out which he is in. I, however, know that he *is* concealed in one of them."

"It is important to discover which," said Markham. "Were we to make our appearance in that vicinity with a body of police, he might escape us altogether."

"And therefore it will be better to take him by means of stratagem," observed Morcar.

"What can have induced him to seek refuge there?" said Richard, in a musing tone. "Some new crime, perhaps?"

"Or else some fresh scheme of villany," returned Morcar. "But perhaps you are not aware, sir, that river piracy still flourishes to some extent?"

"I certainly imagined that with our system of Thames police, that species of depredation was completely ruined."

"No such thing, sir!" exclaimed Morcar. "The man who gave me the information about Tidkins, told me more than ever I knew before on that subject."

"You may as well acquaint me with those particulars, Morcar," said our hero. "They may assist me in devising some scheme to entrap the Resurrection Man, and enable justice to receive its due."

"River piracy, sir," continued Morcar, "is carried on by a set of vagabonds who for the most part have been sailors, or in some shape or another engaged amongst barges and lighters. They are all leagued with the marine-store dealers and people that keep old iron and junk shops on both sides of the river below London bridge. The river pirates usually possess a barge or lighter, which every now and then makes a trip up and down the river between Greenwich and Putney, but with no other freight than bales of sawdust, old rags, or even dung. This they do to keep up appearances and avoid suspicion. But all day long they maintain a good look out in the pool, and take notice of particular ships which they think can be easily robbed. For instance, sometimes a steamer is left with only a boy on board to take care of it; or else a lighter has only one man to look after it. Then these pirates go on board in the night, master the boy or the man, and plunder the steamer or lighter of any thing worth carrying away."

"I begin to understand how these villains may reap a profitable harvest in this manner," observed Richard.

"Oh! you don't know half their pranks, yet," said Morcar. "Sometimes two or three of the gang will go and hire themselves as bargemen or lightermen; and then they easily arrange with their pals how to plunder the vessels thus entrusted to them, while the owners never suspect that their own men are at the bottom of the robbery. When times are bad, and these fellows are driven to desperation, they think nothing of cutting away great pieces of ships' cables, or even weighing the anchors of small craft; and with these heavy materials they will get clean off in their boats to their own barge; and next morning they convey them as coolly as possible to the marine store dealers. Sometimes they cut lighters adrift, when the tide is running out, and follow them in their boat; then, under pretence of helping those on board, they cut away bales of cotton or any other goods that are easily thrown into their boats in dark nights."

"The villain Tidkins has no doubt transferred his operations from the land to the river," observed Markham; "seeing that, by means of a little address and a great deal of courage, such depredations can be effected."

"These river-pirates are of several kinds," continued Morcar. "There 's the *light-horsemen*, or men who board the unprotected vessels in the night. Then there 's the *heavy-horsemen*, who wear an under-dress, called a *jemmy*, which is covered by their smocks: these fellows obtain employment as *lumpers*,—that is, to load or discharge ships in the pool, during which they contrive to stow away every thing portable in the large pouches or pockets of their under-dress. Afterwards, the *heavy-horsemen*, give information to their pals, and put them

on the scent which ships to rob at night. Next there 's the *mud-larks*, who get on board stranded lighters at low water, and carry off what they can when the vessels are unprotected, or ask some question to lull suspicion if they find any one on board. This mode of river-piracy is very profitable, because numbers of lighters and barges are often left for hours alongside the banks, without a soul on board. *Game lightermen* are those pirates that are in league with dishonest mates and sailors belonging to vessels that come up the river to discharge: and they receive at night from their pals on board, through the port-holes or over the quarter, any thing that 's easy to move away in this manner. Last of all there's the *scuffle-hunters*, who put on smocks, and obtain work as porters on the wharfs where a ship is loading: then, if they can't contrive to steal any thing by those means, they can at all events carry some useful information to their pals—so that the ship is generally robbed in one way or another."

"With so well organised a fraternity and such means of operation," said Markham, who had listened with interest and astonishment to these details, "Tidkins is capable of amassing a fortune in a very short time. But we must stop him in his criminal career. At the same time, let us do nothing without mature consideration. Are you willing to assist? Your reward shall be liberal."

"The Zingaree may not of his own accord deliver up any one to justice," answered Morcar; "but he is allowed to serve an employer who pays him. Moreover," he added, as if ashamed of that sophistical compromise with the rules of his fraternity, "I shall gladly help to punish the miscreant who treated us with such base ingratitude."

"Then you consent to serve me?" said Richard.

"I do, sir," was the reply.

"To-morrow, at mid-day, I will meet you somewhere in the eastern part of London," continued Richard. "I have already a project in my head; but I must consider it more maturely."

"Where shall we meet, sir?" asked Morcar.

Markham reflected for a moment, and then said, "On the Tower wharf."

"I will be punctual, sir," answered the gipsy; and he took his departure.

CHAPTER CLXVI.

THE THAMES PIRATES.

MOORED at a wharf at the Rotherhithe side of the river Thames, nearly opposite Execution Dock, were several lighters and barges, all lying together.

Along the upper part of the buildings belonging to the wharf were painted, in rude but gigantic letters, the following words:—"MOSSOP'S WHARF, WHERE GOODS ARE RECEIVED, HOUSED, OR CARTED."

Mr. Mossop, the sole proprietor of this wharf, was by no means particular what goods he thus received, whence they came when he housed them, or whither they were going when he carted them. He asked no questions, so long as his commission and charges were duly paid.

For the convenience of his numerous customers, he kept his office constantly open; and either himself or his son Ben Mossop was in constant attendance.

Indeed, Mr. Mossop did more business by night than by day. He was, however, a close man: he never put impertinent questions to any one who called to patronise him; and thus his way of doing business was vastly convenient for all those who used his wharf or his store-houses.

If a lighter arrived at that wharf, ostensibly with a freight of hay, but in reality with divers bales of cotton or other goods concealed beneath the dried grass, Mr. Mossop did not seem to think that there was any thing at all strange in this; and if next day he happened to hear that a barge at a neighbouring wharf had been robbed of divers bales of cotton during the night, Mr. Mossop was too much of a gentleman to question the integrity of *his* customers. Even if every wall in Rotherhithe, Horselydown, and Bermondsey, were covered with placards announcing the loss of the bales, describing them to a nicety, and offering a reward for their recovery, Mr. Mossop never stopped to read one of them.

On two or three occasions, when a police-officer called at his wharf and politely requested him just to honour the nearest magistrate with a visit, and enter into an explanation how certain goods happened to be found in his store-rooms, the said goods having been lost by other parties in an unpleasant manner, Mr. Mossop would put an enormous pair of spectacles upon his nose and a good face on the matter at the same time; and it invariably happened that he managed to convince the bench of *his* integrity, but without in any way compromising those persons who might be in custody on account of the said goods.

His son Ben was equally prudent and reserved; and thus father and son were mighty favourites with all the river pirates who patronised them.

Moreover, Mossop's Wharf was most conveniently situate: the front looked, of course, upon the river; the back opened into Rotherhithe Wall; and Mossop's carts were noted for the celerity with which they would convey goods away from the warehouse to the receivers in Blue Anchor Road or in the neighbourhood of Halfpenny Hatch.

The father and son were also famous for the regularity and dispatch with which they executed business on pressing occasions. Thus, while Mossop senior would superintend the landing of goods upon the wharf, Mossop junior was stationed at the back gate, where it was his pleasing duty to see the bales speedily carted as they were brought *through* the warehouses by the lumpers employed.

Mossop senior was also reputed to be a humane man; for if any of his best customers got into trouble (which was sometimes the case) and were short of funds, a five pound note in a blank envelop would reach them in prison to enable them to employ counsel in their defence; and this sum invariably appeared as "*money lent*" in Mossop's next account against them when they were free once more, and enabled to land another cargo at the wharf.

But to continue our narrative.

It was the evening after the one on which Morcar had called at Markham Place; consequently the evening of that day when the gipsy was to meet our hero on the Tower wharf.

Over the particulars of that meeting we, however, pass; as the plans then arranged will presently develop themselves.

It was now about nine o'clock.

The evening was beautiful and moonlight.

Myriads of stars were rocked to and fro in the cradle of the river's restless tide; and the profiles of the banks were marked with thousands of lights, glancing through dense forests of masts belonging to the shipping that were crowded along those shores.

At intervals those subdued murmurs which denoted that the river was as busy and active as the great city itself, were absorbed in the noise of some steamer ploughing its rapid way amidst the mazes of vessels that to the inexperienced eye appear to be inextricably entangled together.

Then would arise those shouts of warning to the smaller craft,—those rapid commands to regulate the movements of the engines,—and those orders to the helmsman, which, emanating from the lips of the captain posted on the paddle-box, proclaim the progress of the steamer winding its way up the pool.

A wondrous and deeply interesting spectacle, though only dimly seen, is that portion of the Thames on a moonlight night.

Then indeed is it that even the most callous mind is compelled to contemplate with mingled astonishment and awe, one of the grandest features of the sovereign city and world's emporium of trade.

The gurgling water, and the countless masts,—the vibration of mighty engines on the stream, and the myriads of twinkling lights along the shores,—the cheering voices of the mariners, and the dense volumes of smoke which moving colossal chimneys vomit forth,—the metallic grating of windlasses, and the glittering of the spray beneath revolving wheels,—the flapping of heavy canvass, and the glare from the oval windows of steamers,—the cries of the rowers in endangered boats, and the flood of silver lustre which the moon pours upon the river's bosom,—these form a wondrous complication of elements of interest for both ear and eye.

The barge that was farthest off from Mossop's wharf, of all the lighters moored there, and that could consequently get into the stream quicker than any other near it, was one to which we must particularly direct our readers' attention.

It was called the *Fairy*, and was large, decently painted, and kept in pretty good order. It had a spacious cabin abaft, and a smaller one, termed a cuddy, forward. The mast, with its large brown sail that seemed as if it had been tanned, was so fitted as

to be lowered at pleasure, to enable the vessel to pass under the bridges at high water. The rudder was of enormous size; and the tiller was as thick and long as the pole of a carriage.

The waist, or uncovered part of the lighter in the middle, was now empty; but it was very capacious, and adapted to contain an immense quantity of goods.

On the evening in question two men were sitting on the windlass, smoking their pipes, and pretty frequently applying themselves to a can of grog which stood upon the deck near them.

One was the Resurrection Man: the other was John Wicks, better known as the Buffer.

"Well, Jack," said the Resurrection Man, "this is precious slow work. For the last four days we've done nothing."

"What did I tell you, when you fust come to me and proposed to take to the river?" exclaimed the Buffer. "Did n't I say that one ought to be bred to the business to do much good in it?"

"Oh! that be hanged!" cried the Resurrection Man. "I can soon learn any business that 's to make money. Besides, the land was too hot to hold me till certain little things had blown over. There's that fellow Markham who ran against me one night;—then there 's Crankey Jem. The first saw that I was still hanging about London; and the other may have learnt, by some means or another, that I did n't die of the wound he gave me. Then again, there 's those gipsies whose money I walked off with one fine day. All these things made the land unsafe; and so I thought it best to embark the gold that I took from old King Zingary, in this barge, which was to be had so cheap."

"I suppose we shall do better in time, Tony," said the Buffer, "when we get more acquainted with them light and heavy horsemen that we must employ, and them lumpers that gives the information."

"Of course. When you set up in a new business, you can't expect to succeed directly," returned the Resurrection Man. "The regular pirates won't have confidence in us at first; and as yet we do n't know a single captain or mate that will trust us with the job of robbing their ship. How do they know but what we should peach, if we got into trouble, and tell their employers that it was all done with their connivance? But old Mossop begins to grow more friendly; and that, I 'm sure, is a good sign that *he* thinks that we shall succeed."

"So it is," said the Buffer. "Besides, this barge is so good a blind, that business *must* come. What should you say to getting into the skiff presently, and taking a look out amongst the shipping for ourselves?"

"Well, I 've no objection," answered Tidkins. "But we 've already a connexion with several lumpers; and they have put us on to all that we *have* done up to the present time. P'haps we should do better to wait for the information that they can give us. They begin to see that we pay well; and so they 'll only be too anxious to put things in our way."

"True enough," observed the Buffer.

At this period of the conversation, a woman's head appeared above the cabin hatch-way.

"Supper 's ready," she said.

"We 're coming, Moll," returned the Buffer.

The two villains then descended into the cabin, where a well-spread table awaited them.

Scarcely had the trio concluded their repast, when a man, who had come from the wharf and had walked across the barges until he reached the *Fairy*, called to Tidkins, by the appellation of "Captain," from the hatchway.

"Come below," answered the Resurrection Man.

The person thus invited was the foreman in Mr. Mossop's employment. He was short, stout, and strongly built, with a tremendous rubicundity of visage, small piercing grey eyes, no whiskers, and a very apoplectic neck. His age might be about fifty; and he was dressed in a light garb befitting the nature of his calling.

"Well, Mr. Swot," said the Resurrection Man, as the little fat foreman descended the ladder; "this is really an unusual thing to have the honour of your company. Sit down; and you, Moll, put the lush and the pipes upon the table."

"That 's right, Captain," returned Mr. Swot, as he seated himself. "I came on purpose to drink a social glass and have a chat with you. In fact, my present visit is not altogether without an object."

"I 'm glad of that," said the Resurrection Man. "We want something to do. It was only just now that I and my mate were complaining how slack business was."

"You know that Mossop never has any thing to do with any schemes in which chaps of your business choose to embark," continued Mr. Swot: "he receives your goods, and either keeps them in warehouse or carts them for you as you like; but he never knows where they come from."

"Perfectly true," observed the Resurrection Man.

"But all that 's no reason why I should be equally partickler," proceeded Swot.

"Of course not," said the Resurrection Man.

"Well, then—we are all friends here?" asked Swot, glancing around him.

"All," replied Tidkins. "This is my mate's wife; she answers to the name of Moll, and is stanch to the back-bone."

"Well and good," said Swot. "Now I 've as pretty a little idea in my head as ever was born there; but it requires two or three daring—I may say *desperate* fellers to carry it out."

"You could n't come to a better shop for them kind of chaps," remarked the Buffer.

"And if it 's necessary, I 'll deuced soon dress myself up like a lighterman and help you," added Moll.

"I am very much pleased with your pluck, ma'am," said Mr. Swot; "and I drink to your excellent health—and our better acquaintance."

Mr. Swot emptied his mug at a draught, lighted a pipe, and then continued thus:—

"But now, my fine fellers, s'pose I was to start some scheme which is about as dangerous as walking slap into a house on fire to get the iron safe that 's full of gold and silver?"

"Well—we 're the men to do it," said Tidkins.

"That is," observed the Buffer, "if so be the inducement is equal to the risk."

"Of course," returned Mr. Swot. "Now one more question:—would you sleep in the same room with a man who had the cholera or the small-pox, for instance—supposing you got a thousand pounds each to do it?"

"I would in a minute," answered the Resurrection Man. "Nothing dare, nothing have."

"So I say," added the Buffer.

"And you would n't find me flinch!" cried Moll.

"Now, then, we shall soon understand each other," resumed Swot, helping himself to another supply of grog. "Please to listen to me for a few minutes. A very fine schooner, the *Lady Anne* of London, trades to the Gold and Slave Coasts of Guinea. She takes out woollens, cottons, linen, arms, and gunpowder, which she exchanges for gold dust, ivory, gums, and hides. A few days since, as she was beating up the Channel, homeward bound with a fine cargo, something occurs that makes it necessary for her to run for the Medway, instead of coming direct up to London. But the night before last it blew great guns, as you may recollect; and as she was but indifferently manned, she got out in her reckoning—for it was as dark as pitch—and ran ashore between the mouth of the Medway and Gravesend. Now, there she lies—and there she 's likely to lie. She got stranded during spring-tide; and she does not float now even at high water. The gold dust would be very acceptable; the gums, ivory, hides, and such like matters, may stay where they are."

"Then the fact is the owners have n't yet moved out the cargo?" said the Resurrection Man, interrogatively.

"No—nor do n't intend to, neither—for the present," answered Swot. "And what 's more, there 's a police-boat pulling about in that part of the river all day and all night; but I can assure you that it gives the schooner a precious wide berth."

"Well, I can't understand it yet," said the Buffer.

"The fact is," continued Swot, "the *Lady Anne* was on its way to Standgate Creek in the Medway, when it got ashore on the bank of the Thames. Do you begin to take?"

"Can't say I do," answered the Resurrection Man. "Is the crew on board still?"

"The crew consisted this morning, when I heard about it last, of three men and a boy," returned Swot; "and one of them men is a surgeon. But the *Lady Anne* has got the yellow flag flying;—and now do you comprehend me?"

"The plague!" ejaculated the Resurrection Man and the Buffer in the same breath.

"The plague!" repeated Moll Wicks, with a shudder.

"Neither more or less," said Swot, coolly emptying his second mug of grog.

There was a dead silence for some moments.

It seemed as if the spirits of those who had listened with deep attention to the foreman's narrative, were suddenly damped by the explanation that closed it.

"Well—are you afraid?" asked Swot, at length breaking silence.

"No," returned the Resurrection Man, throwing off the depression which had fallen upon him. "But there is something awful in boarding a plague-ship."

"Are you sure the gold dust is on board?" demanded the Buffer.

"Certain. My information is quite correct. Besides, you may get the newspapers and read all about it for yourselves."

"The thing is tempting," said Moll.

"Then, by God, if a woman will dare it, we mustn't show the white feather, Jack," exclaimed the Resurrection Man.

"That's speaking to the point," observed the foreman. "You see there 's a guard on land, to prevent any one from going near the vessel on that side; and the police-boat rows about on the river. The plan would be, to get down to Gravesend to-morrow, then to-morrow night, to drop down with the tide close under the bank, and get alongside the vessel."

"All that can be done easy enough," said the Resurrection Man. "But we want more hands. Of course you'll go with us?"

"Yes—I'll risk it," answered Mr. Swot. "It's too good a thing to let slip between one's fingers. If you'll leave it to me I'll get two or three more hands; because we must be prepared to master all that we may meet on the deck of the schooner, the very moment we board it, so as not to give 'em time even to cry out, or they 'd alarm the police-boat."

"Well and good," said the Resurrection Man. "But you do n't mean to go in the lighter?"

"No—no: we must have a good boat with two sculls," answered Swot. "Leave that also to me. At day-break every thing shall be ready for you; and I shall join you in the evening at Gravesend."

"Agreed!" cried Tidkins.

Mr. Swot then took his departure; and the three persons whom he left behind in the lighter, continued their carouse.

In this way the Resurrection Man, the Buffer, and Moll Wicks amused themselves until nearly eleven o'clock, when, just as they were thinking of retiring for the night,—Tidkins to his bed in the after cabin where they were then seated, and the other two to their berth in the cuddy forward,—the lighter was suddenly shaken from one end to the other by some heavy object which bumped violently against it.

CHAPTER CLXVII.

AN ARRIVAL AT THE WHARF.

THE collision was so powerful that the Buffer's wife was thrown from her seat; and every plank in the *Fairy* oscillated with a crashing sound.

The Buffer and the Resurrection Man rushed upon the deck.

A single glance enabled them to ascertain the cause of the sudden alarm.

A lighter, nearly as large as the *Fairy*, and heavily laden, had been so clumsily brought in against the barges moored off the wharf, that it came with the whole weight of its broad-side upon the *Fairy*.

"Now then, stupids!" ejaculated the Buffer, applying this complimentary epithet to the two men who were on the deck of the lighter which was putting in.

"Hope we have n't hurt you, friends," exclaimed one of the individuals thus addressed.

"More harm might have been done," answered the Buffer. "Who are you."

"The *Blossom*," was the reply.

"Where d'ye come from?" demanded Wicks.

"Oh! up above bridge," cried the man, speaking in a surly and evasive manner. "Here—just catch hold of this rope, will you—and let us lay alongside of you."

"No—no," shouted the Buffer. "You 'd better drop astern of us, and moor alongside that chalk barge."

"Well, so we will," said the man.

While the *Blossom* was executing this manœuvre, which it did in a most clumsy manner, as if the two

men that worked her had never been entrusted with the care of a lighter before, the Buffer turned towards the Resurrection Man, and said in a whisper, "We must remain outside all the barges, 'cause of having room to run our boat alongside the *Fairy* and get the things on board easy, when we come back from the expedition down to the *Lady Anne*."

"To be sure," answered the Resurrection Man. "You did quite right to make those lubbers get lower down. I 'm pleased with you, Jack; and now I see that I can let you be spokesman on all such occasions without any fear that you 'll commit yourself."

"Why, if you want to keep in the back-ground as much as possible, Tony," replied the Buffer, "it 's much better to trust these little things to me. But, I say—I think there 's something queer about them chaps that have just put in here."

"So do I, Jack," said Tidkins. "They certainly know no more about managing a lighter than you and I did when we first took to it."

"Yes—but we had a regular man to help us at the beginning," observed the Buffer.

"So we had. And I precious soon sent him about his business when he had taught us our own."

"Well—p'rhaps them fellows have got a reg'lar man too," said Wicks. "But let 'em be what and who they will, my idea is, that they 've taken to the same line as ourselves."

"We must find that out, Jack," observed the Resurrection Man. "If they 're what you think, they will of course be respected: if they do n't belong to the same class, we must ascertain what they 've got on board, and then make up our minds whether any of their cargo will suit us."

"Well said," returned the Buffer.

"But in any case you must be the person to learn all this," continued the Resurrection Man. "You see, I 'm so well known to a lot of different people that would show me no mercy if they got hold of me, that I 'm compelled to keep myself as quiet as possible. There 's Markham—there 's Crankey Jem—there 's the gipsies—and there 's the Rattlesnake: why—if I was only to be twigged by one of them I should have to make myself scarce in a minute."

"I know all this, Tony," cried the Buffer, impatiently; "and therefore the less you 're seen about, the better. In the day time always keep below, as you have been doing; but at night, when one can 't distinguish particular faces, you can take the air;—or on such occasions as to-morrow will be, for instance,—when we run down the river, and get away from London——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted Tidkins: "do n't think that I shall throw away a chance. Those lubbers have managed to make their lighter fast to the chalk barge now: just step across and try and find out what you can about them."

The Buffer immediately proceeded to obey this order. He walked across the barges, which, as we before stated, were so closely moored together that they formed one vast floating pier; and approaching as close as possible to the *Blossom*, without setting foot upon it, he said, "Holloa, friend, there! You must n't think that we meant any thing by telling you not to lay alongside of us: 't was only 'cause we expect to be off to-morrow or next day."

"No offence is taken where none 's intended," answered the man who had before spoken.

The Buffer now perceived that the other individual on board the *Blossom*, and who had charge of the helm, was a Black, of tall form, and dressed in the rough garb of a sailor.

"You seem well laden," said the Buffer, after a pause.

"Yes—pretty deep," answered the first speaker.

"Do you discharge here, at Mossop's?"

"Do n't know yet," was the laconic reply.

"And what may be your freight?"

"Bales of cotton," returned the man.

"Then I suppose you 're the master of that lighter?" continued the Buffer.

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"Well, it 's a pleasant life," observed Wicks. "Have you been at it long?"

"I 've only just begun it," replied the master.

"And that sable gentleman there," said the Buffer, with a laugh,—"I should think he 's not a Johnny Raw on the water?"

"Not quite," returned the master. "Poor fellow! he 's deaf and dumb!"

"Deaf and dumb, eh?" repeated the Buffer. "Well,—p'rhaps that 's convenient in more ways than one."

"I believe you," said the master, significantly.

"Ah! I thought so," cried Wicks, who now felt convinced that the *Blossom* was not a whit better than the *Fairy*. "Ain't there no one on board but you and Blackee?"

"What the devil should we want any more hands for?" said the master, gruffly.

"Oh! I understand," observed the Buffer. "Capital! you 're the master—to do as you like; Blackee 's deaf and dumb, and can't blab; and you and him are alone on board. I 've hit it, you see."

"You 're uncommon sharp, my fine feller," said the master. "Step on board and wash your mouth out."

The Buffer did not hesitate to accept this invitation. The Black had lighted his pipe, and was lounging on the deck over the after cabin. The master disappeared down the hatchway of the small cabin, or cuddy, forward; and in a few moments he returned with a bottle and two tin panikins.

"What 's the name of your craft?" he said, as he poured out the liquor, which exhaled the strong and saccharine flavour of rum.

"The *Fairy*," replied the Buffer.

"Then here 's a health to the *Fairy*."

"And here 's to the *Blossom*."

The master and the Buffer each took draughts of the raw spirit.

"Now let us drink to our better acquaintance," said the master. "You seem an honest, open-hearted kind of a feller——"

"And to be trusted, too," interrupted Wicks.

"Well—I 'm inclined to think you are," said the master, speaking deliberately, as if he were meditating upon some particular idea which then occupied his mind; "and it 's very probable—it *may* be, I mean—that I shall want a little of your advice; for which, remember, I should be happy to pay you well."

"You could n't apply to a better man," returned the Buffer.

"And here 's to you," said the master. "What sort of a fellow is Mossop, that keeps this wharf?"

"He has no eyes, no ears, and no tongue for things that do n't consarn him," answered Wicks.

"Just the kind of agent I want," returned the

master. "But I shall also require two or three good fellers in a few days,—chaps that ain't over particklar, you understand, how they earn a ten-pound note, so long as it 's sure."

"And you want two or three chaps of that kind?" asked the Buffer.

"Yes. I 've a good thing in hand," returned the master. "But I shan't say too much now."

"Well, you may reckon on me at any moment—to-morrow excepted," said Wicks; "and my pal in the *Fairy* will also be glad to row in the same boat."

"What sort of a man is your pal?" demanded the master: "one of the right kind?"

"If he was n't, him and I should n't long hold together," answered the Buffer. "But when do you think you 'll want our services?"

"Very soon. You say you 're both engaged for to-morrow?"

"Yes—both of us."

"The day after to-morrow, in the evening, you and your friend can come and smoke your pipes with me; and we 'll talk the matter over," said the master.

"And if any thing should prevent us coming the day after to-morrow, the evening after that will do p'rhaps?" remarked the Buffer, interrogatively.

"Well—we must make that do, then," answered the master. "Good night."

"Good night," said Wicks; and he then returned to the *Fairy*.

"What can you make of them, Jack?" demanded the Resurrection Man, who was smoking his pipe on the after deck.

"They 're of the right sort, Tony," was the reply. "The master seems a good kind of a feller: the only other man on board with him is a Black; and he 's deaf and dumb. The master sounded me about Mossop; and that shows that he knows what 's what. Besides, he hinted that he 'd a good thing in view, but wanted more hands, and so he made an appointment for you and me to smoke a pipe with him in the course of two or three evenings, to talk over the matter."

"You did n't say much about me?" exclaimed the Resurrection Man, hastily.

"Not more than was proper. It 's all right—I could tell *that* with half an eye."

"Well, business seems dropping in upon us," observed the Resurrection Man; "but we must be very cautious what we do. And now let 's turn in, for we have to get up early, recollect."

CHAPTER CLXVIII.

THE PLAGUE SHIP.

It wanted half-an-hour to day-break, when the splash of oars alongside met their ears; and in a few moments Swot, the foreman, made his appearance.

"I 've got all ready for you, my boys," said that individual; "a good boat, and two stout chaps to help."

"Have they got their barkers?" demanded the Resurrection Man, thereby meaning pistols.

"A brace each," replied the foreman. "But they must only be used in case of desperation. There 's a false bottom to the boat; and there I 've stowed away five cutlasses."

"All right!" cried the Buffer. "Now, Moll, you make yourself comfortable till we get back again."

"You 're a fool, Jack, not to let me go along with you," observed the woman.

"Nonsense," answered her husband. "Some one must stay on board to take care of the lighter."

"Well, do n't say that I 'm a coward—that 's all," exclaimed Moll.

"We won't accuse you of that," said the Resurrection Man. "But now let 's be off. Where shall we meet you at Gravesend?"

"You know the windmill about a mile below the town," returned Swot, to whom this question was addressed. "Well, close by is the *Lobster Tavern*: and there 's a little jetty where the boat can be fastened. Meet me at that tavern at ten o'clock this evening."

"Agreed," answered Tidkins.

The three men then ascended to the deck.

The dawn was at that moment breaking in the east; and every moment mast after mast on the stream, and roof after roof on the shore, appeared more palpably in the increasing light of the young day.

On board of the *Blossom*, the Black was busily employed in washing the deck, and seemed to take no notice of any thing that was passing elsewhere.

"The tide will be with us for nearly three hours," said Tidkins. "Come—we won't lose a moment."

The foreman retraced his steps across the barges to the wharf; while the Resurrection Man and the Buffer, each armed with a pair of pistols, leapt into the boat, that lay alongside the lighter.

Two stout fellows, dressed like watermen, and who were already seated in the boat, instantly plied their sculls.

The skiff shot rapidly away from the vicinity of the barges, and was soon running down the middle of the river with a strong tide.

The morning was beautiful and bright: a gentle breeze swept the bosom of the stream:—and when the sun burst forth in all its effulgent glory, a few fleecy clouds alone appeared on the mighty arch of blue above.

Here and there the mariners on board the outward-bound vessels were busy in heaving up their anchors—a task which they performed with the usual cheering and simultaneous cry,—or in loosening the canvass that immediately became swollen with the breeze.

At distant intervals some steamer, bound to a native or foreign port, walked, as it were, with gigantic strides along the water, raising with its mighty Briarean arms, a swell on either side, which made the smaller craft toss and pitch as if in a miniature whirlpool.

Alas! how many souls have found a resting-place in the depths of those waters; and the spray of the billow seems the tears which old Father Thames sheds as a tribute to their graves! Then, at dark midnight, when the wind moans over the bosom of the river, the plaintive murmurs sound as a lament for those that are gone!

Vain are thy tears, O River! But if they must be shed, let them flow for the living, whose crimes or whose miseries may, with Orphic spell, awaken the sympathy of even inanimate things.

The boat shot rapidly along, the sun gilding its broad pathway.

What evidence of commercial prosperity appears on either side! The clang of mighty hammers de-

note the progress of new vessels in the various building-yards; and in the numerous docks the shipwright is busy in repairing the effects of past voyages, and rendering the gallant barks fit to dare the perils of the ocean once more!

The river-pirates, whose course we are following, pursued their way: the old *Dreadnought*, stripped of the cannon that once bristled on its lofty sides, and now resembling the worn-out lion that has lost its fangs, was passed;—the domes of Greenwich greeted the eye;—and now the boat merged upon the wide expanse which seems to terminate with Blackwall.

But, no! the stream sweeps to the right; and onward floats the skiff—skirting the Kentish shore.

At length the gloomy and sombre-looking hulks off Woolwich are reached: the boat shoots in between the shipping; and there the pirates landed.

At Woolwich they repaired to a low public-house with which they were acquainted; and, as the fresh air of the river had sharpened their appetites, they called into request every article of food which was to be found in the larder. Liquors in due proportion were ordered; the Resurrection Man paid the score for all; and in this manner the four pirates contrived to while away the time until the tide turned once more in their favour in the afternoon.

At three o'clock they retraced their steps to the boat; and in a few minutes were again gliding rapidly along on the bosom of the river.

"Now," said the Resurrection Man, "as we have drunk a glass and smoked a pipe together, we are better acquainted with each other."

These words were especially addressed to the two men whom the foreman at Mossop's wharf had provided.

"Of course," continued the Resurrection Man, "I need n't ask you if you know the exact nature of the business which we have in hand. I did n't think it prudent to talk about it when we were at the crib in Woolwich just now, because walls have ears; but I took it for granted, from certain words which you two chaps said, that it 's all right."

"Yes, yes, master," returned one, who was called Long Bob, in consequence of his height: "Swot put us up to the whole thing."

"We know the risk, and we know what 's to be got by it," added the other, who delighted in the name of the *Lully Prig*,* from the circumstance of his having formerly exercised the calling with which, in flash language, the name is associated, before he became a river-pirate.

"Then we understand each other," said the Resurrection Man, "without any farther wagging of the tollibon."†

"We cut the same lock that you do, ‡ old feller," answered the Lully Prig; "and as long as we snack the bit § in a reg'lar manner, we 're stanch to the back-bone."

"So far, so good," said the Resurrection Man. "But you 're also aware that the swag must be taken up the river and put on board the *Fairy*, where it must stay some time till Swot can find a safe customer for it, because it 's sure to be chanted on the leer."*

"We 're fly to all that," said Long Bob. "But Swot promised us ten neds † each, if the thing succeeds to-night; so that we shan't object to waiting for the rest of our reg'lars till the swag is dinged."‡

"Who knows that we shan't find some gobsticks,§ clinks,‖ or other things of the same kind?" exclaimed the Lully Prig; "and, if so, they can soon be walked off to the melting-pot fence,** and the glanthem will be dropped †† in no time."

"That 's understood, my boys," exclaimed the Resurrection Man. "Now, give way with a will, and do n't let 's delay."

On went the boat with increased rapidity, the Lully Prig and Long Bob plying the oars with strength and skill. Then, when they were wearied, the Resurrection Man and the Buffer took their turns. Occasionally Tidkins handed round his flask, which he had taken good care to have replenished with rum at Woolwich; and at intervals the Buffer or the Lully Prig cheered their labours with a song.

In this manner Erith was reached and passed:—Greenhithe and Ingress Abbey, the front of which splendid mansion is built with the stones of old London Bridge, were in due course left behind;—and soon the antique windmill and the tall tower of Gravesend greeted the eyes of the river-pirates.

At the two piers of the town were numerous steam-packets;—there were large merchant-vessels riding at anchor in the middle of the river;—and, on the opposite side, Tilbury Fort commanded the expanse of water with its cannon.

"Since we 're to meet Swot at the *Lobster Tavern*," said the Resurrection Man, "we may as well run down to that place at once."

"So we will," returned the Buffer.

The boat continued its course; and in a short time it was made fast to the little jetty which affords a convenient means of landing at the point mentioned.

The *Lobster Tavern* is a small isolated place of entertainment, upon the bank of the Thames, and is chiefly frequented by those good folks who, in fine weather, indulge in a trip on Sundays from London to Gravesend.

There are sheds, with seats, built in front of the tavern; and on a calm summer's evening, the site and view are pleasant enough.

The four pirates entered the establishment, and called for refreshments.

They thus passed away the time until ten o'clock, when Mossop's foreman joined them.

In another half-hour they were all five seated in the boat; and, in the darkness of the night, they bent their way towards the plague-ship.

They kept close along the Kentish shore; and when Swot imagined that they must be within half-a-mile of the place where the *Lady Anne* was stranded, the oars were muffled.

The sky was covered with dense black clouds: no moon and not a star appeared.

The water seemed as dark as ink.

But the foreman knew every inlet and every jutting

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* A thief who steals damp linen off the hedges in the country.
† Talking—palaver. "Tollibon" is the tongue.
‡ Get our living in the same way.
§ Share the money.

* Advertised in the newspapers.
† Sovereigns.
‡ Sent to the receiver.
§ Silver spoons.
‖ Silver milk jugs or sugar basins.
** Persons who receive and melt down stolen metal.
†† Money will be obtained.

point which marked the course of the Thames; and, with the tiller in his hand, he navigated the boat with consummate skill.

Not a word was spoken; and the faint murmurs of the oars were drowned in the whistling of the breeze which now swept over the river.

At length the foreman said in a low whisper, "There is the light of the police-boat."

At a distance of about a quarter of a mile that light appeared, like a solitary star upon the waters.

Sometimes it moved—then stopped, as the quarantine officers rowed, or rested on their oars.

"We must now be within a few yards of the *Lady Anne*," whispered Swot, after another long pause: "take to your arms."

The Buffer cautiously raised a plank at the bottom of the boat, and drew forth, one after another, five cutlasses.

These the pirates silently fastened to their waists.

The boat moved slowly along; and in another minute it was by the side of the plague ship.

The Resurrection Man stretched out his arm, and his hand swept its slimy hull.

There was not a soul upon the deck of the *Lady Anne*; and, as if to serve the purposes of the river-pirates, the wind blew in strong gusts, and the waves splashed against the bank and the vessel itself, with a sound sufficient to drown the noise of their movements.

The bow of the *Lady Anne* lay high upon the bank: the stern was consequently low in the water.

As cautiously as possible the boat was made fast to a rope which hung over the schooner's quarter; and then the five pirates, one after the other, sprang on board.

"Holloa!" cried a boy, suddenly thrusting his head above the hatchway of the after cabin.

Long Bob's right hand instantly grasped the boy's collar, while his left was pressed forcibly upon his mouth; and in another moment the lad was dragged on the deck, where he was immediately gagged and bound hand and foot.

But this process had not been effected without some struggling on the part of the boy, and trampling of feet on that of the pirates.

Some one below was evidently alarmed, for a voice called the boy from the cabin.

Long Bob led the way; and the pirates rushed down into the cabin, with their drawn cutlasses in their hands.

There was a light below; and a man, pale and fearfully emaciated, started from his bed, and advanced to meet the intruders.

"Not a word—or you 're a dead man," cried Long Bob, drawing forth a pistol.

"Rascal! what do you mean?" ejaculated the other; "I am the surgeon, and in command of this vessel. Who are you? what do you require? Do you know that the pestilence is here?"

"We know all about it, sir," answered Long Bob.

Then, dropping his weapons, he sprang upon the surgeon, whom he threw upon the floor, and whose mouth he instantly closed with his iron hand.

The pirates then secured the surgeon in the same way as they had the boy above.

"Let 's go forward now," cried Swot. "So far, all 's well. One of you must stay down here to mind this chap."

The Lully Prig volunteered this service; and the other pirates repaired to the cabin forward.

They well knew that the plague-stricken invalids must be *there*; and when they reached the hatchway, there was a sudden hesitation—a simultaneous pause.

The idea of the pestilence was horrible.

"Well," said the foreman, "are we afraid?"

"No—not I, by God!" ejaculated the Resurrection Man; and he sprang down the ladder.

The others immediately followed him.

But there was no need of cutlass, pistol, or violence there. By the light of the lamp suspended to a beam, the pirates perceived two wretched creatures, each in his hammock,—their cadaverous countenances covered with large sores, their hair matted, their eyes open but glazed and dim, and their wasted hands lying like those of the dead outside the coverlids, as if all the nervous energy were defunct.

Still they were alive; but they were too weak and wretched to experience any emotion at the appearance of armed men in their cabin.

The atmosphere which they breathed was heated and nauseous with the pestilential vapours of their breath and their perspiration.

"These poor devils can do no harm," said the Resurrection Man, with a visible shudder.

The pirates were only too glad to emerge from that narrow abode of the plague; and never did air seem more pure than that which they breathed when they had gained the deck.

"Now then to work," cried Swot. "Wait till we raise this hatch," he continued, stopping at that which covered the compartment of the ship where the freight was stowed away; "and we 'll light the darkey when we get down below. You see, that as they had n't a light hung out before, it would be dangerous to have one above: we might alarm the police-boat or the guard ashore."

The hatch was raised without much difficulty: a rope was then made fast to a spar and lowered into the waist of the schooner; and Long Bob slid down.

In a few moments he lighted his dark lantern; and the other three descended one after the other, the Lully Prig, be it remembered, having remained in the after cabin.

And now to work they went. The goods, with which the schooner was laden, were removed, unpacked, and ransacked.

There were gums, and hides, and various other articles which the western coast of Africa produces; but the object of the pirates' enterprise and avarice was the gold-dust, which was contained in two heavy cases. These were, however, at the bottom of all the other goods; and nearly an hour passed before they were reached.

"Here is the treasure—at last!" cried Swot, when every thing was cleared away from above the cases of precious metal. "Come, Tony—do n't waste time with the brandy flask now."

"I 've such a precious nasty taste in my mouth," answered the Resurrection Man, as he took a long sup of the spirit. "I suppose it was the horrid air in the fore-cabin."

"Most likely," said the foreman: "come—bear a hand, and let 's get these cases ready to raise. Then Long Bob and me will go above and reeve a rope and a pulley to haul 'em up."

The four men bent forward to the task; and as they worked by the dim light of the lantern, in the

depths of the vessel, they seemed to be four demons in the profundities of their own infernal abode.

Suddenly the Resurrection Man staggered, and, supporting himself against the side of the vessel, said in a thick tone, "My God! what a sudden headache I 've got come on!"

"Oh! it 's nothing, my dear feller," cried Swot.

"And now I 'm all cold and shivering," said Tidkins, seating himself on a bale of goods; "and my legs seem as if they 'd break under me."

The Buffer, the foreman, and Long Bob were suddenly and simultaneously inspired with the same idea; and they cast on their companion looks of mingled apprehension and horror.

"No—it can't be!" ejaculated Swot.

"And yet—how odd that he should turn so," said Bob, with a shudder.

"The plague!" returned the Buffer, in a tone of indescribable terror.

"You 're a fool, Jack!" exclaimed the Resurrection Man, glaring wildly upon his comrades, and endeavouring to rise from his seat.

But he fell back, exhausted and powerless.

"Damnation!" he muttered in a low but ferocious tone; and he gnashed his teeth with rage.

"The plague!" repeated the Buffer, now unable to contain his fears.

Then he hastily clambered from the hold of the schooner.

"The coward!" cried Swot: "such a prize as this is worth any risk."

But as he yet spoke, Long Bob, influenced by panic fear, sprang after the Buffer, as if Death itself were at his heels, clad in all the horrors of the plague.

"My God! don't leave me here," cried the Resurrection Man, his voice losing its thickness and assuming the piercing tone of despair.

"Every man for himself, it seems," returned Swot, whom the panic had now robbed of all his courage; and in another moment he also had disappeared.

"The cowards—the villains!" said Tidkins, clenching his fists with rage.

Then, by an extraordinary and almost superhuman effort, he raised himself upon his legs: but they seemed to bend under him.

He, however managed to climb upon the packages

of goods; and, aided by the rope, lifted himself up to the hatchway. But the effort was too great for his failing strength: his hands could not retain a firm grasp of the cord; and he fell violently to the bottom of the hold, rolling over the bales of merchandize in his descent.

"It 's all over!" he muttered to himself; and then he became rapidly insensible.

Meantime the Lully Prig, who was mounting sentry upon the surgeon in the after cabin, was suddenly alarmed by hearing the trampling of hasty steps over head. He rushed on deck, and demanded the cause of this abrupt movement.

"The plague!" cried the Buffer, as he leapt over the ship's quarter into the boat.

The Lully Prig precipitated himself after his comrade; and the other two pirates immediately followed.

"But we are only four!" said the Lully Prig, as the boat was pushed away from the vessel.

"Tidkins has got the plague," answered the Buffer, his teeth chattering with horror and affright.

Fortunately the police-boat was at a distance; and the pirates succeeded in getting safely away from that dangerous vicinity.

But the Resurrection Man remained behind in the plague-ship!

CHAPTER CLXIX.

THE PURSUIT.

We must now return to the *Blossom*—the lighter which had only arrived at Mossop's wharf the night before the incidents of the last chapter occurred.

When the boat which conveyed the pirates to Gravesend had pushed away from the *Fairy* at daybreak, as already described, the Black, who was cleaning the deck of the *Blossom*, cast from beneath his brows a rapid and scrutinising glance at the countenances of the four men who were seated in that skiff.

As soon as the boat was out of sight, the Black hastened down into the after-cabin of the *Blossom*, where a person was lying fast asleep in bed.

The Black shook this person violently by the shoulder, and awoke him.

"I have found him, sir,—I have found him!" cried the Black.

"Indeed!" cried Markham, starting up, and rubbing his eyes. "Where? where?"

"He has just gone with three other men in a boat, down the river," answered Morcar; "and one of these men is him that spoke to Benstead last night."

"Then they both belong to the *Fairy?*" exclaimed Richard.

"Both," replied Morcar; "at least they both came from it just now."

"Go and rouse Benstead," said Markham; "and in the meantime I will get up."

The gipsy, who had so well disguised himself as a man of colour, hastened to the cuddy where Benstead was wrapped in the arms of Morpheus.

The police-officer was delighted, when awakened and made acquainted with Morcar's discovery, to find that the Resurrection Man had been thus recognised; and he lost no time in dressing himself.

The gipsy and Benstead afterwards proceeded to Richard's cabin, where they found our hero just completing his hasty toilet.

"Thus far our aims are accomplished," said Markham, when they were all three assembled. "It has turned out exactly as I anticipated. Morcar, by aid of his disguised appearance, was enabled to keep a sharp look out on all the vessels; while the report which you circulated that he was deaf and dumb prevented him from being questioned. Had Tidkins himself seen Morcar as closely as we are to him now, he would not have known him."

"My suspicions, too, are fully confirmed," observed Benstead. "The moment I saw that feller hanging about us last night, I suspected he was up to no good. But how I managed to pump *him*, when he doubtless thought that *I* was the soft-pated one! By my short, evasive, or mysterious answers, I allowed him to think that the *Blossom* was no better than she should be; and then I saw by his manners and language at once, that he was a pirate. But when I dropped a hint about wanting two or three hands for a good thing which I had in view, how eager the chap was to enlist himself and his pal in the business!"

"And to-morrow night they are coming to talk over the matter with you?" said Richard, half interrogatively.

"To-morrow night, or the night after," returned Benstead. "The pal that the man spoke of is sure to be Tidkins, since our friend Morcar saw the villains leave the *Fairy* together."

"But there were two other men in the boat," observed the gipsy.

"You say that they sculled the boat round to the *Fairy*, from some place higher up the river?" said Richard.

"Yes. But I could not see where they came from, as it was nearly dark when they got alongside the *Fairy*."

"Well," exclaimed Benstead, "it is very clear that those two men who came in the boat, do n't belong to the *Fairy;* but that Tidkins and the person who spoke to me last night do. I should think there 's no doubt about Tidkins being the pal that the man alluded to."

"Not the slightest," said Markham. "And yet, to make assurance doubly sure, we will not alter the plan which we laid down yesterday afternoon when we first came on board the lighter. You, Benstead, must remain spokesman—the master, in fact, of the *Blossom;* you, Morcar, will continue a deaf and dumb Black," continued Richard, with a smile; "and I must keep close in this cabin until the moment of action arrives. If, to-morrow night or the night after, that man should bring Tidkins with him, our object is accomplished at once: if he bring a stranger, our precautions must be strictly preserved, and we must devise a means of seizing the miscreant on board the *Fairy* or any other lighter to which we can trace him."

This advice was agreed to by Benstead and Morcar; and while Richard remained below, the others took their turns in watching upon the deck.

But all that day passed; and the pirates did not come back to the *Fairy*—they being occupied in the manner related in the last chapter.

Morcar undertook to keep watch during the night; but hour after hour stole away,—another day dawned, and still the *Fairy* was occupied only by the woman whom the pirates had left behind.

That day also passed; and it was not until midnight that Morcar's attention was attracted towards the *Fairy*. Then a boat rowed alongside of the pirate-barge.

The night was pitch dark—so dark that Morcar could not see what was going on in the direction of the *Fairy*: but his ears were all attention.

He was enabled to discover, by means of those organs, that the boat transferred one or more of its living freight (but he could not tell how many) to the *Fairy*: then a brief conversation was carried on in low whispers, but not a distinct word of which reached the gipsy. At length the boat pushed off, and rowed away up the river.

Morcar stood upon the deck of the *Blossom* for a few minutes, attentively listening to catch a sound of any thing that might be passing on board the pirate lighter: but all continued silent in that quarter.

Then Morcar descended to the cabin, where Richard and the policeman were waiting.

To them he communicated the few particulars just narrated.

"It is clear that the pirates have returned from their expedition, whatever it might be," said our hero; "and most probably Tidkins and his friend have just been put on board their lighter. We must contrive to watch their motions; and should they keep their appointment with you, Benstead, to-morrow night, our enterprise will speedily be brought to a conclusion."

"I will keep my watch now on deck till three o'clock," said the policeman; "and Morcar may turn in."

This was done; Richard also retired to rest; and the night passed away without any further adventure.

But at day-break Morcar, who had again resumed the watch, observed some activity on board the *Fairy*. The Buffer and his wife were in fact making evident preparations for departure. They raised the mast by means of the windlass; they shook out the sail; fixed the tiller in the rudder, and performed the various preliminaries in a most business-like manner.

Morcar speedily communicated these circumstances to Benstead and Markham; and these three held a rapid consultation in the after-cabin of the *Blossom*.

"You are certain you saw no one but that man who first spoke to Benstead, and the woman?" asked Markham.

"Not a soul," answered Morcar. "But that is no reason why Tidkins should not be below."

"Certainly not. He has numerous reasons to conceal himself."

"But what is to be done?" said Morcar.

"Benstead must go and speak to the man," observed Richard, after a pause.

The policeman immediately left the cabin.

He crossed the barges and approached the *Fairy*, which was just ready to put off.

"Holloa! my friend," cried Benstead: "you seem busy this morning?"

"Yes—we 're going up above bridge a short way," answered the Buffer: "the tide is just turning in our favour now, and we have n't a moment to spare."

"And the appointment with me?"

"Oh! that must stand over for a day or two. How long do you mean to remain here?"

"Till I get a couple of good hands to help me in the matter I alluded to the night before last," answered Benstead.

"Well, I do n't like to disappoint a good feller—and *that* you seem to be," said the Buffer. "but I really can't say whether I shall be able to do any thing with you, or not. I 've something else on hand now—and I think I shall leave the river altogether."

"You speak openly at all events," said Benstead. "It 's very annoying, though; for I relied upon you. Can't your pal—the man that you spoke of, you know—have a hand in this matter with me?"

"No," answered the Buffer shortly. "But I 'll tell you who 'll put you up to getting the assistance you want:—and that 's Mossop's foreman. He 's a cautious man, and won't meet you half way in your conversation; but you can make a confidant of him, and if he can't help you, he 's sure not to sell you. So now good bye, old feller; and good luck to you."

With these words the Buffer loosened the rope that held the *Fairy* alongside the barge next to it; and then by means of a boat-hook he pushed the lighter off.

"Good bye," exclaimed Benstead; and he hastened back to the *Blossom*.

"Now what must be done?" asked Morcar, when these particulars were communicated to him and Richard.

"It seems clear to me that these men have endangered themselves by something they have just been doing," observed Benstead; "and so they 're sheering off as fast as they can."

"And most likely the Resurrection Man is concealed on board the *Fairy*," added Markham. "We must follow them—we must follow them, at any rate!"

"If we take our skiff and pursue them, they will immediately entertain some suspicion," said Benstead; "and if *you* go, sir, the Resurrection Man will recognise you the moment he catches a glimpse of you."

"We have no alternative, my good friends," observed Richard. "Let us all three follow them in our skiff: we will dog them—we will watch them; and if they attempt to land, we will board them."

"Be it so," said Benstead.

This plan was immediately put into operation.

The skiff was lowered: Markham, the policeman, and the gipsy leapt into it; the two latter pulled the oars; and our hero, muffled in a pilot coat, with the collar of which he concealed his countenance as much as possible, sate in the stern.

"Just keep the lighter in view—and that 's all," said Richard. "So long as it does not show signs of touching at any place on shore, we had better content ourselves with following it, till we are assured that Tidkins is actually on board."

"Certainly, sir," answered Benstead. "We might only get ourselves into trouble by forcibly entering the *Fairy*, unless we knew that we should catch the game we 're in search of."

The rowers had therefore little more to do than just play with their oars, as the tide bore the skiff along with even a greater rapidity than the lighter, although the latter proceeded with tolerable speed, in consequence of being empty, and having a fair breeze with it. Thus, when the boat drew too near the barge, the rowers backed their oars; and by this manœuvring they maintained a convenient distance.

On board the lighter, the Buffer and his wife were too busy with the management of their vessel—a task to which they were not altogether equal—to notice the watch and pursuit instituted by the little boat.

In the manner described, the two parties pursued their way up the narrow space left by the crowds of shipping for the passage of vessels.

The Tower was passed—that gloomy fortalice which has known sighs as full of anguish and hearts as oppressed with bitter woe as ever did the prisons of the Inquisition, or the dungeons of the Bastille.

Then the Custom House was slowly left behind; and Billingsgate, world-renowned for its slang, was passed by the pursued and the pursuer.

To avoid the arch of London Bridge the Buffer lowered his mast; and then mid-way between that and Southwark Bridge, his intentions became apparent.

He was about to put in at a wharf on the Surrey side, where a large board on the building announced that lighters were bought or sold.

"Pull alongside the *Fairy*," cried Markham: "we must board her before she touches the wharf, or our prey may escape."

Benstead and Morcar plied the oars with a vigour which soon brought the boat within a few yards of the *Fairy*. The Buffer's attention was now attracted to it for the first time; but he did not immediately recognise the two rowers, because they had their backs turned towards the lighter.

"I should know that man!" suddenly exclaimed Richard, as he contemplated the Buffer, who was standing at the tiller, and who had his eyes fixed with some anxiety upon the boat, which was evidently pulling towards him.

"Who?" asked Benstead.

"That man on board the lighter," was the reply.

Benstead cast a glance behind him, and said, "He 's the man that spoke to me."

"I remember him—the villain!—I recollect him now!" cried Richard. "Yes—he is a companion in iniquity of Anthony Tidkins: it was he who brought me that false message concerning my brother, which nearly cost me my life at Twig Folly!"

These words Richard spoke aloud; but they were unintelligible to his two companions, who were unacquainted with the incident referred to.

They had no time to question him, nor had he leisure to explain his meaning to them; for at that moment the boat shot alongside of the lighter.

"Markham!" cried the Buffer, in alarm, as he recognised our hero who immediately sprang upon the deck.

"You know me?" said Richard: "and I have ample reason to remember you. But my present business regards *another*; and if you offer no resistance, I will not harm you."

"Who do you want?" asked the Buffer, somewhat reassured by these words.

"Your companion," replied Richard.

"What! my wife?" ejaculated the Buffer, with a hoarse laugh. "Do you know this gen'leman, Moll?"

"Cease this jesting," cried Richard sternly; "and remain where you are. Benstead, take care that he does not move from the deck: Morcar, come you with me."

The Buffer cast looks of surprise and curiosity upon Richard's companions, who, having made the boat fast to the lighter, had leapt upon the deck.

"What! you, my fine feller?" cried Wicks, addressing himself to Benstead. "I suppose, then, this is all a reg'lar plant;—and you 're——

"I am a police officer," answered Benstead coolly. "But, as far as I know, we have no business with either you or your wife—since you say that this woman is your wife."

"Well—so much the better," remarked the Buffer. "And I also suppose your negro is about as deaf and dumb as I am?"

"About," replied Benstead, unable to suppress a smile. "Keep quiet, and no harm will happen to you."

"But who is it that you *do* want?" asked the Buffer.

"Your friend Tidkins—better known as the Resurrection Man."

"Then you won't find him here."

In the meantime, Richard and the gipsy had descended into the after-cabin; and they now reappeared upon the deck, their search having been fruitless.

"He is not there," said Richard. "Let us look forward."

He and Morcar visited the cuddy; but the Resurrection Man was evidently not in the lighter.

They returned to the after deck, and questioned the Buffer.

"I don't know where Tidkins is," was the reply of that individual, who did not dare reveal the truth relative to the expedition to the plague ship, and its result; "and even if I did, it is not likely that I should blab any thing that would get us both into a scrape, since I see that the whole thing with you is a trap, and that man there," he added, pointing to Benstead, "is a policeman."

"Now, listen," exclaimed Richard. "It is in my power to have you arrested this moment for being concerned in a plot against my life—you know how and when; but I pledge you my honour that if you will satisfy me relative to Anthony Tidkins, we will depart, and leave you unmolested. I scorn treachery, even among men of your description; and I will not offer you a bribe. But I require to know how he came to separate from you—for I am convinced that he was with you a day or two ago."

"Well, sir," said the Buffer, who had found time, while Richard thus spoke, to collect his ideas and invent a tale, "Tidkins, me, and some other pals went on a little excursion the night afore last—you do n't want me to get myself into a scrape by saying what the business was; but we fell in with a Thames police boat some way down the river; and Tidkins had a swim for it."

"Did he escape?" demanded Richard.

"Yes," answered the Buffer, boldly. "I saw him get safe on land; and then of course he took to his heels."

"This looks like the truth, sir," said Benstead aside to our hero. "These fellows have been baulked in some scheme—the river-police have got scent of 'em—and that 's the reason why this man gets off so quick with his lighter."

"And as I do not wish to punish this man for the injury he has done me," said Richard, glancing towards the Buffer,—"as I can afford to forgive *him*,—our expedition seems to have arrived at its close."

"Without success, too, sir," added Morcar.

"We shall now leave you," continued Richard, turning towards the Buffer; "but rest well assured that, though we forbear from molesting you, justice will some day overtake you in your evil and wayward courses."

"That 's my look out," cried the Buffer, brutally.

Markham turned away in disgust, and descended to the boat, followed by Morcar and Benstead.

"We will now proceed to the wharf where I hired the *Blossom*," said Richard, when they had pushed off from the *Fairy*; "and, my good friends, there I shall dispense with your further services. The owner of the lighter can send his men to Rotherhithe to bring it up, and thus save us a task which is somewhat beyond our skill."

"It is a great pity we have failed to capture the miscreant," observed Morcar.

"But your reward has not been the less fairly and honestly earned," replied Richard; "as I will prove to you when we land."

CHAPTER CLXX.

THE BLACK VEIL.

RETURN we now to one whom we have long left, but whom the reader cannot have forgotten.

In a sumptuously furnished room at the house of Mr. Wentworth, the surgeon of Lower Holloway, Diana Arlington was reclining upon a sofa.

She was dressed in an elegant manner; but a large black lace veil, doubled so as to render it more impervious to the eye of a beholder, was thrown over her head. The folds were also so arranged that the elaborately worked border completely concealed her countenance.

She was alone.

An open piano, a harp, and piles of music, together with a choice selection of volumes on the shelves of a book-case, denoted the nature of her amusements during her residence of several weeks at the surgeon's abode.

It was mid-day.

The damask curtains at the windows were drawn in such a manner as to reduce the light of the effulgent sun to a mellow and soft lustre within that apartment.

Beautiful nosegays of flowers imparted a delicious fragrance to the atmosphere.

The bounty of the Earl of Warrington had furnished the room in a style of luxury which could scarcely be surpassed.

But was Diana happy?

Were those sighs which agitated her heaving bosom,—was that restlessness which she now manifested,—was that frequent listening as the sounds of wheels passed along the road,—were all these signs of sorrow or of suspense?

Patience, gentle reader.

The time-piece on the mantel had chimed mid-day.

"He is not punctual," murmured Diana.

Ten minutes elapsed.

"He does not come!" she said aloud.

And her restlessness redoubled.

At length a carriage drove rapidly up to the door; and a long double knock reverberated through the house.

"'Tis he!" cried Diana.

In a few moments the Earl of Warrington entered the room.

"Diana—dearest Diana!" exclaimed the nobleman, starting back when he beheld her countenance covered with that ominous dark veil: "is it indeed thus——"

"Thus that we meet after so long an absence?" added the Enchantress. "Yes, my lord: Mr. Wentworth must have told you as much."

"No, Diana," answered the Earl, seating himself upon the sofa by her side, and taking her hand: "you know not by what a strange idiosyncrasy my conduct has been influenced. I entrusted you to Mr. Wentworth's care: I enjoined him to spare no money that might procure the best advice—the most efficient means of cure. Then I resigned myself to a suspense from which I might at any moment have relieved my mind by an inquiry;—but at the bottom of that suspense was a fond, a burning hope which made the feeling tolerable—nay, even vested the excitement with a peculiar charm of its own. I took it for granted that you would be cured—that your countenance would be restored to that beauty which had originally attracted me towards you;—and now, may I not say—without detriment to my own firm character as a man, and without indelicacy towards your feelings,—may I not say that I am disappointed?"

"And is this my fault?" asked Diana, in a soft plaintive tone. "Does your lordship suppose that I have not also suffered—that I do not at present suffer?"

"Oh! yes—you have—you do," answered the nobleman, pressing her hand with warm affection. "When we were happy in each other's society, Diana," he continued, "I never spoke to you of love: indeed, I experienced for you nothing more than a fervent friendship and profound admiration. But since I have ceased to see you—during the interval of our separation—I found that you were necessary to me,—that I could not be altogether happy without you,—that your conversation had charms which delighted me,—and that your attachment was something on which I could ponder with infinite pleasure. My feelings have warmed towards you; and I—I, the Earl of Warrington—experience for you a feeling which, if not so romantic and enthusiastic as my *first affection*, is not the less honourable and sincere."

"Ah! my lord," said Diana, in a tremulous tone, "why raise the cup of happiness to my lips, when a stern fatality must dash it so cruelly away?"

"No, Diana—it shall not be thus dashed away," answered the Earl, emphatically. "I am rich—I am my own master: not a living soul has a right to control or question my conduct. The joy which I anticipated at this meeting shall not be altogether destroyed. Here, Diana—here I offer you my hand; and on your brow—scarred, blemished by an accident though it be—that hand shall place a coronet!"

"My lord, this honour—this goodness is too much," said Diana, in a tone of deep emotion. "Remember that I am no longer possessed of those charms which once attracted you; and now that they are gone—gone for ever—I may speak of what they were without vanity! Remember, I say, that you will ever have before you a countenance seared as with a red-hot iron,—a countenance on which you will scarcely be able to look without loathing in spite of all the love which your generous heart

may entertain for me! Remember that when I deck myself in the garments befitting the rank to which you seek to elevate me, that splendour would be a hideous mockery—like the fairest flowers twining round the revolting countenance of a corpse on which the hand of decay has already placed its mark! Remember, in a word, that you will be ashamed of her whom, in a moment of generous enthusiasm, you offer to reward for so much suffering—suffering which originated in no fault of yours:—remember all this, my lord—and pause—reflect—I implore you to consider well the step you are taking!"

"Diana, I am not a child that I do not know my own mind," answered the Earl: "moreover, I have the character of firmness: and I shall *never* repent the proposal I now make you—provided you yourself do not give me cause by your conduct."

"And on that head——"

"I have every confidence—the deepest conviction, Diana," interrupted the Earl, warmly.

"Your wishes, then, are my commands—and I obey," returned Diana, her voice thrilling with tones expressive of ineffable joy. "But shall we not ratify our engagement with *one* kiss?"

And as she spoke she slowly drew the black veil from her countenance.

The nobleman's heart palpitated, as she did so, with emotions of the most painful suspense—even of alarm: he felt like a man who in another instant must know the worst.

The veil dropped.

"Heavens! Diana," exclaimed the Earl, starting with surprise and indescribable delight.

For instead of a countenance seared and marked, he beheld a pure and spotless face glowing with a beauty which, even in her loveliest moments, had never seemed to invest her before.

Not a scar—not a trace of the accident was visible.

Her pouting lips were like the rose moistened with dew: her high, pale forehead was pure as marble; and her cheeks were suffused in blushes which seemed to be born beneath the clustering ringlets of her dark brown hair.

"Ah! Diana," exclaimed the Earl, as he drew her to his breast, "how can I punish thee for this cheat?"

"You will pardon me," she murmured, as she clasped her warm white arms around his neck, and imprinted a delicious kiss upon his lips, while her eyes were filled with a voluptuous languor,—"you will pardon me when you know my motives. But can you not divine them?"

"You wished to put my affection to the test, Diana," said the Earl. "Yes—I must forgive you—for you are beautiful—you are adorable—and I love you!"

"And if the sincerest and most devoted attachment on my part can reward you for all your past goodness, and for the honours which you now propose to shower upon me, then shall I not fail to testify my gratitude," exclaimed Diana.

These vows were sealed with innumerable kisses.

At length the Earl rose to depart.

"Three days hence," he said, "my carriage will be sent to fetch you to the church where our hands shall be united."

"And our hearts—for ever," returned Diana.

The nobleman embraced her once more, and took his leave.

But he did not immediately quit the house: he had business with Mr. Wentworth to transact.

We know not the precise sum that this generous peer presented to the surgeon: this, however, we can assure our readers, that he kept his word to the very letter—for Mr. Wentworth became rich in one day.

"*If you succeed in restoring her to me,*" had the Earl said, when he first entrusted Diana to the surgeon's care, "*in that perfection of beauty which invested her when I took leave of her yesterday—without a mark, without a scar,—your fortune shall be my care, and you will have no need to entertain anxiety relative to the future, with the Earl of Warrington as your patron.*"

Such were the nobleman's words upon that occasion; and, on the present, he amply fulfilled his promise.

Three days after, Diana became the Countess of Warrington.

The happy news were thus communicated by the bride to her sincerest and best friend:—

"*Grosvenor Square,*
"*March 22nd,* 1840.

"TO HER SERENE HIGHNESS THE GRAND DUCHESS OF CASTELCICALA.

"I steal a few minutes from a busy day, my dearest Eliza,—for by that dear and familiar name you permit me to call you,—to inform you that I have this morning united my destinies with those of the Earl of Warrington. In a former letter I acquainted you with the dreadful accident which menaced me with horrible scars and marks for life:—you will be pleased to know that the skill and unwearied attention of my medical attendant have succeeded in completely restoring me to my former appearance—so that not a trace of the injury remains upon my person. The Earl of Warrington has elevated me to the proud position of his wife: the remainder of my existence shall be devoted to the study of his happiness.

"I regret to perceive by your letters, dearest Eliza, that you are not altogether happy. You say that the Grand Duke loves you; but his temper is arbitrary—his disposition despotic. And yet he is amiable and gentle in his bearing towards you. Study to solace yourself with this conviction. He has elevated you to a rank amongst the reigning princesses of Europe; and as you have embraced the honours, so must you endure some few of the political alarms and annoyances which are invariably attached to so proud a position. You tremble lest the conduct of the Grand Duke, in alienating from him those who are considered his best friends, should endanger his crown. Are you convinced that those persons are indeed his friends! Of course I know not—I cannot determine: I would only counsel you, my dearest friend, not to form hasty conclusions relative to the policy of his Serene Highness.

"I perceive by the English newspapers, that there are numerous Castelcicalan refugees in this country. Amongst them are General Grachia and Colonel Morosino, both of whom, I believe, occupied high offices in their native land. They, however, appear, so far as I can learn, to be dwelling tranquilly in London—no doubt awaiting the happy moment when it shall please your illustrious husband to recall them from exile.

"His Highness Alberto of Castelcicala—(for you are aware that the Earl of Warrington communicated to me some time ago the real rank and name of *Count Alteroni*)—continues to reside at his villa near Richmond. This much I glean from the public journals; but doubtless you are well acquainted with all these facts, inasmuch as your government has a representative at the English court.

"Adieu for the present, dearest Eliza:—I knew not, when I sate down, that I should have been enabled to write so long a letter. But I must now change my dress; for the carriage will be here shortly to convey me to Warrington Park, where we are to pass the honeymoon.

"Ever your sincere friend,
"DIANA."

Such are the strange phases which this world presents to our view! That same Fortune, who, in

a moment of caprice, had raised an obscure English lady to a ducal throne, placed, when in a similar mood, a coronet upon the brow of another who had long filled a most equivocal position in society.

CHAPTER CLXXI.

MR. GREENWOOD'S DINNER-PARTY.

SOME few days after the events just related, Mr. G. M. Greenwood, M.P., entertained several gentlemen at dinner at his residence in Spring Gardens.

The banquet was served up at seven precisely:—Mr. Greenwood had gradually made his dinner hour later as he had risen in the world; and he was determined that if ever he became a baronet, he would never have that repast put on table till half-past eight o'clock.

On the present occasion, as we ere now observed, the guests were conducted to the dining-room at seven.

The thick curtains were drawn over the windows: the apartment was a blaze of light.

The table groaned beneath the massive plate: the banquet was choice and luxurious in the highest degree.

On Mr. Greenwood's right sate the Marquis of Holmesford—a nobleman of sixty-three years of age, of immense wealth, and notorious for the unbounded licentiousness of his mode of life. His conversation, when his heart was somewhat warmed with wine, bore ample testimony to the profligacy of his morals: seductions were his boast; and he frequently indulged in obscene anecdotes or expressions which even called a blush to the cheeks of his least fastidious male acquaintances.

On Mr. Greenwood's left was Sir T. M. B. Muzzlehem, Bart., M.P., and Whipper-in to the Tory party.

Next to the two guests already described, sate Sir Cherry Bounce, Bart., and the Honourable Major Smilax Dapper—the latter of whom had recently acquired a grade in the service *by purchase*.

Mr. James Tomlinson, Mr. Sheriff Popkins, Mr. Alderman Sniff, Mr. Bubble, Mr. Chouse, and Mr. Twitchem (a solicitor) completed the party.

Now this company, the reader will perceive, was somewhat a mixed one: the aristocracy of the West End, the civic authority, and the members of the financial and legal spheres, were assembled on the present occasion.

The fact is, gentle reader, that this was a "business dinner;" and that you may be no longer kept in suspense, we will at once inform you that when the cloth was drawn, Mr. Greenwood, in a brief speech, proposed "Success to the Algiers, Oran, and Morocco Railway."

The toast was drunk with great applause.

"With your permission, my lord and gentlemen," said Mr. Twitchem, the solicitor, "I will read the Prospectus."

"Yeth, wead the pwothpeckthuth, by all meanth," exclaimed Sir Cherry Bounce.

"Strike me—but I 'm anxious to hear *that*," cried the Honourable Major Dapper.

The solicitor then drew a bundle of papers from his pocket, and in a business-like manner read the contents of one which he extracted from the parcel:—

"ALGIERS, ORAN, AND MOROCCO GREAT DESERT RAILWAY.

"(Provisionally Registered Pursuant to Act.)

"Capital £1,600,000, in 80,000 shares, of £20 each.

"Deposit £2 2s. per Share.

"COMMITTEE OF DIRECTION.

"THE MOST HONOURABLE THE MARQUIS OF HOLMESFORD, G. C. B., Chairman.

"GEORGE M. GREENWOOD, Esq., M.P., Deputy Chairman.

"Sir T. M. B. Muzzlehem, Bart., M.P.
"James Tomlinson, Esq.
"Sylvester Popkins, Esq., Sheriff of London.
"Percival Peter Sniff, Esq., Alderman.
"Sir Cherry Bounce, Bart.
"The Honourable Major Smilax Dapper.
"Charles Cecil Bubble, Esq.
"Robert James Baring Chouse, Esq.

"This Railway is intended to connect the great cities of Algiers and Morocco, passing close to the populous and flourishing town of Oran. It will thus be the means of transit for passengers and traffic over a most important section of the Great Desert, which, though placed in maps in a more southernly latitude, nevertheless extends to the District through which this Line is to pass.

"The French government has willingly accorded its countenance to the proposed scheme; and the Governor-General of Algeria has expressed his sincere wish that it may be carried into effect.

"The Morocco government (one of the most enlightened in Africa) has also assented to the enterprise; and the Emperor, the better to manifest the favour with which he views the project, ordered his Prime Minister to be soundly bastinadoed for daring to question its practicability. This proof of the imperial wisdom has filled the Committee and friends of the enterprise with the most sanguine hopes.

"The support of the principal tribes, and other influential parties in Algeria and Morocco, has been secured.

"The Emperor of Morocco, on one side, and his Excellency the Governor-General of Algeria, on the other, have signified their readiness to grant a strong armed force to protect the engineers and operatives, when laying down the rails, from being devoured by wild beasts, or molested by predatory tribes.

"The ex-Emir of Mascara, Abd-el-Kadir, has entered into a bond not to interfere with the works while in progress, nor to molest those who may travel by the Line when it shall be opened; and, in order to secure this important concession on the part of the ex-Emir, the Committee have agreed to make that Prince an annual present of clothes, linen, tobacco, and ardent spirit.

"It is with the greatest satisfaction that the Committee of Direction is enabled to announce these brilliant prospects; and the Committee beg to state that application for the allotment of Shares must be made without delay to James Tomlinson, Esq., Stockbroker, Tokenhouse Yard.

"By order of the Board,

"SHARPLY TWITCHEM, Secretary."

"On my thoul, there never wath any thing better—conthith, bwief, ekthplithit, and attwactive!" cried Sir Cherry.

"Sure to take—as certain as I 'm in Her Majesty's service—strike me!" exclaimed Major Dapper.

"I think you ought to have thrown in something about African beauties," observed the Marquis; "they are particularly stout, you know, being all fed on a preparation of rice called *couscousou*. I really think I must pay a visit to those parts next spring."

"I will undertake to get one of the members of the government to introduce a favourable mention of the project into his speech to-morrow night, in the House," said Sir T. M. B. Muzzlehem: "but you must send him a hundred shares the first thing in the morning.

"That shall be done," answered Mr. Twitchem.

"Well, my lord and gentlemen," observed Mr. Greenwood, "I think that this little business looks uncommonly well. The project is no doubt feasible—I mean, the shares are certain to go off well. Mr. Bubble and Mr. Chouse will undertake to raise them in public estimation, by the reports they will circulate in Capel Court. Of course, my lord and gentlemen, when they are at a good premium, we shall all sell; and if we do not realise twenty or thirty thousand pounds each—*each*, mark me—then shall you be at liberty to say that the free and independent electors of Rottenborough have chosen as their representative a dolt and an idiot in the person of your humble servant."

"Whatever Mr. Greenwood undertakes is certain to turn to gold," observed Mr. Bubble.

"Can't be otherwise," said Mr. Chouse.

"Mr. Greenwood's name stands so well in the City," added Mr. Sheriff Popkins.

"And his lordship's countenance to the enterprise is a tower of strength," exclaimed Mr. Alderman Sniff.

"I have already had many inquiries concerning the project," said Mr. Tomlinson.

"Yes—Chouse and I took care to circulate reports in the City that such a scheme was in contemplation," observed Bubble.

"Gentlemen, I think that all difficulties have been provided against in this Prospectus," cried Mr. Twitchem;—"the predatory tribes, Abd-el-Kadir, and the wild beasts."

"Nothing could be better," answered Mr. Greenwood. "Take care that the Prospectus be sent as an advertisement to every London journal, and the leading provincial ones. You know that I am a shareholder in one of the London newspapers; and I can promise you that it will not fail to cry up our enterprise. In fact, my lord and gentlemen," added Mr. Greenwood, "I have at this moment in my pocket a copy of a leading article—that will appear in that paper, the day after to-morrow."

"My gwathioth!—do read it, Greenwood," cried Sir Cherry Bounce.

"Yes: I'd give the world to hear it—smite me!" ejaculated Major Dapper.

Mr. Greenwood glanced complacently around, and then drew forth a printed slip, the contents of which were as follow:—

"In our opposition to those multifarious railway projects which are starting up on all sides, as if some Cadmus had been sowing bubbles in our financial soil, we have only been swayed by our fears lest such a number of schemes, which never can obtain the sanction of Parliament, should injure the credit, and impair the monetary prosperity of the country. It must not, however, be supposed that we are inimical to those undertakings which are based upon fair, intelligible, and reasonable grounds. There are many talented, honourable, and wealthy individuals engaged in speculations of this nature; and, their motives being beyond suspicion, no one of common sense can for a moment suppose that we include *their* projects amongst the airy nothings against which we are compelled to put the public on their guard. The extension of railways is internally connected with the progress of civilisation; and when we behold the principle applied to distant and semi-barbarian countries—as in the case, for instance, of that truly grand and promising enterprise, the Algiers, Oran, and Morocco Great Desert Railway—we feel proud that England should have the honour of taking the initiative in thus propagating beyond its own limits the elements of civilisation, and the germs of humanising influences. At the same time we shall continue our strenuous opposition to all railway schemes which we consider to be mere bubbles blown from the pipes of intriguants and adventurers; and we shall never pause until in those pipes we put an effectual stopper."

"Thuper-ekthellent — glowiouth — majethtic — athtounding!" ejaculated Sir Cherry, quite in raptures.

"You perceive how beautifully—how delicately the puff is insinuated," said Mr. Greenwood. "That article will have an astonishing effect."

"No doubt of it," observed the Marquis. "You might have contrived to introduce something relative to the Emperor of Morocco's ladies. Why not state that the Moorish terminus will command a view of the gardens of the imperial harem, where those divine creatures—each of seventeen stone weight—are wont to ramble in a voluptuous undress?"

"No—no, my lord; that would never do!" cried Greenwood, with a smile. "And now, my lord and gentlemen, we perfectly understand each other. Each takes as many shares as he pleases. When they reach a high premium, each may sell as he thinks fit. Then, when we have realized our profits, we will inform the shareholders that insuperable difficulties prevent the carrying out of the project,—that Abd-el-Kadir, for instance, has violated his agreement and declared against the scheme,—that the Committee of Direction will therefore retain a sum sufficient to defray the expenses already incurred, and that the remaining capital paid up shall be returned to the shareholders."

"That is exactly what, I believe, we all understand," observed Mr. Twitchem.

"For my part," said Lord Holmesford, "I only embark in the enterprise to oblige my friend Greenwood; and therefore I am agreeable to any thing that he proposes."

Matters being thus amicably arranged, the company passed the remainder of the evening in the conviviality of the table.

At eleven o'clock the guests all retired, with the exception of the Marquis of Holmesford.

"Now, friend Greenwood," said this nobleman, "you will keep your engagement with me?"

"Yes, my lord: I am prepared to accompany you."

"Let us depart at once, then," added the Marquis, rising from his chair: "my carriage has been waiting some time; and I long to introduce you to the voluptuous mysteries of Holmesford House."

CHAPTER CLXXII.

THE MYSTERIES OF HOLMESFORD HOUSE.

THE Marquis and Mr. Greenwood alighted at the door of Holmesford House—one of the most splendid palaces of the aristocracy at the West End.

The Marquis conducted his visitor into a large ante-room at the right hand of the spacious hall.

The table in the middle of the apartment was covered with the most luxurious fruits, nosegays of flowers, preserves, sweetmeats, and delicious wines.

From this room three doors afforded communication elsewhere. One opened into the hall, and had afforded them ingress: the other, on the opposite side, belonged to a corridor, with which were connected the baths; and the third, at the bottom, communicated with a vast saloon, of which we shall have more to say very shortly.

The Marquis said to the servant who conducted him and Mr. Greenwood to the ante-room, "You may retire; and let *them* ring the bell when all is ready."

The domestic withdrew.

The Marquis motioned Greenwood to seat himself at the table; and, filling two coloured glasses with real Johannisberg, he said, "We must endeavour to while away half an hour; and then I can promise you a pleasing entertainment."

The nobleman and the member of Parliament quaffed the delicious wine, and indulged in discourse upon the most voluptuous subjects.

"For my part," said the Marquis, "I study how to enjoy life. I possess an immense fortune, and do not scruple to spend it upon all the pleasures I can fancy, or which suggest themselves to me. I am not such an idiot as to imagine that I possess the vigour or natural warmth which characterised my youth; and therefore I have become an Epicurean in my recreations. I invent and devise the means of inflaming my passions; and then—*then* I am young once more. You will presently behold something truly oriental in the refinements on voluptuousness which I have conceived to produce an artificial effect on the temperament when nature is languid and weak.

"Your lordship is right to fan the flame that burns dimly," observed Greenwood, who, unprincipled as he was, could not, however, avoid a feeling of disgust when he heard that old voluptuary, with one foot in the grave, thus shamelessly express himself.

"Wine and women, my dear Greenwood," continued the Marquis, "are the only earthly enjoyments worth living for. I hope to die, with my head pillowed on the naked—heaving bosom of beauty, and with a glass of sparkling champagne in my hand."

"Your lordship would then even defy the pangs of the grim monster who spares no one," said Greenwood.

"I have lived a joyous life, my dear friend; and when death comes, I can say that no mortal man—not even Solomon, with his thousand wives and concubines—nor any eastern Sultan, who had congregated the fairest flowers of Georgia, Circassia, and

Armenia in his harem,—had more deeply drunk than I of the pleasures of love."

Just as the aged voluptuary uttered these words, a silver bell that hung in the apartment was agitated gently by a wire which communicated with the adjoining saloon.

"Now all is in readiness!" exclaimed the Marquis: "follow me."

The nobleman opened the door leading into the saloon, which he entered, accompanied by Greenwood.

He then closed the door behind him.

The saloon was involved in total obscurity; the blackest darkness reigned there, unbroken by a ray.

"Give me your hand," said the Marquis.

Greenwood complied; and the nobleman led him to a sofa at a short distance from the door by which they had entered.

They both seated themselves on the voluptuous cushions.

For some moments a solemn silence prevailed.

At length that almost painful stillness was broken by the soft notes of a delicious melody, which, coming from the farther end of the apartment, stole, with a species of enchanting influence, upon the ear.

Gentle and low was that sweet music when it began; but by degrees it grew louder—though still soft and ravishing in the extreme.

Then a chorus of charming female voices suddenly burst forth; and the union of that vocal and instrumental perfection produced an effect thrilling—intoxicating—joyous, beyond description.

The melody created in the mind of Greenwood an anxious desire to behold those unseen choristers whose voices were so harmonious, so delightful.

The dulcet, metallic sounds agitated the senses with feelings of pleasure, and made the heart beat with vague hopes and expectations.

For nearly twenty minutes did that delicious concert last. Love was the subject of the song,—Love, not considered as an infant boy, nor as a merciless tyrant,—but Love depicted as the personification of every thing voluptuous, blissful, and enchanting,—Love, the representative of all the joys which earth in reality possesses, or which the warmest imagination could possibly conceive,—Love apart from the refinements of sentiment, and contemplated only as the paradise of sensualities.

And never did sweeter voices warble the fervid language of passion through the medium of a more enchanting poesy!

Twenty minutes, we said, passed with wonderful rapidity while that inspiring concert lasted.

But even then the melody did not cease suddenly. It gradually grew fainter and fainter—dying away, as it were, in expiring sounds of silver harmony, as if yielding to the voluptuous entrancement of its own magic influence.

And now, just as the last murmur floated to the ears of the raptured listeners, a bell tinkled at a distance; and in an instant—as if by magic—the spacious saloon was lighted up with a brilliancy which produced a sensation like an electric shock.

At the same time, the music struck up in thrilling sounds once more; and a bevy of lovely creatures, whom the glare suddenly revealed upon a stage at the farther end of the apartment, became all life and activity in a voluptuous dance.

Three chandeliers of transparent crystal had suddenly vomited forth jets of flame; and round the walls the illumination had sprung into existence, with simultaneous suddenness, from innumerable silver sconces.

A glance around showed Greenwood that he was in a vast and lofty apartment, furnished with luxurious ottomans in the oriental style; and with tables groaning beneath immense vases filled with the choicest flowers.

The walls were covered with magnificent pictures, representing the most voluptuous scenes of the heathen mythology and of ancient history.

The figures in those paintings were as large as life; and no prudery had restrained the artist's pencil in the delineation of the luxuriant subjects which he had chosen.

There was Lucretia, struggling—vainly struggling with the ardent Tarquin,—her drapery torn by his rude hands away from her lovely form, which the brutal violence of his mad passion had rendered weak, supple, and yielding.

There was Helen, reclining in more than semi-nudity on the couch to which her languishing and wanton looks invited the enamoured Phrygian youth, who was hastily laying aside his armour after a combat with the Greeks.

There was Messalina—that imperial harlot, whose passions were so insatiable and whose crimes were so enormous,—issuing from a bath to join her lover, who impatiently awaited her beneath a canopy in a recess, and which was surmounted by the Roman diadem.

Then there were pictures representing the various amours of Jupiter,—Leda, Latona, Semele, and Europa—the mistresses of the god—all drawn in the most exciting attitudes, and endowed with the most luscious beauties.

But if those creations of art were sufficient to inflame the passions of even that age when the blood seems frozen in the veins, how powerful must have been the effect produced by those living, breathing, moving houris who were now engaged in a rapid and exciting dance to the most ravishing music.

They were six in number, and all dressed alike, in a drapery so light and gauzy that it was all but transparent, and so scanty that it afforded no scope for the sweet romancing of fancy, and left but little need for guesses.

But if their attire were thus uniform, their style of beauty was altogether different.

We must, however, permit the Marquis to describe them to Greenwood—which he did in whispers.

"That fair girl on the right," he said, "with the brilliant complexion, auburn hair, and red cherry lips, is from the north—a charming specimen of Scotch beauty. Mark how taper is her waist, and yet how ample her bust! She is only nineteen, and has been in my house for the last three years. Her voice is charming; and she sings some of her native airs with exquisite taste. The one next to her, with the brown hair, and who is somewhat stout in form, though, as you perceive, not the less active on that account, is an English girl—a beauty of Lancashire. She is twenty-two, and appeared four years ago on the stage. From thence she passed into the keeping of a bishop, who took lodgings for her in great Russell Street, Bloomsbury. The Right Reverend Prelate one evening invited me to sup there; and three days afterwards she removed to my house."

"Not with the consent of the bishop, I should imagine?" observed Greenwood, laughing.

"Oh! no—no," returned the Marquis, chuckling and coughing at the same time. "The one who is next to her—the third from the left, I mean—is an Irish girl. Look how beautifully she is made. What vigorous, strong, and yet elegantly formed limbs! And what elasticity—what airy lightness in the dance! Did you observe that pirouette? How the drapery spread out from her waist like a circular fan! Is she not a charming creature?"

"She is, indeed!" exclaimed Greenwood. "Tall, elegant, and graceful."

"And her tongue is just tipped with enough of the Irish accent—I cannot call it *brogue* in so sweet a being—to render her conversation peculiarly interesting. And now mark her smile! Oh! the coquette—what a roguish look! Has she not wickedness in those sparkling black eyes?"

"She seems an especial favourite, methinks," whispered Greenwood.

"Yes—I have a sneaking preference for her, I must admit," answered the Marquis. "But I also like my little French girl, who is dancing next to Kathleen. Mademoiselle Anna is an exquisite creature—and such a wanton! What passion is denoted by her burning glances! How graceful are her movements: survey her now—she beats them all in that soft abandonment of limb which she just displayed. Her mother was a widow, and sold the lovely Anna to a French Field-Marshal, when she was only fifteen. The Field-Marshal, who was also a duke and enormously rich, placed her in a magnificent mansion in the Chausseé d'Antin, and settled a handsome sum upon her. But, at his death, she ran through it all, became involved in debt, and was glad to accept my offers two years ago."

"She is very captivating," said Greenwood. "How gracefully she rounds her dazzling white arms!"

"And how well she throws herself into the most voluptuous attitudes—and all, too, as if unstudied!" returned the Marquis. "The beauty next to her is a Spaniard. The white drapery, in my opinion, sets off her clear, transparent, olive skin, to the utmost advantage. The blood seems to boil in her veins: she is all fire—all passion. How brilliant are her large black eyes! Behold the glossy magnificence of her raven hair! Tall—straight as an arrow—how commanding, and yet how graceful is her form! And when she smiles—now—you can perceive the dazzling whiteness of her teeth. Last of all I must direct your attention to my Georgian—"

"A real Georgian?" exclaimed Greenwood.

"A real Georgian," answered the Marquis; "and, as Byron describes his Katinka, 'white and red.' Her large melting blue eyes are full of voluptuous, lazy, indolent, but not the less impassioned love. Her dark brown hair is braided in a manner to display its luxuriance, and yet leave the entire face clear for you to admire its beauty. Look at that fine oval countenance: how pure is the red—how delicate the white! Nature has no artificial auxiliaries there! And now when she casts down her eyes, mark how the long, silken black lashes, slightly curling, repose upon the white skin beneath the eyes. Is not that a charming creature? The symmetry of her form is perfect. Her limbs are stout and plump; but how slender are her ankles, and how exquisitely turned her wrists! Then look at her hand. What beautiful, long taper fingers! How sweet are her movements—light, yet languishing at the same time!"

"What is the name of that beauty?" asked Greenwood.

"Malkhatoun," replied the Marquis; "which means *The Full Moon*. That was the name of the wife of Osman, the founder of the Ottoman empire."

"And how did you procure such a lovely creature?" inquired Greenwood, enraptured with the beauty of the oriental girl.

"Six months ago I visited Constantinople," answered the Marquis of Holmesford; "and in the Slave-Market I beheld that divinity. Christians are not allowed to purchase slaves; but a convenient native merchant was found, who bought her for me. I brought her to England; and she is well contented to be here. Her own apartment is fitted up in an oriental style; she has her Koran, and worships Alla at her leisure; and when I make love to her, she swears by the Prophet Mahommed that she is happy here. The romance of the thing is quite charming."

"Of course she cannot speak English?" said Greenwood interrogatively.

"I beg your pardon," answered the Marquis. "She has an English master, who is well acquainted with Persian, which she speaks admirably; and I can assure you that she is a most willing pupil. But of that you shall judge for yourself presently."

During this conversation, the dance proceeded.

Nothing could be more voluptuous than that spectacle of six charming creatures, representing the loveliness of as many different countries, engaged in a *pas de six* in which each studied how to set off the graces of her form to the utmost advantage.

The genial warmth of the apartment—the delicious perfume of the flowers—the brilliancy of the light—the exciting nature of the pictures—and the enchantment of that dance in which six beings of the rarest beauty were engaged,—filled the mind of Greenwood with an ecstatic delirium.

Not the rich and luscious loveliness of Diana Arlington, whom circumstances had made his own,—not the matured and exuberant charms of Eliza Sydney, who had escaped his snares,—not the bewitching beauty of Ellen Monroe, from whose brow he had plucked the diadem of purity,—nor the licentious fascinations of Lady Cecilia Harborough, who sold herself to him for his gold,—not all these had so stirred his heart, so inflamed his ardent imagination, as the spectacle which he now beheld.

At length the dance terminated.

The Marquis then advanced towards the stage, accompanied by Greenwood, and said, "Many thanks, young ladies, for this entertainment. Allow me to present an intimate friend of mine—a gentleman whom I am anxious to initiate in the mysteries of Holmesford House."

Greenwood bowed; the six beauties returned his salutation; and the Marquis then proceeded to adjourn to the ante-room, where supper was set up.

The ladies descended from the platform by a flight of steps on one side.

"I shall give my arm to Kathleen," said the Marquis. "Do you escort whomever you fancy. There are no jealousies here."

Without hesitation Greenwood advanced towards the charming Malkhatoun, who took the arm which he presented to her, with a sweet smile—as if of gratitude for the preference.

As Greenwood thus stepped forward to meet her, he now for the first time observed the orchestra, which was situated in a large recess on the right of the stage, and had consequently been unseen by him from the place which he had originally occupied at the other end of the saloon.

The party now proceeded to the ante-room before mentioned.

There a magnificent repast was served up.

They all seated themselves at table, Kathleen next to the Marquis, and Malkhatoun by the side of Greenwood.

At first the conversation languished somewhat, the ladies being abashed and reserved in the presence of a stranger; but as they grew warmed by degrees with the generous wine, their tongues were unlocked; and in half an hour they rattled and chatted away as if they had never known restraint.

They laughed and displayed their beautiful teeth: their eyes flashed fire, or became voluptuously melting: and their cheeks were animated with the hues of the rose.

Even the fair Mohammedan did not refuse the sparkling champagne which effervesced so deliciously over the brim of the crystal glass.

The Scotch and Irish girls warbled the sweetest snatches of song which Greenwood had ever heard; and then the French damsel rose and gave admirable imitations of Taglioni's, Elssler's, and Duvernay's respective styles of dancing—throwing, however, into her movements and attitudes a wantonness which even the most exciting efforts of those *artistes* never displayed.

It was now nearly two in the morning; and Greenwood intimated to the Marquis his wish to retire.

"Just as you please," replied the old voluptuary, who had drawn Kathleen upon his knee, and was toying with her as if they were unobserved: "but if you like to accept of a bed here, there is one at your service—and," he added, in a whisper, "you need not be separated from Malkhatoun."

"Is your lordship in earnest?" asked Greenwood, also in a low tone, while joy flashed from his eyes.

"Certainly I am," replied the Marquis. "Do you think that I brought you hither merely to tantalize you?"

Greenwood smiled, and then redoubled his attentions towards the charming Georgian, who returned his smiles, and seemed to consider herself honoured by his caresses.

On a signal from the Marquis, the Scotch, English, French, and Spanish girls withdrew.

"One glass of wine in honour of those houris who have just left us!" cried the nobleman, who was already heated with frequent potations, and inflamed by the contiguity of his Hibernian mistress.

"With pleasure," responded Greenwood.

The toast was drunk; and then the Marquis whispered something to Greenwood, pointing at the same time to the door which opened into the bathing rooms.

The member of Parliament nodded an enraptured assent.

"There is a constant supply of hot water, kept ready for use," observed the nobleman. "Each room is provided with a marble bath; and vases of eau-de-cologne afford the means of cooling the water and imparting to it a delicious perfume at the same time. You will also find wines, fruits, and all species of delicate refreshments there; and adjoining each bath-room is a bed-chamber. With Malkhatoun as your companion, you may imagine yourself a Sultan in the privacy of his harem; and, remember, that no soul will intrude upon you in that joyous retreat."

Greenwood presented his hand to Malkhatoun, and led her away in obedience to the nobleman's suggestion.

The door by which they left the ante-room admitted them into a passage dimly lighted with a single lamp, and where several doors opened into the bathing apartments.

Into one of those rooms Greenwood and the beautiful Georgian passed.

Shortly afterwards the Marquis and Kathleen entered another.

Here we must pause: we dare not penetrate farther into the mysteries of Holmesford House.

CHAPTER CLXXIII.

THE ADIEUX.

OUR narrative must now take a leap of several months.

It was the middle of October.

Once more in the vicinity of Count Alteroni's mansion near Richmond, a handsome young man and a beautiful dark-eyed maiden were walking together.

Need we say that they were Richard and the charming Isabella?

The countenances of both wore an expression of melancholy; but that indication of feeling was commingled with the traces of other emotions.

Richard's eyes beamed with ardour, and his lips denoted stern resolution: Isabella's bewitching features showed that her generous soul entertained warm and profound hope, even though the cloud sate upon her brow.

"Yes, my adored one," said Richard, gazing tenderly upon her, "it is decided! To-morrow I embark on this expedition. But I could not quit England without seeing you once more, dearest Isabella; and for two or three days have I vainly wandered in this neighbourhood with the hope of meeting you—alone."

"Oh! Richard, had I for one moment divined that you were so near, I should have come to you," answered the Princess; "and this you know well! If I have hitherto discouraged clandestine meetings and secret correspondence—save on one or two occasions—it was simply because you should not have reason to think lightly of me;—but you are well aware, Richard, that my heart is thine—unchangeably thine,—and that my happiest moments are those I pass with thee!"

"I cannot chide you, dearest, for that fine feeling which has made you discourage clandestine meetings and secret correspondence," said Richard, gazing with mingled admiration and rapture upon the angelic countenance of Isabella; "but now that circumstances are about to change,—now that I shall be far away from thee, beloved girl,—that

restriction must in some degree be removed, and you will permit me to write to you from time to time."

"It would be an absurd affectation and a ridiculous prudery, were I to refuse you," replied Isabella. "Yes, dear Richard—write to me;—and write often," she added, tears starting into her eyes.

"A thousand thanks, Isabella, for this kind permission—this proof of your love. And, oh! to whatever perils I am about to oppose myself face to face,—in whatever dangers I may be involved,—whatever miseries or privations I may be destined to endure,—the thought of you, my own adored Isabella, will make all seem light! But I do not anticipate much difficulty in the attainment of our grand object. General Grachia, Colonel Morosino, and the other chiefs of this enterprise, have so well, so prudently, so cautiously digested all the measures necessary to ensure success, that failure is scarcely possible. The tyranny of the Grand Duke and of his shameless Ministry has reduced the Castelcicalans to despair. We have three fine vessels; and twelve hundred devoted patriots will form the expedition. The moment we land, we shall be welcomed with enthusiasm. And if an opportunity should serve for me to show myself worthy of the confidence that General Grachia and his colleagues have placed in me,—if," continued Richard, his handsome countenance now lighted up with a glow of heroic enthusiasm,—"if the aid of my feeble efforts can in any way demonstrate my zeal in favour of the constitutional cause, be well assured, dearest Isabella, that it is not an idle boaster, nor a braggart coward who now assures thee that he will not dishonour the service in which he has embarked."

"Of that I feel convinced, Richard," exclaimed the Italian lady, whose soul caught the enthusiasm which animated her lover. "But you know not the wild hopes—the exalted visions which have at times filled my imagination, since I heard a few weeks ago that you were one of the chiefs of this enterprise, the preparations for which were communicated to my father. For you are doubtless aware that General Grachia *has* made my father acquainted with his intentions and projects——"

"Which the Prince discountenances," added Richard, with a sigh. "Nevertheless, he is perhaps right: but if we succeed, Isabella—oh! if we succeed, your father becomes the sovereign of a great and enlightened people! Then—what hope will remain for me?"

"Providence will not desert us, Richard," answered Isabella. "Said I not ere now that the wildest hopes—the most exalted visions have dazzled my imagination? I will not describe them to you, Richard; but need I confess that they are connected with yourself? The dying words of our poor friend Mary Anne have made an impression upon me which I can never forget."

"I can well divine all the hopes and aspirations which *her* prophetic language was calculated to excite," returned Markham; "for there have been moments when I was weak enough to yield to the same influence myself. But the future is with the Almighty; and He must ordain our happiness or our misery! I must now leave you, my beloved Isabella:—when I am away thou wilt think of me often?"

"Oh! Richard, will you really depart? will you venture on this expedition, so fraught with danger?" cried Isabella, now giving way to her grief as the moment of separation drew nigh. "I told you to hope—I wished to console you; but it is I who require consolation when about to say farewell to you! Oh! Richard, if you knew what anguish now fills my heart, you would be enabled to estimate all my love for you!"

"I do—I do, adored Isabella!" ejaculated Markham, pressing her to his breast. "How devotedly—how faithfully you have loved me, I never can forget! When spurned from your father's house—overwhelmed with the most cruel suspicions, your love remained unchanged; and in many a bitter, bitter hour, have I derived sweet solace from the conviction that thy heart was mine! Oh! Isabella, God in his mercy grant that I may return from this enterprise with some honour to myself! It is not that I am influenced by motives of selfish ambition;—it is that I may remove at least one of the hundred obstacles which oppose our union. And now adieu, my angel—my dearly-beloved Isabella: adieu—adieu!"

"Farewell, Richard—farewell, dearest one—my first and only love," murmured Isabella, as she wept bitterly upon his breast.

Then they embraced each other with that passionate ardour—with that lingering unwillingness to separate—with that profound dread to tear themselves asunder, which lovers in the moment of parting alone can know.

"Let us be firm, Isabella," said Richard: "who can tell what happiness my share in this enterprise may create for us?"

"Yes—something tells me that it will be so," answered Isabella; "and that hope sustains me!"

Another embrace—and they parted.

Yes—they parted,—that handsome young man and that charming Italian maiden!

And soon they waved their handkerchiefs for the last time;—then, in a few moments, they were lost to each other's view.

Richard returned home to his house at Lower Holloway.

He had visited the farm near Hounslow a few days previously, and had taken leave of Katherine. The young maiden had wept when her benefactor communicated to her his intended absence from England for some time; but, as he did not acquaint her with the nature of the business which took him away from his native country, she was not aware of the perils he was about to encounter.

He had now to say farewell to the inmates of his own dwelling. But towards Mr. Monroe, Ellen, and the faithful Whittingham he was less reserved than he had been to Katherine.

Vainly had the old butler implored "Master Richard not to indemnify himself with other people's business;"—vainly had Mr. Monroe endeavoured to persuade him to refrain from risking his life in the political dissensions of a foreign country; vainly had the beautiful and generous-hearted Ellen, with a sisterly warmth, argued on the same side. Richard was determined:—they deemed him obstinate—foolish—almost mad; but they knew not of his love for Isabella!

"I must now make you acquainted with a certain portion of my affairs," said our hero, addressing Mr. Monroe, "in order that you may manage them for me until my return. I have embarked as much of my capital as I could well spare in the enter-

prise on which I am about to set out: you will find in my strong-box, of which I leave you the key, a sufficient sum of money to answer the expenses of the establishment until January. Should I not return by that time, you will find papers in the same place, which will instruct you relative to the moneys that will then be due to me from the two respectable individuals who are my tenants. Moreover," added Richard,—and here his voice faltered,—"my will is in the strong-box; and should I perish in this undertaking, you will find, my dear friend,—and you too, my faithful Whittingham,—that I have not left you without resources."

"Richard, this is too generous!" exclaimed Mr. Monroe, tears of gratitude trickling down his cheeks.

Whittingham also wept; and Ellen's sobs were convulsive—for she regarded Richard in the light of a dear brother.

"Render not our parting moments more painful than they naturally are, my dear friends," said Markham. "You cannot understand—but, if I live, you shall some day know—the motives which influence me in joining this expedition. Mr. Monroe—Ellen—Whittingham, I have one last request to make. You are all aware that on the 10th of July, 1843, a solemn appointment exists between my brother and myself. If I should perish in a far-off clime,—or if a prison, or any accident prevent my return,—let one of you represent me on that occasion. Should it be so, tell my brother how much I have loved him—how anxiously I have ever looked forward to that day,—how sincerely I have prayed for his welfare and his success! Tell him," continued Richard, while the tears rolled down his cheeks, large and fast,—"tell him that I have cherished his memory as no brother ever before was known to do; and if he be poor—or unhappy—or suffering—or unfortunate, receive him into this house, which will then be your own—console, comfort him! If he be criminal, do not spurn him:—remember, he is my brother!"

Ellen sobbed as if her heart would break as Richard uttered these words.

There was something fearfully poignant and convulsive in that young lady's grief.

But suddenly rousing herself, she rushed from the room; and, returning in a few moments with her child, she presented it to Markham, saying "Embrace him, Richard, before you depart;—embrace him—for he bears your Christian name!"

Our hero received the innocent infant in his arms, and kissed it tenderly.

No pen can depict the expression of pleasure—of radiant joy,—joy shining out from amidst her tears,—with which Ellen contemplated that proof of affection towards her babe.

"Thank you, Richard—thank you, my brother," she exclaimed, as she received back her child.

The old butler and Mr. Monroe were not callous to the touching nature of that scene.

"I have now no more to say," observed Richard. "I am about to retire to the library for a short time. At five o'clock the post-chaise will be here. Whittingham, my faithful friend, you will see that all my necessaries be carefully packed."

Markham then withdrew to his study.

There he wrote a few letters upon matters of business.

At length Whittingham made his appearance.

"Morcar is arrived, Master Richard," said the old man, "and it is close upon five."

"I shall soon be ready, Whittingham," answered Richard.

The old butler withdrew.

Then Richard took from his strong-box the mysterious packet which had been left to him by Thomas Armstrong; and that sacred trust he secured about his person.

"Now," he said, "I am about to quit the home of my forefathers."

And tears trickled down his cheeks.

"This is foolish!" he exclaimed, after a pause: "I must not yield to my emotions, when on the eve of such a grand and glorious undertaking."

He then returned to the drawing-room.

At that moment the post-chaise arrived at the front door of the mansion.

We will not detail the affecting nature of the farewell scene: suffice it to say that Richard departed with the fervent prayers and the sincerest wishes of those whom he left behind.

Morcar, the gipsy, accompanied him.

"Which road, sir?" asked the postillion.

"Canterbury—Deal," replied Richard.

And the post-chaise whirled him away from the home of his forefathers!

* * * * *

By a special messenger, on the same day when the above-mentioned incidents took place, the following letter was despatched from London:—

"To Her Serene Highness the Grand Duchess of Castelcicala.

"I have the honour to inform your Serene Highness that the measures which I adopted (and which your Highness condemned in the last letter your Highness deigned to address to me) have enabled me to ascertain the intentions of the conspirators. The three vessels purchased by them are now completely equipped and manned. One has already arrived in the Downs, where the Chiefs of the rebels are to join her. A second sailed from Hull four days ago: and the third left Waterford about the same time. They will all three meet at Cadiz, where they are to take in stores and water. Twelve hundred exiled Castelcicalans are on board these three ships, which are ostensibly fitted out as emigrant vessels for North America. So well have General Grachia, Colonel Morosino, and Mr. Markham planned their schemes, that I question whether even the English government is acquainted with the real destination of those ships, and the object of their crews.

"Beware, then, noble lady! The last meeting of the Chiefs of the expedition was held last evening; and I was present in my presumed capacity of a stanch adherent to the cause of the conspirators. The reasons which I adduced for not proceeding with them on the enterprise, and for remaining in London, were completely satisfactory; and no one for a moment suspected my integrity. Indeed, the confidence which Mr. Markham has placed in me from the beginning, in consequence of the share which I had in saving his life (an incident to which I have alluded in preceding letters to your Highness) on a certain occasion, annihilated all suspicion as to the sincerity of my motives.

"At the meeting of which I have just spoken, it was resolved that the descent upon Castelcicala shall be made in the neighbourhood of Ossore, which, I need scarcely inform your Serene Highness, is a small sea-port about thirty-five miles to the south of Montoni.

"And now I have discharged what I consider to be a faithful duty. If I have fallen in your Highness's good opinion by betraying those with whom I affected to act, I fondly hope that the importance of the information which I have thereby been enabled to give you, will restore me to your Highness's favour.

"But remember, my lady—remember the prayer which I offered up to your Highness when first I wrote concern-

ing this conspiracy,—remember the earnest supplication which I then made and now renew,—that *not a hair of Richard Markham's head must be injured!*

"I have the honour to subscribe myself your Serene Highness's most faithful and devoted servant,

"FILIPPO DORSENNI.

"*Oct. 16th*, 1840."

Thus was it that Mr. Greenwood's Italian valet provided, to the utmost of his power, for the safety of Richard Markham, in case those whom he improperly denominated "conspirators" should fall into the hands of the Castelcicalan authorities.

CHAPTER CLXXIV.

CASTELCICALA.

THE Grand-Duchy of Castelcicala is bounded on the north by the Roman States, on the south by the kingdom of Naples, on the east by the Apennine Mountains, and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea.

It is the most beautiful, the best cultivated, and the finest portion of the Italian Peninsula. The inhabitants are brave, enlightened, and industrious.

Castelcicala is divided into seven districts, or provinces, the capitals of which are Montoni (which is also the metropolis of the Grand Duchy), Abrantani, Veronezzi, Pinalla, Estella, Terano, and Montecuculi. Each province is governed by a Captain-General (the chief military authority), and a Political Prefect, (the chief civil authority).

The principal city, Montoni, stands at the mouth of the Ferretti, and contains a hundred thousand inhabitants. It is built on both sides of the river, has a fine harbour, spacious dockyards, and extensive arsenals, and is one of the principal trading-ports of Italy. It is strongly fortified on the system of Vauban.

The entire population of the Grand-Duchy of Castelcicala is two millons. Its revenues are three millions sterling; and the annual income of the sovereign is two hundred thousand pounds.

From these details the reader will perceive that Castelcicala is by no means an unimportant country in the map of Europe.

We shall now continue our narrative.

It was the middle of November, 1840, and at an early hour in the morning, before sun-rise, when three vessels (two large brigs and a schooner) ran in as close as the depth of water would permit them with safety, on the Castelcicalan coast a few miles below Ossore.

The boats of these vessels were immediately lowered; and by the time the sun dawned on the scene, nearly twelve hundred armed men were landed without molestation.

This force was divided into two columns: one of seven hundred strong was commanded by General Grachia; the other of five hundred was led by Colonel Morosino. Richard Markham, as Secretary-General of the Constitutional Chiefs, and attended by Morcar, accompanied General Grachia. The chiefs and their staff were all provided with horses.

The army presented a somewhat motley aspect, the officers alone appearing in uniforms. The entire force was, however, well provided with wea-

pons; and every heart beat high with hope and patriotism.

The banners were unfurled; an excellent brass band struck up an enlivening national air; and the two columns marched in the direction of Ossore.

It was deemed most important to possess this seaport without delay; as its harbour would afford a safe refuge for the three ships to which the Constitutionalists (as the invaders termed themselves) could alone look for the means of retreat, in case of the failure of their enterprise.

But of such a result they entertained not the slightest apprehension.

And now the peasants in the farm-houses and hamlets near which they passed, were suddenly alarmed by the sounds of martial music: but the rumour of the real object of the invaders spread like wild-fire; and they had not marched three or four miles, before they were already joined by nearly a hundred volunteer-recruits.

The hearts of the Constitutionalists were enlivened by this success; for while the male inhabitants of the district through which they passed hastened to join them, the women put up audible prayers to heaven to prosper their glorious enterprise.

Ossore was in the province of Abrantani, which had for nearly a year groaned under the tyranny of the Captain-General, who governed his district by martial law, the jurisdiction of the civil tribunals having been superseded by the odious despotism of military courts. The Constitutionalists, therefore, entertained the strongest hopes that Ossore would pronounce in their favour the moment they appeared beneath its walls.

The Constitutionalists were now only three miles from Ossore, which was hidden from their view by a high hill, up the acclivity of which the two columns were marching, when the quick ear of General Grachia suddenly caught the sound of horses' feet on the opposite side of the eminence.

Turning to one of his *aides-de-camp*, he said, "Hasten to Colonel Morosino—tell him to take that road to the left and possess himself of yonder grove. Our landing is known—a body of cavalry is approaching."

These words were delivered in a rapid but firm tone. The *aide-de-camp* galloped away to execute the order; and General Grachia proceeded to address a few brief but impressive words to the patriots of his division, telling them that the moment to strike a blow was now at hand.

"Markham," said the General, when he had concluded his harangue, "we shall have hot work in a few minutes."

Scarcely were these words uttered, when a large body of cavalry made its appearance on the summit of the hill. A general officer, surrounded by a brilliant staff, was at their head.

"That is Count Santa-Croce, the Captain-General of Abrantani!" exclaimed Grachia, drawing his sword. "Parley with him were vain—he is devoted to the Grand Duke. My friends, before us lies death or victory!"

The Constitutionalists gave a deafening cheer in answer to the words of their commander.

Then, like an avalanche bursting from its rest on the Alpine height, and rolling with dread and deafening din in its precipitate path, the ducal cavalry thundered down the hill.

But they were well received; and a terrific contest ensued.

The ear was deafened with the report of musketry and the clang of weapons. Bullets whistled through the air; and as the serried ranks on either side poured forth volumes of smoke,—the Constitutionalists with their muskets, and the cavalry with their carbines,—the shouts of the combatants and the groans of the dying announced the desperate nature of the conflict.

But, alas! the Constitutionalists were doomed to experience a sad blow!

General Grachia,—a patriot whose memory demands our admiration and respect,—was slain at the commencement of the battle. He died, fighting gallantly at the head of his troops; and not before the enemy had felt the weight of his valiant arm.

Almost at the same moment the ensign who bore the Constitutional banner was struck to the earth; and an officer of the ducal cavalry seized the standard.

But scarcely had he grasped it, when Richard Markham, who had vainly endeavoured to protect his chief and friend from the weapons of the enemy, spurred his steed with irresistible fury against the officer, hurled him from his seat, and snatched the banner from his grasp.

Then, waving the flag above his head with his left hand, and wielding his sword in the right, Richard plunged into the thickest of the fight, exclaiming, "Vengeance for the death of our general!"

The moment that Grachia fell, a sudden panic seized upon the Constitutionalists of his division; and they were already retreating, when that gallant exploit on the part of Markham rallied them with galvanic effect.

"Vengeance for the death of our general!" was the cry; and our hero was instantly backed by his faithful Morcar and a whole host of Constitutionalists.

The conflict was desperate—both sides fighting as if all idea of quarter were out of the question, and victory or death were the only alternatives.

Fired by the loss of General Grachia,—conscious of the desperate position in which defeat would place the invaders,—and inspired by the image of Isabella, Richard fought with the fury of the Destroying Angel.

He who had only been looked upon as possessing an able head in administrative matters, now suddenly appeared in a new light,—a gallant warrior, who by his bravery had succeeded in rallying a panic-struck army.

Already were the ducal cavalry retreating;—already had the Captain-General, who surveyed the conflict from the summit of the hill, disappeared with his staff-officers on the opposite side;—already were the Constitutionalists of Richard's division shouting "Victory,"—when Colonel Morosino's corps, which had been engaged by another body of cavalry, was observed to be in full retreat—dispersing in disorder—flying before its triumphant foes.

The rumour that Colonel Morosino himself was slain, and that a strong body of infantry, provided with cannon, was already advancing from the opposite side of the hill, now spread like wild-fire through the ranks of Richard's division.

Vainly did Markham endeavour by his example to inspire the troops with courage. A panic seized upon them: they exclaimed that some villain had betrayed them; and the disorder became general.

The ducal cavalry which were so lately in full retreat, rallied again: their charge was irresistible; they literally swept the slope of the hill down which they rushed.

Backed by a small but gallant band that scorned to retreat, and well seconded by Morcar, Richard fought with a desperation which was truly marvellous in one who had never wielded a hostile brand until that day. But a pistol-bullet disabled his right arm; and he was taken prisoner, together with Morcar and several others.

The Constitutionalists were completely defeated: five hundred fell upon the field of battle; the remainder were dispersed or captured. But scarcely three hundred succeeded in saving themselves by flight.

And almost at the same moment when this unfortunate expedition was thus overwhelmed with ruin, a Castelcicalan frigate, which had put out from Ossore harbour, shortly after the landing of the Constitutionalists, captured the three vessels which were the last hope of those patriots who had escaped from captivity or carnage.

From the summit of the hill, whither he was conducted into the presence of the Captain-General of Abrantani, Richard beheld the three vessels strike their colours to the Castelcicalan man-of-war.

"Treachery has been at work here," he said within himself; "or else how arose these preparations to receive us?"

He was not, however, permitted much time for reflection—either in respect to his own desperate condition, or that of the unfortunate fugitives whose last hope was thus cut off by the seizure of the ships; for the Captain-General—an old man, with white hair, but a stern and forbidding countenance,—addressed him in a haughty and savage tone.

"Know you the penalty that awaits your crime, young man?" he exclaimed; "for in you I doubtless behold one of the chiefs of this monstrous invasion."

"I know how to die," answered Richard, fearlessly.

"Ah!" ejaculated the Captain-General. "What traitor have we here? Some foreign mercenary

perhaps. He is not a Castelcicalan, by the accent with which he speaks our native tongue."

"I am an Englishman, my lord," said Markham, returning the proud glance of defiance and scorn which Count Santa-Croce threw upon him.

"An Englishman!" thundered the Captain-General. "Then is a military death too good for you! What brings a wretched foreigner like you amongst us with a hostile sword? You have not even the miserable subterfuge of patriotism as a palliation for your crime. Away with him! Hang him to yonder tree!"

"I have one favour to implore of your lordship," said Markham, his voice faltering not, although his cheek grew somewhat pale: "I am prepared for death—but let me not perish like a dog. Plant your soldiers at a distance of a dozen paces—let them level their muskets at me—and I promise you I shall not die a coward."

"No—you are a foreigner!" returned the Captain-General ferociously. "Away with him!"

Markham was instantly surrounded by soldiers, and dragged to the foot of a tree at a little distance.

An *aide-de-camp* of the Count was ordered to superintend the sad ceremony.

"Have you any thing which you desire to be communicated to your friends in your native country?" asked the officer, who was a generous-minded young man, and who, having beheld Richard's bravery in the conflict, could not help respecting him.

"I thank you sincerely for the kindness which prompts this question," replied our hero; "and all I have now to hope is that those who know me—in my native land—may not think that cowardice or dishonour closed the career of Richard Markham."

"Richard Markham!" ejaculated the officer. "Tell me—is that your name?"

"It is," answered our hero.

"Then there is hope for you *yet*, brave Englishman!" cried the officer; and without uttering another word, he hastened back to the spot where the Captain-General of Abrantani was standing.

Were we to say that Richard was now otherwise than a prey to the most profound suspense, we should be exaggerating the moral strength of human nature.

We have no wish to make of our hero a demigod: we allow him to be nothing more than mortal after all!

It *was*, therefore, with no little anxiety that Markham saw the officer approach the Captain-General of Abrantani, and discourse with him for some moments in a low tone. The *aide-de-camp* appeared to urge some point which he was anxious to carry: Count Santa-Croce shook his head ominously.

"Beloved Isabella," murmured Richard to himself: "shall I never see thee more?"

His eyes were still fixed upon those two men who appeared to be arguing his life or death.

At length the Captain-General took a paper from the breast of his profusely-laced blue uniform coat, and cast his eyes over it.

Richard watched him with breathless anxiety.

This state of suspense did not last long. Count Santa-Croce folded the paper, replaced it where he had taken it from, and then gave a brief command to the officer.

The latter hurried back to the spot where Markham was hovering as it were between life and death.

"You are saved, sir!" cried the Castelcicalan, his countenance expressing the most unfeigned joy.

"Generous friend!" exclaimed Richard: "by what strange influence have you worked this miracle?"

"That must remain a secret," answered the *aide-de-camp*. "At the same time I can take but little merit to myself in the transaction—beyond a mere effort of memory. You have powerful friends, sir, in Castelcicala: otherwise his lordship the Captain-General," he added in a whisper, "was not the man to spare you."

"To you I proffer my most heart-felt thanks, generous Italian!" cried Richard; "for to you I am clearly indebted for my life. Let me know the name of my saviour?"

"Mario Bazzano—junior *aide-de-camp* to Count Santa-Croce, the Captain-General of Abrantani," was the answer. "But we have no time to parley," he continued rapidly: "the good news which I have already imparted to you in respect to your life, must be somewhat counterbalanced by the commands which I have received regarding your liberty."

"Speak, Signor Bazzano," said Markham. "You saw that I did not flinch from death: it is scarcely probable that I shall tremble at any less severe sentence which may have been passed upon me."

"My orders are to conduct you to Montoni, where you will be placed at the disposal of a higher authority than even the Captain-General of Abrantani," returned the *aide-de-camp*. "But, in the first place, my lord's surgeon shall look to your wound."

Then once more did the generous-hearted Castelcicalan hasten away; and in a few minutes he returned, accompanied by the Count's own medical attendant.

Richard's arm was examined; and it was discovered that a bullet had passed through the fleshy part between the elbow and the shoulder. The wound was painful, though by no means dangerous; and the surgeon bandaged it with care and skill.

"Now, Signor Markham," said Bazzano, "it is my duty to conduct you to Montoni. I do not wish to drag you thither like a felon—because you are a brave man: at the same time I am answerable to the Count and *to another* who is higher than the Count, for your person. Gallant warriors are usually honourable men: pledge me your honour that you will not attempt to escape; and we will proceed to Montoni alone together."

"I pledge you my honour," answered Richard, "that so long as I am in your custody, I will not attempt to escape. But the moment you are released from your charge of my person, my vow ceases."

"Agreed, signor," said Bazzano.

The *aide-de-camp* then ordered his own and another horse (for Richard's steed had been sorely wounded in the conflict) to be brought to the spot where this conversation took place.

"Signor Bazzano," said Richard, "you have behaved to me in so noble and generous a manner that I am emboldened to ask another favour of you. A young man accompanied me as my attendant in this unfortunate enterprise: he has a wife and child in his native land; his parents are also living. Should

aught happen to him, four others would thereby be plunged into the depths of misery."

"Where is this person to whom you allude?" inquired Bazzano.

"He is a prisoner yonder. There—he is seated on the ground, with his face buried in his hands!"

And Richard pointed in the direction where the poor gipsy was plunged into a painful and profound reverie at a little distance.

For the third time the *aide-de-camp*,—who was a tall, active, handsome, dark-eyed young man,—hurried away. Count Santa-Croce had mounted his horse and repaired, with his staff, to view more closely the spot where the conflict had taken place, and to issue orders relative to the interment of the killed and the disposal of the prisoners. Mario Bazzano did not therefore dread the eagle glance of his superior, as he hastened to perform another generous deed and confer another favour on Richard Markham.

"Young man," he said, addressing himself to Morcar, "rise and follow me. You are to accompany your master. My good friend," he added, speaking to the sentinel who stood near, "I will be answerable for my conduct in this instance to his lordship the Captain-General."

The sentinel was satisfied; and Morcar followed the officer to the spot where Richard and the Castelcicalan soldiers who had charge of him, were standing.

A third horse was procured; and in a few minutes the *aide-de-camp*, our hero, and Morcar rode rapidly away from the scene of carnage, towards Ossore.

It were a vain task to attempt to describe the joy which succeeded Morcar's grief and apprehension, when he discovered that his own and his master's lives were beyond danger, and that Mario Bazzano was evidently so well inclined to befriend them.

"As I do not wish to keep you in an unpleasant state of suspense, signor," said the *aide-de-camp* to Richard, "I must inform you that you have little to dread at Montoni. You have powerful friends there. A short imprisonment—or some punishment of a slight nature, will be all the penalty you will both have to pay for your mad freak—or else I am much mistaken. But more I dare not—cannot say."

"Whatever be our fate," exclaimed Richard, "my heart will cherish until death the remembrance—the grateful remembrance of your noble conduct. But tell me, my generous friend—what will become of those unfortunate prisoners?"

"The chiefs of the enterprise have fallen in the conflict," answered Mario; "else the fate of traitors would have been in store for them. As for the mistaken men whom they have led to these shores, imprisonment—a long imprisonment in the citadels of Abrantani, Pinalla, and Estella, will doubtless be the penalty of their treason."

The severe terms in which the young *aide-de-camp*, who was evidently devoted to the Grand Duke's cause, spoke of the Constitutionalists, pierced like a dagger to the heart of our hero; but delicacy and gratitude towards one from whom he had received such signal obligations, prevented him from making any comment.

In a short time the little party reached Ossore, at which town they proceeded to an hotel, where they obtained refreshments. There, also, plain clothes were procured for Markham, in order that his uniform (which was different from that of the Castelcicalan officer) might not create unpleasant notice on his arrival at Montoni. Morcar had no uniform to change.

When the repast was terminated, Lieutenant Bazzano ordered a post-chaise and four; and in a short time the little party was whirling rapidly along the high road to the capital.

During the journey Richard and the *aide-de-camp* rose higher in each other's esteem, the more they conversed together; and by the time they reached their destination, a sort of friendship, which circumstances had tended to invest with unusual interest, already existed between them.

Bazzano assured our hero that the contemplated invasion of the Constitutionalists had been communicated some time previously to the Captain-General of Abrantani; but whence that information had emanated the young officer was unable to state. Preparations had, however, been in existence for at least a fortnight to receive the invaders when they set foot on the Castelcicalan territory. These assurances confirmed Richard in the opinion which he had already formed, that treachery had existed somewhere on the side of the patriots.

CHAPTER CLXXV.

MONTONI.

It was nine o'clock at night when the post-chaise entered the capital of Castelcicala.

In spite of his unfortunate position,—a prisoner, defeated in his grand aims, and with all his hopes apparently blasted,—Richard could not help feeling a glow of pleasure when he thus found himself in the sovereign city which was the birth place of his well-beloved Isabella.

But, oh! in what a state did he now enter its walls!

Instead of accompanying a victorious army to proclaim Alberto Grand Duke of Castelcicala,—instead of the society of the patriotic Grachia and the heroic Morosino,—instead of hearing the welcome voices of a liberated people echoing around,—the young man was in the custody of a subaltern, and, for aught he knew, on his way to a dungeon!

Then—Grachia, Morosino, and the other chiefs of the enterprise—where were they?

Numbered with the dead—or captives in the hands of a savage conqueror!

Oh! how were Markham's fondest hopes blasted! how were his elysian dreams dissipated by the mocking reality of disaster and defeat!

Now, too, how much farther than ever was he removed from the sole object of his toils,—the only hope of his existence,—the hand of Isabella!

Her father, who had all along discountenanced the projects of the Constitutionalists, but who would naturally have pardoned them had they succeeded, could not for a moment be expected to forgive the survivors of that terrible defeat!

All these gloomy ideas annihilated in a moment the temporary glow of pleasure which our hero had experienced on entering Montoni.

The chaise traversed the southern part of the metropolis, crossed the Ferretti by a noble bridge,

and entered the most fashionable and imposing quarter of that portion of the city which stands on the northern side of the river.

At length it stopped at an hotel.

"We shall alight here," said Mario Bazzano.

"But this is not a prison!" exclaimed Richard.

"I never told you that you were on your way to such a place," returned the *aide-de-camp*, laughing.

"Did you not hint at imprisonment, signor?" said our hero, surprised at the kind forbearance shown towards him—captured, as he had been, with arms in his hand against the reigning Prince.

"That may, or may not happen," replied Bazzano. "At all events, here we will alight: and, remember, while in my charge, you are on your parole. It is not necessary to let the gossips of this tavern know who you are, or why you are here with me."

"My honour is pledged, and the vow will be punctually fulfilled," said Markham.

They then descended from the vehicle, and were conducted to a private apartment in the hotel.

Bazzano ordered refreshments: then, as soon as he himself had drunk a glass of wine and eaten a mouthful of food, he left the room, simply observing, "I may be absent nearly an hour; but I will thank you not to retire to rest until my return."

Markham bowed an acquiescence with this request; and, as soon as the door had closed behind the *aide-de-camp*, he exclaimed, "If Signor Bazzano be a fair specimen of the Castelcicalans generally, they are a glorious race!"

"Some kind power seems to protect you in this country, Mr. Markham," observed Morcar.

"I candidly confess that I am at a loss to interpret these occurrences," returned our hero. "At the moment when the cord is round my neck, the mention of my name saves my life, and converts an enemy into a stanch friend. Even the ferocious Captain-General of Abrantani relaxes all his natural severity in my behalf. Then, instead of being chained, I am scarcely guarded: instead of being placed between two soldiers with loaded muskets, I am allowed to remain upon parole. He who has charge of me, leaves me for an hour, with a simple request not to retire to rest until his return! Yes—some secret power protects me. It is true that a few years ago I once met her who now occupies a seat on the Grand-ducal throne," he continued, rather musing to himself, than addressing his words to Morcar; "but she can scarcely remember—or, even if she do—could not be supposed to interest herself in one so obscure, so humble as I!"

Then he paced the room—lost in conjecture, and giving way to the immense variety of reflections which his position was calculated to engender.

In an hour the young *aide-de-camp* returned.

"Signor Markham," he said, "you will have the kindness to accompany me whither I shall conduct you. You," he added, addressing himself to Morcar, "must await our return here."

Richard signified his readiness to follow Bazzano; and they left the hotel together.

It was now past eleven o'clock; and, though the shops were all closed, the streets of Montoni were resplendent with the lustre which streamed from the windows of the *cafés*, *restaurants*, and club-houses.

Markham could not help observing to his companion that there appeared to be numerous patrols of military moving about in the capital, and that the sentinels were posted along the streets at very short intervals.

"The news of this morning's invasion reached Montoni several hours ago," answered the *aide-de-camp*; "and I do not disguise from you the fact that until this strong military demonstration was made, the city was in an extraordinary ferment. This I heard just now, previous to my return to the hotel."

"The reigning Grand Duke seems very unpopular," observed Markham.

Bazzano made no reply: it was evident that he could not contradict the assertion; and, being in his sovereign's service, he could not with propriety corroborate it.

A quarter of an hour's rapid walking brought our hero and the young officer to an immense square; and the magnificent buildings on two sides thereof shed a brilliant light from their ample casements.

"This is the ducal palace," said Mario.

Crossing the square, the officer led the way towards a small door in one of the angles of the immense edifice.

Mario knocked gently; and the door was immediately opened by a tall servant in a gorgeous livery.

Markham followed his companion into a small vestibule, brilliantly lighted, and at the end of which was a narrow staircase carpetted all over.

Not a word was spoken: the domestic bowed as the two young men passed him; and Bazzano led the way up the staircase, which was lighted by lamps held in the hands of marble statues placed in recesses.

On the landing which the visitors speedily reached, an usher, dressed in black, and wearing a massive gold chain, advanced to receive them; and, opening a door, conducted them into an ante-room, where he requested them to be seated.

He then opened another door on the opposite side from which they had entered the room, and disappeared for a few minutes.

On his return, he desired Markham to follow him.

Our hero obeyed, and was led through several magnificent apartments, all brilliantly lighted, but unoccupied at the moment.

At length the usher paused in a room smaller, but more elegantly furnished, than any of the preceding ones; and, having requested our hero to take a seat, he retired by the same door by which they had entered that room.

For a few minutes Richard remained alone with his reflections.

He was now in the Castelcicalan palace. But wherefore had he been brought thither? Was it to undergo an examination before the Grand Duke, relative to the invasion of the morning? was it to be overwhelmed with reproaches by that sovereign against whom, and without provocation, he had borne arms? Could treachery be meditated? No—that idea was absurd. He was so completely in the power of the Grand Duke, that there had been no need to exercise treachery towards him, if punishment were intended.

Then our hero thought of the Grand Duchess. Had she learnt that he was engaged in the expedition? had she remembered his name? was it through her he had received that treatment from Mario Bazzano which had so astonished him? could

it be possible that she would interest herself in him?

He was in the midst of his reverie, when a door opposite to where he was sitting, suddenly opened; and a lady, elegantly attired, with a tiara of diamonds upon her brow, entered the apartment.

One glance was sufficient for Richard Markham!

He immediately recognised the beautiful woman whom he had seen five years previously, disguised in male attire, at Mrs. Arlington's lodgings, and whose singular history had subsequently reached his ears when he was imprisoned at the same time as herself, though of course not in the same department, in Newgate.

Yes—he recognised *her* who was once Eliza Sidney; and he now bent his head to the grand Duchess of Castelcicala.

Although somewhat pale, and showing a slightly deeper shade of that melancholy expression which her countenance had acquired during her captivity of two years, Eliza was still eminently lovely.

Her form had expanded into those proportions which indicated the maturity of her charms, but which gave to her beauty a voluptuousness that was only attempered by the chaste glances of her melting hazel eyes, and the halo of purity which dwelt on her lofty and spotless brow.

And well fitted was that pure and open forehead to be crowned with the glittering tiara which denoted her sovereign rank, and which set off to such exquisite advantage the large bands of her light, luxuriant, shining, chesnut hair!

Her walk was a dignified and yet harmonious motion;—her gesture expressed no particle of hauteur, but still denoted a consciousness of the respect which she felt to be due to her position as a Princess, and to her character as a woman.

"Resume your seat, Mr. Markham," she said in a sweet tone, and with a manner full of grace: then, placing herself on a sofa at a short distance, she added, "I have had the pleasure of seeing you before; but little did I *then* suppose that the next time we met, it would be under such circumstances as these."

"I comprehend your Serene Highness," answered Markham, firmly, but respectfully. "We meet—your Highness as a sovereign Princess, and I as a prisoner at the disposal of those who have power to command in this State."

"Such is indeed the fact, Mr. Markham," returned the Grand Duchess, with a half smile. "But I did not send for you hither to reproach you. Doubtless you considered yourself justified in the proceedings which you have adopted, and in joining the cause of those mistaken men who this morning set hostile feet upon these shores;—for I have received from an agent of mine in England assurances of your honourable nature and estimable character; and I did not fail some time since to issue those secret instructions to the various authorities, which saved your life this morning, and ensured you good treatment at the hands of those into whose power you were doomed to fall. Moreover, I learn that you behaved most gallantly in the conflict between your party and the ducal troops; and I can respect bravery, Mr. Markham, even in an enemy."

"Your Serene Highness will give me credit for the sincerity with which I express my gratitude for the kindness that I have received at your hands," said Markham; "especially under circumstances, which—whatever opinion I may entertain of them—could not have served me as a very favourable passport to the notice of your Highness."

"Mr. Markham," returned the Grand Duchess, "you are an Englishman—and that is one reason to induce me to exercise some leniency in your case; for however profoundly my interests may be identified with this country, it is impossible that I can forget my own. Secondly, I am better acquainted with your history than you imagine. Do you remember an anonymous letter which your late father received—some years ago,—yes—it was in 1831, I believe,—warning him of a burglarious attempt which was contemplated in respect to his abode?"

"I remember well the letter to which your Highness alludes," answered Markham, surprised at this mention of an incident which had occurred only a short time previously to the separation of himself and his brother on the hill-top.

"That letter was written by myself," said the Grand Duchess, with a smile.

"Written by your Highness!" ejaculated Markham, more and more amazed at what he heard.

"Yes, Mr. Markham," continued Eliza: "it was I who sent that warning. Circumstances enabled me to overhear the discourse of two miscreants in whose den I accidentally took refuge during a storm, and whence I narrowly escaped with my life. But enough of that: I merely mentioned the circumstance to show you that your name has long been familiar to me. Then, about four years after that event, I met you at the abode of a lady from whom I have since received signal kindnesses, and who is now the Countess of Warrington."

"I remember that evening well, your Highness," observed Richard.

"Afterwards," resumed the Grand Duchess, sinking her voice, "you and I were the inmates of a tenement whose severity you deserved perhaps much less than I—though heaven knows the artifice that was used to involve me in that desperate venture!"

"Your Serene Highness has heard, then, that I too was innocent of the crime laid to my charge?" said Markham.

"I imagined so when I first learnt the particulars of your case at the time of its occurrence," answered the Grand Duchess; "and my agent in England has lately confirmed me in that belief. Then, again," she added, with an arch smile, "I am not ignorant of the motives which induced you to embark, like a gallant cavalier, in the enterprise whose results have led to this interview."

"Your Serene Highness will not wrong, by injurious suspicions, an exiled family!" said Markham, well knowing to what Eliza alluded.

"No!" exclaimed the Grand Duchess, solemnly: "I am aware that Prince Alberto did not countenance the expedition; and I can scarcely believe that his charming daughter," she continued, archly smiling again, "could have been very ready to permit you to embark on so mad an enterprise. You see, Mr. Markham, that I am acquainted with more than you would have supposed me to know. And now, perhaps, you will be surprised, when I assure you that I entertain the most profound respect and esteem for Prince Alberto and his family—although I have never seen them. But, oh!" exclaimed Eliza, wiping away a tear, "how great was my grief when I learnt, this afternoon, that my friend General Grachia had fallen in the conflict of the morning!"

"General Grachia invariably spoke to me in the most pleasing terms of your Serene Highness," observed Richard.

"Do not think, Mr. Markham," said the Grand Duchess, after a pause, during which she seemed a prey to deep thought,—"do not think that I have been a party to all the instances of severity and sentences of exile which have lately characterised the political history of Castelcicala. No, Mr. Markham—I would not have you think unworthily of your fellow-countrywoman. But, enough of that! You can well imagine that I am not all-powerful here:—otherwise," she added, with a sigh, "it would be different! Time is, however, pressing; and I have not yet spoken to you on the matter which ought to form the principal topic of our conversation;—I mean your own position. You have heard enough from my lips to show you that you are not unknown to me, and that there are consequently reasons which have induced me to interest myself in your behalf. But, as I ere now observed, my power is not unlimited; and although my secret wishes are commands in the eyes of Count Santa-Croce and his officers, still my influence is not sufficient to protect you from the vengeance of the Grand Duke, did he know that *one* of the invaders was at large and unpunished in his dominions. It is true that I can soften his rigour—as I shall do in respect to those unhappy prisoners——"

"God be thanked that their condition excites the compassion of your Serene Highness!" exclaimed Markham fervently. "A weight is removed from my mind by this assurance!"

"Rest satisfied on that head," said Eliza. "I can promise you that imprisonment is the worst punishment which shall overtake any of them."

When Eliza had first entered the room, Richard had bowed his head low to the Grand Duchess; but now he sank on his bended knee in presence of the humane and tender-hearted woman.

Eliza felt the full force of this expression of feeling:—it rewarded her for her goodness!

She extended her hand towards him; and he respectfully touched it with his lips.

Then he rose, and resumed his seat.

Oh! at that moment, how sweet—how sweet to the amiable and noble-minded woman,—noble in nature, as well as in name,—was the possession of power;—and how amply recompensed was she for its humane use, by that spontaneous tribute of respect which she had just received from her fellow-countryman!

"Mr. Markham," she said, after a pause, "you must escape from Castelcicala: but that is not so easy a matter as you may haply imagine. The Castelcicalan steam-frigates will rigorously guard the coast by sea, and the custom-house officers by land; and not a ship will leave one of our ports without being searched. Orders to that effect have already been issued by the Minister of Marine; and I dare not interfere to prevent their full operation. Are you bold enough to strike far into the country, traverse its length, and obtain refuge in the Neapolitan kingdom?"

"And wherefore not in the Roman States, my lady?" asked Richard. "Their frontier is but a day's distance from Montoni."

"Because the Grand Duke has concluded a league, offensive and defensive, with the Pope; and you would assuredly be detected in the dominions of his Holiness, and sent ignominiously back to Montoni—in which case, Mr. Markham, I could not save you."

"And what chance of safety do I possess by following the plan suggested by your Serene Highness?"

"Every chance," was the decided reply. "In the first place, Signor Mario Bazzano will procure for you a passport: his uncle is Under-Secretary for the Interior. This passport, made out for you in a fictitious name, will be dated from Montoni; and the various authorities will never suspect that one of the invaders could possibly have obtained such a document from the capital itself. Secondly, you can purchase a portfolio with drawing materials, and pass yourself off for an English artist, sent to Castelcicala to design some of the most striking features of Italian scenery. By these means there will be an ostensible reason for avoiding the great cities and towns; and no suspicion will be excited by your keeping as much as possible to the open country. Does my plan please you?"

"How can I ever sufficiently express my gratitude to your Serene Highness for all this kind consideration—this unlooked-for generosity?" cried Markham.

"By abstaining from plans of invasion or insurrection in future," answered Eliza.

"Ah! how can I pledge myself to such a condition?" exclaimed Richard. "Should circumstances induce or compel Prince Alberto to strike a blow——"

"I fully comprehend you," interrupted the Grand Duchess. "In that case, I impose no conditions whatsoever upon you. Go, Mr. Markham—adopt the plan which I have suggested—and you will soon be beyond the reach of danger. And excuse me," she added, after a moment's pause, "if I act as your banker, as well as your adviser. Use this purse; and, on your arrival in England, you can liquidate the debt by affording succour to any needy Castelcicalan whom chance may throw in your way."

"Before I receive this new proof of your goodness—before I take my leave,—your Serene Highness must permit me, on my bended knee,"—and our hero sank to that posture as he spoke,—"to declare that, while I shall henceforth consider myself indebted to your Highness in an obligation which I can never repay,—while I shall ever hold myself ready to serve your Highness by day and night, and to dare every earthly danger in so doing—in order to evince my gratitude for all that your Highness has this day done for me,—still I would rather be delivered up to the hands of justice,—I would rather die on the scaffold to-morrow, or take my stand in front of a platoon,—than renounce—Englishman—foreigner though I be—the cause of Castelcicalan liberty!"

"Rise, headstrong—foolish young man," exclaimed the Grand Duchess, smiling. "I seek to impose no conditions upon you. "Go; and when once you are beyond the Castelcicalan territory, use your own free will—let no shackle of any kind curb the ardour of your soul. At the same time, beware! On another occasion, I may seek to protect you in vain!"

"Never—never again, your Highness, will I wantonly aid in provoking civil strife in Castelcicala!" ejaculated Richard. "Two motives shall alone henceforth be powerful enough to induce me to unsheath the hostile weapon in this clime."

"And which are they?" asked Eliza, still half smiling as she spoke.

"In obedience to the command of Prince Alberto—and then only if *his* cause be just; or in order to relieve Castelcicala from some foreign invader."

"And may God grant that neither of those alternatives shall ever occur!" said the Grand Duchess. "But our interview has already lasted a long time; and delay is dangerous to you."

Eliza once more extended her hand towards our hero, who pressed it respectfully, but with fervour, to his lips.

He then withdrew.

In the adjoining apartment he found the usher waiting for him.

They retraced their steps to the ante-room, where Signor Mario Bazzano was seated, expecting their return.

In a few minutes our hero and the young *aide-de-camp* were on their way back to the hotel.

During the walk, Bazzano said, "I presume you have assented to the plan which her Highness has devised for your safe retreat into the Neapolitan territory?"

Markham replied in the affirmative.

"In that case I will procure passports for yourself and attendant, to-morrow morning," observed the young officer. "But, for the present, we all three stand in need of rest."

CHAPTER CLXXVI.

THE CLUB-HOUSE.

We must now transport our readers back to London.

At about the same time when the events of the two preceding chapters occurred in Castelcicala, others of a scarcely less interesting nature took place in the great metropolis of England.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon of one of those dark, misty, dispiriting November days, when the sun is scarcely visible, and sinks early to rest, that half-a-dozen fashionable gentlemen were lounging in the bay-window of a Club-House in St. James's Street.

They were all dressed in the first style: gold chains festooned over waistcoats of the most recent Parisian fashion; and brilliantly polished boots, without a speck of mud upon them, showed that their owners had not arrived at the Club on foot.

"What news in the political world, Greenwood?" asked the Marquis of Holmesford.

"Nothing particular," answered the gentleman appealed to. "Our party is sure to drive the Whigs out next year; and then I shall show the independent and enlightened freemen of Rottenborough that they will acquire some honour through the medium of their representative."

"I suppose you will do a little good for yourself—eh, Greenwood?" asked the Honourable Augustus Smicksmack—a lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards, and just turned nineteen: "a baronetcy—eh, Greenwood? for that 's the rumour, I believe?"

"Well, I *do* hope that Fame for once is not far wrong, my dear fellow," answered Mr. Greenwood.

"And I must beg of you to support my friend the Honourable Gively Starkeley's new Game Bill, which he intends to introduce next session," observed Lord Dunstable—a major in a crack regiment, and whose age was probably one-and-thirty.

"A new Game Bill!" ejaculated Mr. Greenwood, horror depicted on his countenance. "Surely your friend Starkeley cannot mean to relax the penalties which now exist in respect to poaching?"

"Quite the reverse," answered Lord Dunstable. "He thinks—as I think—that the present statute is not stringent enough; and he has drawn up a bill—at least, Rumrigg the barrister did for him—making it transportation for life to shoot game without a license, and transportation for fifteen years for looking at a bird or a hare with an unlawful purpose."

"*That Bill* will receive my most unqualified support, Dunstable," said Mr. Greenwood. "In fact, the laws cannot be too stringent against poachers."

"Certainly not," observed Colonel Cholmondeley, a gentleman of about three-and-thirty who was one of the group in the Club-House window. "For my part, I consider a murderer or a highwayman to be an estimable character in comparison with a poacher."

"Decidedly so," exclamed Lord Dunstable. "A murderer kills his victim—a highwayman robs a person; and the thing is done. The individuals murdered or plundered alone suffer. But a poacher deprives hundreds of noblemen and gentlemen of their legitimate sport: he preys upon the aristocracy, as it were;—and, by God! I 'll defend the privileges of the aristocracy with my life!"

"Oh! certainly—certainly," muttered the Marquis of Holmesford, who, in consequence of swollen gums, had been compelled to lay aside his false teeth for a few days, and was therefore somewhat incomprehensible in his speech. "Always defend the aristocracy! *The millions*, as they call themselves, are ever ready to assail us: they 're jealous of us, you see—because we have carriages and horses, and they have not."

"And for many other reasons," observed Mr. Greenwood. "But I always know how to serve the scurvy riff-raff. Why, it was but the other day that some thirty or forty of the independent and intelligent electors of Rottenborough assembled together at the *Blue Lion* in their town, to address a remonstrance to me on my parliamentary conduct, and call upon me to resign."

"And what did you do?" asked Lord Dunstable.

"Oh! I knew my men well enough: it was not the first time they had taken this step," continued Greenwood. "My agent down there wrote me up an account of their intentions; and I sent him instructions how to act. The malcontents met; there was a great deal of speechifying; and the tide flowed strong against my interests. The chairman was about to put to the vote a Resolution condemnatory of my conduct, when the landlord entered, and addressed the meeting in this manner:—'Gentlemen, Mr. Greenwood, having heard that it was your intention to assemble here this evening, has conveyed to me his commands to serve up a little supper—poultry, turtle, venison, and other trifles of the same kind, together with as much port and sherry as you can drink. The supper is now ready, gentlemen: you had better partake of it first, and continue your deliberations afterwards.'"

"Capital—excellent!" exclaimed Lord Dunstable.

"Glowiouth—thuperfine—bwilliant!" cried Sir Cherry Bounce, who was one of the group.

"Strike me—but it was uncommon good!" observed Major Dapper, who was also present.

"Well—what followed?" demanded Colonel Cholmondeley.

"Yes, do tell us," said Mr. Smicksmack.

"Oh! the result was simple enough," continued Greenwood. "The free and independent electors of Rottenborough adjourned to the supper-room, gorged and drank till their senses were completely obfuscated, and then passed a vote of confidence in their Member, one gentleman alone not holding up his hand in its favour."

"What was the reason of that?" inquired the Marquis of Holmesford.

"Simply because he was dead drunk under the table," answered Greenwood. "And then this fellow had the impudence to write a letter next day to all the newspapers to say *that he alone had remained dissentient upon principle!*"

"Pwepothterouth!" loudly exclaimed Sir Cherry Bounce.

"Hold your tongue, Cherry," said Major Smilax Dapper. "You're a ——"

"A what, Thmilackth?" asked the youthful baronet.

"A bore—strike me!" replied the major.

There was a general laugh at the expense of Sir Cherry Bounce, who coloured up to the very roots of his hair.

"What's become of Harborough, does any one know?" said Lord Dunstable, when the cachinnation was concluded.

"Gone into the country with his friend Chichester, I believe," replied Greenwood. "Harborough and I have not spoken for a long time; but I heard of him a little while ago."

"A dreadful thing that was about his wife," observed the Honourable Augustus Smicksmack.

"I don't think Harborough cared much about it," returned Greenwood. "They had long led a cat-and-dog kind of a life. The moment Lady Cecilia's suicide reached the ears of Sir Rupert, who was in France at the time, he came over to England, and sold the few things which had belonged to his wife—her trinkets, I mean; for the house in Tavistock Square was a ready-furnished one."

"And *that* he gave up, I believe?" said Dunstable.

"Or rather the landlord took it away from him," answered Greenwood. "That intimacy with Reginald Tracy was a bad business for Lady Cecilia," he continued. "But I had my suspicions of *him* before the exposure took place. The fact is, I saw him at a masquerade ball one night, at Drury Lane theatre."

"At a masquerade?" ejaculated Lord Dunstable.

"Yes. I was dressed as a Greek brigand, and he was attired as a monk."

"The sanctified scoundrel!" said Colonel Cholmondeley, in a tone of deep indignation. "What dishonour he brought upon the cloth! You know my brother the Archdeacon? Well, he's as jovial a fellow as you could wish to meet. Keeps his three mistresses, his horses and hounds, and goes to bed mellow every night of his life. But *he* does things discreetly."

"In a proper manner, to be sure," muttered the Marquis of Holmesford. "But, by the by, Greenwood, you once admired my beautiful Georgian."

"And I often think of her now, my lord," returned the Member of Parliament.

"I'll make you a proposal, if you like," continued the Marquis, grinning like an antiquated goat. "I have taken quite a fancy to your bay mare *Cleopatra*."

"Yes—'tis a beautiful bit of horse-flesh," remarked Greenwood.

"Well—my Georgian for your bay mare?" said the Marquis. "Is it a bargain?"

"A decided bargain," replied Greenwood.

"But how do you know that the lady will submit to the exchange?" asked Smicksmack, with a smile.

"I feel convinced that she will offer no objection," answered Greenwood. "It is true that every slave becomes free when once the foot touches the soil of this country, as I once observed to the independent electors of Rottenborough;—but I am sure that she will wear the gold chain that I shall be delighted to throw around her."

"Well spoken, Greenwood!" cried the Marquis. "Send the bay to my stables in the morning; and fetch away the Georgian when you choose."

"Greenwood 's the man for business," observed Lord Dunstable. "By the by, how did the African Railroad scheme turn out?"

"Oh! admirably," replied the capitalist. "I cleared my ten thousand by it: so did the Marquis."

"But I lotht thwee thouthand, though—and a pwethiouth wage I wath in," said Sir Cherry.

"Because you kept your shares too long, my dear fellow," remarked Greenwood coolly. "No, my good woman—I have nothing for you!"

These last words were uttered, in a loud tone, and accompained by a stern shake of the head, to a poor, ragged, shivering creature, who had paused on the pavement outside to solicit alms from the aristocrats assembled at the window.

The miserable woman cast one glance of ineffable anguish on Mr. Greenwood, and then hurried away, overwhelmed by the savage determination of his refusal.

"That poor wretch has been good-looking in her time," said Mr. Smicksmack. "Although it is nearly dark, I caught sight of her countenance by the light of the lamp."

"And so did I," whispered Lord Dunstable to Colonel Cholmondeley, whom he drew aside. "Do you know who that was?" he asked in a low and somewhat hoarse tone.

"No: how the devil should I?" said the Captain, also sinking his voice—but simply because Dunstable did so.

"If that poor mendicant were not Lydia Hutchinson," returned the young nobleman, "I never was more mistaken in my life. But, my God! how altered!"

And for a few moments his countenance became inexpressibly sad.

"What nonsense to give way to feelings of that kind!" whispered Cholmondeley.

"But she was once so beautiful!" said Dunstable. "Do you remember the first time we ever met her—in Hyde Park——"

"I was thinking a deuced deal too much about Adeline Enfield, at that time, to bother myself about Lydia What-'s-her-name," interrupted the colonel, impatiently. "Come—it 's of no use yielding to maudlin feelings of that kind, Dunstable. We are

all going to dine together presently: and if you wear that kill-joy countenance, I shall wish you at the devil."

Then the Captain drew the young nobleman back to the group in the window; and in a few minutes the sprightly nature of the conversation banished from Dunstable's mind the unpleasant reminiscences which had been temporarily excited by the sudden appearance of one whom he knew so well!

In the meantime that miserable female pursued her way down St. James's Street.

The weather was cold—dreadfully cold: the streets were damp—and she had neither shoes nor stockings!

An old cotton gown, a wretched rag of a shawl, and a broken straw bonnet, constituted her sole attire.

Not an article of clothing had she more than those enumerated.

She had parted with her under garments to obtain the means of subsistence; not even a petticoat had she beneath that thin cotton gown!

When she stopped for a moment to implore alms at the Club-window, it was the first time she had ever begged. She had not recognised *him* who had recognised her: but the stern countenance of Greenwood, as he refused her a single penny from his immense wealth, had struck her with despair.

If the rich would not assist her, how could she hope for succour from the poor?

She hurried down the street, weak and weary as she was;—but she hurried, with a sort of shuffling pace, because she was cold, and her feet were so benumbed that she could not feel that she had any!

She passed many a brilliantly lighted shop,—many a superb Club,—many a magnificent hotel, from the underground windows of which emanated the savoury steam of delicious viands:—she beheld cheerful fires, roaring up the chimneys of the kitchens whence those odours came;—but she was starving, shivering, dying, all the same!

A carriage, with arms emblazoned on the panels, and with horses whose beauty and appointments attracted the gaze of the passengers, was standing opposite to a splendid shawl-warehouse.

Just as the poor mendicant was passing, a tall

footman, carrying a gold-headed cane in his hand, pushed her rudely back, exclaiming, "Do n't you see that you 're in the way?"

The shivering woman cast a timid look around, and beheld an elderly gentleman handing a lady, much younger than himself, to the carriage above mentioned.

The blaze of light from the shop window illuminated that portion of the street; and as the elegantly-dressed lady turned her countenance towards her companion, to answer some observation which he made to her, the mendicant caught a full view of her beautiful features.

A scream escaped from the beggar's lips: then, in the next moment, she rushed towards the door of the carriage, which the gentleman and lady were just entering.

"Miss Enfield—Adeline!" she exclaimed.

"What do you want, my good woman?" cried the voice of the nobleman—for such indeed he was.

"Miss Enfield—I—I am starving!" answered the beggar, clinging to the door.

"Do you know her, my dear?" asked the nobleman.

"I—I think she was once a teacher at the school, where——" faltered the beautiful lady, evidently by no means pleased at the recognition.

"Oh! a teacher!" cried the nobleman. "Ah! it is easy to see what she has come to:"—and he drew up the carriage window violently.

That was a signal for the coachman to whip his horses: the fiery animals sprang forward—the carriage moved off with a species of jerk—the poor starving, shivering creature was thrown upon the kerb-stone—and there she lay insensible.

In a moment she was surrounded by a crowd, that formed a circle about her, and stood gazing on the prostrate, motionless form as if the spectacle were very interesting, but by no means calculated to awaken compassionate sympathy.

Then a huge policeman elbowed his way through the crowd, crying "Move on here!" in a very savage tone, and crushing divers bonnets, besides upsetting sundry small boys in his endeavours to force a passage.

But at the same moment that he reached the spot where the poor creature was lying, a lady, about six-and-twenty years of age, and well though by no means showily dressed, pressed through the crowd, and immediately bestowed her attention on the mendicant female.

The lady raised the unfortunate being's head; and then, by the light of the lamp, it was discovered that she had received a wound on the temple, from which the blood was flowing freely.

"She must be conveyed to the hospital, if she 's got any broken bones," said the policeman; "and to the workus if she has n't."

"She shall go to neither," observed the lady firmly: "I will take care of her until she is recovered."

"What—do you know her, mum?" demanded the policeman.

"No—I never saw her before in my life, to my knowledge," answered the lady. "But I cannot help feeling for a fellow-creature—especially one of my own sex—in such a position."

A murmur of approbation arose amongst the crowd.

"Will you help me to convey the poor creature to the neighbouring surgeon's?" continued the lady, addressing herself to the officer. "See—she opens her eyes—she moves—but, my God! how wan, how thin, how cold she is!"

The wretched woman was removed to the adjacent establishment of a medical practitioner; and in a short time the benevolent lady had the satisfaction of ascertaining that the wound on the poor creature's forehead was the only injury which she had sustained by the fall.

"She is more in need of sustenance, madam, than medicine," said the surgeon, when he had bandaged the wound. "I will give her a glass of wine and a morsel of light food."

This humane proposal was immediately carried into effect;—the starving creature would have eaten ravenously; but the surgeon prudently checked her;—and in a short time she was considerably revived.

She appeared to be about seven or eight and twenty years of age; and possessed the remains of great personal attractions. But her dark eyes were sunken, and their lustre was dimmed with privation: her cheeks were hollow; and her form was little more than mere skin and bone.

The lady did not ask her if she had any friends, or any home. Such a question would have been a superfluous mockery of one whose appearance was sufficient to convey the sad tale of utter destitution and hopelessness.

"You shall come with me, my poor creature," whispered the lady, in a kind tone. "I know not who nor what you are; but I am touched to the very heart by your sorrowful condition."

"Ah! madam, if you knew all—" began the woman, bursting into tears; "if you knew——"

"I wish to know nothing now," interrupted the lady. "It is sufficient for me that you are in distress."

The surgeon's boy was despatched for a hackney-coach, into which the invalid was conveyed. The lady then entered it, and directed the driver to take them to her residence, which was in Cannon Street, City.

"I have known sorrow myself," said the lady, as they proceeded thither; "and, although, thank God! I have never experienced the stings of poverty, I have nevertheless been forced to endure afflictions almost as poignant."

"Ah! madam," returned the poor woman, "such a heart as yours never ought to be tutored in the ways of unhappiness. But, as you observe, there are other afflictions which may compare with the stings of want!"

And the unhappy creature wept bitterly.

The lady endeavoured to console her to the best of her ability; and even in the short conversation which passed between them during the ride from the West End to the City, the invalid gave proofs of a superior understanding and cultivated mind.

At length they reached Cannon Street, and stopped at a house, the lower portion of which was a stationer's shop. The lady occupied apartments on the first floor.

"Oh! Mrs. Chichester, how long you have been absent!" exclaimed the mistress of the house, who opened the door. "I really began to be alarmed—"

"Thanks for your kind consideration," interrupted Viola, with a smile—for the benevolent lady was none other than the neglected and persecuted

wife of Mr. Chichester. "I have brought home a poor creature, whom I found insensible—dying—in the streets; and I request you to provide a room for her."

"Ah! my dear lady, what an excellent disposition you possess!" exclaimed the mistress of the house.

Then she bustled about to help the invalid up stairs; and the poor creature speedily experienced a feeling akin to happiness, when cheered by a comfortable fire and a good meal.

Mrs. Chichester also supplied her with warm clothes; and a night's rest made her an altered being.

On the following day she was enabled to narrate her history, which she did in the ensuing manner.

CHAPTER CLXXVII.

THE HISTORY OF AN UNFORTUNATE WOMAN.

"My name is Lydia Hutchinson. My father was the curate of a small village near Guildford; and fortune had frowned upon him with such continuous rancour from the moment he left the University where he graduated, that it was somewhat late in life ere he ventured to think of matrimony. After filling several different curacies, from which he was invariably removed at the deaths of the old incumbents and the arrival of the new ones, he seemed at length to settle down in the little village to which I have alluded. There he fell in love with the daughter of a half-pay officer as poor as himself; and, with only eighty pounds a-year to depend upon, he embarked in the voyage of matrimony. A year after this union, a son was born, and christened by the name of Edgar: an interval of eighteen months elapsed, and I was ushered into the world. But my mother died in giving birth to me.

"To say that my brother and myself were the only consolation which my poor father now possessed, were merely to tell the common tale of parental love in the widowed breast. We were indeed his only consolation! Often and often has he told us this, when we were old enough to comprehend his meaning, and appreciate the full value of his kindness. He was an excellent man. In order to let his children be respectably dressed and maintain a decent appearance—especially at church on Sundays—he stinted himself of almost the common necessaries of life. He undertook my brother's education himself; and from his lips I also learnt the rudiments of the knowledge which I possess. There was resident in the village, a widow lady of great accomplishments, but reduced circumstances; and out of his pittance my father even contrived to spare something to procure her services in giving me lessons in music, drawing, embroidery, and French. Under her tuition I progressed rapidly in those branches; and, when I was sixteen, I was considered to be better educated than if I had been brought up at a boarding-school.

"Since I have mentioned that age, I will not weary you with any farther details concerning the earlier portion of my life. My brother Edgar had already obtained a situation as an usher in a school at Guildford, and my father, though loth to part with us both, was well aware of the necessity of placing us in positions which would, he hoped, enable us to earn our own bread. For of course his small income would cease at his death; and it had been impossible for him to save a single penny. He, however, anticipated that, when we were both provided for, he should be able to lay aside a few pounds during the remaining years of his life, so as not to leave his dearly-beloved children completely dependant on themselves at his decease. Under such circumstances he gladly availed himself of an opportunity of placing me as junior teacher in an extensive ladies' boarding-school at Kensington.

"My father brought me up to London, and left me at Mrs. Lambkin's establishment, which was called Belvidere House. He wept when he took leave of me; but as Mrs. Lambkin (who was a widow, about forty years of age) spoke very kindly, and promised to take great care of me, the sorrow of parting was somewhat mitigated on both sides. I was to receive no salary the first year; but if I suited, my remuneration was fixed at six pounds for the second year, to be increased subsequently.

"When my father took his leave, Mrs. Lambkin said, 'My dear sir, do not be grieved at parting from your daughter. She will find a mother in me. I will be all to her that her own maternal parent would be, were she alive. God bless her! she's a pretty, amiable looking girl; and I already love her!'—Then Mrs. Lambkin put her handkerchief to her eyes; and my poor father was deeply affected. Mrs. Lambkin proceeded to inform him that she had scarcely ever known a moment's happiness since poor dear Mr. Lambkin's death, which took place, she said, five years previously, and in a most distressing manner. 'In fact, Mr. Hutchinson,' she continued, 'Mr. Lambkin lost his valuable life when gallantly attempting to rescue an ill-used and most virtuous young woman from a brutal assault on the part of half-a-dozen intoxicated policemen.'—My father expressed great sorrow at this information. Mrs. Lambkin had wine and cake brought in; and at length my father took his leave, greatly comforted to think that I should have obtained a situation in the establishment of so kind-hearted and excellent a lady.

"Scarcely had my father left the door, when Mrs. Lambkin turned round towards me, and in a tone which I considered somewhat inconsistent with her former manner and language, exclaimed, 'Now, miss, dry those tears, and go up to your room to make yourself decent for afternoon school. The young ladies at Belvidere House all belong to the first families of distinction, and are accustomed to see the teachers well dressed.' Then, ringing the bell, she said to a smart servant who answered the summons, 'Jessica, show Miss Hutchinson to her room.' Jessica took a good long stare at me, then turning sharply round, told me to follow her. We proceeded up two handsome flights of stairs, beautifully carpetted. On the second floor, the doors of several bed-rooms stood open; and I could not help admiring the comfort—nay, even the luxury, which their interior revealed to the hasty glance that I threw into them. 'These are the young ladies' rooms,' said Jessica abruptly: 'yours is higher up.' On the third floor I also observed the doors of several chambers standing open, and permitting glimpses of great neatness inside. 'These are *our* rooms,' said Jessica—alluding, as I afterwards discovered, to the servants' apartments. Up another flight we went; and now we reached the attics. 'These are the junior teachers' rooms,' cried Jessica: 'and

this is yours,' she added, flinging open the door of a garret, wherein I perceived nothing save a mean-looking bed, one chair, a table with a wash-hand basin on it, a brown stone pitcher in a corner, and a glass as large as the palm of my hand hanging to a pin stuck in the wood-work of the window.

"I was about to offer some observation, thinking that Jessica had made a mistake in showing me to this garret; but I checked myself—being unwilling to commence my noviciate at Belvidere House with any thing in the shape of a complaint. 'Will you have the kindness to bring me up my trunk and bonnet-box?' said I, in as polite and meek a manner as possible.—Miss Jessica burst out laughing in my face. 'Well! that is a pretty thing, I do n't think!' she exclaimed, tossing her head haughtily: 'an under teacher to ask an upper servant to bring up her trunk! Well—I never!'—'I am very sorry if I have offended you,' I said.—'If you really do n't know better,' answered Jessica, looking at me attentively, 'I do n't mind forgiving you this time. And I 'll do more, too, for I 'll tell the scullery girl to help you up with your things; but of course even *she* would n't do it alone.'—My heart rose into my mouth; and it was only by means of a desperate effort that I restrained my tears.—'Do the other teachers sleep on this floor?' I asked, more for the sake of concealing my emotions, than gratifying my curiosity.—'Miss Muddle, the head teacher,' replied Jessica, 'sleeps in the room of the first class young ladies: Miss Spinks, the second teacher, sleeps with the second class; Miss Pantile, the third teacher, with the third class; Miss Rhodes, Miss Jessop, and you occupy this part of the house. But I 'll go and tell Betsy to help you up with your things.'

"Jessica walked away in the most stately manner, preceding me down stairs, and evidently considering me her inferior. Betsy was summoned; and with no small amount of grumbling, that dirty slattern condescended to hold one end of my trunk, while I carried the other. Scarcely had I dressed myself in my second best gown (I had but three)—when Jessica came up to say that Mrs. Lambkin was excessively angry at the length of time I took to make myself decent. Jessica herself was in a very bad humour at being obliged to mount four flights to convey this message, and told me in an insolent manner not to daudle so again.

"Trembling, miserable, and unhappy, I went down to the school-room, where Mrs. Lambkin scolded me, before the other teachers and the young ladies, in no measured terms. Then, because I cried, she scolded me the more. At length she set me to teach four little girls, of ages varying from eight to ten. Miss Muddle, Miss Spinks, and Miss Pantile, all surveyed me with the most sovereign contempt: Miss Rhodes and Miss Jessop, who were not much older than myself (whereas the three senior teachers were all past thirty) looked at me in a more friendly manner. The ages of the boarders varied from eight to sixteen. They were all beautifully dressed; and some of the elder ones were very pretty. There were about forty young ladies altogether in the establishment.

"The four little girls whom I had to teach, were as stupid as they well could be, and so pert that I scarcely knew how to manage them. They laughed and giggled at every attempt which I made to instruct them. Sometimes Mrs. Lambkin would exclaim, 'Hutchinson, there 's too much noise with your class;'—and when I spoke very low to my pupils, it was, 'Hutchinson, you 're literally doing nothing there!' The three senior teachers were alone addressed by Mrs. Lambkin as *Miss:* with the three juniors it was plain *Rhodes, Jessop,* and *Hutchinson.*

"At tea-time, the three senior teachers sate near the mistress of the establishment, and had tea and thin bread-and-butter: the three junior teachers sate amongst the little girls, and had milk-and-water, and thick bread-and-butter. The same arrangement existed at breakfast. At dinner, the three junior teachers were expected to eat the cold meat; though none of the little girls were made to partake of it, and, as I once heard Jessica observe, 'such a thing as cold meat was never touched in the kitchen.' I only mention these trifling details to give you an idea of Mrs. Lambkin's fashionable academy. I may add that the junior teachers had to make their own beds, and fetch up their own water in the great stone pitchers.

"I soon found that Mrs. Lambkin was very far from being so amiable as she had appeared in the presence of my father—except of an evening, after about six or seven o'clock; and then she grew more cheerful—nay, jovial, and was very familiar with us all. But she was constantly leaving the room where we all sate, and remaining away for only a few minutes each time; but the oftener she went out in this strange manner, I noticed that the more good-humoured she grew.

"Thus some weeks passed away. One evening I had solicited permission to go out for a few minutes to take a letter to the post for my father (for the servants would do nothing to oblige the junior teachers), when one of the eldest boarders in the establishment (the Honourable Miss Adeline Enfield) accosted me in the passage, and, in a hasty whisper, said, 'Dear Miss Hutchinson, will you put this letter in the post for me?'—'Certainly,' I replied.—'You need not say a word about it, you know,' added Miss Enfield; and she glided away.—I did not think very seriously of the matter, knowing that it was against the rules of the establishment for the young ladies to write to their friends or parents without allowing Mrs. Lambkin to inspect their letters; and as I considered this to be a harsh regulation, I did not hesitate to oblige Miss Enfield—especially as she had addressed me in so kind a tone. I accordingly posted her letter, and thought no more of the subject. But the next time I was going out, Miss Enfield repeated her request, and again ran away ere I could reply. I noticed that this letter was addressed to the same person as the former one—namely, '*Captain Cholmondeley, Barracks, Knightsbridge;*'—but supposing that he might be a relative, I did not hesitate to post the epistle.

"That same night, after I had retired to my garret, the door was opened softly, and the Honourable Miss Enfield entered. She was in her night clothes; and, placing her finger on her lip to enjoin caution, she said, 'My dear Miss Hutchinson, you can do me such a favour, if you will?'—Certainly I will, if I can,' was my answer.—'Oh! you can very easily,' continued the young lady, who, by-the-by, was a sweet pretty girl, and very interesting: 'a letter will come addressed to you, by the first post to-morrow morning.'—'Indeed!' I said; 'and how do you know that?'—'Because, though the envelope

will be addressed to you, the letter inside will be for me,' she answered, laughing.—'And what would Mrs. Lambkin say if she knew it?' I asked.—'She cannot know it unless you tell her; and I am sure you will not do that, dear Miss Hutchinson,' returned the Honourable Miss Enfield.—'I will oblige you this time,' I said, after some consideration; 'but pray do not let this take place again.'—Then she kissed me so affectionately, I was really pleased to have made a friend of her; for I was so forlorn and unhappy in my situation—though I never let my father know how completely we had been deceived in Mrs. Lambkin's disposition.

"On the following morning the letter came: and when I could find an opportunity, I gave the contents (which was a small note carefully sealed) to Miss Enfield. She thanked me with a sweet smile. Three or four days afterwards, another letter came addressed to me, with another enclosure for Miss Enfield. I was determined not to give it to her during the day, because I could find no opportunity to speak to her unobserved. Accordingly, as I anticipated, she came up to my room in the evening, after we had all retired to rest. I then gave her the note, but with a firm and decided assurance that I would not be the intermediate of any further correspondence carried on in so secret a manner. She cried very bitterly at my resolve, and by means of some tale which it is not worth while to repeat, but which seemed to me satisfactory at the time, induced me to convey a letter to the post for her next day, and receive the answer in the usual manner. I foolishly allowed myself to be over-persuaded, and fulfilled her wishes in both respects. I must observe that her letter was addressed to the same person as the two preceding ones.

"She was very grateful to me for my kindness, and treated me with marked attention. Being the daughter of a noble house, her conduct towards me produced a pleasant effect in respect to the three senior teachers, who, seeing that Miss Enfield courted my society, began to treat me more as their equal than they had hitherto done. Mrs. Lambkin also grew less harsh towards me; and my position acquired some degree of comfort.

"One evening, after I had retired to my garret, Miss Enfield paid me another visit. She had another favour to ask me. 'The day after to-morrow,' she said, 'I shall have leave to go out for a little shopping. Will you accompany me?'—I replied that I should do so with much pleasure.—'Very well,' she said; 'leave me to manage it. I will ask Mrs. Lambkin to-morrow night, when she has been out of the room three or four times——.'—'I do not understand why you should choose that moment,' I said.—'Oh!' was the answer, 'when she has had her third or fourth glass, she can refuse me nothing; and she is sure to ask whom I will have of the teachers to accompany me.'—'Her third or fourth glass!' I exclaimed.—'Yes, to be sure,' returned Miss Enfield. 'What! I thought every one knew that she drinks like a fish; although she does do it on the sly. Her husband was a dreadful drunkard.'—'Indeed! I am sorry to hear this,' I observed. 'Moreover, I thought that her husband was a most respectable person.'—'Oh! I dare say Mrs. Lambkin has been telling you that nonsense about her husband's death,' said Miss Enfield, laughing. 'The truth is, he was coming home one night most terribly the worse for liquor, when he became involved in a dispute with a bad woman; and when the police interfered, he made a desperate assault upon them, and was killed by an unlucky blow with one of their bludgeons.'—'She told quite a different tale to my father,' I observed.—'Yes, because your father is a clergyman, and may recommend some boarders to her house,' returned Miss Enfield. 'Did she not also seem mighty civil and polite before him?'—I confessed that she did.—'And the moment his back was turned, did she not turn also?'—This I likewise admitted.—'She cannot keep her temper long, you see. But I must go now, for fear Miss Muddle should awake, and happen to find out that I have left my bed. Good night, dear Miss Hutchinson. The day after to-morrow we will go out shopping together.'

"Then the Honourable Miss Enfield withdrew, leaving me greatly astonished at what I had heard. I lay awake the greater part of the night, reflecting on all that she had told me; and when I thought of this young lady's rank, youth, beauty, and brilliant prospects, I felt sad at the idea that the purity of her soul had been in the least degree interfered with by tales of drunken men, bad women, and police-riots, as well as by the example of an intemperate school-mistress. Miss Enfield's communication had shed a new light upon my mind. The term '*bad woman*' set me thinking what it could mean; and at last I comprehended its signification. Oh! how I shuddered when that first consciousness of the real extent to which female frailty can reach, grew more and more defined in my imagination, until I understood its deep shade of guilt. The first step towards teaching the youthful mind to become infidel, is to suffer it to know that there live men, in Christian countries, who deny the truth of revealed religion:—the first step towards inducing a young girl to harbour impure thoughts, is to show her that female depravity has, in its worst sense, an indubitable existence!

"The Honourable Miss Enfield was as good as her word. She obtained permission to go out shopping, and also for me to accompany her. It was three o'clock, on a beautiful spring afternoon, when Miss Enfield and myself sallied forth together. 'The best shops lie in this direction,' I observed, pointing towards the left.—'Oh! no, my dear Miss Hutchinson,' she said, with a merry laugh: 'the spot that will suit me is in *this* direction;'—and she took the road to London. I made no ojection; my duty was to accompany her for the sake of appearances—not precisely to take care of her, because, although eight months younger than I, she was as tall and as matured in form as myself. Indeed she was very precocious, but, as I have before said, very pretty.

"We passed by several linen-drapers' shops; but the Honourable Miss Enfield entered none of them. At length we reached Hyde Park. 'Do let us take a walk here, my dear Miss Hutchinson,' she exclaimed: 'see how beautiful the trees already seem; and what a freshness there is in the air!'—I assented; and we entered the Park. Presently Miss Enfield burst out into a joyous laugh. I inquired the reason; but she only looked archly at me, and renewed her merriment. Scarcely had I time to question her a second time concerning her joyousness, when she pressed my arm significantly; and I beheld two tall, fine-looking military men approaching. I cast my eyes downwards, for I perceived

that they were looking attentively at us; but in a few moments I heard one of the officers exclaim, 'It *is* my dearest Adeline! I felt convinced that she would not disappoint me.'—'Not for worlds, Cholmondeley,' she replied;—and, in another moment, she had left me and was hanging on the officer's arm. —'Now, Dunstable, you do the amiable with Miss Hutchinson,' said Captain Cholmondeley to his companion; and before I could recover from the stupefaction into which these proceedings threw me, I found myself arm-in-arm with a handsome young officer, whom I soon afterwards ascertained to be Lord Dunstable.

"For some time I walked on in profound silence, conscious that I was doing wrong, but unable to muster up the courage sufficient to withdraw from the false position in which Miss Enfield's intrigue had placed me. At length the gentle tones of a kind but manly voice penetrated through the chaos of ideas which agitated in my brain. 'Wherefore so silent, Miss Hutchinson?' said the young officer: 'does my boldness in constituting myself your companion offend you? If so, I will instantly release you from the unpleasant contact of my society.'—I made no answer, but burst into tears.—'By heaven! you are a sweet girl,' he continued; 'and I feel that I can love you sincerely. But dry those lovely eyes: there are persons about who may observe us.'—He was right: I wiped away the tears; and, after hazarding a few brief replies to his remarks, I insensibly fell into conversation with him. By degrees I lost the restraint and embarrassment which had at first possessed me; and ere I had been half an hour in his society, I laughed heartily at his lively sallies and sprightly observations. In the mean time Adeline was walking at a considerable distance in front, with the Honourable Captain Cholmondeley.

"Nearly two hours passed away in this manner; and then I insisted upon returning to Belvidere House. We accordingly overtook Miss Enfield and the Captain; and I signified my desire, observing that Mrs Lambkin would be angry did we remain absent much longer. 'We will not part with you, ladies,' said the Captain, 'unless you promise to lighten our darkness again with your presence ere we are all a week older.'—'This day week we could manage it again,' immediately observed Miss Enfield. —I murmured an objection.—'If you do not come, my dearest Miss Hutchinson,' whispered Lord Dunstable to me, 'I shall either hang or drown myself.' —I smiled; and Adeline, who was watching my countenance, cried, 'Oh! Lydia is such a dear good-natured creature, and we are such friends, I am sure she will not refuse.'—Again I smiled; and this was taken for an assent on my part. Then the two gentlemen looked round, and, perceiving no stangers near at the present, they bade us farewell in a most tender manner:—I mean that Captain Cholmondeley pressed Adeline in his arms, while Lord Dunstable literally glued his lips to mine. And I—— Oh! my resistance was but feeble!

"Miss Enfield and myself then retraced our steps towards Belvidere House; but to save appearances, she purchased some articles at the first linen-draper's shop that we came to. 'Ah! Miss Adeline,' I said, as we proceeded homewards, 'what have we both been doing?'—'Enjoying ourselves very much, dear Lydia,' answered the young lady, laughing heartily. 'I am sure you ought not to complain, for you have made the conquest of a lord, handsome, and wealthy.'—'But what will he think of me?' I exclaimed.—'That you are a very pretty, amiable, delightful girl,' rejoined the Honourable Miss Enfield.—'And all this was planned on your part, Miss Adeline?' I said.—'Call me *Adeline* in future,' answered Miss Enfield; 'for now you and I are sworn friends. Yes; the whole matter was pre-arranged so far as my meeting with Cholmondeley was concerned; and as I told him in my last note that you would accompany me, he was too gallant not to engage a friend to take charge of you while he and I were conversing together.'—'Are you going to be married to Captain Cholmondeley?' I inquired.—'He has promised to demand my hand of my parents the moment I leave school,' replied Adeline: then after a pause, she added, 'And if you play your cards well, you may become Lady Dunstable.'—This assurance electrified me: it filled me with new hopes, new visions, new aspirations. In a few moments I saw myself (in imagination) the wife of a Lord, my father a Bishop, through my husband's influence, and my brother a rich gentleman to whose addresses no heiress would turn a deaf ear!

"I could not sleep all that night! I considered my fortune already assured; and I declare most solemnly that I felt more delight, in the visions of prosperity and bliss which I conjured up, on account of my father and brother, than for the sake of myself. The week passed away: I did not oppose Miss Enfield's intimation to me that we should keep our appointment with the two officers; and, permission having been obtained as before, we sallied forth. Hyde Park was soon gained; and we were not kept waiting a moment by our *beaux*—for they were already at the place of meeting. They received us with evident delight; and as Lord Dunstable pressed my hand tenderly, my eyes met his—a deep blush suffused my countenance—and I felt that I already loved him.

"Adeline walked apart with the Captain: and I remained with Lord Dunstable. He spoke to me more freely, but not less respectfully, than on the former occasion. He assured me that he had thought of nothing, since we last met, save the prospect of seeing me again; and he forced from me an avowal that I too had not altogether forgotten him! We had been thus together for half an hour, when it began to rain. The Honourable Captain Cholmondeley and Adeline then turned and joined us. 'This rain is a great nuisance,' said the Captain: 'it is impossible to keep the ladies out in it; and it is equally impossible to part with them so soon.' —'What is to be done?' asked Lord Dunstable.—'My private residence is close by,' said the Captain; 'and if the ladies would take shelter there, until the rain is over, they shall be treated with as much respect as if they were at home.'—'Well, on that condition,' exclaimed Miss Enfield, 'we will assent.' —I was about to offer some remonstrance, when Lord Dunstable whispered a few tender words in my ear; and the objection died upon my lips.

"The Honourable Captain Cholmondeley's private dwelling was in the immediate vicinity of Sloane Street; and thither we repaired. A servant in livery opened the door: we were conducted into an elegantly furnished dining-room, and a cold collation was speedily served up. Champagne was poured out; and, not aware of its strength, I drank two glasses without much hesitation. The Captain told the servant to leave the room; and I remem-

ber that we laughed, and chatted, and ate, and drank as happily as if Adeline and myself were in no way tied to time. But presently my senses became obscured; my head swam round; and I was ready to fall from my seat. I have a faint idea of beholding Adeline sitting on the Captain's knee; and then I recollected no more, until I awoke in the morning!

"But, my God! to what did I awake? Oh! even now I shudder as I recall to mind my sentiments on that occasion! I was in bed—in a strange bed; and by my side was Lord Dunstable. Then I comprehended that my dishonour had been effected! I uttered a scream—a wild, terrific, appalling scream! Lord Dunstable caught me in his arms, and said all he could to soothe me. He pleaded the extent of his love, called heaven to witness that he looked upon me as his wife, and swore by all he held sacred to make me so in the eyes of the law as soon as he could complete certain arrangements necessary to such a change in his condition. He spoke with so much apparent sincerity, used so many arguments to convince me of his love, and expatiated so eloquently upon the happiness which we should enjoy when united, that my grief was absorbed in a wild delirium of bliss!

"Then came the sudden thought, '*What was to become of me in the meantime?*'—'You can return to Belvidere House,' answered Lord Dunstable: 'Miss Enfield will make it all right for you.'—'Return to Belvidere House!' I exclaimed: 'impossible!'—'Nay, it is very possible,' rejoined my lover: 'Adeline, who is an uncommonly sharp girl, arranged it all last evening before she left. She said that she should let herself into Belvidere House by the back way, and that she should proceed straight into the parlour, where she should assure Mrs. Lambkin that you, Lydia, had come home with such a dreadful headach, you were obliged to go straight up to bed.'—'That excuse will do for last night,' I said, wringing my hands in despair: 'but this morning?'—'All is arranged equally well,' answered my noble lover. 'It is only now six o'clock: you are to be in the neighbourhood of the school by half-past seven; Adeline will steal out and join you: then you can both walk boldly up to the door, enter, and say that you have been out together for a little stroll, in accordance with a permission to that effect which Adeline declared she would obtain from Mrs. Lambkin last night, when that respectable lady was in her cups.'—These stratagems produced a great relief to my mind, because I saw that they were entirely practicable. But, even in that moment of my agitated soul, I could not help reflecting upon the deep artifice which lurked in the bosom of so young a creature as the Honourable Miss Enfield.

"I rose and hastily dressed myself. Then I took leave of Lord Dunstable. He renewed all his protestations of sincerity, unalterable love, and honourable intentions; and we arranged a plan of correspondence and future meetings. I stole from the house, unperceived by any of the inmates, and proceeded at a rapid pace towards the school. But how changed was my soul—how altered were all my thoughts! I fancied that every one whom I met, read the history of my shame in my countenance! Then I consoled myself with Lord Dunstable's assurance that I was his wife in the sight of heaven, and soon should receive that hallowed name in the eyes of man.

"At a short distance from the school, I met Miss Enfield. I cast down my eyes, and blushed deeply. She laughed merrily. 'Oh! Adeline,' I exclaimed, 'to what has all this intriguing brought me?'—'My dear Lydia, she returned, 'our positions in that respect are equal; and, as our lovers will keep their words and marry us, where is the harm?'—I stared at the young lady with the most profound astonishment. How were our positions equal in reference to our lovers? She speedily cleared up my doubts. 'If you continue to blush and turn pale alternately, twenty times in a minute, as you are now doing,' she said, 'we shall both be suspected. We must exercise the greatest caution; for if it were discovered that we surrendered ourselves to our lovers——.'—'*We!*' I repeated, contemplating her with increasing astonishment.—'My dear Lydia,' she continued, 'do you suppose that I was more virtuous than you, or the captain less tender than the nobleman? I certainly would not have accepted the invitation to visit Cholmondeley's private abode, if I had foreseen the consequences. But what is done cannot be undone; and we must make the best of it.'—I offered no reply: I saw that we were both completely at the mercy of those who had taken advantage of us,—that our positions were indeed equal in this one respect; and I fervently hoped that we might not live to rue the adventures of the last twelve hours!

"The Honourable Miss Enfield had so well arranged matters, that we entered the house without having excited the least suspicion of my absence throughout the night. And now commenced a new species of existence for me. My whole life suddenly appeared to be wrapped up in the promise which Lord Dunstable had given me to make me his wife. We corresponded often; and his letters to me invariably contained a note from the Honourable Captain Cholmondeley to Miss Enfield. A fortnight after the meeting which was so fatal to my honour, Adeline obtained permission for us to go out again; and we proceeded to Hyde Park, where our lovers joined us. An invitation to the Captain's private residence was again given; the weather was, however, fine—we could walk in the Park—and I positively refused. But Adeline and Cholmondeley disappeared for more than an hour! Dunstable was as kind and tender to me as I could wish: still he did not volunteer a single observation concerning our marriage; and, when I gently alluded to it, he declared that he was hastening his arrangements. Then he changed the conversation. At length the Captain and Adeline returned; and we parted with our lovers, promising to meet them again in a fortnight.

"The two weeks passed away: we met again; and on this occasion the invitation to Cholmondeley's house was renewed—insisted upon—and, alas! accepted. I will not dwell upon this portion of my narrative. Suffice it to say that Cholmondeley's residence was converted into the scene of unlawful pleasure and voluptuousness,—that Adeline with her lover in one room, and myself with Dunstable in another, entered upon a career of wantonness, which grew more insatiable as it progressed!

"Seven months had passed since the first meeting in Hyde Park; and Lord Dunstable never spoke of marriage—never started the subject of his own accord. I often questioned him on the point; and he invariably replied that his arrangements

were not yet complete. At length the dream of hope and pleasure in which Adeline and myself had existed for half-a-year, was suddenly dissolved. Hastily-written letters were one morning received by us from our lovers, stating that they were about to proceed on a continental tour; that they had not leisure to meet us for the sake of taking leave; but that, on their return at the expiration of a few months, they should be delighted to renew the intimacy. Not a word of marriage in either letter!

"That night, at eleven o'clock, Adeline came to my garret. I was reduced to despair; and could offer her no consolation, although she needed it even more—oh! far more than I. The moment she found herself alone with me, she gave way to a paroxysm of grief—a convulsion of anguish, which alarmed me. I implored her to restrain her emotions, or we should be overheard. She sank upon my bed; and I soon perceived that she was enduring great bodily pain in addition to deep mental affliction. An idea of the terrible truth flashed through my brain: she was in the agony of premature labour!

"I had not even suspected her condition until that moment. I was bewildered—I knew not what to do. At length I thought it advisable, at all hazards, to alarm the house, and procure medical attendance. But as I was rushing towards the door for that purpose, Adeline caught me by the hand; and, turning towards me her countenance—her ghastly pale countenance, with an expression of indescribable anguish and alarm, she said, 'For God's sake, remain with me! If another be made acquainted with my shame, I will not survive this disgrace.' I locked the door cautiously, and returned to the bed-side. And there—in a miserable garret, and in the depth of a cold winter's night,—with a nipping frost upon the window, and the bright moon high in the heavens,—there, attended only by myself, did the delicately-nurtured Adeline Enfield give birth to a male child. But the little infant's eyes never opened even for a moment upon this world: it was born dead!

"An hour afterwards Adeline dragged herself back to the room in which she slept. That was a fearful night for us both: it was for *me*—it must have been for *her*! I never closed my eyes: this terrible event weighed upon my soul like a crime. I felt as if I had been the accomplice in some awful deed of darkness. The cold and placid moon seemed to reproach me—as if its bright orb were heaven's own all-seeing eye!

"I could not endure that calm—unvarying—steadfast light, which appeared to be a glance immoveably fixed upon *me*. It drove me mad—it pierced my brain. That cloudless moon seemed to shine on none of earth's denizens, save myself. Methought that from its empyrean height it surveyed every nook, every crevice of my lonely garret; and at length so icy became its gaze, that I shuddered from head to foot—my teeth chattered—my limbs grew rigid. There was a deep conviction in my soul that the eye of God was upon me!

"I knelt down at last, and tried to pray. I called upon heaven—I called upon my father—I called upon my brother, to pardon me! Then once more I turned my eyes towards the moon; and its reproachful, chilling glance seemed to penetrate to the depths of my secret soul,—singling me, *me* out for its maddening scrutiny,—marking *me* alone, of all the human race, for its calm, but bitter contemplation.

"At length the orb of night was no longer visible from my window, although its silver flood still inundated the dwellings and the country of which my garret commanded a view. Then I grew more tranquil:—but I could not sleep!

"Never was morning more welcome to the guilty imagination haunted by the fearful apparitions of the night, than it was to me. I composed myself as well as I could; but when I surveyed my countenance in the glass, I was dismayed by its awful pallor—its haggardness—its care-worn look. I did not dare plead illness, as an excuse for keeping my chamber; because I was too anxious to ascertain what course Miss Enfield would pursue to escape those inquiries that her appearance, I felt convinced, must elicit. Besides, there was *something* in my box which—but of that no matter at present.

"I accordingly descended to the breakfast-room. The moment I entered, I cast a hurried glance around, and beheld Adeline seated in her usual place, chatting gaily with Miss Muddle, the senior teacher. We exchanged rapid and significant looks; and I moved in silence to my own chair. But I fully comprehended the indescribable efforts which Adeline was forced to make in order to prevent herself from sinking with exhaustion. Others noticed her extreme pallor, and spoke of the slight indisposition which she declared she experienced: but *I* saw how ill—how very ill, weak, and languid she really was. And I was pale and suffering too; and no one inquired what ailed me. This result of indifference on the part of all save Adeline,—and of prudence on *her* side,—was actually a great source of comfort to me; for had I been questioned, I know not how I should have replied. My confusion was extreme as it was; and yet I had much less to tremble for than Adeline.

"The breakfast was over; and we all repaired to the school-room. As we were proceeding thither, Miss Enfield drew me aside for a moment, and said in a hurried whisper, 'For heaven's sake, keep my secret, dearest Lydia: the honour of a noble family depends upon your prudence!'—I pressed her hand in acquiescence.—'I will ever be your friend, dearest Lydia,' she repeated.—Then we separated to take our respective places in the school.

"The usual routine was progressing in its monotonous and wearisome manner, when Jessica, the upper servant-maid, suddenly burst into the room, and, addressing Mrs. Lambkin, said, 'Ma'am, there's three silver tea-spoons missing; and as we've been quarrelling about it down stairs, I beg that all our boxes may be searched. Of course I don't mean the young ladies; or yet the *senior* teachers, ma'am.'—The loss of three silver spoons was sufficient to rouse Mrs. Lambkin's ire; and she vowed that Jessica's suggestion should be immediately acted upon. The boxes must be searched. I felt as if struck by a thunderbolt.

"Mrs. Lambkin summoned Miss Rhodes, Miss Jessop, and myself to accompany her. Then Adeline rose, and exclaimed, 'Surely, Mrs. Lambkin, you will not subject these three young ladies to the indignity of examining their trunks?'—'Yes, but I will though,' cried Mrs. Lambkin, her anger getting the better of her respect for the scion of aristocracy.—Adeline sank back in her seat: and never—never shall I forget the imploring, despairing, heart-rend-

ing glance which she darted upon me, as I followed the school-mistress from the room.

"The servants' boxes were all searched, one after the other; and no spoons were discovered. Then Miss Rhodes was subjected to the same degradation. When the scrutiny in respect to her trunk was concluded,—and, of course, without any success in respect to the lost articles,—she said, 'Madam, I beg to give you one month's warning that I intend to leave your establishment.'—'Oh! very well: just as you like,' returned Mrs. Lambkin.—Miss Jessop's room then passed through the ordeal. No spoons. 'Madam,' said Miss Jessop, 'I beg to give you one month's notice, according to the terms of our agreement. I know that my parents will not blame me, after this insult.'—'Very well, miss,' cried Mrs. Lambkin; 'you 'll repent of leaving a good situation before you 're six months older.' Then, turning towards me, she said, 'This won't prevent me from searching your boxes, miss; and I shall not die of grief if you give me notice also.'—'Such is not my intention, madam,' I replied, hoping that my submissiveness would plead in my favour, and prevent her from visiting my room.—'No; I should think not,' she retorted; and she walked straight away to the garret which I occupied.

"Miss Rhodes and Miss Jessop had gone down stairs; Jessica, Mrs. Lambkin, and myself were alone together. During the few minutes that intervened between the search in my small boxes and the visit to my large trunk, I revolved in my mind the only alternatives which a certain discovery that I now saw to be inevitable, would leave me: namely, to shield Miss Enfield by accusing myself; or to save myself by exposing her. Then I thought whether I really should save my own honour by this latter course; for, although my frailty had led to none such consequences as those which were connected with Adeline, nevertheless she might proclaim me to have been the paramour of Lord Dunstable. Moreover, I remembered her appealing, despairing look;—I called to mind all the promises of friendship and assistance which she had made me; I knew that she belonged to a noble, wealthy, and influential family; and I had such confidence in the generosity and grateful nature of her disposition,

that I felt fully persuaded she would never abandon me.

"But, oh! I did not thus reason so calmly nor so deliberately as I am now speaking. My brain was a whirlwind—my soul was a chaos; and it was only with considerable mental effort, that I could separate and classify my ideas in the slightest degree. And now the school-mistress approached my trunk: she raised the lid—I leant against the wall for support. My clothes were tumbled out on the floor: at the bottom of the box was a small bundle, wrapped round with linen articles. The school-mistress drew it forth—a terrific scream escaped my lips—the corpse of the infant rolled upon the floor!

"Jessica gave vent to an exclamation of horror and alarm, and was rushing towards the door, when Mrs. Lambkin, recovering from the sudden shock which this spectacle had occasioned, held her back, saying, 'In the name of God be cautious; or my establishment will be ruined!' Then turning towards me, her lips quivering and white with rage, she said, in a low hollow tone, 'No wonder you are so pale and ill this morning! But must I look upon you as the murderess——.'—'Oh! no, no, madam,' I exclaimed, falling on my knees, and joining my hands together; 'that child was born dead. Listen to me, and I will tell you all; I will confess every thing!'—'There appears to be but little now to confess,' returned Mrs. Lambkin; 'and I have no time for idle conversation. The honour of my institution is seriously compromised: I will pay you the amount due to you, and you can leave my service this minute. It will be your fault if the real cause ever transpires.'—'Ah! madam,' I exclaimed, 'shall I not then be looked upon as the thief who stole your spoons?'—'No,' answered the school-mistress. 'I will declare in the presence of the entire establishment that my search has proved ineffectual in all quarters; and I will even allow you the merit of having left of your own accord, for the same reason which prompted Miss Rhodes and Miss Jessop to give me notice.' Mrs. Lambkin then turned towards Jessica, to whom she enjoined the strictest secrecy concerning the discovery of the dead child.

"At one moment, when on my knees before Mrs. Lambkin, I was about to confess the whole truth: but, now perceiving the turn which matters had taken, and that she herself was most solicitous to hush up the affair for the credit of her establishment, I saw that no exposure awaited me, and that I might save Adeline from disgrace and ruin without farther compromising myself. I accordingly intimated my readiness to leave on condition that the real motive should never transpire. Then I thrust my things back again into the trunk: but the corpse of the child, wrapped in linen, I left lying on the floor. 'Put every thing into the trunk—*that*, and all!' said Mrs. Lambkin.—'Not for worlds, madam,' I exclaimed, 'would I remove my effects elsewhere, with *that* amongst them!'—'Wretch!' she cried, 'would you have me dispose of your bastard's corpse for you?'—This insulting question brought the blood into my cheeks. Oh! it was too much to be thus reviled for a disgrace which did not really belong to me. Mrs. Lambkin saw how I was agitated, and, dreading a scene, she said in a low tone, 'You can remain here till to-morrow, Miss Hutchinson. If you choose to walk out this evening, *when it is dark*, you have my permission. But, in the meantime, you will have the kindness to keep your box carefully locked.'—I understood the hint, and bowed acquiescence.

"We descended to the school-room once more. The moment I entered I darted a glance towards Adeline which convinced her that *she* was saved. The one she gave in return was replete with gratitude. Oh! how much had I sacrificed, and how deeply had I suffered for her!

"The day passed slowly away. Fortunately the missing spoons were found in the evening: they had merely been mislaid by the cook or scullery-girl. I retired to my chamber at an earlier hour than usual: the presence of the school-mistress was irksome to me in the room below. In a short time Adeline came to me. She had stolen away to have an opportunity of conversing with me. Then I narrated to her all that had occurred in the morning. She threw herself upon my neck, and thanked me with tears in her eyes for having saved her from the depths of disgrace. She called me her 'sister'—her 'friend'—her 'dearest, dearest friend;' and vowed she would never forget the immense service which I had rendered her. Then I felt glad that I had acted as I had done. She even offered to go out, when the other inmates of the house had retired to rest, and dispose of the corpse of the child—her own child; but I knew that it would be death to one in her condition to venture abroad in the night-air. I accordingly undertook to perform that task also. We next conversed on my own prospects. I was averse to return home: I dreaded the numerous questions which my father and brother were certain to put to me. Adeline, who was an uncommonly worldly-minded girl for her age, instantly suggested that I should take a respectable lodging in London, and she would undertake to procure for me a situation as a nursery-governess. The Christmas holidays were at hand: she would be returning in the course of ten days to her parents' house in Belgrave Square; and she assured me that she should then have an opportunity of exercising her influence in my favour. To these proposals I assented; and she withdrew.

"When the house was quiet, I put on my bonnet and cloak, concealing beneath the latter the corpse of Miss Enfield's child. I then slipped out by the back way, and striking into the bye-lanes leading towards Brompton, at length reached a pond, into which a muddy ditch emptied itself. The moon was bright, and thus enabled me to discover a spot fitted for my purpose. I placed two or three large stones in the bundle containing the body of the child: then I threw the whole into the pond. The dark water splashed and gurgled; and in a few moments all was still once more.

"I now breathed more easily; but it was not without some difficulty that I found my way back to Belvedere House.

"On the following morning I took my leave of the inmates of that establishment. I received the money that was due to me; and I requested Mrs. Lambkin to allow me to leave my boxes until I should send for them in the evening. To this she assented; and I repaired by the omnibus to London. Miss Enfield had given me the necessary advice to guide me in searching for a lodging; and I engaged a room in the house of a respectable widow in Bury Street, St. James's. Her husband had been an upper servant in the family of Lord and Lady Rossville (Miss Enfield's parents); and, by using

Adeline's name, I was immediately received with civility by the widow.

"I sent a porter for my boxes; and then my first care was to write a letter to my father. This I found to be no easy task. I recoiled from the idea of sending a tissue of falsehoods to that dear, confiding parent. Nevertheless, the duty was imperative. I accordingly concocted a letter, in which I informed him 'that having been grievously insulted by Mrs. Lambkin, I had left her service; but that I had met with a sincere friend in the Honourable Miss Adeline Enfield, one of the young ladies of the establishment, who had taken a great interest in me, and had not only promised to procure me a situation as a nursery-governess in a wealthy family, but had also recommended me, in the interval, to the care of a most respectable widow.' By return of post I received my father's answer, He regretted my precipitation in leaving Mrs. Lambkin until I had written to consult him; but admitted that the provocation in searching my boxes was grave. He expressed his entire confidence in my discretion, and declared his delight at the friendship I had formed with Miss Enfield. But he charged me to return home the moment I experienced the least difficulty in obtaining another situation. He concluded by stating that either he or Edgar would have repaired to London to see me; but that the expense was an almost insuperable barrier to such a step, their limited means being considered.

"Ten days elapsed; and then I knew that Miss Enfield must have returned home for the Christmas holidays. I accordingly expected an early visit from her. Nor was I mistaken. A magnificent equipage one afternoon drove up to the door; and Adeline stepped out. In a few moments she was seated in my little room. 'You see that I have not forgotten you, dear Lydia,' she exclaimed. 'I have told my mother, Lady Rossville, such a fine story about you,—how good and kind you always were to me, and how Mrs. Lambkin persecuted you without any reason,—that she has permitted me to visit you; and, more than *that*, she has recommended you to Lady Penfeather as a nursery-governess. There is Lady Penfeather's address; and you may call on her to-morrow afternoon. I have already said so much to her ladyship concerning you, and assured her of the respectability of yourself and family with such effect, that you will be received immediately.'—I cordially thanked Adeline for this goodness on her part; and she insisted so earnestly upon pressing on me a sum of money to enable me to improve my wardrobe, that I could not refuse her offer. She then embraced me, and took her leave.

"I will not dwell tediously on this portion of my narrative. On the following day I called upon Lady Penfeather, and was received very graciously. After some conversation, she engaged me at a salary of twenty guineas a-year; and I was to remove to her house immediately. She was an easy, affable, good-natured person—about thirty-six years of age, and not very handsome. Her husband, Sir Wentworth Penfeather, was three or four years older than herself, and was a fine, tall, good-looking man. They had three children, whose ages were between six and ten: the two eldest were girls, and the youngest a boy. These were to be my pupils. I hastened back to my lodging, and wrote a letter to my father informing him of my good luck. Then I settled with my kind landlady, and removed to Sir Wentworth Penfeather's residence in Cavendish Square.

"I was very well treated in this family. The servants were all civil and attentive to me; and the children were as ready to learn as children of such an age could possibly be. Sir Wentworth was very frequently in the apartment where I sate with them; and he was particularly kind in his manners toward me. He even laughed and joked, and conversed with me in a very friendly way. But in the presence of his wife, he was reserved, and never addressed a word to me. At length his attentions, when unperceived by Lady Penfeather, grew daily more significant; and he paid me many compliments on my beauty. I discouraged his familiarity as much as possible; but he soon grew more bold, and one day declared in plain terms that he adored me. I rose and left the room.

"Three months had now passed; and I had never seen Adeline since she called upon me at my lodging. I knew that she was not to return to Mrs. Lambkin's establishment, her education being completed (completed indeed!); and I felt hurt that she had not found a leisure moment either to call or write to me. I accordingly wrote a note requesting to see her. I was anxious to obtain another situation, and thus escape from Sir Wentworth Penfeather's importunities. On the following day Adeline called, and desired to see me alone. I was struck by her cold and distant manner. 'Miss Hutchinson,' she said, 'you must not be astonished at my conduct in not visiting you. You did me a great service: I have returned the obligation by procuring you a good situation. There are now no debts on either side. Our ways lie so totally different in the world, that were I to maintain an intimacy with you, my behaviour would be subject to the most annoying comments. We have both of us a deep interest in keeping each other's secrets. Were you, in a moment of anger against me, to state that it was *my* child that was discovered in *your* trunk, who would believe you? whereas, if you proclaim our respective amours with Captain Cholmondeley and Lord Dunstable, you publish your own shame at the time you denounce me. I am sorry to be compelled to speak thus to you; but I should have thought that your own good sense would have taught you the immeasurable distance which lies between you and me. Henceforth we are mere acquaintances, and nothing more.'

"With these words the honourable Adeline Enfield sailed out of the room, leaving me lost in astonishment—absolutely bewildered—at her behaviour. Then I felt for the first time the bitter ingratitude of the world, and I wept. Oh! I wept abundantly. My head had fallen forward on the table near which I was sitting; and I was giving way to my sorrow, when I heard Lady Penfeather's voice in the passage. She was saying, 'This way, my lord: I am sure you will be delighted to see the dear children. They are all so fond of your lordship! Really it is quite an age since we have seen you!'—'I have been on the continent with my friend Cholmondeley,' was the answer: but the voice in which it was delivered touched the tenderest chord in my heart. In another moment the door opened, and Lady Penfeather entered, followed by Lord Dunstable. 'This is the little school-room, you see, my lord,' she said; 'and this is my governess, Miss Hutchinson. But where are the children?'—'Miss

Hutchinson!' exclaimed Lord Dunstable; 'Oh! we are old acquaintances: I have had the honour of meeting Miss Hutchinson before. I used to visit at her father's house, at—at—;' and he hesitated. —'At the Parsonage, near Guilford, my lord,' I instantly added, my courage reviving when I felt my hand tenderly pressed in his.—'Ah! to be sure,' he exclaimed; 'and how is my respectable friend, your father?' he continued, casting a significant look upon me.—I answered the query; and Lady Penfeather was quite satisfied with the manner in which Lord Dunstable's knowledge of me was accounted for. His lordship went on talking to me about Guilford, (which, I really believe, he had never seen in his life); and Lady Penfeather went herself into the next room to fetch the children.

"The moment her back was turned, Lord Dunstable said to me in a hurried whisper, 'Dearest Lydia, you look more beautiful than ever! I have never ceased to think of you since we last met. I have much to say to you: will you meet me to-morrow afternoon, somewhere? Say in the Pantheon, (it is not very far from hence) at three o'clock precisely?'—I murmured an affirmative; and at that moment Lady Penfeather returned, accompanied by the children. Lord Dunstable affected to admire them very highly; and the mother was quite charmed with his amiability. I could not help noticing how much his continental tour had improved him; indeed, I had never seen him looking so handsome before: my heart was once more filled with the fondest hopes;—for I really loved that man.

"When his lordship retired, he shook hands with me again, and we exchanged significant glances. The pleasure I experienced at this unexpected meeting, and the interest he manifested in my behalf, banished from my mind the disagreeable impression created by Adeline's unfeeling conduct towards me. Oh! how slowly passed the hours until the time of our appointment drew nigh! I was so completely my own mistress in Lady Penfeather's family, that I could go out when I chose; and thus I had no difficulty in repairing to the *rendez-vous*. Lord Dunstable was there; and he advanced to meet me with pleasure depicted on his countenance. I took his arm, and we retired to the picture-gallery, where there happened to be but few loungers at the moment.

"He began by saying 'What must you have thought of my conduct in leaving England so abruptly?'—'It gave me very great pain,' I answered; 'and, after all your promises to me, I considered that I had reason to be both dissatisfied and unhappy.'—'Let me speak candidly to you,' he continued. 'I am so circumstanced, in consequence of being entirely dependent on my father, that marriage is for the present impossible. But I love you very sincerely, and absence has augmented my attachment. Are you happy where you are?'—I then candidly acquainted him with Sir Wentworth Penfeather's conduct towards me, and stated my determination to leave my present situation as soon as I could obtain another.'—'Sir Wentworth,' continued Lord Dunstable, 'is the greatest scoundrel in respect to women, in London. If you do not yield to his wishes, he will slander you to his wife in private: and you will be turned away some fine morning without knowing why, and without a character.'—'Can he be so base?' I exclaimed, alarmed at this information.—'He is indeed,' replied Dunstable.

"Then, in a language so plausible—so earnest—so seductive, that I am unable to give you an idea of its speciousness, he proposed that I should at once place myself under his protection. At first I scorned the offer: he implored me to listen to him; he declared that he loved me to distraction, and that the moment his father was dead he would marry me. I wavered—he redoubled his entreaties, his prayers; and at length he wrung from me a consent to his proposition! It was agreed that I should invent some excuse to quit Lady Penfeather in the course of the week; and Dunstable promised in the meantime to provide suitable apartments for me. Then we separated.

"But do not imagine that I did all this without a pang, when I thought of my poor father and my brother! Oh! no—I wept bitter, burning tears at my weakness, after I quitted my lover; and I resolved to recall my promise to accept his protection. In this better frame of mind I returned to Cavendish Square. The moment I entered, the servant who opened the door informed me that Lady Penfeather desired to speak to me. I proceeded to the drawing-room, where her ladyship was sitting. Sir Wentworth was also there. I immediately suspected that there was something wrong. Lady Penfeather said, in a cold and freezing tone, 'Miss Hutchinson, I have no farther need of your services. Here is the amount due to you, together with a quarter's salary in addition, as I have not given you a quarter's notice.'—'This is somewhat peremptory, madam,' I observed, when I could recover from this sudden and unexpected announcement.—'I should be even justified in turning you out of the house, without the quarter's salary, Miss,' retorted the lady: 'but I do not wish to behave too harshly to you; I would not, however, advise you to apply to me for a character.'—'My God!' I exclaimed; 'what have I done?'—'The levity of your conduct has been noticed by Sir Wentworth,' returned Lady Penfeather.—'Sir Wentworth!' I repeated, unable to believe my own ears; and then, in a moment, Lord Dunstable's words flashed to my memory.—'Yes, Miss Hutchinson,' continued Lady Penfeather; 'and as I recalled to mind the significant glances which you exchanged with Lord Dunstable yesterday, I deemed it my duty to have you watched this afternoon. Do you desire to know any more?'—'It is perfectly true that I have been with Lord Dunstable ere now,' I exclaimed, my blood boiling with indignation: 'but it is because I would not listen to the infamous proposals of your husband, madam, that I have been maligned, and am treated thus.'—Sir Wentworth started from his seat, livid with rage; and her ladyship ordered me to quit the room. I perceived that all attempts at explanation in respect to her husband's conduct were vain; and I accordingly obeyed this mandate.

"I now resolved to return straight home to my father. I accordingly repaired, with my baggage, in a hackney-coach to the *White Horse Cellar*, for the purpose of taking the first conveyance to Guilford. But my evil star interfered to prevent this prudential arrangement; for it happened that as I alighted at the coach-office in Piccadilly, Lord Dunstable was passing at the moment. I shrank back to avoid him; but he saw me, and was immediately

by my side. I then told him all that had occurred at the Penfeathers', and acquainted him with my firm resolution to return home. Need I say how he implored me to abandon this determination? need I describe the earnestness with which he besought me not to make him miserable for life? His language was eloquent—he was handsome—I loved him—I was weak—and I consented to pass a few days with him ere I returned to my father.

"Alas! those few days were prolonged into a few weeks. I did not dare to write home: I fondly hoped that my father imagined me still to be in Lady Penfeather's establishment; and I felt convinced there was no chance of his coming to London so long as he entertained this impression. Lord Dunstable continued very kind to me. He had hired magnificent apartments for me in Jermyn Street, and allowed me a carriage, besides a handsome weekly allowance. He passed with me all the time he could spare from his regimental duties; but he never went abroad with me—except to a private box at the theatre on two or three occasions; and then he was so afraid of being seen by his relations, that I was quite miserable.

"Several times I made up mind to leave him and return home; for the remembrance of my beloved father and brother cut me to the quick. But how could I seek their presence,—I who was now polluted not merely through the treachery of my lover, but also through my own weakness! Nevertheless, day after day I resolved to abandon my present mode of life—retrace my steps to the home of my childhood—throw myself at my father's feet—confess all my errors—implore his blessing—and devote the remainder of my existence to penitence and virtue. Then my lover would make his appearance; and all my prudent designs would flit away as if they had never been.

"But one morning I was aroused from this dream of irresolution—vacillation—weakness—and crime. I was seated alone at breakfast, whiling away an hour with the newspaper. Suddenly my eyes fell upon an advertisement at the head of the second column of the first page. Oh! never shall I forget the agony of my feelings—the deep, deep anguish of my soul, as I read these words:—'*L. H., your father is at the point of death. Your afflicted brother implores you to return home. For God's sake, delay not; or it will be too late! All shall be forgiven and forgotten.*'—And in the corner was the name of my father's village!

"For an instant I felt as if I should go raving mad. My brain seemed actually to whirl. Oh! what a wretch did I conceive myself to be! Another moment, and I became all activity—hurrying the small preparations which were necessary for my departure. The terrible words, '*Delay not, or it will be too late!*' seemed fraught with an electric impulse. A post-chaise and four were immediately ordered: I took with me but a small parcel containing necessaries;—all the trinkets, all the jewels, all the valuables which Dunstable had given to me, I sealed up and left behind me. I moreover penned a hasty note to bid him farewell for ever!

"I lavished gold upon the postillions to induce them to spare not their horses. The chaise rushed along like the wind. God knows what were my feelings during the few hours which that terrible journey lasted. I cannot attempt to describe them. Oh! if indiscretion and crime have their enjoyments, they are also doomed to experience bitter—bitter penalties. And my punishment was now at hand. It was not so long since I had journeyed along that road with my father—when he first conducted me up to London. Then we had travelled by the coach, and not so rapidly as I was now retracing the same path. Then, too, I had marked many of the most prominent features on the road and in the adjacent country,—here a church—there a picturesque farm—a cottage—a mill—or a hamlet! As I was hurried along in the post-chaise, I looked ever and anon from the window; oh! there were the same objects I had before observed;—there they were, apparently unchanged;—but I—my God—was I the same?

"But it was as I drew nearer and nearer to the little village where I was born, that my eyes encountered a thousand objects which aroused feelings of the most acute anguish within me. There was a beautiful hill to the summit of which I had often climbed in my youthful days, accompanied by my brother. There was the stream which turned the huge wheel of the water-mill in the valley, and the path along whose banks was a favourite walk of my father's. The wheel was turning still: my eye could trace the path on the river's margin;—but the days of innocence, in which I had rambled there—a fond, loving, and confiding girl, hanging on my father's arm, or skipping playfully away from him to pluck the wild-flowers in the fields—those days of innocence, where were they? The chaise rolled on; and now the spire of the village church, peeping above the mighty yew-trees which surrounded the sacred temple, met my view. But, ah! what was that sound? The bell was speaking with its iron tongue: its well-known clang boomed over hill and valley. Merciful heavens! it was a knell! 'Oh! no—no,' I exclaimed aloud, clasping my hands together in bitter agony; 'it cannot be! God grant that it is not so!'

"And now the chaise rolled through the village: the humble inhabitants rushed to their doors—Ah! how many faces that I knew, were thrust forth to gaze at the equipage. I can picture to myself that when the condemned malefactor, on the morning of his death, is advancing towards the scaffold, he closes his eyes just at the moment when he feels that he has reached that point whence his glances might embrace all its hideous reality. Urged by a similar impulse, I covered my face with my hands the instant the chaise swept from the main-road towards the home of my childhood. I dared not glance in that direction!

"But in a few moments the vehicle stopped. The knell from the church-tower was still ringing in my ears: by an almost superhuman effort I withdrew my hands from my countenance, and cast a shuddering look towards the house. My terrible apprehensions were confirmed: the shutters were all closed; and I saw in a moment *that there was death in that abode!*

"From that instant all consciousness abandoned me for several hours. Indeed, it was not until the next morning that I awoke as it were from a hideous dream,—and yet awoke to find it all a fearful reality. I was in bed: my poor brother—pale and careworn—was leaning over me. In a short time I learnt all. My father was indeed no more. He had breathed his last while I was yet on my way to implore his dying blessing. And he *had* left me his

blessing—he did not curse me, although I had been the cause of his death! Nor did my brother reproach me: on the contrary, he whispered to me words of consolation, and even of hope! Poor father—beloved brother!

"But I cannot dwell upon this portion of my narrative: it rends my heart—lost, guilty, wretched as I am,—it rends my heart to recall those terrible events to mind! Suffice it to say that Lady Pen-feather had written to my father, to state that she had been compelled to discharge me at a moment's notice '*in consequence of the levity of my behaviour;*' and she had added that, '*in spite of the excellent admonitions and example of herself and Sir Wentworth,*' she was afraid I had formed evil acquaintances. This letter was enough to induce a parent even less loving than my poor father, to hasten immediately to London, where he commenced a vigilant search after me. He traced me to the *White Horse Cellar;* and there, by dint of inquiry, he discovered that I had met a gentleman with whom I had gone away. He proceeded to Mrs. Lambkin, with the feeble hope that she might know something about me; and that lady told him sufficient (without, however, mentioning a word about the discovery of the dead infant in my box) to confirm his worst fears that I was indeed a lost and ruined creature! After passing several weeks in London in a vain and ineffectual search after his still dearly-beloved daughter, the poor old man had returned home, heart-broken—to die!

"And I gazed upon his cold clay—and I followed him to the grave which was hollowed for him near the walls of that church wherein for twenty years he had preached the ways of virtue—those ways which he himself had so steadily pursued. Oh! when the minister came to those solemn words '*Earth to earth, and ashes to ashes,*'—and when the cold clay rattled down upon the coffin-lid,—what feelings were mine! You may probably divine them; but the world has no language that can express them!

"Scarcely was my father consigned to his last home, when my brother demanded of me a full account of my late proceedings. He could not believe that one who had been reared with such care, and in whose soul such sublime moral lessons had been inculcated, could have erred willingly. He expressed his conviction that some infernal treachery had been practised towards me. I threw myself upon his breast: I wept—and I told him all,—all, as I have now related these particulars to you. On the following morning he had left home when I descended to the breakfast-table. His absence alarmed me sorely; I was full of vague and undefined apprehensions. Alas! how speedily were they confirmed! Four days afterwards I received a letter from a surgeon in London, breaking to me the fearful news '*that my brother had died of a wound received in a duel with a certain Lord Dunstable.*'—A certain Lord Dunstable;—as if I did not know him too well!

"Was I, then, the murderess of my poor father and my noble-hearted brother? If my hand had not struck a dagger into their hearts, my conduct had nevertheless hurried them to the grave. I hated—I abhorred myself. But the bitterness of my reflections was in some degree mitigated by the hasty preparations which I was compelled to make for an immediate return to London. I had not money enough to enable me to take a post-chaise; and I was therefore obliged to wait for the Portsmouth coach, which passed through the village on its way to the metropolis. I had already made up my mind what course to adopt. Now that my father and brother were no more, I could not bear the idea of remaining in the place where we had all been once so happy together: I moreover knew that the parsonage-house would soon be required by the new curate who had been appointed as my late father's successor. I accordingly sent for the village lawyer, and gave him instructions to realize in ready money all the little property which had become my sad inheritance. I told him that in a few days I would let him know my address in London; and that he was to forward me the proceeds of the sale. But I retained a few relics to remind me of my departed relatives; and as I wept bitterly over them, I took a solemn vow that my future conduct should prove the sincerity of my repentance for the past!

The coach made its appearance soon after midday: there was not a single person inside; and thus I was enabled to pour forth, without restraint, that grief—that acute anguish which I experienced at being compelled, by my own misconduct, to quit for ever the place of my birth. Oh! then I felt how hard, how bitter it was to arrive at the conviction that I had no longer *a home!* I was now wretched in the extreme: I had lost those who were nearest and dearest to me! Not to me was it given to close the eyes of the author of my being: not to me was it allowed to receive the parting sigh of that brother who had met his death in the cause of his sister's outraged honour! Wretch that I was;—I had no longer a friend—and no longer a home!

The coach, on its arrival in London, stopped at the *White Horse Cellar.* I took a cab, and immediately proceeded to the house of the surgeon who had written to me. There it was that my brother had breathed his last! The duel had taken place in the neighbourhood of Bayswater: my brother received his adversary's ball in the breast; and although he lived for some hours afterwards, he never spoke again. Lord Dunstable conjured the surgeon to show the unfortunate young man every attention, and then took his immediate departure for the continent. But, from motives of delicacy, neither poor Edgar nor his lordship had communicated to the medical man the cause of the duel. It was only by means of papers found about my brother's person that the surgeon discovered that he had a sister, and ascertained where that sister lived. In the hurry, alarm, and confusion which followed the duel, the surgeon had forgotten to demand, and Lord Dunstable was too bewildered to communicate, any particulars relative to the family or friends of the young man who had fallen in the hostile encounter. Thus, had it not been for certain memoranda which were discovered in my poor brother's pocket-book, the surgeon would not have known to whom to write, and I might have remained for months—or even years—in ignorance of that dear relative's untimely fate. Full well did I comprehend the delicacy of his own conduct: he had not left a written trace which might expose my shame by revealing the motives that had led to the duel!

"There was a coroner's inquest; but, as it was stated that I was not in London at the time when the hostile encounter took place, I was not examined. Thus were my feelings spared a most pain-

ful ordeal! The funeral took place;—and the earth closed over the remains of him who was cut off in the flower of his youth—a victim to my misdeeds! The kindness of the surgeon's family had hitherto made me their guest; but on the day after the mournful obsequies, I perceived the necessity of adopting some decided course, so as to intrude no longer on that generous hospitality. But the worthy surgeon questioned me closely; and finding that I had only recently been left an orphan, and was totally friendless, he insisted that I should pass a few weeks longer with his family, until he could obtain for me a situation as governess. I wrote to the lawyer of my native village; and by return of post he forwarded me an order on a London banker for thirty-seven pounds—the poor proceeds of the sale of the furniture in the parsonage house.

"Six months passed away: during that period I was treated with the utmost kindness by the surgeon and his family. But misfortune suddenly overtook that excellent man. The villany of a false friend plunged him from affluence into comparative poverty. This abrupt change preyed so deeply on his mind, that he put a period to his existence. His brother—a man of morose disposition and selfish character—undertook to provide for the widow and her children; and I was then compelled once more to shift for myself. I took an affectionate farewell of those who had behaved so well towards me, and removed to a humble lodging, where I soon experienced all the wretchedness of my lonely and unfriended position. I inserted advertisements in the newspapers, for the purpose of obtaining a situation as teacher in a school or governess in a respectable family; and although I received many replies, I failed to give a satisfactory account of myself. I could not refer to Mrs. Lambkin, nor to Lady Penfeather; and I found that my orphan condition excited but little sympathy in my favour. Thus a year—an entire year—passed; and at the end, I found myself without hope, and without resources. I knew not what would become of me. At length I mustered up all my courage, and proceeded to Rossville House. I inquired for Miss Adeline Enfield. The servant demanded my name, and left me standing in the hall for nearly ten minutes until his return. I was then shown into a small but magnificently furnished parlour; and almost immediately afterwards Adeline made her appearance. She advanced towards me with the most chilling hauteur of manner, and desired to know '*my business*.'—'Oh! Miss Adeline,' I exclaimed, 'have I no claims upon your friendship?'—'You must remember what took place between us the last time we met,' she answered. 'If you require pecuniary assistance, I will succour you *for the last time*; but circumstances compel me to decline seeing you, or even *knowing* you in future.'—'And is this the way you treat me after all I suffered on your account?' I said, bursting into tears. 'Do you not reflect that your reputation is in my hands?'—'If you menace me, Miss Hutchinson,' she said, 'I shall know how to treat you. In a word, who would believe your story were you to proclaim it? You would only draw down upon yourself the vengeance of my family by endeavouring to shift your own disgrace on to my shoulders. The whole world would denounce you as a common impostress.'—An instant's reflection showed me that these assurances were strictly true. But my pride was hurt, and my feelings were poignantly wrung by the blackness of Adeline's ingratitude. Pushing aside her hand which tendered me a purse of gold, I exclaimed, 'From this moment, Miss Enfield, I consider myself absolved from all motives of secrecy on your account;'—and, before she could utter a word of reply, I left the room.

"I hurried back to the house where I lodged. The landlady met me upon the threshold of the door. 'Come, young woman,' she said, 'can you pay the fortnight's rent you owe me?'—'I have been disappointed,' was my reply: 'but in a few days——.'—'People are always being disappointed when they owe money,' she exclaimed. 'I shall keep your things till you settle your rent; and I shall let the room to those who can and will pay.' And she banged the door in my face. This cruel calamity reduced me to despair. I turned away from that inhospitable abode,—not with tears, for there is a grief too profound to find a vent by the eyes—but with an utter hopelessness that was distraction!

"I had eaten nothing since the morning: I was hungry, and I had not a farthing in my pocket. It was moreover cold; and I knew not where to sleep that night. Oh! then how bitterly did I regret the ebullition of pride and feeling which had prevented me from accepting the purse which Adeline had proffered me! It was now too late to conciliate her: I had used menaces; and I felt convinced that it would be impossible to make my peace with that proud and determined spirit. I wandered about the streets in a state of mind which every moment suggested suicide. Then did all the happiness of home and of the days of innocence recur to my memory with a force that nearly crushed me! I thought of my dear departed father and my noble-hearted brother—both hurried to the grave by my wickedness! Evening came—and I was still a wanderer in the streets, without a hope—without a feasible project! Hour after hour passed: midnight was proclaimed by the iron tongues of the thousand towers of this mighty city;—and I sank exhausted on the step of a door in Gerrard Street, Soho. I then became insensible.

"When I awoke, I was in a comfortable bed; and the day-light streamed through the windows of a nicely-furnished room. I started up, and glanced around me. On a small table by the side of the bed stood a decanter with some port wine, and a bowl half-filled with broth. I immediately judged by those appearances, and by my own sensations, that the kind hand of charity had administered sustenance to me, as well as providing me with an asylum. From those objects on the table my eyes wandered round the room; and I was surprised and shocked to observe that the pictures on the walls were of a somewhat indecent description. The unpleasant reflections which this circumstance occasioned were interrupted by the entrance of an elderly woman,—very stout, with small grey eyes, and a red nose. She seemed to have literally flung on the cotton-gown which she wore; and a dirty night-cap was perched on the top of her head. She advanced with a good-natured smile towards the bed, and, surveying me with great apparent satisfaction, exclaimed, 'How do you feel, my poor child? I am delighted to see you looking so much better! Dear me, what a state you were in when I found you, in the middle of the night, on the step of my door.'—'Ah! madam,' I said, extending my hand towards her, 'how can I ever repay you for this

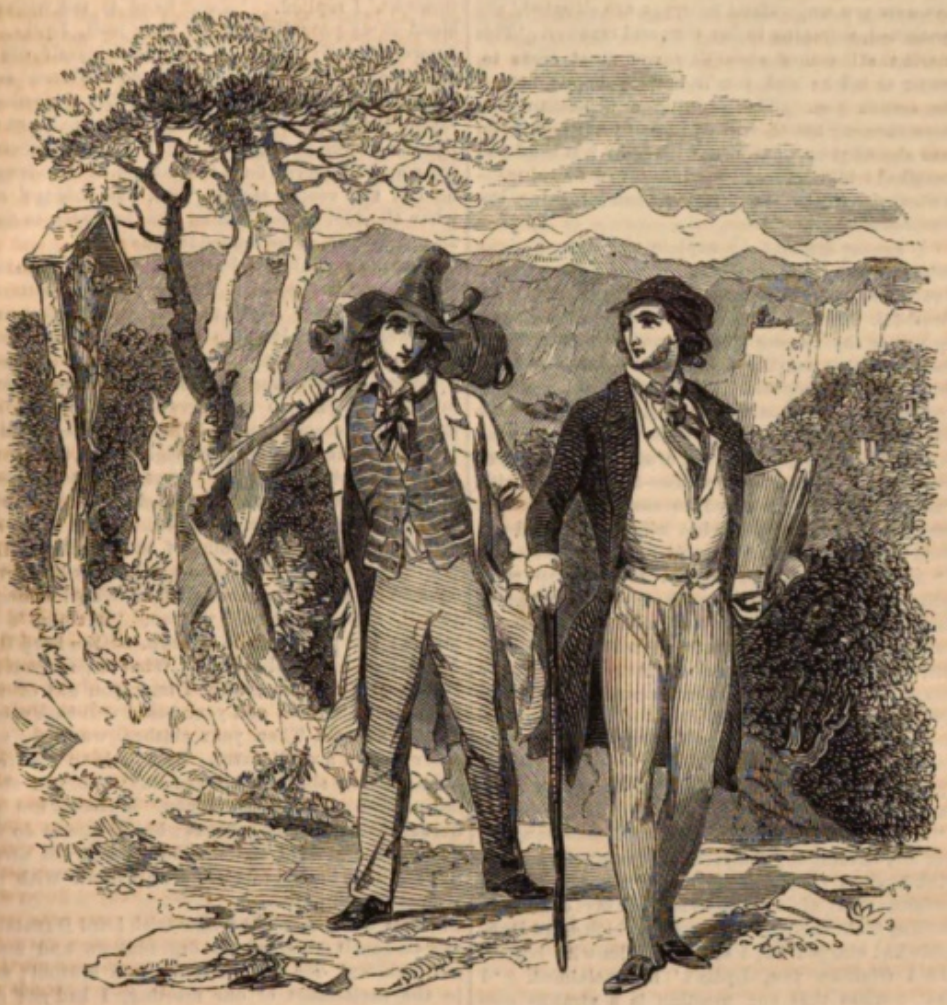
goodness?'—She pressed my hand warmly, and declared that she was charmed at being able to serve so sweet a young creature. Then she asked me a great many questions; and I gave her to understand that I was the orphan daughter of a clergyman; that I had failed to obtain the renewal of my engagements as a nursery-governess: that I had been turned into the streets by my landlady, who had detained my boxes; and that I should have perished had it not been for the kindness and benevolence of my present benefactress. When I had concluded this statement of as much of my past life as I chose to reveal, the elderly lady exclaimed, 'And so you are a clergyman's orphan, my dear? How very singular! Poor curates' daughters are always falling into difficulties. But cheer up, my dear: I will be a friend to you. And first tell me the address of your hard-hearted landlady: I will send at once and redeem your things for you.'—I gave her the information which she asked, and once more expressed my profound gratitude for her goodness towards me. She patted my cheek, and then left the room, observing that she would send me up breakfast. In a few minutes a good-looking and smartly-dressed servant entered the chamber, bearing a tray containing coffee, hot rolls, eggs, and the usual concomitants of a good meal. 'What is the name of your excellent mistress?' I inquired.—'Mrs. Harpy,' was the reply, given with a smile the nature of which struck me as being somewhat strange.—'What is she?' I asked.—'She keeps a very respectable boarding-house,' answered the servant.—I did not like to put any farther questions; and the girl withdrew.

"I ate a very hearty breakfast, and then lay down again; for I was not quite recovered from the fatigues of the preceding day. I fell into a doze; and when I awoke, Mrs. Harpy was once more standing by the side of the bed. 'Here are your things, my dear,' she said: 'I paid your landlady fifteen shillings. That was for two weeks' rent owing, and a week she claimed because you had left without giving notice. She gives an excellent character of you, and proves all you have told me to be quite true. I am really as fond of you as if you were my own daughter. You are looking much better; and a nice little boiled fowl, with a glass of Port, will set you to rights. What time do you like to dine, dear?'—'My good lady,' I replied, 'you are heaping favours upon me, and I have not the means of paying you for any one of them.'—'Don't talk of that, my dear girl,' ejaculated Mrs. Harpy. 'I 'm sure it is quite a pleasure to do any thing for you. But, by-the-by,' she added, 'you may just as well give me a memorandum for what I am paying for you; and as I shall be able to procure some nice, easy, genteel avocation for you, you can reimburse me at your convenience.'—Of course I was delighted at this opportunity of testifying my honest intentions and good-will; and I instantly affixed my signature to a slip of paper which she produced from her pocket. Mrs. Harpy kissed me very affectionately; and then, casually observing that she kept a very genteel boarding-house, concluded by saying that she would ask some of the young ladies to come up after dinner and keep me company for an hour or two.

"At four o'clock the pretty servant made her appearance with the boiled fowl and a small decanter of wine; and when the things were cleared away, the young ladies were duly ushered in. There were five of them. Their ages varied from seventeen to twenty-three; and they were all remarkably good-looking. It however struck me as somewhat singular that they were every one dressed in extremely low-bodied gowns, so as to exhibit a great deal more of the bust than was consistent with my notions of decorum. But as they were very affable and kind in their manners, and '*dear'd*' me with much apparent sincerity, I ceased to think of that peculiarity. Presently Mrs. Harpy sent up a bottle of wine and some fruit, with her kindest compliments; and then the young ladies laughed and enjoyed themselves in the happiest manner possible. They drank the wine with great freedom and relish; and by degrees their conversation turned upon the topic of love. With this subject they were quite familiar; and the more they drank, the more license they allowed their tongues. They spoke of the kindness of Mrs. Harpy, of the gaiety of the life which they led in her establishment, and of the high acquaintance which they enjoyed. They seemed to know every young lord and wealthy gentleman about town, and compared the various qualifications of those personages. Their discourse became more and more animated in proportion as their imaginations were warmed with the wine; and at length they allowed such observations to escape them which made me blush. I was surprised at their levity, and had already begun to entertain strange suspicions of their virtue, when a bell suddenly rang on the landing. They all started up, and rushed out of the room—leaving me a prey to the reflections which their remarkable conduct had very naturally excited.

"I kept my bed, by Mrs. Harpy's advice, all that day; but I did not feel sleepy in the evening, after the young ladies had left me;—and even if the contrary were the case, I should not have been able to indulge a wish for repose, for after eleven o'clock the whole establishment seemed to be in a constant bustle. People ran up and down stairs; doors were banged; shouts of laughter awoke every echo in the place; glasses rattled on trays that were carried to the different rooms; and the boisterous mirth of men rose at intervals above the other sounds and noises. This confusion, as it appeared to me, continued until about two o'clock; and then the house became quiet. My suspicions were seriously excited relative to the respectability of Mrs. Harpy's establishment; but I endeavoured to quiet them by all the arguments I could conceive in that lady's favour, and which were prompted by my gratitude towards her. At length I fell asleep.

"In the morning the servant brought me up my breakfast. I asked her the meaning of the bustle I had heard during the night. She answered carelessly, 'Oh! Mrs. Harpy is very gay, Miss, and is fond of company.'—After breakfast I got up, and had just dressed myself, when a door was opened violently on the opposite side of the landing, and a male voice exclaimed, 'Well, if the old woman won't give me credit for a miserable bottle of champagne, after all the money I 've spent in the place, I 'll never set foot in it again. So good bye, 'Tilda. Here 's a sovereign for you, my girl. It 's the last time I shall ever sleep in this house.'—Thereupon the individual, who had so expressed himself, descended the stairs with a tremendous stamping of his feet, as if he were very indignant at the treatment he had complained of; and Miss Matilda—one



of the *young ladies* who had visited in my room on the preceding evening—returned into her apartment, banging the door violently behind her. This incident opened my eyes to the dread truth:—I was in a brothel!

"I threw myself on a chair and burst into a flood of tears. Merciful heavens! for what fate was I reserved? Had I indeed fallen so low that my only home was a loathsome den of iniquity like that? For some minutes after the occurrence of the incident just related, I felt as if my senses were leaving me. Suddenly the door opened, and Mrs. Harpy made her appearance. She seemed astonished at the condition in which she found me, and was about to make some remark, when I threw myself at her feet, exclaiming, 'I conjure you, madam—if you have any pity for a poor friendless orphan—let me leave your house this moment!'—'And where will you go, my dear child?' she said.—'To the workhouse, ma'am: anywhere, rather than remain here!' I answered.—'This is a pretty recompense for my kindness towards you,' she observed. 'If it had not been for me, you would have died in the streets.'—'Far better for me were it, had I so perished!' I exclaimed.—'Now, Miss,' cried Mrs. Harpy, growing angry, 'what is the meaning of all this nonsense?'—'Can you ask me?' I demanded. 'Oh! that the feelings which prompted you to assist me, should have been any other save the disinterested benevolence for which I so sincerely thanked you!'—'Then you know where you are, Miss, I suppose?' she said, with a leer; and, before I had time to give any reply, she added, 'I meant you to find it out in a day or two; and it 's as well now as a few hours later. Here you are, and here you will stay. You shall be treated just in proportion as you behave; and this evening, I shall introduce some fine nobleman or gentleman to you.'—'Never!' I cried: then moving towards the door, I said, 'Detain me at your peril!'—'So I shall,' answered Mrs. Harpy, coolly. 'I 've got your I. O. U. for twenty pounds; and if you go any where, it will be to Whitecross Street prison, before you 're many hours older. Remember, it 's for *necessaries*; and so no plea of minority or any other gammon of that kind, will avail you.'—I remembered the slip of paper which I had signed;

and my heart sank within me, as I saw how completely I was in the power of that vile woman.—'So now you understand how you are situated,' she continued, softening in her tone and manner. 'This is what all young girls like you must come to, sooner or later; and you 'll be very happy here, I can assure you. This evening a nobleman who patronizes my house, will call upon you; and if you have any of your nonsense with him, I 'll send you straight to Whitecross Street to-morrow morning.'—With these words she left the room, locking the door behind her.

"I cannot attempt to explain the nature of my feelings during the remainder of that day. A good dinner was sent up to me; but I could not eat a mouthful. The servant asked if I should like to see any of the 'young ladies;' and I answered in a manner which convinced her how I recoiled from the detestable proposal. She smiled—as I thought, significantly,—as much as to say, 'You will talk differently in a very short time.'—At about nine o'clock Mrs. Harpy sent up word that I was to dress myself in my best attire—a command with which I positively refused to comply; for I was determined that, happen what might, I would not assist in the sacrifice of myself!

"At ten o'clock the servant brought up wax-lights, and a tray containing a bottle of champagne, glasses, and several plates of fruits and cakes. I watched these preparations in a state of dumb despair, bordering on stupefaction. Another half hour passed; and steps once more ascended the stairs. My heart palpitated violently! The door was thrown open;—a man elegantly dressed entered the room;—I cast one glance towards him, and, uttering a faint cry, sank insensible on the carpet. It was Lord Dunstable!

"When I awoke, I found that nobleman hanging over me, bathing my temples. He compelled me to drink a glass of wine; and I soon recovered full consciousness of the miseries of my condition. Starting from the half-embrace in which Lord Dunstable had clasped me, I surveyed him with horror. 'Do I frighten you, Lydia?' he exclaimed. 'I must confess that our meeting is a strange one. The old woman sent to tell me that she had a prize; but I little expected to find you here.'—'My presence in this house of infamy, my lord,' I answered, 'is one of the links in that chain of degradation of which you forged the first link. To you I owe all the disgrace and all the sorrow that I have endured. Not contented with my ruin, you deprived me of my brother.'—'Come, Lydia, this is absurd,' he cried. 'In the first place, a young female who meets a gentleman and walks with him in Parks or elsewhere, must not expect to escape the usual consequences. Secondly, your brother challenged me, like a rash and headstrong young fellow as he was: I sent him due warning by my second that I was certain to shoot him; but he would not take good advice, and I *did* shoot him.'—'And had you no regard for me at that moment?' I asked.—'Egad!' he replied, 'I only thought of myself. I fancied that if I did not shoot him, he might perform that good office for me; and so I was resolved not to give him a second chance.'—'Surely you cannot be in your senses, my lord,' I exclaimed, 'to talk of so serious a matter in such a flippant style?'—'Come, let us understand each other, Lydia,' he said. 'I did not come to such a house as this to receive a lesson in morals. Do you wish me to remain here with you until to-morrow?'—'No: a thousand times *no*,' I replied. 'Your hand is red with the blood of my poor brother.'—'Very well, Lydia,' he answered coolly; 'then I will take myself off as quietly as I came. But for old acquaintance' sake I must do the thing handsomely.'—I heard his observation, the flippant tone of which made me avert my head from him in disgust; and I did not therefore see why he lingered for a few moments. At length he left the room, saying, 'Bye, bye, Liddy;' and when the door closed behind him, he began to hum an opera-tune, as he descended the stairs.

"Scarcely could he have had time to gain the street door, when Mrs. Harpy bounded into my room, exclaiming, 'Well, my dear, you have behaved very well, for his lordship went away in an excellent humour. What did he give you?'—'Give me!' I repeated, surveying that horrible woman with mingled indignation and terror.—'By Jove, he 's a lord in name and nature both!' ejaculated Mrs. Harpy, as her eyes caught sight of a bank-note which lay upon the table. 'Twenty pounds, as I 'm a living woman!' and she clutched the object of her delighted avarice.—'Hold, madam!' I exclaimed. 'Not one farthing of that money will I retain! The man who gave it killed my brother!'—'I do n't care who he 's killed, or who he means to kill,' answered the old woman, 'But here 's his money; and that I intend to keep.'—'*You* keep it!" I cried.—'Yes; who else? What an ungrateful hussey you must be, after I took you out of the street! This room and your board will cost you a guinea a-day. Then your clothes, washing, and other things are all extra. So I 'll keep nineteen pound fifteen shillings on account; and you shall have a crown for pocket money. If that is not generous, I do n't know what is; but I like to do the thing what 's right.'—With these words she threw five shillings on the table, and walked off with the twenty-pound note.

"This unexpected interview with Lord Dunstable and its result stamped my degradation, and made me reckless. He had seen me in a brothel; and in the excitement of our meeting, I had not explained to him how I became an inmate of that house. Then he left behind him a sum of money; and, as I was unable to restore it to him with an indignant refusal of any succour at his hands, he would naturally conceive that I availed myself of his bounty. My pride was wounded to such an irreparable degree, that I felt, if you can understand me, a total unwillingness to endeavour to maintain it any longer. I was spirit-crushed. I fancied that it was no use to contend any more against my fate. I considered myself to be now so lost and degraded in the estimation of that one man whom I had loved, that I had nothing else in the world to induce me to study character, reputation, or pride. I accordingly abandoned myself to what I firmly believed to be my destiny; and, seating myself at the table, I poured out a glass of champagne. For a moment I sighed as I remembered that it was champagne that had led to my ruin in the first instance:—then I laughed at what I called 'my folly,' and emptied the glass. The wine cheered me, but, at the same time, confirmed me in that recklessness which had succeeded the first feeling of utter and irredeemable degradation. I drank another glass: the last spark of virtuous aspiration was then extinguished in my

bosom. The other *young ladies* suddenly made their appearance: I received them with open arms;—we sate down to drink and chat;—I was put to bed in a disgusting state of intoxication; and on the following morning I awoke—reconciled to a life of infamy!

"Pardon me, if I dwell for a few minutes upon the characteristics of those houses of abomination, in one of which I was now located. Mrs. Harpy was an admirable type of her profession. She was mean and griping in the extreme when wringing an extra shilling, or even an extra penny, from her *boarders*, as we were called; and yet she was profuse and liberal in supplying us with costly wine. If we complained of having to eat cold meat two days running, she would storm, and declare that we lived too well as it was;—but she would think nothing of giving us a bottle of champagne, which could not have cost her less than eight or ten shillings, after dinner. She took from us every farthing that we received, and invariably made us out her debtors, although she never showed us any accounts. To give you an idea of her way of managing, I will relate a little anecdote. One Saturday afternoon, Matilda (whom I have before mentioned) asked her for a sovereign; adding, 'You know I have given you altogether thirteen guineas this week.'—'Thirteen guineas!' screamed the old woman: 'I'll take my Bible oath it was only twelve.'—'Well, call it even twelve, if you like,' said the young female: 'you can well spare me a sovereign.'—'Lord bless the girl!' cried Mrs. Harpy. 'Why, there 's seven guineas for your board and lodging; two guineas for your washing; that 's ten; a guinea for pocket money; and a guinea for letters and needles and thread; that makes up the twelve, or else I never went to school to learn compound addition.'—'And multiplication too,' said Matilda. 'Why, I had but one letter all the week, and that was paid.'—'Well, my dear,' answered Mrs. Harpy, 'we will ask the postman. Come! I 'll stand another bottle of champagne now, and you shall have an extra sovereign for yourself next Saturday, if you 're lucky in the meantime.'

"We were complete slaves to this Mrs. Harpy. She had got a note-of-hand for twenty pounds from each of us; and if any one even so much as hinted at leaving her, she immediately threatened to wreak her vengeance by means of the sheriffs' officer. She seldom allowed us to go out to take any exercise, for fear we should decamp altogether; but every now and then we would all go together to Gravesend or Richmond by the steam-boats, or else to Copenhagen House, in the summer time, and to some minor theatre in the winter. Oh! the misery of that existence! We were slaves to an old wretch who was enriching herself at our expense, whilst we had not an opportunity of hoarding a single guinea against any sudden necessity or misfortune. Then, what atrocious proceedings were frequently enacted in that house! Hard by lived three or four idle fellows, who dressed flashily, spent a great deal of money, and yet had no visible employment or resources. Those ruffians were the *blinks*, or *bullies*, belonging to Mrs. Harpy's establishment. Their tricks were manifold. For instance, they would pick up, at a tavern, coach-office, the theatre, or other public place, some country gentleman, or even a clergyman, whom they would ply with liquor, and then induce to accompany them to '*their aunt's*,' where they would meet '*some delightful girls*.' Of course this was Mrs. Harpy's establishment. The respectable country gentleman, or clergyman, was plied with more liquor; and, if he would not drink fast enough, his wine was drugged for him. When he awoke in the morning, he would find himself in bed with one of the '*delightful girls*.' Presently, one of the bullies would rush into the room, declare that the gentleman had debauched '*his cousin*,' and threaten an exposure. Then the poor victim was glad to compromise the business by paying a considerable sum, in order to hush up the matter at once.

"Sometimes, the bullies would attempt a similar scheme of extortion in reference to individuals who came voluntarily to the house; and if the latter resisted the exorbitant demands made upon them, they were not unfrequently maltreated in a most shameful manner. It often happened that a gentleman would become a regular visitor to the house, if he took a fancy to one particular boarder: in such a case he probably adopted a false name, and took every precaution to avoid discovery as to who he was. The girl whom he visited, was then directed to pump him; and if she failed to elicit the desired particulars, one of the bullies was instructed to watch and dog him when he left the house. By these means, his real name, residence, position, and circumstances, were speedily ascertained. If he were moving in a very respectable sphere, was married, or had any particular motives to induce him to keep his intrigue secret, he was the very kind of person who suited Mrs. Harpy and her bullies. The next time he visited the house, he would be surrounded by those ruffians, menaced with exposure, and forced to pay a considerable sum of money to purchase silence. But the evil did not terminate there. From that time forth, the unfortunate gentleman would be periodically beset by his persecutors; and fresh extortions would be effected to renew the pledge of secrecy on their part. Married men, moving in respectable spheres, have been *driven to suicide* by this atrocious system! Many a time have I read, in the newspapers, instances of self-destruction on the part of gentlemen whose pecuniary, social, or domestic circumstances afforded not the least appearance of any possible motive for such a deed;—and then I have thought within myself that those poor victims had been *hunted to death* by extortioners of the class which I have described! The man who has a *character* to lose, or who has the *peace* of his family to consider, knows not how fearfully both are compromised, both endangered, when he so far forgets himself as to set foot in a house of infamy. He may imagine that his secret never can transpire—that neither his family nor friends can, by any possible means, ever discover that he has thus erred;—but, if he be an individual, who, by his wealth and social position, appears worth the trouble of looking after, he will most assuredly find himself a prey to the vilest of extortioners. His happiness will be undermined and destroyed; he will live in constant dread of exposure: and deeply—deeply will he rue the day that he ever set foot in a brothel!

"The most bare-faced robberies are practised in even what are called '*the respectable dress-houses*.' A gentleman, wearing a handsome watch and chain, is pretty certain to have it stolen from him; and when he remonstrates, he is perhaps met with a

counter-accusation of having given a bad sovereign in payment for champagne, on the preceding evening. On one occasion, a young gentleman who was so plundered, and so accused, carried the business to the Marlborough Street Police-Office. Mrs. Harpy attended, denied the robbery in the most indignant manner, and persisted in the accusation relative to the base sovereign. The proceedings took such a turn that the young gentleman was searched; and in his pockets were found *other counterfeit sovereigns*, exactly resembling the *one* produced by Mrs. Harpy. Then Mrs. Harpy sent for her wine-merchant, her butcher, and her baker, who were all her near neighbours: and those tradesmen declared that Mrs. Harpy kept a most respectable boarding-house, and that she was a lady of good connexions and undoubted integrity. The magistrate then appealed to the policeman within whose beat Gerrard Street was included; and as he received five guineas a year from Mrs. Harpy for shutting his eyes, it was not likely that he would open them on that occasion. He fully corroborated the evidence of the wine-merchant, butcher, and baker; and the young gentleman was committed for trial for passing base money. Mrs. Harpy's story was that he had presented himself on the preceding evening at her house, and arranged to become a boarder in her establishment; that he obtained from her the change for the bad sovereign; and that, when accused of the act, he had turned round with a counter-charge relative to his watch. The magistrate declared that there was no doubt of Mrs. Harpy's perfect respectability, and commented severely on the '*infamous behaviour of the prisoner, in trumping up so vile an accusation, as a means of releasing himself from the odium of the charge laid against him.*' This young man belonged to a highly respectable family; and he had given a fictitious name in answer to the magistrate's question, *for he had only been married six months*, and was naturally anxious to conceal his visit to a brothel from the knowledge of his friends. But when he was committed for trial, he was forced to send for them, confess his indiscretion, and implore them to save him from the ignominy of exposure in a court of justice. A compromise with Mrs. Harpy was accordingly effected: she *paid* fifty pounds in forfeit of her recognizances to prosecute: and she *received* two hundred to abstain from farther proceedings! I need scarcely say that the young gentleman really had been plundered of his watch, and that the entire business of the counterfeit money had been arranged to ruin him. Again I declare that no one knows the woeful risks he incurs when he sets foot in a house of ill-fame. That one false step may embitter the remainder of his days!

"Some weeks elapsed ere I was completely aware of the infamies which were perpetrated in Mrs. Harpy's den; and then I resolved to leave the place, whatever might subsequently become of me. At length an opportunity served; and one evening, with only a small parcel of necessaries under my arm, and a few shillings in my purse, I slipped out of that scene of iniquities. I cannot enter into further details: suffice it to say, from that moment commenced an existence of fearful vicissitudes,—starvation one day, luxury the next,—the most abrupt descents into the lowest abyss of destitution, and the most sudden elevations to comfort, though still a career of infamy,—wanderings for many, many nights together, without knowing where to lay my head, and then a lodging and a good bed! Oh! it was horrible, that precariousness of life to which I was doomed!

"How often did I reflect upon the times of my innocence! Now and then I saw well-known names mentioned in the newspapers. The consecutive and rapid promotions of Lord Dunstable and Cholmondeley were not unnoticed by me. The presentation of the Honourable Adeline Enfield to court was an incident which affected me deeply; for it naturally led me to compare her elevated position with my degraded and wretched state. But one event, which was recorded in the newspapers, gave me, I must confess, some satisfaction: this was the bankruptcy of Mrs. Lambkin and her committal to Newgate for having fraudulently disposed of her property. I afterwards learnt that she died miserably in that gaol.

"But my own vicissitudes continued! Oh! let those who are prone to turn away from *the unfortunate woman* with disgust and abhorrence, rather exercise a feeling of sympathy in her behalf. She does not drag her weary frame nightly along the pavement, through *choice*, but from *necessity*. In all weathers must she ply her miserable trade—or starve. Then to what indignities is she subjected! Every drunken ruffian considers himself justified in ill-using her: every brutal fellow jostles against her, and addresses her in terms of insult. Do they think that, because she is compelled to ply her hideous trade, she has no feelings? But it is chiefly from the young men who rove about the streets at night, smoking cigars, wearing pea-coats, and carrying sticks, that the unfortunate woman is doomed to receive the deepest indignity:—yes, from those who ought to have more chivalry in their dispositions! There is one base extortion to which the unfortunate woman is subjected, and which I must mention. I allude to the necessity of feeing the policeman belonging to that beat where the unhappy creature walks. The miserable wretch who deviated from this practice, either through inability or unwillingness, would never have a moment's peace. The moment she was accosted in the street by a gentleman, the officer would come up and order her brutally to move on; and perhaps he would add violence to harsh words. Then, on the slightest pretence—and often without any at all—the miserable woman is dragged off to the station-house, charged with creating a disturbance, and taken next morning before the magistrate. In vain may she protest her innocence of the offence charged against her: in vain may she denounce the vindictive motives of the officer. The word of one policeman is deemed worth the oaths of ten thousand degraded females; and the accused is sentenced to Bridewell accordingly. No one can conceive the amount of the wrongs inflicted by the police upon the most miserable class of women!

"I could enter into details respecting the lives of unfortunate females, which would inspire you with horror—and yet with deep compassion. But I have already dwelt too long on a subject which should never be mentioned without caution to the pure-minded woman. In reference to myself, I need only add that having passed through all the terrible phases of a career of infamy,—each day beholding me more degraded, and sinking lower and lower amongst the low,—I was reduced to a condition when beggary appeared the only resource left

From this appalling condition your goodness has relieved me; and God alone must reward you—I never can!"

CHAPTER CLXXVIII.

THE TAVERN AT FRIULI.

THROUGH the broad meadows, the waving woods, and the delicious valleys which lie on the northern side of the Ferretti, in the State of Castelcicala, two foot-travellers pursued their way.

Lovely flowed the river amidst the meads that were clothed in the country's everlasting green.

Busy hamlets, neat farm-houses, and the chateaux of nobles or wealthy gentlemen, varied the appearance of the magnificent landscape.

Although it was the middle of November, the climate was as mild and genial as that of September in the British Islands: the vines had not been entirely stripped of their luscious fruit; and the citrons, so plentiful that they were but little prized by the inhabitants, grew wild by the road-side.

Here groups of mighty chesnut-trees afforded a delicious shade to the way-worn traveller: there the tapering spire of a village church, or the white walls and slated roof of some lordly country-seat, appeared above the verdant mulberry-groves.

Nevertheless, the woodlands of Castelcicala were not characterised by that gloominess of foliage which invests the English and German forests with such awful solemnity; for the leaves were of a brighter green, and the density of their shade was relieved by the luxuriousness of the botany that spread its rich and varied colours over the surface of the land.

The banks of the Ferretti yielded an immense profusion of aromatic herbs, which imparted a delicious perfume and, at the same time, a freshness to the air.

Much as those two travellers had been accustomed to admire the loveliness of their own native England, they could not avoid exclamations of joy and surprise as they pursued their way amidst the fertile plains of Castelcicala.

We need scarcely inform our readers that those travellers were Richard Markham and his faithful Morcar.

Our hero, dressed in a neat but modest garb, and carrying a portfolio of drawing materials under his arm, journeyed along a little in advance of his attendant, who bore a small valise of necessaries.

In his pocket-book Richard had secured the two passports, for himself and follower, which the interest of Mario Bazzano had obtained, and which were made out in fictitious names.

Fastened to a riband round his neck, and carefully concealed beneath his raiment, was a small morocco leather case, containing the sealed letter left him, with such mysterious instructions, by Thomas Armstrong.

The well-filled purse which the generosity of the Grand Duchess had supplied, and a map of the Duchy, completed the stock of materials with which the travellers had deemed it fit to furnish themselves.

Their way now lay, according to the advice which Richard had received from the Grand Duchess, towards Friuli: thence it was his intention to strike off abruptly in a longitudinal direction, and, passing between Dandolo and Lipari, proceed straight toward the Neapolitan frontier.

On the fourth evening the two travellers arrived at Friuli, having walked upon an average thirty miles each day, and slept at night in some cottage or farm-house.

They did not, however, penetrate into the fine and spacious town which they had now reached; but stopped at a small tavern in the suburbs. There they ordered supper, which was served up to them in the public room, as Richard did not think it prudent to excite notice by having a private apartment.

Several other persons were sitting in the public room, busily engaged in imbibing the various liquors suited to their respective palates, and discussing, with great solemnity, the political aspect of the State.

By their conversation Markham judged that they must be the small tradesmen of the suburbs of the town, as they all seemed well acquainted with each other, and spoke as if they were in the habit of meeting at that tavern every evening after the bustle and cares of the day's business.

"Are you certain, neighbour," said one worthy burgher, addressing himself to another, "that the proclamation will be made to-morrow morning?"

"I believe, gentlemen," answered the individual thus appealed to "you are all aware that my wife's father is Adjunct to the Mayor of Friuli; and the title of Adjunct is pretty nearly synonymous with that of Deputy. Well, then, gentlemen, my father-in-law being, you perceive, as good as Deputy-Mayor," continued the speaker, thinking that his prosiness would add to his importance, "he cannot fail to be in the mayor's secrets. That once granted, gentlemen, you can easily estimate the value of my authority for the tidings I reported to you just now. You may therefore rely on it, that the proclamation placing the entire province of Montecuculi under martial law, will be read in Friuli, as well as in all the other towns, villages, and hamlets of the aforesaid province, to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock."

"Then I suppose the whole Duchy will be placed under martial law?" observed another member of the party.

"No doubt of it," said the second speaker. "The worshipful mayor hinted as much to the not less worshipful adjunct, or deputy, this afternoon."

"The province of Abrantani has been for some time in an exceptional state, you know," said the individual who had first spoken; "and by all accounts, we had much better be under the yoke of the Austrians at once—just like the northern provinces of Italy. I tell you what," added the individual who was now addressing his companions,—"I tell you what," he repeated, sinking his voice almost to a whisper, "there is not a man in Castelcicala who will not be ready to draw his sword against this most odious tyranny."

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed the relative of the civic authority, as he glanced towards Richard Markham and Morcar; "we do not know who may overhear us, as the adjunct often observes to me."

"The gentleman is an artist, and looks like a foreigner, too," said the individual whose freedom of speech had provoked this remonstrance: "he is not likely to meddle with our political business."

"Gentlemen," said Richard, "it is true that I understand your language, although I speak it imperfectly; but if you apprehend that I should make any improper use of the remarks which fall from you, I will at once retire to a private room."

"Well spoken!" ejaculated one of the company. "No, sir—you shall not leave the room on our account. If I mistake not, you must be an Englishman or a Frenchman; and I like both those nations—for they know what true freedom is, while we are slaves,—abject slaves."

"Yes,—and I admire the English, too," cried the person who had before spoken with so little reserve. "Have they not given an asylum to that excellent Prince who is only exiled because he was the people's friend—because he wished to obtain for us a Constitution that would give us Houses of Parliament or Chambers, to be the bulwark of our liberties? Is not our Grand Duchess an Englishwoman? and has she not exerted herself to the utmost to mitigate the severity of Angelo III? *That* is no secret. And, when I think of it, I remember hearing at Ossore (where I was, you know, a few days ago,) that it was a young Englishman who rallied the Constitutionalists when they were flying, after the fall of General Grachia."

"What became of him" asked one of the company.

"It is known that he was taken prisoner," was the reply; "but as he disappeared almost immediately afterwards, it is supposed that he was hurried off without delay to one of the fortresses in the interior—Pinalla or Estella, for instance. Poor young fellow—I wish he had had better luck! But, as I was saying, you see we have good reason to admire the English—God bless them!"

"Amen!" exclaimed several voices.

The emotions of our hero, while this discourse was progressing, may be more readily imagined than explained: but prudence on his own account, and obedience to the advice of the Grand Duchess, sealed his lips.

Morcar continued to eat and drink without excitement, because the conversation passing around was totally unintelligible to him.

The relative of the mayor's adjunct was dilating pompously on the duties of a sovereign, when a post-chaise drove furiously up to the door of the tavern.

All was immediately bustle and confusion.

"Horses! four horses wanted!" shouted a voice in the passage.

Then commenced the rattling of harness,—the running hither and thither of ostlers,—and the usual calling and bawling which characterise such occasions.

All the inmates of the coffee-room, with the exception of Markham and the gipsy, rushed out to stare at the equipage.

Scarcely was the room thus left comparatively empty, when a tall man, wrapped in an ample travelling cloak, entered hastily, followed by the landlord.

"Here—we have not a moment to lose—give me change for this bank-note," cried the traveller.

"Yes, sir," said the host, and hurried from the room.

"Signor Bazzano," whispered our hero, who had started from his seat at the sound of the traveller's voice.

"What! Signor Markham!" said the young *aide-de-camp*, shaking him kindly by the hand. "This is indeed most fortunate! But I have not a moment to spare. Listen! terrible events have taken place at Montoni: *you* are in danger. You must separate from your attendant, and each gain the Neapolitan frontier by a separate route. Follow my advice, my dear Markham,—*as you value your life!*"

At that moment the host re-appeared with the gold and silver in change for the note; and Bazzano, having hastily consigned the money to his pocket, hurried from the room,—but not before he had darted a significant glance upon our hero.

In a few moments the post-chaise drove rapidly away.

Richard returned to his seat in a cruel state of uncertainty, doubt, and suspense.

What could that precipitate journey mean? was Bazzano the sole occupant of the carriage? what terrible events could have occurred at Montoni? and what was that fearful peril which would oblige him to adopt so painful a precaution as to separate from his companion?

Richard was at a total loss how to solve these queries which naturally suggested themselves to his mind.

While he was yet pondering on the singularity of the incidents which had occurred, all within the space of three or four minutes, the company poured back again to the coffee-room.

"Something mysterious there," said one.

"Yes—a post-chaise with the blinds drawn down," observed another.

"Four horses—and travelling like wild-fire," exclaimed a third. "The tall man in the cloak, who rode outside, came into this room. What did he want, sir?" demanded the speaker, turning abruptly towards Markham; "for I believe you did not leave the room."

"He obtained change from the landlord for a bank-note, sir," answered our hero laconically.

"Oh! that was all—eh? Well—the thing still looks odd—particularly in such troubled times as these. Did anybody hear the orders given to the postilions?"

"The tall man in the cloak said in a loud voice, '*The road towards Dandolo, my boys!*'" observed another of the company.

Richard smiled imperceptibly; for he thought within himself, "Then it is precisely because Bazzano said in a loud tone, '*Towards Dandolo,*' that the travellers are going in another direction."

The company continued to debate, as all gossips will, upon the incident which had just occurred; and Richard determined to lose no more time ere he explained to Morcar, who had of course recognised the young *aide-de-camp*, the nature of the warning he had received from this individual.

He according bade the assembled guests "Good night," and left the room, followed by Morcar.

At his request, the landlord conducted them to a double-bedded room; and the moment the host had retired, Richard communicated to the gipsy all that Bazzano had said to him.

"There is but one course to pursue, sir," exclaimed Morcar.

"Which is that?" asked Richard.

"To follow the Castelcicalan officer's advice," returned Morcar. "He saved your life—he restored

me to your service—and he is incapable of deceiving us. He is your friend, sir—and you must obey him."

"But, my poor Morcar," said Richard, "I cannot part with you. I have lured you away from your family and native land, to lead you into these difficulties; and I would sooner die than abandon you in a strange country, with even the language of which you are unacquainted."

"My dear, good master," exclaimed the gipsy, his eyes dimmed with tears, "it will go to my heart to leave you; but if your life is in danger, I shall not hesitate a moment. Besides, the same peril that would overtake one, would crush both, were we together when it came; and it is folly for either of us to run idle risks in such a strait. No—let us follow the advice of your friend."

"Again, I say, Morcar, that I cannot part with you. Were any thing fatal to happen to you, I should never forgive myself. No," continued Richard, "you shall remain with me. If danger come, it is only I who will suffer—for it seems that it is only my life which *is* in danger. And this is probable enough."

"Ah! sir—I am not afraid of myself," exclaimed Morcar: "I would lay down my life to serve you! But I am convinced that you will only attract unpleasant attention to yourself, if you travel with a follower: one person can slip unperceived through so many perilous places, where two together would be suspected. Besides, sir, I shall not be quite so badly off in this strange country, as you suppose."

"How so, Morcar?" demanded Richard, surveying him with astonishment.

"There are Zingarees in this land as well as elsewhere," replied Morcar; "and amongst them I shall be safe."

"On that consideration alone," exclaimed Richard, struck by the truth of the observation, and well-pleased at the idea that his faithful dependant would indeed derive no small benefit, under circumstances, from the aid of that extensive and mysterious freemasonry to which he belonged,—"on that consideration alone I will consent to this separation. At day-break we will rise, and each take a different route. I will give you the map of Castelcicala, as its geography has been so well studied by me that I am fully acquainted with the direction of all the principal towns and cities. But let us fix a place where we can meet again. Our grand object must be to gain the city of Naples. On your arrival there, proceed to the abode of the English Consul, and leave with him the name of the inn where you put up: if I have reached Naples before you, that functionary will be enabled to tell you where I am to be found."

"I will strictly follow your instructions, sir," said Morcar.

"And now, my good friend," continued our hero, "I must speak to you as if I were making my last will and testament; for heaven alone knows whether I shall ever quit this country alive. You remember the secret of my affection for a noble lady, which I communicated to you the night before we landed on the Castelcicalan coast?"

"Not a syllable of what you told me, sir, has been effaced from my memory," replied Morcar "You enjoined me that, if any thing fatal should occur to yourself, and Providence should enable me to return to England, I was to seek the Princess Isabella, and break to her the tidings and manner of your death, with the assurance that your last thoughts were given to her!"

"Such was my request, Morcar," said Richard. "I need now observe little more than repeat it. Let the one who reaches Naples first wait for the other fifteen days; and, if he come not by the expiration of that period, then let him——"

"Surmise the worst," added Morcar, seeing that our hero hesitated. "Your message to the Princess shall be delivered—if God ordain that so sad a result ensues. And, on your part, sir—if I come not to the place of appointment, and you succeed in reaching it——"

"Say no more, my dear friend," interrupted Markham, pressing the gipsy's hand; "we understand each other!"

And they each dashed away the tears from their eyes.

Richard then divided the contents of his purse into two equal portions, and presented one to Morcar. The gipsy positively refused to accept any thing beyond a few pieces of gold; but Markham was more positive still, and compelled him to assent to the equitable partition of the large sum which Eliza's bounty had supplied.

They then retired to rest.

At day-break Markham started up; but he looked in vain for Morcar.

On the table stood a pile of gold: it was the one which our hero had forced upon the gipsy;—and only two of the pieces had been taken from the heap.

"Generous man;" cried Markham: "God grant that I may one day be enabled to reward him for his fidelity and devotion to me!"

Having hastily dressed himself, our hero concealed about his person the few necessaries that were indispensable, and left the remainder in his valise.

He then descended to the coffee-room, hurried over a slight refreshment, and, having settled the account, took his departure, telling the landlord to keep the valise for him until his return.

But now how lonely, forlorn, and friendless did he feel, as he hurried away from the inn where he had parted with his faithful dependant!

CHAPTER CLXXIX.

THE JOURNEY.

Richard Markham struck into the fields, and pursued his way in a southerly direction.

He avoided even the small hamlets, and kept as much as possible in the open country.

Being unaware of the precise nature of the danger which menaced his life,—although of course connecting it with the part which he had recently played in the invasion,—he feared lest printed descriptions of his person, with rewards for his apprehension, might be circulated; and this source of terror induced him to choose the most secluded paths.

It was long after sunset when he stopped at a small country public-house, where he determined to rest for the night.

To his great joy the coffee-room was unoccupied by other travellers; and the landlord appeared a simple, honest kind of half-farmer, half-publican,

who never troubled himself about any one's business save his own.

A good supper and a bottle of very excellent wine tended to raise our hero's spirits: and when the meal was concluded, he fell into a train of meditation on the events of the preceding evening.

A thousand times did he ask himself who could be the occupant of that chaise which was journeying in such haste? for that there *was* some person inside the vehicle, who had urgent reasons for the utmost circumspection, the fact of the drawn blinds would not permit him to doubt. Moreover, the young *aide-de-camp* was evidently riding *outside* for the purpose of answering any questions that might be put, paying the bills, directing the postillions, and in all respects acting with a view to save the person or persons inside from the necessity of giving their own orders.

The words—"*Terrible events have occurred at Montoni*"—were also fraught with a most menacing and mysterious importance. What could they mean? whom had these events endangered? Was it possible that the kindness of the Grand Duchess towards himself had been detected? And if so, what results could such a discovery have produced?

While he was thus lost in the most painful conjectures, a horseman suddenly galloped up to the door of the inn; and in a few moments the traveller himself entered the coffee-room.

He was a slightly-built, middle-aged man, with a good-humoured expression of countenance. He was attired in a kind of undress cavalry uniform, consisting of a foraging-cap with a broad gold band, a laced jacket, trousers with a red stripe down each leg, and a very small black leathern knapsack at his back.

"Now, landlord," he exclaimed, as he entered the room, followed by the individual whom he thus addressed, "some supper at once—not a moment's unnecessary delay—and see that a fresh horse is ready in twenty minutes. That is all the rest I can allow myself here."

The landlord bustled about to serve up the best his house could afford in such haste; and in the meantime the new-comer addressed himself to our hero.

"Rather chilly this evening, sir," he said.

"And yet you can scarcely feel the cold, considering the pace at which you appear to ride," returned Richard with a smile.

"Egad! I do not ride so for pleasure, I can assure you," observed the man. "But I presume that you are travelling in this country for your amusement," he added: "for I perceive by your accent that you are not a Castelcicalan, and I can judge your avocation by that portfolio lying near you."

"You have guessed correctly," answered Richard. "Have you travelled far to-day?"

"A considerable distance. I am, as perhaps you may know by my dress, a government courier: and I am the bearer of dispatches from Montoni to the Captain-General of Montecuculi."

"Any thing new in the capital?" asked Richard, scarcely able to conceal the anxiety with which he waited for a reply.

"Great news," was the answer. "The Grand Duchess has fled."

"Fled!" ejaculated Markham.

"Yes—left the capital—gone no one knows where, and no one knows why," continued the courier. "Montoni is in a dreadful ferment. Martial law was proclaimed there the day before yesterday; and a tremendous crowd collected in the Palace-square in the evening. The military were called out, but refused to fire upon the people. Numerous conflicting reports are in circulation: some say that the Grand Duke has sent to demand the aid of an Austrian force. The people attacked the mansion of the Prime Minister; and the firmness of the Political Prefect alone prevented serious mischief. In fact, sir," added the courier, sinking his voice to a whisper, "we are on the eve of great events; and for my part—although I am in the government employment—I don't think it 's treason to say that I would as soon serve Alberto as Angelo."

At that moment the landlord entered with a tray containing the courier's supper; and the conversation ceased. Nor had our hero an opportunity of reviving it; for the courier was too busily engaged with his knife and fork to utter a word during his meal; and the moment it was terminated, he wished Markham good night and took his departure.

Still our hero had gleaned enough to afford him some clue to the mystery of the post-chaise. The Grand Duchess had fled: the reason of her flight was not publicly known. Was it not probable that she was an occupant of the post-chaise which journeyed so swiftly? did not this idea receive confirmation from the fact that Mario Bazzano accompanied the vehicle?

Then again occurred the question, had the Grand Duchess involved herself in difficulty by her generosity towards him? The bare supposition of such an occurrence was the source of the most poignant anguish in the breast of Richard Markham.

He retired to rest; but his sleep was uneasy; and he awoke at an early hour, little refreshed. He was however compelled to pursue his melancholy journey, which he resumed with a heavy heart and with a mind oppressed by a thousand vague apprehensions.

There was one circumstance which especially afflicted him. He had not dared to write a letter to Isabella; and he knew that the tidings of the failure of the invasion would shortly reach her. Then what must be her feelings! She would believe that he had either fallen in the conflict, or was a prisoner in some Castelcicalan fortress; and he entertained so profound a conviction of her love for him,—a love as sincere as that which he experienced for her,—that he dreaded the effects which would be produced upon her by the most painful uncertainty or the worst apprehensions concerning his fate.

Still, how could he write to her with any hope that the letter would reach her? In the existing condition of Castelcicala, he felt persuaded that all correspondence addressed to Prince Alberto or any member of his family, would be intercepted. This conviction had hitherto prevented him from addressing a word to that charming girl whose image was ever present to his mind.

But as he journeyed wearily along, it suddenly struck him that he might write to Whittingham, and enclose a note for Isabella. Besides, he was also anxious to acquaint that faithful servant, as well as Mr. Monroe and Ellen, with the hopes that he entertained of being shortly enabled to return to his native land. He accordingly resolved to put this project into execution.

For that purpose he was compelled to pass the

next night at a town where there was a post-office. He wrote his letters in the most guarded manner, and omitted the signature. When they were safely consigned to the letter-box, he felt as if a considerable load had been taken off his mind.

At this town he gleaned a great deal of information concerning the agitated condition of the country. Martial law had been proclaimed in every province; and the worst fears existed as to the Grand Duke's ulterior views. The idea of Austrian intervention appeared to be general; and deep, though not loud, were the curses which were levelled against the policy of that sovereign who could venture to call in a foreign soldiery to rivet the shackles of slavery which he had imposed upon his subjects.

One circumstance peculiarly struck our hero: the Grand Duke seemed to possess no supporters—no apologists. The hatred excited by his tyranny was universal. Castelcicala only required a champion to stand forward—a leader to proclaim the cause of liberty—and Richard felt convinced that the whole nation would rise as one man against the despot.

That the Grand Duchess had fled precipitately from Montoni, was a fact now well known; but the motives and details of her departure were still veiled in the most profound mystery.

There was another circumstance which forced itself on Markham's observation: this was that the deepest sympathy existed in behalf of the prisoners who had been taken in the conflict near Ossore, and who, it seemed, had all been despatched to the fortress of Estella. Richard's prowess in rallying the troops also appeared to be well known; and on more occasions than one, during his wanderings in Castelcicala, did he find himself the object of the most flattering discourse, while those who eulogised him little suspected that the hero of their panegyric was so near.

But it is not our intention to follow him through those wanderings. Suffice it to say that he found his journey more wearisome than he had anticipated; and that he was frequently compelled to avail himself of a carrier's van along the by-roads, or to hire a horse, in order to diminish the fatigues of his wayfaring.

It was on the twelfth evening after he left Friuli,

where he had parted with Morcar, that he crossed the river Usiglio at a ferry about four miles to the east of Pinalla.

He was now only forty miles from the Neapolitan frontier; and in twenty-four hours more he fondly hoped to be beyond the reach of danger.

He had partaken of but little refreshment during that day, for the nearer he approached the point where peril would cease and safety begin, the more anxious did he become.

Having crossed the ferry, he inquired of the boatman the way to the nearest inn. A dreary by-lane was pointed out to him, with an intimation that it would lead to a small public-house, at the distance of about a mile.

Richard pursued his way, and had proceeded about three hundred yards down the lane, which was shaded on either side by large chesnut-trees, when several individuals rushed upon him so suddenly that he had no time to offer any effectual resistance.

He, however, struggled desperately, as two of the banditti (for such his assailants were) attempted to bind his arms with cords.

But his endeavours to free himself from their grasp were vain and fruitless, and only provoked a rougher treatment at their hands; for one of the banditti drew a pistol from his belt, and with the butt-end of the weapon aimed a desperate blow at our hero's head.

Richard fell, bleeding and insensible, upon the ground.

* * * * *

When he opened his eyes again, he found himself lying in a comfortable bed.

Putting aside the damask-silk curtains, he glanced anxiously around the room, which was sumptuously furnished.

He fell back on his pillow, and strove to collect his scattered ideas. His head pained him: he raised his hand to his forehead, and found that it was bandaged.

Then the attack of the banditti in the dark lane flashed across his mind; and he mechanically thrust his hand into his bosom.

Alas! Armstrong's letter was gone!

CHAPTER CLXXX.

THE "BOOZING-KEN" ONCE MORE.

We must now direct our readers' attention for a short space to the parlour of the Boozing-Ken on Saffron Hill.

It was nine o'clock in the evening; and, as usual, a motley company was assembled in that place.

A dozen persons, men and women, were drinking the vile compounds which the landlord dispensed as "Fine Cordial Gin," "Treble X Ale," "Real Jamaica Rum," "Best Cognac Brandy," and "Noted Stout."

At one of the tables sate the Buffer, smoking a long clay pipe, and from time to time paying his respects to a pot of porter which stood before him. He occasionally glanced towards the clock as if he were expecting some one; and then an impatient but subdued curse rose to his lips, proving that the individual for whom he waited was behind his time.

"Well, as I was saying," exclaimed an old shabbily-dressed and dissipated looking man, who sate near the fire, "it 's a burning shame to make people pay so dear for such liquor as this;"—and he made a quart-pot, which he held in his hand, describe sundry diminutive circles, in order to shake up the liquor whereat he gazed with disgust.

"Why do you drink it, then, friend Swiggs?" demanded the Buffer, in a surly tone. "You was once a licensed witler yourself: and I 'll be bound no one ever doctored his lush more than you did."

"Of course I did!" ejaculated the old man. "The publican can't live without it. Look how he 's taxed—look how the police preys upon him—look at the restrictions as to hours that he 's subject to. I tell you the publican *must* adulterate his liquor—aye, even the most honest. But I do n't like to drink it so, none the more for all that. Besides, this beer is so preciously done up, that one does not know whether there 's most cocculus indicus or most tobacco-juice in it."

"What 's cocculus indicus?" asked the Buffer.

"An Indian berry of so poisonous a nature," was the reply, "that the natives throw it into the ponds to render the fish insensible and make them float on the surface, when of course they 're easily caught. That will show you the strength of it—ha! ha!"

And the old man chuckled with a sort of malignant triumph, as he recalled to mind his own practices when he was in business, and ere dissipation ruined him.

"Oh! I have the *Vintners' Guides* all by heart, I can assure you," continued Swiggs; "and now that I 'm out of the business, and never likely to be in it again, I do n't mind telling you a secret or two. Let us begin with the beer. In the first place the brewer adulterates it, to save his malt and hops; and then the publican adulterates it, to increase its quantity. *His* business is to make one butt of beer into two—aye, and sometimes three. Ha! ha! Now, how do you think he does it? He first deluges it with water: then, of course, it 's so weak and flat that no one could possibly drink it. It wants alcohol, or spirit in it; it wants the bitter flavour; it wants pungency; it wants age; and it wants froth. All these are supplied by means of adulteration. Cocculus indicus, henbane, opium, and Bohemian rosemary are used instead of alcohol: these are all poisons; and the Bohemian rosemary is of so deadly a nature, that a small sprig produces a raving intoxication. Ha! ha! that 's good so far! Then aloes, quassia, wormwood, and gentian supply the place of hops, and give bitterness to the hell-broth. Ginger, cassia-buds, and capsicum, produce pungency. Treacle, tobacco-juice, and burnt sugar give it colour. Oil of vitriol not only makes it transparent, but also imparts to it the taste of age; so that a butt so doctored immediately seems to be two years old. I need n't tell you what sort of a poison oil of vitriol is: I do n't want to suggest the means of suicide—ha! ha! But when the brew has gone so far, it wants the heading—that froth, you know, which you all fancy to be a proof of good beer. Alum, copperas, and salt of tartar will raise you as nice a heading as ever you 'd wish to dip your lips in."

"You do n't mean to say all that 's true, Swiggs?" exclaimed the Buffer; "for though I ain't particklar, I do n't think I shall ever like porter again."

"True!" ejaculated the old man, contemptuously: "it 's as true as you 're sitting there! But there 's a dozen other ingredients that go into the

stuff you lap up so pleasantly, and pay for as *beer*. What do you think of extract of poppies, coriander, nux vomica, black extract, Leghorn juice, and bitter beans? But all these names are Greek to you. They ain't to the publicans, though—ha! ha! Why half the poor people that go to lunatic asylums, are sent there by the poison called beer."

"What have you got to say agin blue ruin, old feller?" demanded a Knacker, who was regaling himself with a glass of gin-and-water.

"Blue ruin—gin!" cried the old man. "Ah! I can tell you something about that too. Oil of vitriol is the chief ingredient: it has the pungency and smell of gin. When you take the cork out of a bottle of *pure gin*, it will never make your eyes water: but the oil of vitriol *will*. Ha! ha! there's a test for you. Try it! Oil of turpentine, sulphuric æther, and oil of almonds are used to conceal the vitriol in the made-up gin. What is called *Fine Cordial Gin* is the most adulterated of all: it is concocted expressly for dram-drinkers—ha! ha!"

"Rum, I should think, is the best of all the spirits," said the Buffer.

"Because you like it best, perhaps?" exclaimed the old man. "Ha! ha! you don't know that the *Fine Jamaica Rum* is nothing else but the vile low-priced Leeward Island rum, which is in itself a stomach-burning fire-water of the deadliest quality, and which is mixed by the publican with cherry-laurel water and *devil*."

"What's *devil?*" asked the Knacker.

"Aye, what is it, indeed? It's nothing but chilie pods infused in oil of vitriol—that's all! But now for *Best Cognac Brandy*," continued the old man. "Do you think the brandy sold under that name ever saw France—ever crossed the sea? Not it! Aqua ammonia, saffron, mace, extract of almond cake, cherry-laurel water, *devil*, terra japonica, and spirits of nitre, make up the brandy when the British spirit has been well deluged with water. That's your brandy! Ha! ha!"

"What a precious old sinner you must be, Swiggs," said one of the company, "if you used to make up such poisons as you're now talking about."

"Dare say I was—dare say I was," observed the old man, composedly. "Nearly every publican does the same, I tell you. Those who don't, go into the *Gazette*—that's all. Ha! ha! But if the poor are cheated and poisoned in that way, how do you think the middle classes and rich ones are served? Shall I tell you any thing about wine—eh?"

"Yes—do," cried several voices. "Let's hear how the swell cove is served out."

"Well, I'll tell you that too," continued the old man. "There's hundreds of *Wine-Guides* that contain instructions for the merchants, and vintners, and publicans. Take a bottle of cheap Port wine, and get a chemist to analyse it: he'll tell you it contains three ounces of spirits of wine, fourteen ounces of cyder, one ounce and a half of sugar, two scruples of alum, one scruple of tartaric acid, and four ounces of strong decoction of logwood. That's the way I used to make *my* Port wine. Not a drop—not a single drop of the juice of the grape. Ha! ha! Families bought it wholesale—three-and-sixpence the bottle—rank poison! Ha! ha! Nearly all fictitious wines possess too high a colour—particularly sherry: the way to make such wine pale is to put a quart of warm sheeps' blood in the butt, and, when it's quite fine, to draw it off. I always did that—but I did n't tell the families so, though! Which do you think is the greatest cheat of all the cheap wines?—the Cape. The publicans sell it at eighteen-pence and two shillings. Why—it's nothing more than the drippings from the casks, the filterings of the lees, and all the spoiled white wines that happen to be in the cellar, mixed together with rum-cowe and cyder, and fined with sheep's blood."

"I'm glad to hear the rich is humbugged as well as the poor," observed the Knacker: "that's a consolation, at any rate."

"So it is," said a cat's-meat man, nodding his head approvingly.

"Humbugged!" ejaculated Swiggs, triumphantly: "I b'lieve you! I'll tell you how two-thirds of all the Port wine drunk in the United Kingdom is made:—Take four gallons of cyder, two quarts of the juice of red beet-root, two quarts of brandy, four ounces of logwood, half a pound of bruised rhatany root, and one ounce of alum: first infuse the logwood and rhatany root in the brandy and a gallon of the cyder for ten days; then strain off the liquor and mix all the other ingredients with it; put it into a cask, keep it for a month, and it will be fit to bottle. Not a drop of grape-juice there. Ha! ha! If the colour is n't quite right, an infusion of raspings of red sandars wood in spirits of wine will soon give it a beautiful red complexion. But then the bees'-wing. Ha! the bees'-wing—eh! A saturated solution of cream of tartar, coloured with Brazil-wood or cochineal, will give the best crust and bees'-wing you can imagine. There's for you! Port made in a month or six weeks can be passed off for wine ten or a dozen years old. The corks can easily be stained to indicate age—and who's to discover the cheat? Nobody but the chemist—ha! ha!"

"Well, I've learnt someot to-night," said the Knacker.

"Learnt something! You know nothing about it yet," cried the old man, who was on his favourite topic. "You don't know what poison—rank poison—there is in all these cheap wines;—aye, and in the dear ones too, for that matter. Sugar of lead is a chief ingredient! I need n't tell you that sugar of lead is a deadly poison: any fool knows that. Sal enixum and slaked lime are used to clear muddy wine; and litharge gives a sweet taste to wines that are too acid. Bitter almonds imparts to port a nutty flavour; cherry-laurel water gives it a bouquet; and tincture of raisin seeds endows it with a grapy taste—which it has n't got and can't have otherwise. But I've told you enough for to-night. And now I dare say you wonder why I drink beer or spirits at all? Because I am old and miserable; because I am poor and wretched; because I must kill care somehow or another; and therefore I take daily doses of those slow poisons."

With these words the old man rose, and shuffled out of the room.

His denunciation of the abominable system of doctoring wines, spirits, and malt liquors produced a gloomy effect upon the company whom he left behind. The Buffer glanced often and often towards the clock: the time was passing rapidly; and yet the person for whom he was waiting came not.

"Who'll tip us a song?" said the Knacker, glancing around.

"There's Jovial Jenkins up in the corner there," exclaimed the cat's-meat man. "He's the chap for a song."

"Well, I don't mind, pals," cried a diminutive specimen of the male sex, dressed in a suit of clothes every way too large for him. "What shall I sing yer? Oh! I s'pose it must be the favourite—eh? Come—here goes, then."

And in another minute the parlour of the boozing-ken reverberated with the intonations of the following strange song:—

THE MAN OF MANY PURSUITS.*

Come, lip us a chant, pals! Why thus mum your dubber!
My gropus clinks coppers, and I'll fake the rubber:
Here's a noggin of lightning to slacken your glib;—
Then pass round the lush, and cease napping the bib.

T'other night we'd a precious rum squeeze at the Spell,
And, togg'd as a yokel, I used my forks well;
From a Rum-Tom-Pat's kickseys I knapp'd a green twitch,
And nearly got off the gold glims from his snitch.

But a swell with hock-dockeys and silken gam-cases,
Put the parish prig up to the rig of such places;—
So, finding the nib-cove was chanting the play,
I shov'd my trunk nimbly and got clean away.

As a jolly gay-tyke-boy I sometimes appear,
And chirp for the curs that are spelt in the leer;
Or as a leg-glazier, with fadger and squibs,
I work my way into the nibsomest cribs.

But when on these dodges the blue-bottles blow,
As a flue-flaker togg'd then at day-break I show:
And though from the slavey I get but a flag,
I can fly the blue-pigeon and thus bank the rag.

Sometimes as a mabber I dose the swell fred;—
Or else as a vamper I mill for a ned;
And as soon as my man is tripp'd up by the gams,
A pal knaps his ticker, or frisks off his flamms.

But the life that I love is in Swell-street to shine,
With a Mounseer-fak'd calp, and my strummel all fine,
Heater-cases well polish'd, and lully so white,
And an upper ben fitting me jaunty and tight.

Then with nice silk rain-napper, or gold-headed dick,
I plunge neck and heels into sweet river-tick;
And if in a box of the stone-jug I get,
Though hobbled for macing, 'twill prove but a debt.

Then lip us a chant, pals! Why thus mum your dubber?
My gropus clinks coppers, and I'll fake the rubber:
A noggin of lightning will slacken our glib;
So pass round the lush, and let none nap the bib.

"Brayvo, Jovial Jen!" shouted the inmates of the boozing-ken parlour.

"You're the prince of good fellers at a spree," said the Knacker: "and I'll stand a quartern of blue ruin and two outs, in spite o' what old Swiggs said of the lush."

The promised treat was called, paid for, and disposed of.

Scarcely had the applause, which greeted this song, terminated, when the door opened, and Ladeur, Mr. Greenwood's French valet, entered the room.

He was disguised in a large rough coat and slouched hat; but the Buffer immediately recognised his countenance, and hurried to meet him.

"You're late," said the Buffer, in a low tone.

"Yes—I could not come before," answered the valet. "But I knew that you would wait for me, as I told you yesterday that the business was important."

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* In order to avoid breaking the sense of this song by a constant repetition of those typographical signs which point a reference to foot-notes, we have deemed it best to give a complete glossary:—

Lip us a chant. Sing us a song.
Mum your dubber. Keep your mouth shut.
My gropus clinks coppers. My pocket has got money in it.
Fake the rubber. Stand treat this time.
Noggin of lightning. Quartern of gin.
Slacken your glib. Loosen your tongue.
Cease napping the bib. Leave off whining.
Precious-rum squeeze at the Spell. Good evening's work at the theatre.
Yokel. Countryman.
Forks. Fingers.
Rum-Tom-Pat. Clergyman.
Kickseys. Breeches.
Twitch. Silk net purse.
Glims. Spectacles.
Snitch. Nose.
Hock-dockeys. Shoes.
Gam-cases. Stockings.
Parish prig. Parson.
Nib-cove. Gentleman.
Chanting the play. Explaining the tricks and manœuvres of thieves.
Shov'd my trunk. Moved off.
Gay-tyke-boy. Dog-fancier.
Chirp. Give information.
Spelt in the leer. Advertised in the newspaper.
Leg-glazier. A thief who carries the apparatus of a glazier, and calls at houses when he knows the master and mistress are out, telling the servant that he has been sent to clean and mend the windows. By these means he obtains admission, and plunders the house of any thing which he can conveniently carry off.
Fadger. Glazier's frame.
Squibs. Paint brushes
Nibsomest cribs. Best houses.
Blue-bottles. Police.
Flue flaker. Chimney-sweeper.
Slavey. Female servant.
Flag. Fourpenny-piece.
Fly the blue-pigeon. Cut the lead off the roof.
Bank the rag. Make some money.
Mabber. Cab-driver.
Dose the swell fred. Inveigle the fare into a public-house and hocus him.
Vamper. A fellow who frequents public-houses, where he picks a quarrel with any person who has got a ring or a watch about him, his object being to lead the person into a pugilistic encounter, so as to afford the vamper's confederate, or pal, the opportunity of robbing him.
Mill for a ned. Fight for a sovereign.
Gams. Legs.
Ticker. Watch.
Flamms. Rings.
Swell-street. The West End.
Mounseer-fak'd calp. A hat of French manufacture.
Strummel. Hair.
Heater-cases. Wellington boots.
Lully. Shirt.
Upper ben. Coat.
Rain-napper. Umbrella.
Gold-headed dick. Riding-whip.
River-tick. Tradesmen's books.
Box of the stone-jug. Cell in Newgate.
Hobbled. Committed for trial.
Macing. Swindling.
'Twill prove but a debt. Swindlers of this class usually arrange their business in such a manner as to escape a conviction on the plea that the business is a mere matter of debt. In order to induce the jury to come to this decision, recourse is had to the assistance of pals, who depose to conversations which they pretended to overhear between the prosecuting tradesman and the swindling prisoner, but which in reality never took place.

"Well, we can't talk here," observed the Buffer. "There's a snug room up-stairs devoted to them that's got private business: and I'll show you the way."

The Buffer left the parlour, followed by Lafleur, whom he conducted to a private apartment on the first floor. A bottle of wine was ordered; and when the waiter had withdrawn, the Buffer made a sign for his companion to explain the object of the interview.

"You know very well that I am in the service of Mr. Greenwood, the Member of Parliament?" began Lafleur.

"Yes—me and two pals once did a little job for him on the Richmond road," answered the Buffer.

"You mean the affair of the robbery of Count Alteroni?" said Lafleur.

"Well—I do, since you know it. Does your master tell you all his secrets?" demanded the Buffer.

"No—no," was the reply; and the Frenchman gave a sly laugh. "But he can't very well prevent me listening at the door of his room, when he's engaged with people on particular business. I know enough to ruin him for ever."

"So much the better for you. There's nothing like being deep in one's master's secrets: it gives you a hold on him."

"Let us talk of the present business," said Lafleur. "Are you the man to do a small robbery on the Dover road, as skilfully as you helped to do it on the Richmond road?"

"I'm the man to do any thing for fair reglars," answered the Buffer. "Go on."

"I will explain myself in a few words," continued Lafleur. "By dint of listening at doors and looking over my master's papers when he was out, I have made a grand discovery. To-morrow evening Greenwood leaves town in a post-chaise and four for Dover. It seems that he has embarked in some splendid speculation with a house in Paris, and the success of it depends on influencing the rates of exchange between English and French money. He will take with him twenty thousand pounds in gold and Bank of England notes to effect this purpose."

"Never mind the rigmarole of the reasons," said the Buffer; "for I don't understand them no more than the Queen does the papers she signs, they say, by dozens and dozens at a sitting."

"It is sufficent, then, for *you* to know that Mr. Greenwood will leave London to-morrow evening with twenty thousand pounds, in a post-chaise," proceeded Lafleur. "His Italian valet and myself are to accompany him; and we are all to be well armed."

"What sort of a feller is your Italian wally?" demanded the Buffer.

"Not one of our sort," replied Lafleur; "he will do his duty to his master, although I don't think he has any very great love for him."

"Greenwood believes you to be stanch also, s'pose?"

"Of course he does. I shall have to see that his master's pistols are in proper order, and place them in the chaise; but the Italian will take care of his own. There will, consequently, only be *one pair* loaded with ball."

"I understand you," said the Buffer. "Still that one pair of pistols may send two good chaps to Davy Jones."

"Risk nothing, get nothing," observed Lafleur. "The chances are that Filippo and I shall ride together on the dickey: if so, the moment the horses are stopped, I shall have nothing more or less to do than turn suddenly on Filippo and prevent him from doing any mischief."

"So far, so good," said the Buffer. "But I ought to have at least three pals with me. Remember, there's two postillions; Greenwood himself won't part with his tin without a struggle; and Filippo, as you call him, might master you.'

"Can you get three men as resolute as yourself to accompany you?" asked Lafleur.

"The notice is so deuced short," returned the Buffer; "but I think I can reckon on two. Long Bob and the Lully Prig," he added, in a musing tone, "are certain to jine in."

"Three of you will scarcely be sufficient," said Lafleur. "Only think of the sum that's at stake: we must n't risk the loss of it by any want of precaution on our parts."

"Well—I must see," cried the Buffer. "It isn't that I don't know a many chaps in my line; but the thing is to get one that we're sure on—that won't peach either afore or arterwards. Ah! I lost my best pal in Tony Tidkins—poor feller!"

"The Resurrection Man, you mean?" said Lafleur.

"The same. Greenwood was a good patron of his 'n," observed the Buffer; "but that would n't have perwented him from jining in along with me."

"I remember that Greenwood wanted Tidkins for some business or another nearly a year ago," said the French valet; "and he sent me with a note to him at this very place. He did not, however, come; but I called here a few days afterwards, and heard that he had received the letter."

"That was just about the time poor Tidkins was desperately wounded by Crankey Jem," said the Buffer, rather speaking to himself than to his companion; "and circumstances forced him to keep deuced close arterwards. But that's neither here nor there: let's talk on our own business. Leave me to get a proper number of pals; and now answer me a question or two. At what time does Greenwood intend to start?"

"At seven o'clock. He means to get to Dover so as to have a few hours' sleep before the packet leaves for Calais."

"Then the business must n't be done this side of Chatham," said the Buffer: "it would be too early. There's a nice lonely part of the road, I remember, between Newington and Sittingbourne, with a chalk pit near, where we can divide the swag, and each toddle off in different directions arterwards. The chaise will reach that place about ten. Now, one more question:—where will the blunt be stowed away?"

"Under the seat inside, no doubt," answered Lafleur. "Then I may consider the business agreed upon between us?"

"As good as done, almost," said the Buffer.

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door.

The waiter entered, and whispered something to the Buffer.

"By God, how fortunate!" ejaculated this individual, his countenance suddenly assuming an expression of the most unfeigned joy. "Show him up—this minute!"

The waiter disappeared.

"Who is it?" demanded Lafleur.

"The very person we are in want of! He has turned up again:—that feller has as many lives as a cat."

"But who is it?" repeated Lafleur impatiently.

Before the Buffer could answer the question, the door was thrown open, and the Resurrection Man entered the room.

CHAPTER CLXXXI.

THE RESURRECTION MAN AGAIN.

ANTHONY TIDKINS was dressed in a most miserable manner; and his whole appearance denoted poverty and privation. He was thin and emaciated; his eyes were sunken; his cheeks hollow; and his entire countenance more cadaverous and ghastly than ever.

"My dear fellow," cried the Buffer, springing forward to meet him; "how glad I am to see you again. I really thought as how you was completely done for."

"And no thanks to you that I was n't," returned the Resurrection Man gruffly. "Did n't you leave me to die like a dog in the plague-ship?"

"I 've been as sorry about that there business, Tony, ever since it happened, as one can well be," said the Buffer: "but if you remember the hurry and bustle of the sudden panic that came over us, I 'm sure you won't harbour no ill-feeling."

"Well, well—the least said, the soonest 's mended," growled the Resurrection Man, taking his friend's hand. "Holloa, Lafleur! What are you doing here?"

"Business—business, Mr. Tidkins," answered the valet; "and you 're the very man we are in want of."

"The very man," echoed the Buffer. "I give up the command of the expedition to him: he 's my old captain."

"In the first place, order me up some grub and a pint of brandy," said the Resurrection Man; "for I 've been precious short of every thing at all decent in the eating or drinking way of late;—and while I refresh myself with some supper, you can tell me what new scheme there is in the wind. Of course I 'm your man, if there 's any good to be done."

The waiter was summoned: Lafleur ordered him to bring up the entire contents of the larder, together with a bottle of brandy; and when these commands were obeyed, the Resurrection Man fell to work with extraordinary voracity, while the French valet briefly explained to him the nature of the business already propounded to the Buffer.

The hopes of obtaining a considerable sum of money animated the eyes of Tidkins with fire and his cadaverous countenance with a glow of fiendish satisfaction. He highly approved of the idea of engaging the Lully Prig and Long Bob in the enterprise; for he entertained a good opinion of their courage, in spite of the affair of the plague-ship. Indeed, he could well understand the invincible nature of the panic-terror which had seized upon them on that occasion; and, as he foresaw that their co-operation would be valuable in other matters, he was disposed to forget the past.

In fine, all the preliminary arrangements were made with Lafleur, who presented the two villains each with a ten pound-note as an earnest of his sincerity, and then took his departure.

When the Resurrection Man and the Buffer were alone together, they brewed themselves strong glasses of brandy and water, lighted their pipes, and naturally began to discourse on what had passed since they last saw each other.

The Buffer related all that had occurred to him after his return to Mossop's wharf,—how he had been pursued by the three men belonging to the *Blossom*,—how one turned out to be Richard Markham, another a policeman in disguise, and the third Morcar,—how they had vainly searched the *Fairy* to discover Anthony Tidkins,—and how he himself eventually sold the lighter.

"Since then," added the Buffer, "I have not been doing much, and was deuced glad when Greenwood's valet came to me last evening and made an appointment with me for to-night to talk upon some business of importance. You know what that business is; and I hope it will turn up a trump—that 's all."

"Then the whole affair of the *Blossom* was a damnation plant?" cried the Resurrection Man, gnashing his teeth with rage. "And that hated Markham was at the bottom of it all? By the thunders of heaven, I 'll have the most deadly vengeance! But how came you to learn that Morcar was one of the three?"

"Because I heard Markham call him by that name when they all boarded the *Fairy*; and I instantly remembered the gipsy that you had often spoken about. But what do you think? He was the Black—the counterfeit Brummagem scoundrel that could neither speak nor hear. The captain was the blue-bottle; and Markham, I s'pose, had kept down below during the time the *Blossom* was at Mossop's. It was a deuced good scheme of theirs; and if you had n't been left in the plague-ship, it might have gone precious hard with you."

"Well said, Jack," observed the Resurrection Man. "Out of evil sometimes comes good, as the parsons say. But that shan't prevent me from doing Master Richard Markham a turn yet."

"You must go to Italy, then," said the Buffer laconically.

"What gammon 's that?" demanded Tidkins.

"Why, I happened yesterday morning to look at a newspaper in the parlour down stairs, and there I read of a battle which took place in some country with a cursed hard name in Italy, about three weeks ago; and what should I see but a long rigmarole about the bravery of '*our gallant fellow-countryman, Mr. Richard Markham*,' and '*the great delight it would be to all the true friends of freedom to learn that he was not retained amongst the prisoners.*"

"But perhaps he was killed in the battle, the scoundrel?" said the Resurrection Man.

"No, he was n't," answered the Buffer; "for the moment I saw that all this nonsense was about him, I read the whole article through; and I found that he *had* been taken prisoner, but had either been let go or had made his escape. No one, however, seems to know what 's become of him;—so p'r'aps he 's on his way back to this country."

"I 'd much sooner he 'd get hanged or shot in Italy," said the Resurrection Man. "But if he ever does come home again, I 'll be square with him—and no mistake."

"Now you know all that has happened to me

Tony," exclaimed the Buffer, "have the kindness to tell us how you got out of that cursed scrape in the *Lady-Anne*."

"I will," said the Resurrection Man, refilling his glass. "After you all ran away in that cowardly fashion, I tried to climb after you; but I fell back insensible. When I awoke, the broad daylight was shining overhead; and a boy was looking down at me from the deck. He asked me what I was doing there. I rose with great difficulty; but I was much refreshed with the long sleep I had enjoyed. The boy disappeared; and in a few minutes the surgeon came and hailed me down the hatchway. I begged him to help me up out of the hold, and I would tell him every thing. He ordered me to throw aside my pistols and cutlass, and he would assist me to gain the deck. I did as he commanded me. He and the boy then lowered a rope, with a noose; I put my foot in the noose, grasped the rope tight, and was hauled up. The surgeon instantly presented a pistol, and said, '*If you attempt any violence, I'll shoot you through the head.*' I declared that nothing was farther from my intention, and begged him to give me some refreshment. This request was complied with; and I then felt so much better, that I was able to walk with comparative ease. It, however, seemed as if I had just recovered from a long illness: for I was weak, and my head was giddy. I told the surgeon that I was an honest hard-working man; that I had come down to Gravesend the day before to see a friend; and had fallen in with some persons who offered me a job for which I should be well paid; that I assented, and accompanied them to their boat; that when I understood the nature of their business, I declared I would have nothing more to do with it; that they swore they would blow my brains out if I made any noise; that I was compelled to board the ship with them; that when some sudden sound alarmed them as they were examining the goods in the hold, they knocked me down with the butt-end of a pistol; and that I remembered nothing more until the boy awoke me by calling out to me from the deck. The surgeon believed my story, and said, '*A serious offence has been perpetrated, and you must declare all you know of the matter before a magistrate.*' I of course signified my willingness to do so, because I saw that the only chance of obtaining my liberty was by gaining the good opinion of the surgeon; for he had a loaded pistol in his hand—I was unarmed—and the police-boat was within hail. '*But, according to the quarantine laws,*' continued the surgeon, '*you cannot be permitted to leave the vessel for the present; and what guarantee have I for your good behaviour while you are on board?*'"

"That was a poser," observed the Buffer.

"No such thing," said the Resurrection Man. "I spoke with so much apparent sincerity, and with such humility, that I quite gained the surgeon's good opinion. I said, '*You can lock me in your cabin during the day, sir; or you can bind my hands with cords; and, at night, I can sleep in the hold from which you released me, with the hatches battened down.*' —'*I really do believe you to be an honest man,*' exclaimed the surgeon; '*but I must adopt some precaution. You shall be at large during the day; and I think it right to give you due notice that I shall carry loaded pistols constantly with me. At night you shall sleep in the hold, with the hatches battened down, as you say.*' I affected to thank him very sincerely for his kindness in leaving me at liberty during the day; and he then repaired to the fore-cabin to attend to his patients."

"Had n't he got the plague himself?" inquired the Buffer.

"No: but the fœtid atmosphere of the fore-cabin, to which he was compelled so frequently to expose himself, had made him as emaciated and as pale as if he had only just recovered from the malady. I got into conversation with the boy, and found that he had contrived, shortly after you and the others decamped, to free his arms from the cords with which we had bound him; and that his first care was to release the surgeon. They neither of them entertained the remotest suspicion that any of the pirates were left in the ship, until the boy discovered me in the hold shortly after day-break."

"Well—and how did you escape after all?"

"I remained three or four days on board, before I put any scheme into force, although I planned a great many. At night I could do nothing, because I was a prisoner in the hold; and during the day the police-boat was constantly about, besides the sentinels on land. The surgeon always made me go down into the hold while it was still day-light; and never let me out again until after sun-rise; so that I was always in confinement during the very time that I might contrive something to effect my escape from that infernal pest-ship. But the surgeon seemed afraid to trust me when it was dark. I never passed such a miserable time in my life. The slight touch that I had experienced of the plague—for it could have been nothing else—kept me in a constant fear lest it should return with increased force. How often did I mutter the most bitter curses against you and the other pals for abandoning me;—but now, in consequence of what you told me of the plant that Markham had set a-going against me, I am not sorry to think that I was left behind in the plague-ship. One evening—I think it was the fifth after my first entrance into the vessel—I observed that it was growing darker and darker; and yet the surgeon did not appear on deck with his loaded pistol to send me below. The boy was walking about eyeing me suspiciously; and at length he went down into the after-cabin. It struck me that the surgeon was probably indulging in a nap, and that the lad would awake him. It was not quite dark; but still I fancied that it was dusk enough to leap from the bow of the ship, which part of the vessel was high and dry, without alarming the sentinels on shore. At all events the chance was worth the trial. Seizing a handspike, I hurried forward, and sprang from the ship. Then, without losing a moment, I ran along the bank towards Gravesend, as rapidly as I could. In a short time I knew that I was safe. I hurled the handspike into the Thames, and walked on to the *Lobster Tavern*. There I obtained a bed—for I had plenty of ready money in my pocket. My only regret was that I had not been able to bring away any of the gold-dust with me."

"Why did n't you knock the surgeon and the boy on the head, and help yourself?" demanded the Buffer.

"So I should if I had seen a chance," replied the Resurrection Man; "but I was so weak and feeble all the time I was on board, that I was no match even for the young lad; and the surgeon always kept at such a distance, with a loaded pistol ready cocked in his hand, when I was ordered into the hold

of an evening, or called up of a morning, that there was n't a shadow of a chance. Well, I slept at the *Lobster Tavern*, and departed very early in the morning—long before it was day-light. I thought that London would be too hot for me, after every thing that had lately occurred; and I resolved to pay a visit to Walmer—my own native place. I was still too weak to walk many miles without resting; and so I took nearly four days to reach Walmer. Besides, I kept to the fields, and avoided the high road as much as possible. I took up my quarters at a small inn on the top of Walmer hill, and then made inquiries concerning all the people I had once known in or about the village. I have often related the former incidents of my life to you; and you will therefore recollect the baronet who was exchequered for smuggling, and was welcomed with open arms by his friends, when he paid the fine. You also remember all that occurred between him and me. I found that he had married his cook-maid, who ruled him with a rod of iron; and that the '*very select society*' of Walmer and Deal had all cut him on account of that connexion, which was much worse in their eyes than all the smuggling in which he had been engaged. In fact, he was a hero when prosecuted for smuggling; but now *no decent persons could associate with him*, since he had married his scullion. In a word, I learnt that he was as miserable as I could have wished him to be."

"And did n't you inquire after your friend the parson?" demanded the Buffer.

"You may be sure I did," returned the Resurrection Man. "He had made himself very conspicuous for refusing the sacrament to a young woman who was seduced by her lover, and had an illegitimate child; and the '*select society*' of Walmer greatly applauded him for his conduct. At length, about a year ago, it appears, this most particular of all clergymen was discovered by a neighbouring farmer in too close a conversation with the said farmer's wife; and his reverence was compelled to decamp, no one knows where. He, however, left his wife and children to the public charity. That charity was so great, that the poor woman and family are now inmates of the very workhouse where his reverence's slightest wish was once a law. I stayed at Walmer for nearly a week; and then departed suddenly for Ramsgate, with the contents of the landlord's till in my pocket. At Ramsgate I put up at a small public-house where I was taken dreadfully ill. For four months I was confined to my bed; and both landlord and landlady were very kind to me. At length I slowly began to recover; and, when I was well enough to walk abroad, I used to go upon the beach to inhale the sea-air. It was then summer time; and bathing was all the rage. I never was more amused in my life than to see the ladies, old as well as young, sitting on the beach, to all appearance deeply buried in the novels which they held in their hands, but in reality watching, with greedy eyes, the men bathing scarcely fifty yards off."

"You don't mean to say that?" cried the Buffer.

"I do indeed, though," returned Tidkins. "It was the commonest thing in the world for elderly dames and young misses to go out walking along the beach, or to sit down on it, close by the very spot where the men bathed, although there were plenty of other places to choose either for rambling or reading. Well, I stayed two more months at Ramsgate; and as the landlord and landlady of the public-house had behaved so kind to me, I took nothing from them when I went away. I merely left my little account unsettled. I walked over to Margate, with the intention of taking the steamer to London Bridge; but just as I was stepping on the jetty, some one tapped me on the shoulder, and, turning round, I beheld my landlord of the little inn on the top of Walmer hill. All my excuses, promises, and entreaties were of no avail: the man collared me—a crowd collected—a constable was sent for, and I was taken before a magistrate. Of course I was commited for trial, and sent across in a cart to Canterbury gaol. There I lay till the day before yesterday, when the sessions came on. By some extraordinary circumstance or another, no prosecutor appeared before the Grand Jury; and I was discharged. I resolved to come back to London;—for, after all, London is the place for business in our way. With all its police, it 's the best scene for our labours. So here I am; and the moment I set foot in this ken, I find employment waiting for me."

"Well, I 'm sorry to hear you 've been lumbered, old feller," cried the respectable Mr. John Wicks; "but it 's a blessin' the prosecutor never come for'ard. Let 's, however, think of the present; and botheration to the past. I 'm heartily glad you 've turned up again. I was precious nigh going into mourning for you, Tony. Joking apart, though—this business of the Frenchman's looks well; and we must be about early to look after the Lully Prig and Long Bob. I know their haunts down by Execution Dock, just opposite to Mossop's."

"Where are you hanging out now, Jack?" inquired the Resurrection Man.

"Me and Moll has got a room in Greenhill's Rents—at the bottom of Saint John's Street, you know," was the answer.

"Well, I shall sleep here to-night," said the Resurrection Man; "and by six o'clock to-morrow morning I shall expect you."

CHAPTER CLXXXII.

MR. GREENWOOD'S JOURNEY.

It was six o'clock on the evening following the incidents related in the two preceding chapters.

Mr. Greenwood had just concluded an early dinner (early for him) after having devoted the greater part of the day to business in the City, and a small portion of it to his fair Georgian, for whom he had taken elegantly furnished apartments in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall.

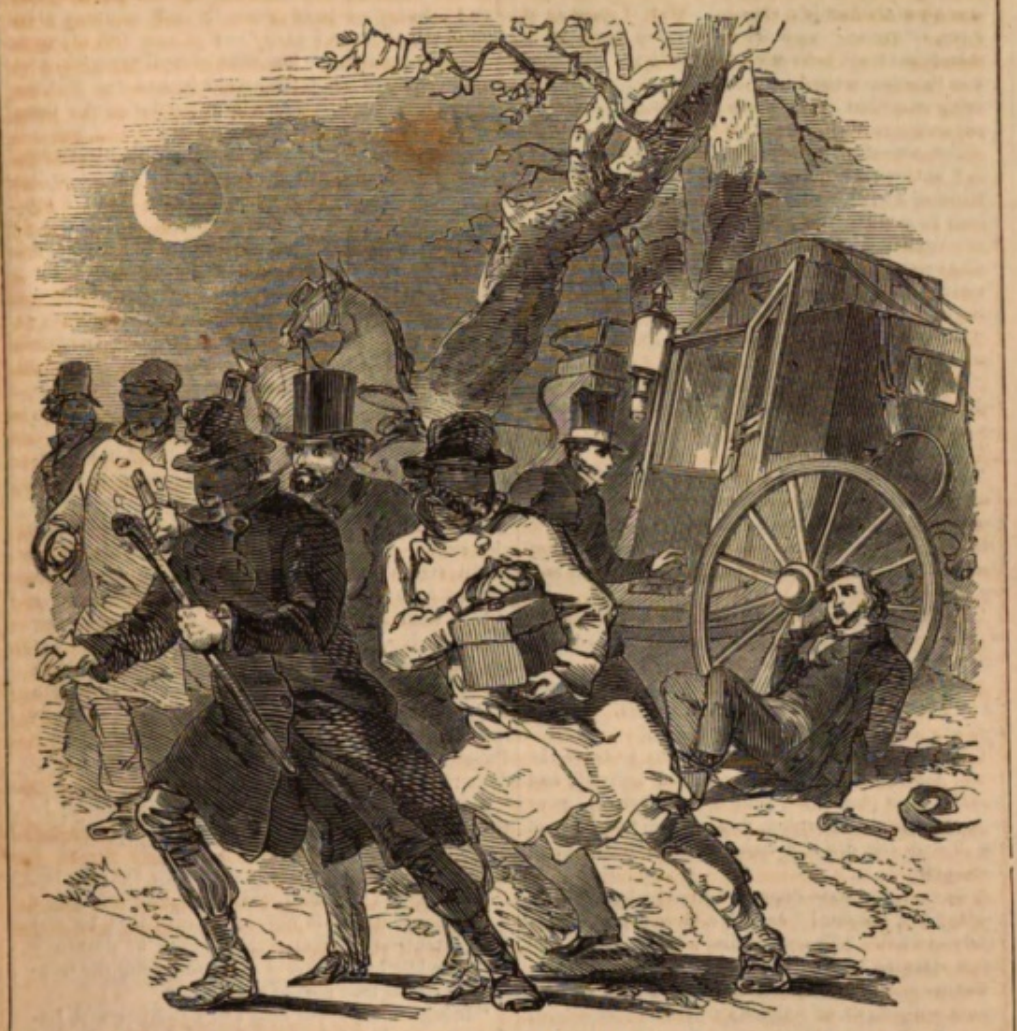
Having disposed of his last glass of champagne, the honourable member for Rottenborough rang the bell.

Lafleur made his appearance.

"Is the chaise ordered for seven precisely?" inquired Mr. Greenwood.

"Yes, sir—seven precisely, sir," answered the valet.

"Did you write to my agent at Rottenborough to tell him that I should pass through that town at half-past eight, and that although I wished to preserve a strict incognito, yet I should not mind being recognised while the horses are changing at the inn?"



"I mentioned all that, sir," replied Lafleur; "and I suggested that he had better get together a hundred or so of persons in the tap-room, to be ready to rush out and cheer you."

"That was well thought of, Lafleur. I have already sent a paragraph to the morning newspaper in which I am a shareholder, stating that I was enthusiastically cheered as I passed through Rottenborough. It will appear to-morrow morning. Have you renewed my positive orders to the policeman on this beat to take all beggars into custody who are found loitering near my door?"

"I have, sir. One woman, with three whimpering children, was dragged off to the station-house half an hour ago, for looking too earnestly down the area windows," said Lafleur. "Her husband has just been to beg you to intercede with the Inspector for her release. He said he was a hard-working man, and that it must be a mistake, as his wife was no beggar."

"And what did you say, Lafleur?" demanded Mr. Greenwood, sternly.

"I said nothing, sir: I merely banged the door in his face."

"That was right and proper. I am determined to put down vagrancy. Nothing is more offensive to the eye than those crawling wretches who are perpetually dinning in one's ears a long tale about their being half-starved."

"Yes, sir—it is very disagreeable, sir," observed Lafleur.

"The free and independent electors of Rottenborough have not sent me to Parliament for nothing, I can assure you," continued Mr. Greenwood.

"No, sir," responded Lafleur.

"And I, from my place in the House, will denounce this odious system of mendicancy," added Mr. Greenwood.

"Yes, sir," observed Lafleur.

"By-the-by, did you send the letter I gave you just now to the post?"

The valet answered in the affirmative.

"I am glad of that. It was to the Reverend Dr. Beganuph—the rector of some place in some county—I am sure I forget where. However—the reverend gentleman is having the parish church enlarged—or made smaller—I really forget which,—but I know

it 's something of the kind;—and as he has sent a circular to all persons whose names are in the *Court Guide*, soliciting subscriptions, I cannot, of course, refuse to contribute my mite of five pounds to the pious work—especially as the list of subscribers is to be advertised in the principal London and provincial papers. We must support the Church, Lafleur."

"Yes, sir—decidedly, sir," observed the valet.

"What would become of us without the Church?" continued Mr. Greenwood. "It is the source from which flow all the blessings of Christian love, hope, benevolence, and charity. Hark! Lafleur, I do really believe there is a woman singing a ballad in the street! Run out and give her into custody this minute."

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the valet: "it 's only the muffin-boy."

"Oh! that 's different," observed Mr. Greenwood, rising from his seat. "The chaise will be here at seven, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

"You and Filippo will accompany me. Tell Filippo to see that his fire-arms are in good order; and do you attend to mine as well as your own. Not that I apprehend any danger on such a road as that on which we are about to travel: still it is better to be prepared."

"Decidedly, sir," answered Lafleur, not a muscle of his countenance betraying any extraordinary emotion.

"Take a lamp to my study," said Greenwood; "and then go and see about the fire-arms. Let my case of pistols be put inside the chaise."

"Yes, sir;"—and Lafleur was about to leave the room, when he suddenly recollected himself, and said, "If you please, sir, your boot-maker sent your new slippers this morning, wrapped up in a piece of the *Weekly Dispatch*. I thought I had better mention it, sir."

"By God, you have done well to acquaint me with this infamy, Lafleur!" cried Mr. Greenwood, desperately excited. "The scoundrel! he reads the *Dispatch*, does he?—the journal that possesses more influence over the masses than even pulpits, governments, sovereigns, or religious tracts! The villain! I always thought that man was a democrat at heart; because one day when I told him if he did n't vote for the Tory Churchwarden he would lose my custom, he smiled—yes, smiled! And so he reads the *Dispatch*—the people's journal—the vehicle of all argument against our blessed constitution—the champion to which all who fancy themselves oppressed, fly as naturally as bees to flowers! Lafleur," added Mr. Greenwood, solemnly, "you will send to that boot-maker, and tell him to show his face no more at the house of the Member for Rottenborough."

"Yes, sir."

And Lafleur left the room.

A few minutes afterwards Mr. Greenwood repaired to his study, where the lamp had already been placed upon the table.

He then opened his iron safe, and drew forth a large canvass bag full of sovereigns. This he consigned to a tin box, resembling those in which lawyers keep their clients' papers. Three more bags, of the same size as the first, were taken from the safe and stowed away in this japanned case.

"Four thousand pounds!" murmured Greenwood to himself. "How many a family would be made happy with only the hundredth part of that sum! But those who want the glittering metal should toil for it as I have done."

Mr. Greenwood, having thus complimented himself upon those "toils" whereby he had gained his wealth, proceeded to take a large portfolio from the iron safe.

Partially opening its various compartments, so as to obtain a glance at the contents, he smiled still more complacently than when his eyes lingered on the canvass bags.

"Sixteen thousand pounds in Bank of England notes," he exclaimed aloud, as he consigned the portfolio to the tin case. "And these twenty thousand pounds, judiciously applied in Paris, will produce me twenty-five thousand clear gain—twenty-five thousand at the least!"

His really handsome countenance wore an expression of triumph, as he carefully locked the tin case, and placed the key in his pocket.

"My combinations are admirable! Thirty thousand pounds, already embarked in these Parisian speculations, have prepared the way for enormous gains: and now," continued Greenwood,—"now this sum,"—and he glanced towards the tin box—"will strike the decisive blow! It is a glorious science—that of the financier! And who is more subtle than I? True—I have experienced some losses during the past week—a few thousands: but they are nothing! I was wrong to job as I did in the English funds. The fluctuations in the French securities are the means by which brilliant fortunes can be made! The timid talk of the great risks—Pshaw! Let them combine their projects as I have done!"

He ceased, and surveyed himself complacently in the mirror above the mantel.

He then rang the bell.

Lafleur appeared in about a minute; but so calm, composed, and unruffled was his countenance, that no living soul would have suspected that he had been attentively listening at the door of the study all the while his master was transferring the treasure from the iron safe to the tin box.

"Bring me my upper coat and travelling cap, Lafleur," said Mr. Greenwood, not choosing to lose sight of his tin box.

Lafleur once more disappeared, and speedily returned with his master's travelling attire.

He announced at the same time that the chaise was at the door.

In a few minutes, Mr. Greenwood was ensconced in the vehicle. The tin box was stowed away under the seat: and his case of pistols lay by his side, within convenient reach.

Filippo and Lafleur mounted the dickey: the postillions cracked their whips; and the equipage rolled rapidly away from Spring Gardens.

At half-past eight o'clock precisely the vehicle drove up to the door of the principal inn of which the town of Rottenborough could boast.

The ostlers seemed to bungle in a very unusual manner, as they changed the horses; and full five minutes elapsed ere they could loosen the traces. In a word, they punctually obeyed the directions of Mr. Greenwood's agent in that famous town.

Suddenly the door of the tap-room burst open and vomited forth about eighty of such queer and suspicious-looking fellows, that no prudent man would

have walked down a dark lane where he knew any one of them to be lurking.

Out they came—in most admirable disorder—pell-mell—jostling, hustling, pushing, larking with each other.

"Hooray, Greenwood! brayvo, Greenwood!" they shouted, at the tops of voices somewhat disguised in liquor. "Greenwood for ever! Down with the Tories!"

"No—no!" shouted a little man, dressed in deep black, and who suddenly appeared at the head of the mob: "down with the Liberals, you mean!"

"Oh—ah! so it is!" cried the mob; and then they shouted louder than ever, "Hooray for Greenwood! Down with the Liberals! The Tories for ever!"

Then the little man in black, who was none other than the honourable member's agent, rushed up to the carriage window, exclaiming, "Ah! Mr. Greenwood!—you are discovered, you see! Very pretty, indeed, to think of passing through Rottenborough *incog.*,—you who are the hope and the glory of the town! Luckily a party of gentlemen—all independent electors," added the lawyer, glancing round at the ragged and half-drunken mob, "were partaking of some little wholesome refreshment together—quite accidentally—in the tavern; and thus they are blessed with an opportunity of paying their respects to their representative in our glorious Parliament!"

"Brayvo, Greenwood!" ejaculated the crowd of "gentlemen," when the little lawyer had concluded his speech.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Greenwood, thrusting his head out of the chaise-window, "you cannot conceive the delight which I experience at this most unexpected—most unlooked-for, and entirely spontaneous expression of your good feeling towards me. Gentlemen, when I behold an enlightened—an independent—a respectable—and an intelligent assembly thus coming forward to signify an approval of my parliamentary career, I meet with an ample recompense for all my exertions and toils to maintain the interests of the great constituency of Rottenborough. Gentlemen, the eyes of the world are upon you at this moment——"

"Then the vorld can see in the dark vithout spectacles," cried one of the free and independent inhabitants of Rottenborough.

"Yes, gentlemen," continued Greenwood, unabashed by this interruption, which raised a general titter; "the eyes of the world are upon you; for when Rottenborough thus emphatically expresses itself in favour of its member, it is avowing its stanch adherence to the true principles of Conservatism. This is a great fact, gentlemen; and so long as Rottenborough remains faithful to those principles, the democratic disturbers of the public peace must look on and tremble!"

With this splendid finale, Mr. Greenwood sank back in the chaise, which immediately drove rapidly away, amidst the uproarious shouts of the ragamuffins and tatterdemalions whom the lawyer had convoked, according to Lafleur's written instructions, for the occasion.

The ragamuffins and tatterdemalions were, however, well recompensed for their trouble; for they were copiously regaled with beer and tobacco before the arrival of the honourable member; and as soon as the member had departed, a supper of boiled tripe and onion-sauce was served up to them. The entertainment concluded with a quarrel and battle amongst the convivialists, several of whom took home with them broken heads and black eyes as trophies of their prowess.

Meantime the travelling-chaise rolled along the road.

The night was beautiful, clear, and frosty; and the moon rode high in the heavens.

Newington was passed; and Mr. Greenwood was just falling into a delicious sleep, when four men, wearing masks, and enveloped in thick pilot-coats, rushed from a hedge.

The horses were stopped suddenly; and two of the ruffians presented pistols at the heads of the postillions, menacing them with instant death if they offered any resistance.

Greenwood lowered the windows of the chaise, and holding a pistol in each hand, exclaimed, "I'll shoot the first who dares approach me!"

Filippo leapt to the ground on one side, and Lafleur followed him so closely, that he fell over the Italian, one of whose pistols went off by the shock, but without doing any mischief. Before he could make an effort to rise, Lafleur struck him on the head with the butt-end of one of his weapons, and laid him senseless on his back.

Meantime, while the Lully Prig and Long Bob took charge of the postillions, as above stated, the Resurrection Man and the Buffer rushed up to the door of the chaise.

Greenwood fired point-blank at Tidkins's head but without the slightest effect.

The door was opened; and the Resurrection Man sprang into the vehicle.

Greenwood fired his second pistol; but it merely singed his assailant's hair.

Then the Member of Parliament was dragged into the road, and bound hand and foot almost in the twinkling of an eye.

This being done, the Resurrection Man hastened to search the chaise, and speedily secured the tin-box.

He gave a long shrill whistle: this was a signal to announce his success; for it had been previously agreed amongst the ruffians that they should not utter a word more than might be absolutely necessary, so that their voices might not be afterwards recognised, in case suspicion fell upon them. Moreover, the Resurrection Man's voice was well known to Greenwood; and thus this precaution was not an useless one.

The four robbers and Lafleur now beat a rapid retreat towards an adjacent chalk-pit, the Buffer leading the way, and the Resurrection Man carrying the box.

CHAPTER CLXXXIII.

KIND FRIENDS.

We left Richard Markham at the moment when, awaking in a strange bed, he perceived that Thomas Armstrong's letter was gone!

It would be impossible to describe his grief at this discovery.

The mysterious document, which he had treasured with so much care, and concerning which such particular instructions had been left by his departed friend,—a document which seemed so intimately to

regard his future welfare,—had been wrested from him!

For a few moments he remained a prey to the deepest dejection; and tears stole into his eyes.

But he was not allowed to remain long in that unpleasant reverie.

The door opened slowly; and a light step approached his couch.

He drew aside the curtain, and beheld a middle-aged lady, elegantly dressed, and with a countenance on which the Almighty had written the word "Benevolence" in characters so legible, that a savage might have read and learnt to revere them.

Advancing close up to the bed, the lady said, in a soft tone, and in the Italian language:—"Be not alarmed, Signor Markham; you are with those who will treat you as your dauntless valour and noble mind deserve."

"Where am I, madam?" asked our hero, reassured by the lady's words and manner.

"In the house of my brother, Signor Viviani, the most eminent banker in Pinalla," answered the lady.

"And how did you discover my name, Signora?" inquired Richard.

"By means of a letter which was secured in a morocco-case about your person, and is now safe in my brother's possession," returned Signora Viviani.

"A thousand thanks, lady, for that assurance—a thousand sincere and grateful thanks!" exclaimed Markham, new life as it were animating his soul.

"Hush!" cried the banker's sister, placing her finger upon her lip: "you must not give way to excitement of feelings. You have been ill—very ill."

"How long, Signora, has this illness lasted?"

"Ten days," was the reply. "You have been delirious."

"Ten days!" ejaculated Richard. "Alas! poor Morcar—what will he think? where can he be?"

"Morcar is safe and knows that you are here, Signor," said the lady. "But do not excite yourself. Providence has allowed you to suffer, for its own wise and inscrutable purposes; but it never deserts the good and great."

"Ah! lady, how can I ever thank you sufficiently for the goodness of yourself and your brother towards one who is a perfect stranger to you?" said Markham, pressing the lady's hand respectfully to his lips.

"You are not altogether so much a stranger to us as you imagine," observed the banker's sister, with a mysterious but good-natured smile. "But I will not tantalize, nor excite you by keeping you in suspense. Your deceased countryman Thomas Armstrong was my brother's intimate friend."

"Is this possible?" cried Markham, overjoyed at such welcome intelligence. "Then Providence has not indeed deserted me!"

"I will now hasten and fetch my brother to see you," said the lady. "He is burning with impatience for the moment when he can converse with you."

Signora Viviani left the room, and shortly returned, accompanied by a gentleman of about sixty, and whose countenance was as expressive of excellent qualities as her own.

"Here is our patient, brother," said the lady, with a smile: "a patient, however, only in one sense, for he has been very impatient in his queries; and now you must satisfy his curiosity in all respects."

"I am delighted to find that you are able to devote a thought to such matters, my dear young friend," exclaimed the banker, pressing both Markham's hands cordially in his own; "for as a friend do I indeed regard you," added the excellent man.

"How can I possibly have deserved such kind sympathy at your hands?" asked Richard, overpowered by so much goodness.

"Your deceased and much lamented friend Thomas Armstrong was as a brother to me, during his residence at different times in Castelcicala," answered the banker; "and he constantly corresponded with me when he was in his native country. In the letters which he wrote during the last two years of his life, he mentioned you in terms which, did I know nothing else meritorious on your part, would have induced me to welcome you as a friend—as a son. But your noble conduct in the late attempt to release Castelcicala from the sway of a tyrant, and place that excellent Prince Alberto on the ducal throne, has confirmed my good opinion of you—if any such confirmation were necessary. I learnt from Armstrong that you were generous, intelligent, and virtuous: recent events have shown that you are brave and liberal-minded."

"How rejoiced I am that my conduct in that unhappy affair merits your approval," said Richard. "I have often trembled, since the fatal day when so many brave spirits came to these coasts to meet death or imprisonment, lest the more sensible portion of the Castelcicalan community should look upon the expedition as one concocted only by selfish or insane adventurers."

"Selfish or insane!" ejaculated Viviani. "Was Grachia selfish or insane? was Morosino a mere adventurer? Oh! no—Castelcicala weeps over the bloody graves of her patriots; and thousands of tongues are familiar with the name of Richard Markham."

The countenance of our hero became animated with a glow of generous enthusiasm as these words met his ears.

"How handsome he is!" exclaimed the banker's sister. "An old woman like me may say so without impropriety," she added smiling; "and even the Princess Isabella would not be offended, did she overhear me."

"The Princess!" ejaculated Richard, surprised at this allusion to that beautiful lady.

"You must not be angry with your faithful Morcar," said the banker's sister, smiling, "if he betrayed your secret. But it was with a good motive. When he found that you were with those who were anxious to be considered in the light of your friends, he communicated to us your secret respecting the Princess, in order that we might write to her and relieve her mind of all anxiety by assuring her that you were safe and well. So I took upon myself the duty of addressing a letter to her Highness the Princess Isabella, and I thought that a little falsehood relative to your real condition would be pardonable. I assured her that you were in security and in good health, save a sprain of the right hand which had compelled you to employ a secretary; and in order that the letter might be sure to reach her, my brother enclosed it in one to his agent in London, with special directions that it might be delivered as speedily as possible. Morcar also wrote a note to his father and his wife, and addressed it to the care of some person in a part of the English

capital called Saint Giles's. In a word, you need be under no anxiety relative to your friends in England."

"Excellent lady!" cried Markham; "you accumulate kindnesses so rapidly upon me, that I know not how to testify my gratitude. And, Morcar, too—how thoughtful of him! Oh! I have indeed found good friends."

"You are doubtless anxious to learn how you came into this house," said the banker. "I will tell you—for you will not allow your mind to compose itself until you know every thing. I had been to pass the day with a friend whose country seat is at a few miles' distance from Pinalla; and I was returning home in an open chaise, attended by my groom, when, in the middle of a lane which I had taken as a short cut, I was accosted by a man who seemed frantic with grief, and implored me to render assistance to his master. He spoke in English; and fortunately I understand that language tolerably well. In a word, the person who accosted me, was your dependant Morcar. He has since explained to me how you had separated at Friuli, in order to gain the Neapolitan frontier by different routes; and it seems that he was journeying along that lane, when he stumbled over a body in the path. The light of the moon speedily enabled him to recognise his master. At that moment my chaise fortunately came up to the spot. Not knowing who you were, but actuated by that feeling which would prompt me to assist any human being under such circumstances, I immediately proposed to convey you to my own house. Your dependant was overjoyed at the offer; and I desired him to accompany you. He would not tell me your real name, but when I questioned him on that point, gave a fictitious one. The poor fellow did not then know how I might be disposed towards the Constitutionalists who had survived the slaughter near Ossore. You may therefore conceive my astonishment when on my arrival at my house, I discovered a letter in a case fastened to a riband beneath your garments, as I helped to undress you. These words, '*To my dear friend, Richard Markham,*' in a handwriting well known to me, immediately excited a suspicion in my mind; and when I had procured the attendance of my physician and ascertained that there was a hope of your eventual recovery—although your wound was a serious one—I questioned Morcar more closely than before. But he would not confess that you were Richard Markham. I then showed him the letter which I had found about your person. Still he obstinately denied the fact. At length, in order to convince him that I was really sincere in my good feeling towards you, I showed him several letters from the deceased Mr. Armstrong to me, and in which you were favourably mentioned. Then he became all confidence; and I can assure you that he is a most faithful and devoted creature towards you."

While the banker was yet speaking, he drew from his pocket the morocco case containing Armstrong's letter, and laid it upon the bed.

Richard warmly pressed his hand with grateful fervour.

He then in a few words narrated the particulars of the attack made upon him by the banditti in the narrow lane, and concluded by saying, "I consider the fact of the ruffians overlooking that document when they rifled me, as another proof of heaven's especial goodness towards me; for I value this relic of my departed friend as dearly as my life."

"And you are still ignorant of its contents?" said the banker, with a smile.

Richard was about to explain the nature of the mysterious instructions which Armstrong had written on the envelope, when Viviani stopped him, saying, "I know all. Some months before his death Armstrong wrote to me his intentions concerning you; and therefore, I presume that '*when you are destitute of all resources—when adversity or a too generous heart shall have deprived you of all means of subsistence—and when your own exertions fail to supply your wants, you will open the enclosed letter. But should no circumstances of any kind deprive you of the little property which you now possess—and should you not be plunged into a state of need from which your own talents and exertions cannot relieve you,—then will you open that letter on the morning of the* 10*th of July*, 1843, *on which day you are to meet your brother.*'"

So astonished was Markham, while the banker recapitulated the *very words* of Armstrong's mysterious instructions, that he could not utter a syllable until the excellent man had finished speaking; and then he cried, in a tone of the most unfeigned surprise, "My dear sir, you know all, then?"

Signora Viviani laughed so heartily at Markham's astonishment, that her good-natured countenance became quite purple.

"Indeed, I do know all," exclaimed the banker, laughing also; "and that is not surprising, either, seeing that every farthing Armstrong has left you is in my hands. But I must not say any more on that head: indeed, I am afraid I have violated my departed friend's instructions to *me* by saying so much already. However, my dear Richard—for so you must allow me to call you, as I am a sort of guardian or trustee towards you—you will not want to open that letter until the 10th of July, 1843; for if you require money, you have only to draw a cheque upon me, and I will honour it—aye, even for ten or fifteen thousand pounds."

"Is it possible that I am awake? am I not dreaming? is this fairy-land, or Castelcicala?" said Richard. "I am overwhelmed with happy tidings and kindnesses."

Again did the good banker and his merry sister—who, though bachelor and spinster, possessed hearts overflowing with the milk of human kind ness, and who felt towards Richard almost as a father and mother would feel towards their own child,—again did they laugh heartily; until the lady remembered that their patient might be too much excited.

"And now I dare say you are anxious about your faithful Morcar," said the banker. "In truth, he is a mystery whom I cannot fathom. All I know of him is that he is most devotedly attached to you. He comes to the house every evening, and sits by your bed-side a couple of hours, or perhaps more; and then he takes his departure again. In vain have I pressed him to remain here—to live here so long as you are my guest: no—he declares that he has business on his hands; and he keeps that business a profound secret. He is always absent save during those two or three hours which he spends near you."

"And when he is here," added the banker's sister, laughing, "he will not allow a soul save himself to do any thing for you. No—he must smooth your

pillow—he must raise your head, and give you your cooling drink—he must hold your hands when the delirium is on you (but, thank heaven! *that* has passed now);—in a word, no one is permitted to be your nurse save himself."

"The good, faithful creature!" cried Markham, tears standing on his long, dark, and slightly curled lashes. "Heaven grant that he be not involving himself in any difficulty."

"He seems prudent and steady," said the banker; "and those are grand qualities. Moreover, these men of Egyptian origin have strange fancies and whims. In any case, he will be more communicative to you than he is to us."

"You have now gratified my curiosity in many—many ways," said Richard; "but there is one more point——"

"You are interminable with your questions," exclaimed Signora Viviani, laughing. "Now, remember—this is the last we will answer on the present occasion, or we shall really fatigue you."

"Oh! no," returned our hero. "When the mind labours under no suspense, how soon the physical energies revive."

"Speak, then," said the banker.

"What is the present condition of Castelcicala? has it been ameliorated, or rendered more deplorable?"

The banker's countenance fell.

"My dear Richard," he replied, "strange and striking events have occurred during the last few days,—events which it pains me to recount, as it will grieve you to hear them. The Grand Duchess fled from the capital—no one knows wherefore. It is certain that she reached Montecuculi in safety; and her farther progress is a complete mystery. All traces of her cease there. But that is not all. An army of thirty thousand Austrians, Richard,—an army of foreigners has been called into the State by Angelo III. Ten days ago it crossed the Roman frontiers, and encamped beneath the walls of Montoni."

"Merciful heaven!" ejaculated Richard: "an army of occupation in the country!"

"Alas! that I should tell the truth when I say so," continued the banker, in a melancholy tone. "The Grand Duke intends to enforce his despotism by means of foreign bayonets. Four thousand Austrians moved on as far as Abrantani, where they are placed under the command of Captain-General Santa Croce, that province being considered the most unsettled, and the one exhibiting the greatest inclination to raise the standard of liberty. But Montoni, Richard,— Montoni, our capital, has set a glorious example. The same day that the Austrians appeared beneath its walls, its inhabitants rose against the Grand Duke and his infamous Ministers. The Muncipal Council, with the Mayor at its head, declared its sittings permanent, and proclaimed itself a Committee of Government. The garrison, consisting of ten thousand brave men, pronounced in favour of the Committee. The Grand Duke and his Ministers fled to the Austrian camp, and took refuge with Marshal Herbertstein, the generalissimo of the foreign army of occupation. And now, Richard—now the Grand Duke and his Austrian allies are besieging the capital of Castelcicala!"

"Alas! these are terrible tidings," said Richard, astounded at all he had just heard, and at the rapidity with which so many important events had occurred.

"Terrible tidings they must be to one who, like you, has fought for Castelcicalan liberty," continued the banker. "Oh! that I should have lived to see my country thus oppressed—thus subject to a foreign yoke! But I have not yet told you all. The Lord High Admiral of Castelcicala has declared in favour of the Grand Duke, and has instituted a blockade, with all his fleet, at the mouth of the Ferreti, so that no provisions may be conveyed into the besieged capital. The garrison of Montoni is, however, behaving nobly; and as yet the Austrians have made no impression upon the city. But a famine must ensue in Montoni;—and then, all hope will be lost!"

"And the other great cities of Castelcicala?" asked Richard: "do they make no demonstration in this terrible crisis?"

"Alas—no! Martial law every where prevails; and had we not a humane and merciful Captain-General at the head of the province of Pinalla, our condition here would be desperate indeed. You are doubtless aware that all the Constitutionalists who were taken prisoners at the battle of Ossore, are now prisoners in Estella——"

Signor Viviani was interrupted by the entrance of a servant, who came to announce that Morcar requested admittance to the sick-room.

The kind-hearted banker and his no less excellent sister withdrew, in order to allow the gipsy an opportunity of free and unrestrained intercourse with his master.

CHAPTER CLXXXIV.

ESTELLA.

NOTHING could exceed the joy which the faithful Morcar experienced on finding his master restored to consciousness, and evidently in a fair way towards convalescence.

The reader may imagine with what enthusiasm the gipsy dwelt upon the kindness of Signor Viviani and his sister; and when the grateful fellow had exhausted all his powers of speech in depicting the excellent qualities of these good people, he begged Markham to acquaint him with his adventures since they separated at Friuli.

Richard related those particulars which are already known to the reader; and he did not forget to reproach Morcar for having refused to accept his share of the purse at the tavern in the suburbs of the above-mentioned town.

"I knew that I should not require the gold, sir," answered Morcar; "for an individual of my race finds friends and brethren all over the world. Nor was I an exception to that rule. At a short distance from Friuli I fell in with an encampment of *Cingani*—for so the gipsies are called in Italy; and I was immediately welcomed in a way becoming my position as the heir to the sovereign of the Zingarees of Great Britain."

"But how did you render yourself intelligible to your Italian brethren?" asked Richard, with a good-natured smile at the solemn manner in which his follower had uttered the concluding portion of his observations.

"We have a language peculiar to ourselves, sir," replied Morcar; "and although it is not very rich in words, it nevertheless contains sufficient to enable

us to converse freely with each other. I travelled with the Cingani belonging to the encampment; and when we arrived in the neighbourhood of Pinalla, I took leave of them with the intention of hastening over the frontier to Naples. God ordained that I should strike into the same path which you were pursuing; and I could not have been many yards behind you, when you were attacked by the banditti in the manner you have just explained to me. You may conceive my grief when I found you lying senseless in that gloomy lane, and when the moonlight, falling on your countenance, showed me who you were. Had it not been for the accidental arrival of Signor Viviani on the spot, and at that particular moment, I cannot say what would have become of us. You know the rest."

"Not entirely, my dear Morcar," said Richard. "I do not wish to penetrate into your secrets; but I am anxious to learn wherefore you refused the hospitality of Signor Viviani's mansion?"

"When I found that you were amongst friends, sir," answered Morcar, "and that there was no longer any necessity for me to proceed to Naples, I returned to my brethren, the Cingani. I have dwelt with them ever since; but have occasionally called to inquire after you."

"Nay, my faithful friend," exclaimed Richard, taking the gipsy's hand, "do not depreciate your own goodness of heart. I have learnt how regularly you came to pass the evening by my side, and how kindly you ministered to me. Heaven grant that the day may arrive when I shall be enabled to reward you adequately."

"You must not talk any more at present, sir," said the gipsy. "If you will only remain quiet for a few days, you will be quite well; and then—"

"And then, what?" asked Richard, seeing that the gipsy checked himself.

"And then we can deliberate on the best course to adopt," replied Morcar.

Our hero saw that his dependant had some plan in his head; but he did not choose to press him on the subject.

* * * * * * *

A fortnight had elapsed since Richard Markham awoke to consciousness in the house of the generous Castelcicalan banker.

This interval had produced a marvellous change in his physical condition.

A powerful constitution, aided by excellent medical advice, and the unremitting attention of his kind friends, enabled him to triumph over the severity of the treatment which he had experienced at the hands of the banditti.

He was now completely restored to health—with the exception of a partial weakness and pallor which naturally followed a long confinement to his couch.

But by means of gentle exercise in the garden belonging to the banker's house, he was rapidly recovering his strength, and the hues of youth again began to bloom upon his cheeks.

It was on the 26th of December, 1840, that he had a long conversation with the banker and Morcar. A certain project was the topic of this debate,—a project for which Morcar had arranged all the preliminaries during Richard's illness, and which our hero now burned to carry into execution. Signor Viviani raised but one objection; and that was only for the purpose of delaying, not renouncing, the scheme in view. He feared lest Markham's health might not be sufficiently restored to enable him to embark so soon in the enterprise. But this doubt was completely over-ruled by his young friend, whose enthusiastic soul could not brook delay in a matter that was so near and dear to his heart.

The deliberations of the three individuals who formed this solemn council lasted for four hours, and concluded at sunset. Richard then wrote several letters, which he sealed and placed in the hands of Signor Viviani, saying, "You will forward these only in case of my death."

The banker wrung our hero's hand cordially, exclaiming, "No, my generous—my gallant-hearted young friend; something within me seems to say that there will be no need to dispatch those letters to your friends in England; for proud success shall be yours!"

Signora Viviani entered the room at this moment, and in a tone of deep anxiety, inquired the result of the deliberation.

"The expedition is to take place," replied the banker, solemnly.

"Ah! Signor Markham," exclaimed the lady; "have you well weighed the contingencies? Do not imagine that I would attempt to dissuade you from so generous,—so noble an undertaking!—Oh! no,—I should be the last to do so. And yet—"

"My dear madam," interrupted Richard, with a smile, "I appreciate all your kind anxiety in my behalf; but I must fulfil my duty towards those unfortunate creatures who embarked in an enterprise of which I was one of the chiefs."

"It would be improper in me to urge a single argument against so noble a purpose," said the banker's sister. "May God prosper you, Richard."

The old lady wiped the tears from her eyes as she spoke.

It was now quite dusk; and our hero signified his intention of taking his departure. He confided the morocco case containing Armstrong's letter, to his excellent friend, the banker, and at the same time expressed his deep gratitude for all the kindness he had experienced at the hands of that gentleman and his sister.

"Do not talk thus, my noble boy," ejaculated the old man; "it makes me melancholy—as if I were never to see you more; whereas, I feel convinced that there are many, many happy days in store for us all! Here, Richard—take this pocket-book: it contains bank-notes to some amount. But if you require more, hesitate not to draw upon me for any sum that you need. And now, farewell—and may all good angels watch over you!"

Signora Viviani, on her side, felt as acutely in parting with our hero as if she were separating from a near relative—so much had his amiable qualities, generous disposition, and noble character endeared him alike to the banker and his kind-hearted sister.

And now the door of that hospitable mansion closed behind Richard Markham, who was accompanied by his faithful Morcar.

They pursued their way, the gipsy acting as the guide, through the streets of Pinalla, and passing out of the town by the north-eastern gate, followed the course of the river Usiglio for upwards of two miles and a-half.

The night was clear with the pure lustre of the

chaste moon; and the air was mild, though fresh enough to be invigorating.

At length they reached the confines of a forest, into which Morcar plunged, closely followed by his master.

They now continued their way amidst an almost total darkness, so thick was the foliage of the evergreens through the mazes of which they pursued their course.

Presently lights glimmered among the trees; and in a few minutes more, Morcar conducted our hero into a wide open area, where a spacious gipsy-encampment was established.

Markham caught his companion by the arm, and held him back for a few moments while he contemplated that scene so strange—so wild—and yet so picturesque.

A space, probably an acre in extent, had been cleared in the midst of the forest; and the tall trees all around constituted a natural barrier, defining the limits of the arena formed for the encampment.

A hundred tents, of the rude gipsy fashion, swarmed with life. Dark countenances bent over the cheerful fires, above which mighty caldrons were simmering; and the lurid light was reflected from dark eyes. The tall athletic forms of men and the graceful figures of women, were thrown out into strong relief by the lambent flames; and the sounds of many voices fell in confused murmurs upon the ears.

"There are four hundred brave men, who will welcome you as their leader, sir!" exclaimed Morcar, stretching forth his arm towards the encampment.

"Oh! my dear friend," cried Markham, all the enthusiasm of his soul aroused by the hopes which those words conveyed; "by what magic were you enabled to collect this band in so short a time?"

"My influence as the son of Zingary was sufficient to induce them to make our cause their own, sir," replied Morcar; "and the extensive organization of the fraternity was already well calculated to gather them thus together. I have moreover informed you that they are all well armed; for their funds have been devoted to the purchase of the weapons and ammunition necessary for the undertaking."

"Which outlay it will be my care immediately to reimburse," said Richard. "But you speak of me as the chief of this band, Morcar? No—that honour is reserved for you, whose energies and influence alone could have brought those four hundred men together."

"That may not be, sir," returned Morcar, seriously. "These men have assembled with the hope that *you* will be their chief: it is *your* name which is enthusiastically spoken of in Castelcicala; and it is *your* presence which will animate this gipsy-band with courage. Come—let me introduce you to the chiefs of the tribe."

"Is the King amongst them?" asked Richard.

"No, sir: the King of the Cingani, or Italian gipsies, is at present in Tuscany; but the chiefs, to whom I will now conduct you, are his relations."

Morcar led our hero through the mazes of the encampment to a tent more conveniently contrived and spacious than the rest; and as they passed along, the groups of Cingani surveyed Richard with curiosity and respect.

They evidently divined who he was.

In the tent to which Morcar conducted his master, three elderly men were seated upon mats, smoking their pipes, and discoursing gravely upon political affairs.

They welcomed Richard with respectful warmth, and instantly assigned to him the place of honour at the upper end of the tent.

A council was then held; but as the results will explain the decision to which the members came, it is not necessary to detail the deliberations on this occasion.

We must, however, observe that Markham accepted the responsible and difficult post of commandant of the entire force; and he immediately handed over to the gipsies an amount in bank-notes equivalent to a thousand pounds, for the purpose of reimbursing the outlay already effected by the Cingani chiefs, and of supplying an advance of pay to all the members of the band.

At about eleven o'clock the fires were all extinguishd throughout the encampment; and, sentinels having been posted at short intervals round the open space, those who were not on duty laid down to rest.

At day-break the scene was once more all bustle and life: the morning meal was hastily disposed of; and Richard then issued the necessary orders for breaking up the encampment.

It was arranged that the men who bore arms should proceed by forced marches towards Estella; while the women and children might follow at their own pace.

The farewells between husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, fathers and children, sons and mothers, took place in silence, but in profound sincerity; and the corps, consisting of four hundred men, all well armed with muskets and cutlasses, and some few with axes also, was soon in motion amidst the dense mazes of the forest.

Markham, with a sword by his side and a pair of pistols in the breast of his coat, advanced in front of the column, attended by the three chiefs and Morcar.

* * * * * * * *

It was at day-break on the 29th of December, that the sentinels posted on the southern bastion of the citadel of Estella, observed a small but compact body of men suddenly emerge from the forest which stretches along the Usiglio, from the neighbourhood of Pinalla almost up to the very walls of Estella.

An alarm was given throughout the citadel; for the beams of the rising sun glistened on the weapons of the small force that was approaching; and although no uniform attire characterised the corps, it was easy to perceive that it advanced with a hostile intention.

But ere the garrison could be got under arms, Richard's followers had already cut an opening in the palisades which protected the glacis, and were advancing up the inclined plane towards the rampart. On they went, their youthful leader at their head: the glacis was passed—the covered way was gained—and then the sentinels on the bastion discharged their muskets at the besiegers.

Two of the Cingani fell dead, and one was very slightly wounded.

"Follow me!" cried our hero; and rushing along the covered way, he reached the wooden bridge which communicated with the interior of the citadel.

And now commenced an interval of fearful peril, but for which Markham was not unprepared.

The soldiers of the garrison had by this time flocked to the rampart of the bastion, and commenced a terrific fire upon the besiegers. The latter, however, replied to it with rapidity and effect, while half a dozen of the foremost cut down with their axes a huge beam from the wooden bridge, and, under the superintendence of Markham, used it as a battering-ram at the postern-gate.

The Cingani, however, lost eight or nine of their men while this task was in progress; and their position, exposed as they were to a murderous fire, would soon have become untenable, had not the postern-gate shortly yielded to the engine employed against it.

Then, with his drawn sword in his hand, Markham precipitated himself into the citadel, closely followed, and well supported by the brave and faithful Cingani.

The tunnel beneath the rampart, into which the postern opened, was disputed for some minutes with desperate valour on both sides; but our hero was so ably backed by Morcar, the three chiefs, and the foremost of his corps, that he eventually drove the soldiers before him.

"Constitutional freedom and Prince Alberto!" shouted Richard, as he rushed onward, and entered the court of the citadel.

The cry was taken up by the Cingani; and although the conflict continued in the court for nearly half an hour longer, it was evident that the note of liberty had touched a chord in the hearts of the Castelcicalan soldiers, for they resisted but feebly, and, though superior in numbers to the besiegers, rapidly gave way.

On the farther side of the court stood a large but low and straggling building, the windows of which were defended with iron bars.

"Friends," exclaimed Markham, pointing with his blood-stained sword towards that structure, "there is the prison of the patriots!"

These words operated like an electric shock upon our hero's followers; and they rushed onward, driving the soldiers like chaff before them.

The gate of the prison was reached, and speedily

forced: Richard entered the gloomy stronghold, and the work of liberation commenced.

Five hundred Castelcicalan patriots were restored to freedom in a short half-hour; and when they recognised in their deliverer him who had been one of the chiefs of the first expedition, and whose valour was so signalised in the battle near Ossore, their enthusiasm knew no bounds.

The name of "MARKHAM" was shouted to the sky: the patriots flocked around him, with heartfelt thanks and the most fervent outpourings of their gratitude; and they hailed him as a deliverer and a chief.

There was not, however, much time for congratulation or explanation. Though the garrison of the citadel was weak, that of the town itself was strong; for the Captain-General had concentrated the greater part of his force in the heart of Estella in order to overawe the inhabitants. This fact had been previously gleaned by the spies whom Morcar had sent out while Richard was yet an inmate of the banker's house; and hence the attack upon the most exposed part of the citadel in preference to an attempt upon the town.

Richard was now master of the citadel. A portion of the garrison had fled into Estella; but by far the larger part, about three hundred in number, declared its readiness to join the cause of liberty. This offer was joyfully accepted. The armoury was then visited, and arms were distributed to the patriots who had been delivered from their dungeons.

Thus Richard Markham found himself at the head of an effective force of nearly twelve hundred men—a triumphant position, which had fortunately cost no more than about twenty lives on the side of the Cingani.

It was now mid-day; and while his forces were obtaining refreshment, and putting the citadel in a proper state of defence, in case of an attack on the part of the Captain-General of Estella, Richard called a council of the three Cingani chiefs, Morcar, the leading patriots whom he had released, and the officers of the garrison-troops that had declared in favour of "Constitutional liberty and Prince Alberto."

At this council it was resolved that Richard should issue a proclamation to the inhabitants of Estella, declaring the real objects for which the standard of civil liberty had been raised—namely, to release the imprisoned patriots, to expel the Austrians from the land, and to place Prince Alberto upon the ducal throne.

This resolution was carried into effect; and the document was forwarded to the Mayor of Estella. The corporation was immediately assembled; and while the Captain-General prepared to attack the citadel, the municipal body remained in close deliberation.

Three hours elapsed; when a rumour prevailed throughout the town that the troops had refused to leave their barracks at the command of the Captain-General. This proof of sympathy with the successful Constitutionalists decided the opinions of the members of the corporation; and the Mayor, attended by several of the municipal authorities, waited upon Richard Markham and presented him with the keys of the city.

No sooner were these tidings bruited throughout Estella, than the Captain-General, the Political Prefect, and one regiment which remained faithful to the Grand Duke's cause, left the town with extraordinary precipitation: the remainder of the garrison sent a deputation to Markham's head quarters in the citadel to announce their readiness to join his cause; and at seven o'clock in the evening of that eventful day the roar of the artillery on the walls of Estella saluted the tri-coloured flag of liberty which was hoisted on the Town-Hall.

By this grand and decisive blow, Richard possessed himself of one of the principal towns of Castelcicala, and found himself backed by a force of three thousand men.

His first care, when order and tranquillity were restored that evening, was to forward a courier with a letter to Signor Viviani at Pinalla. That letter not only detailed the events of the day, but contained a request that the banker would lose no time in writing an account of the proceedings direct to Prince Alberto (under the name of Count Alteroni) in England. Richard also enclosed a letter to be forwarded to Mr. Monroe, and one from Morcar to Eva.

The corporation had assembled in the Town Hall immediately after the tri-coloured flag was hoisted, and remained in deliberation until past ten o'clock. The Mayor then published a proclamation in which there were three clauses. The first declared the sittings of the municipal body permanent, under the title of "Committee of Administration for the Province of Estella." The second nominated Richard Markham General-in-chief of the army of that province. The third called upon all good and faithful Castelcicalan patriots to take up arms in the cause of Constitutional liberty and Prince Alberto, and against the Austrian army of occupation.

A copy of this proclamation was forwarded to Richard Markham, who highly approved of the first and last clauses, and accepted the rank conferred upon him by the second.

Early on the following morning uniforms, taken from the store-rooms in the arsenal, were distributed amongst the Cingani and the patriots who had been liberated; and Richard then made his entry into Estella, in compliance with the request of the corporation.

Wearing the uniform of a General-officer, and mounted upon a handsome charger, our hero never appeared to greater advantage.

The garrison of the town lined the streets, and presented arms to the youthful commander whose extraordinary skill and prowess had so materially contributed to the victory of the preceding day, and who was hailed as a champion raised up by Providence to deliver Castelcicala from the tyranny under which it groaned.

He was attended by two officers whom he had appointed his *aides-de-camp*, and by the faithful Morcar, whom nothing could induce to accept any definite rank, but who, in the uniform of a private, was proud to follow his valiant master.

The windows were crowded with faces, anxious to obtain a glimpse of the youthful hero; and while bright eyes shone upon his way, fair hands waved handkerchiefs or threw nosegays of exotics and artificial flowers from the casements.

The bells rang merrily; the artillery saluted the entrance of the General into the town; the crowds in the streets welcomed him with enthusiastic shouts; and the civic authorities, in their official robes, received him as he alighted at the Town-Hall.

There he was complimented on his gallant deeds, and invited to partake of a sumptuous banquet in the evening.

But Richard's answer was firm though respectful.

"Gentlemen," he said, "pardon me if I decline your great kindness. There remains so much to be done, to restore happiness to Castelcicala, that I should deem myself unworthy of your confidence, did I waste valuable time in festivity. A detachment of the Austrian army occupies and overawes the province of Abrantani: in two hours, with your permission, I propose to set out in that direction with all the forces that you will spare me. Should Providence prosper my arms in this new expedition, my course is simple. I shall proceed to Montoni, and either deliver the capital from the besieging force, or perish beneath its walls."

This short but pithy speech was received with enthusiastic cheers by the municipal body.

"Go, sir," said the Mayor, when silence was obtained once more, "and fulfil your grand mission. Take with you the force that you deem necessary for your purposes; and it shall be *our* duty to supply you with a treasury-chest that will not be indifferently furnished. Go, sir: God has sent you to us in the time of our bitter need; and you are destined to deliver Castelcicala from its tyrant."

Markham bowed, and withdrew.

His return to the citadel was a signal for the renewal of that enthusiasm which had greeted his entrance into the town.

But he was not proud! No—he had no room in his heart for pride: hope—delicious, burning, joyous hope,—the hope of accomplishing his mighty aims and earning the hand of Isabella as his reward,—this was the only sentiment which filled his soul!

On his arrival at the citadel once more, he issued immediate orders to prepare for a march. He proposed to leave a garrison of one thousand men in Estella, and take two thousand with him; for he calculated that this number would be considerably increased, by volunteers, on his way to Abrantani.

The evident rapidity with which he intended his movements to be characterised, created a most favourable impression not only amongst the inhabitants of Estella, but also with the troops under his command; and though they all deemed him eminently worthy of the post to which he had been raised, yet few foresaw the future greatness of that hero who was destined to take his place amongst the most brilliant warriors of the age.

It was at two o'clock in the afternoon that the Constitutional army, consisting of two thousand men, defiled through the western gate of the citadel, towards the bridge over the Usiglio. A squadron of four hundred cavalry led the way: next came the corps of Cingani; then the horse-artillery, with twelve field-pieces; next the liberated patriots; and the rear-guard consisted of the regular infantry of the garrison.

As soon as the river was crossed, Richard formed his little army into three columns, and then commenced a rapid march towards Villabella, which he knew to be well affected in favour of the Constitutional cause.

But while he was leading a gallant band over the fertile plains of Castelcicala, incidents deserving notice occurred in his native land far away.

CHAPTER CLXXXV.

ANOTHER NEW YEAR'S DAY.

It was the 1st of January, 1841.

If there be any hour in the life of man when he ought to commune with his own heart, that proper interval of serious reflection is to be found on New Year's Day.

Then, to the rightly constituted mind, the regrets for the past will serve as finger-posts and guides to the hopes of the future.

The heathen mythology depicted Janus with two faces, looking different ways:—so let the human heart, when on the first day of January, it stands between two years, retrospect carefully over the one that has gone, and combine all its solemn warnings for use and example in the new one which has just commenced.

This also is the day that recalls, with additional impressiveness, the memory of those dear relatives and friends whose mortal forms have been swept away by the viewless and voiceless stream of Time.

Nor less do fond parents think, amidst tears and prayers, of their sons who are absent in the far-off places of the earth,—fighting the battles of their country on the burning plains of India, or steering their way across the pathless solitudes of the ocean.

But, alas! little reck the wealthy and great for those whose arms defend them, or whose enterprise procures them all the bounties of the earth.

An oligarchy has cramped the privileges and monopolised the rights of a mighty nation.

Behold the effects of its infamous Poor-Laws;—contemplate the results of the more atrocious Game-Laws;—mark the consequences of the Corn-Laws.

The Poor-Laws! Not even did the ingenuity of the Spanish or Italian Inquisitions conceive a more effectual method of deliberate torture and slow death, than the fearful system of mental-abasement and gradient starvation invented by England's legislators. When the labourer can toil for the rich no longer, away with him to the workhouse! When the old man, who has contributed for half a century to the revenue of the country, is overtaken by sudden adversity at an age which paralyses his energies, away with him to the workhouse! When the poor widow, whose sons have fallen in the ranks of battle or in defence of the wooden walls of England, is deprived of her natural supporters, away with her to the workhouse! The workhouse is a social dung-heap on which the wealthy and great fling those members of the community whose services they can no longer render available to their selfish purposes.

The Game-Laws! Never was a more atrocious monopoly than that which reserves the use of certain birds of the air or animals of the earth to a small and exclusive class. The Almighty gave man "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth;" and those who dare to monopolise any of these, to the prejudice of their fellow-creatures, fly in the face of the Lord of all! The Game-Laws have fabricated an offence which fills our prisons—as if there were not already crimes enough to separate men from their families and plunge them into loathsome dungeons. That offence is one of human construction, and exists only in certain countries: it is not a crime against God—nor is it deemed such in many enlightened states. The selfish plea-

sures of a miserably small minority demand the protection of a statute which is a fertilising source of oppression, wretchedness, ruin, and demoralization. The Game-Laws are a rack whereon the aristocracy loves to behold its victims writhing in tortures, and where the sufferers are compelled to acknowledge as a heinous crime a deed which has in reality no moral turpitude associated with it.

THE CORN-LAWS! Were the Russian to boast of his freedom, Common Sense would point to Siberia and to the knout, and laugh in his face. When the Englishman vaunts the glory of his country's institutions, that same Common Sense comes forward and throws the Corn-Laws in his teeth. What! liberty in connexion with the vilest monopoly that ever mortal policy conceived? Impossible! England manufactures articles which all the civilised world requires; and other states yield corn in an abundance that defies the possibility of home consumption. And yet an inhuman selfishness has declared that England shall not exchange her manufactures for that superfluous produce. No—the manufactures may decay in the warehouses here, and the grain abroad may be thrown to the swine, sooner than a miserable oligarchy will consent to abandon one single principle of its shameless monopoly. The Corn-Laws are a broom which sweeps all the grain on the threshing-floor into one corner for the use of the rich, but which leaves the chaff scattered every where about for the millions of poor to use as best they may.

The aristocracy of England regards the patience of the masses as a bow whose powers of tension are unlimited: but the day must come, sooner or later, when those who thus dare to trifle with this generous elasticity will be struck down by the violence of the recoil.

Although our legislators—trembling at what they affect to sneer at under the denomination of "the march of intellect"—obstinately refuse to imitate enlightened France by instituting a system of national education,—nevertheless, the millions of this country are now instructing themselves!

Honour to the English mechanic—honour to the English operative: each alike seeks to taste of the tree of learning, "whose root is bitter, but whose fruits are sweet!"

Thank God, no despotism—no tyranny can arrest the progress of that mighty intellectual movement which is now perceptible amongst the industrious millions of these realms.

And how excellent are the principles of that self-instruction which now tends to elevate the moral condition of the country. It is not confined within the narrow limits which churchmen would impose: it embraces the sciences—the arts—all subjects of practical utility,—its aim being to model the mind on the solid basis of Common Sense.

To the millions thus enlightened, Religion will appear in all its purity, and the objects of Government in all their simplicity. The holy Christian worship will cease to be regarded as an apology for endowing a Church with enormous revenues; and political administration must no longer be considered as a means of rendering a small portion of the community happy and prosperous to the utter prejudice of the vast remainder.

There breathes not a finer specimen of the human race than a really enlightened and liberal-minded Englishman. But if *he* be deserving of admiration and applause, who has received his knowlege from the lips of a paid preceptor—how much more worthy of praise and respect is *the self-instructed mechanic!*

But to resume our narrative.

It was the 1st of January, 1841.

The time-piece on the mantel in Mr. Greenwood's study had just struck two in the afternoon.

That gentleman himself was pacing the apartment in an agitated manner.

His handsome dressing-gown of oriental pattern was not arranged, with the usual contrived air of negligence, to display the beautiful shirt-front, over which hung the gold chain of his Breguet-watch;—on the contrary, it had evidently been hurried on without the least regard to effect.

The writing-table was heaped with a confused pile of letters and accounts—not thrown together for show, but lying in the actual disorder in which they had been tossed aside after a minute investigation.

Though not absolutely slovenly in his present appearance, Mr. Greenwood had certainly neglected his toilet on that day; and the state of his room moreover proved that he was too much absorbed in serious affairs to devote time to the minor considerations of neatness and the strict propriety of order.

There was a cloud upon his brow; and his manner was restless and unsettled.

"Curses—eternal curses upon that Lafleur!" he exclaimed aloud, as he walked up and down with uneven steps. "To think that I should have lost so much at one blow! Oh! it nearly drives me mad—mad! If it had only been the twenty thousand pounds of which the black-hearted French villain and his confederates plundered me, I might have snapped my fingers at Fortune who thus vented her temporary spite upon me! But the enormous amount I lost in addition, by failing to pour that sum of English notes and gold into circulation in the French capital,—the almost immediate fall in the rates of exchange, and the fluctuation of the French funds,—Oh! *there* it was that I was so seriously injured. Fifty thousand pounds snatched from me as it were in a moment,—fifty thousand pounds of hard money—my own money! And the thirty thousand pounds that I had first sent over to Paris were so judiciously laid out! My combinations were admirable: I should have been a clear gainer of five-and-twenty thousand, had not that accursed robbery taken place! May the villain Lafleur die in a charnel-house—may he perish the most miserable of deaths!"

Mr. Greenwood ground his teeth with rage as he uttered these horrible maledictions.

He did not, however, recall to mind that Lafleur was an honest man when he entered his service;—he did not pause to reflect upon all the intrigues, machinations, plots, duplicities, and villanies, in which he had employed his late valet,—thus gradually initiating him in those paths which could scarcely have led to any other result than the point in which they had actually terminated—the robbery of the master by the servant whom he had thus tutored.

"The villain!" continued Greenwood. "And I was so kind to him—constantly increasing his wages and making him presents! Such confidence as I put in him, too! Filippo, whom I did not trust to half the same extent—save in my intrigues with women—is stanch and faithful to me!"

He paused and glanced towards the time-piece.

"Half-past two; and Tomlinson does not come! What *can* detain him? Surely that affair cannot have gone wrong also? If so——"

And Greenwood's countenance became as dark and lowering as the sky ere the explosion of the storm.

In a few moments a double-knock at the door echoed through the house.

"Here's Tomlinson!" ejaculated Greenwood; and with sovereign command over himself, he composed his features and assumed his wonted ease of manner.

The stock-broker now entered the room.

"You are an hour behind your time, Tomlinson," said Greenwood, shaking him by the hand.

"I could not come before," was the answer: "I was detained on your business."

"What news?" asked Greenwood, scarcely able to conceal his profound anxiety.

"Bad," replied Tomlinson. "You have sent sixteen thousand pounds to look after the fifty you have already lost. Fortunately you are a rich man, and can stand reverses of this kind. Besides, one who speculates so enormously as you have done of late, must meet with occasional losses. For my part, I should advise you to leave Spanish alone. It seems that you are doomed to fail in your ventures in the foreign securities:—first, your French scheme was totally ruined by the villany of your servant; and now your Spanish one, so far from enabling you to retrieve your losses, has increased them."

This long speech enabled Greenwood to recover from the shock which the announcement of a new reverse had produced.

"My dear Tomlinson," he said, "I am resolved to follow up my speculations in Spanish. The private information I received from an intimate friend of the Spanish Ambassador is correct—I am convinced it is; and I am sure that Queen Christina, by the advice of Espartero, will appropriate a sum to pay the interest on the passives. The announcement must be made in a few days. Of this I am certain. But all my resources are locked up for the present:—in fact, I do not hesitate to tell *you*, Tomlinson, that I have over-speculated of late. Still—remember—I *have* plenty of means remaining; but they are not instantly available."

"What, then, do you propose to do?" inquired the stock-broker.

"You have raised yourself during the past year to a confidential position in the City, Tomlinson," continued Greenwood: "and people no longer remember your bankruptcy."

"But I do," observed the stock-broker bitterly.

"Oh! that is nothing," exclaimed Greenwood. "I was about to say that you could probably borrow me fifteen or twenty thousand on my bond—say for three months."

"I doubt it," returned Tomlinson. "You have no mercantile establishment—you are known as a great speculator——"

"And as a great capitalist, I flatter myself," added Greenwood, playing with his watch-chain in the easy complacent manner which had so characterised him until lately.

"That you *were* a capitalist, there can be no doubt," said Tomlinson, in his usual quiet way; "but ill news fly fast—and your losses——"

"Are already known in the City, you mean?" exclaimed Greenwood, with difficulty concealing his vexation. "I care not a fig for that, Tomlinson. I have ample resources left; but, as I ere now observed, they are not immediately available."

"I understand you. It is well known that you accommodate the members of the aristocracy and heirs-expectant with loans; I presume that you have a mass of their bills, bonds, and acknowledgments? Now if you were to deposit them as collateral security, I know where I could obtain you an equivalent loan in twelve hours."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Greenwood: then, after a moment's pause, he said, "And you think there can be no difficulty in managing the business in that way?"

"None," answered the stock-broker.

Again Greenwood appeared to reflect.

"And yet," he observed, "all these pecuniary accommodations of which you spoke, are strictly confidential; and I dare not violate——"

"You know best, Greenwood," said Tomlinson, coolly. "At the same time, I can assure you that my friend will not betray you. The whole thing lies in a nut-shell: you deposit, say twenty thousand pounds' worth of securities, for a loan of that amount, to be repaid in three months; you redeem the documents by the day appointed, and none of your aristocratic debtors will be one whit the wiser. The transaction could only become known to them if you failed to refund the money, in which case the holder of the documents would send them into the market."

"I comprehend," said Greenwood. "Well—I have no objection to the arrangement. When will you ascertain whether your friend will advance the money?"

"This afternoon," returned Tomlinson; "and should the reply be in the affirmative—of which I have no doubt—I will make an appointment for four to-morrow."

"Be it so," cried Greenwood. "You will, perhaps, send me word between five and six this evening."

"I will not fail," said the stock-broker.

"Any thing new in the City?"

"Nothing particular."

"And your late cashier—what has become of him?" inquired Greenwood.

"He is still living in an obscure street in Bethnal-Green," was the answer. "The poor old man never stirs abroad; and his health is failing fast."

"Ah! it will be a good thing when he is gone altogether," said Greenwood. "If he had had to do with me, I should have shipped him to New Zealand or Van Diemen's Land long ago."

Tomlinson turned away in disgust, and took his leave.

Greenwood never moved from his seat until he heard the front door close behind the stock-broker.

Then he started from his chair, and all his apparent composure vanished.

"Sixteen thousand pounds more gone!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse, hollow tone, while he clenched his fists with rage. "Loss upon loss! All this is enough to ruin any man! And I—who have been even far more unfortunate of late than I chose to admit to Tomlinson! Nothing short of one bold and successful hit can now retrieve my tottering fortunes. Securities for twenty thousand pounds, in-

deed! Ha! ha! I have not bills nor bonds in my possession to the amount of three thousand!"—and he laughed wildly. "But I *will* have them, though—aye, and such ones as shall fully serve my purposes."

Then he paced the room in a singularly agitated manner.

"Yes—one more bold stroke, and I shall retrieve myself," he continued. "My good star cannot have altogether deserted me. No—no! These vicissitudes are only temporary. Accursed Lafleur! To think that he should have served me thus! Instead of proceeding to Paris—with the means of following up those schemes which I had combined so well, and in which I had already risked so much—but with such absolute certainties of immense gain,—instead of pursuing my career of success,—to be plundered— robbed at the last moment—and compelled to return to London to raise fresh funds! Then, when in four days I was prepared with the necessary sum once more—with another twenty thousand pounds—to receive letters which convinced me that the delay was fatal, and that all was lost! Yes—Fortune did indeed persecute me then! But I will be even with her yet. My information concerning the Spanish debt is accurate; and on that ground I can build a fortune far more colossal than the one I have lost. Shall I hesitate, then, in obtaining this money through Tomlinson's agency? No—no!"

Having thus buoyed himself up with those hopes which invariably urge on the gambler—whether at the actual gaming-table or in the public funds (for there is little difference in a moral light between the two modes of speculation),—to put down fresh stakes on the chance aimed at, Greenwood recovered his wonted calmness.

He busied himself in arranging his papers, and restoring neatness to his writing-table.

Thus passed the time until six o'clock, when Filippo entered the room with a letter.

It was from Tomlinson.

Greenwood tore it open: the contents were favourable. The stock-broker's friend had agreed to advance any sum up to twenty-five thousand pounds on the terms proposed, and had promised to observe the strictest secrecy in the transaction.

"The rest now depends upon myself!" ejaculated Greenwood. "Fortune has not altogether deserted me."

CHAPTER CLXXXVI.

THE NEW CUT.

At nine o'clock on the same evening, Mr. Greenwood, muffled in a cloak, alighted from a hackney-cab in the Waterloo Road at the corner of the New Cut.

That wide thoroughfare which connects the Waterloo and Blackfriars' Roads, is one of the most busy and bustling, after its own fashion, in all London.

Nowhere are the shops of a more miscellaneous nature: nowhere are the pathways so thronged with the stalls and baskets of itinerant venders.

The ingenuity of those petty provision-dealers adapts the spoilt articles of the regular fishmongers and butchers to serviceable purposes in the free market of the New Cut. The fish is cut in slices and fried in an oil or butter whose rancid taste obviates the putrid flavour and smell of the comestible; and the refuse scraps from the butchers shops are chopped up to form a species of sausage-balls called "faggots." Then the grease, in which the racy slices of fish and savoury compounds of lights and liver have been alike cooked, serves to fry large rounds of bread, which, when thus prepared, are denominated "sop in the pan." Of course these culinary refinements are prepared by the venders in their own cellars or garrets hard by; but when conveyed to the miscellaneous market in the New Cut, the luxuries impart a greasy and sickening odour to the air.

It is perfectly wonderful to behold the various methods in which the poor creatures in that thoroughfare endeavour to obtain an honest livelihood; and although their proceedings elicit a smile—still, God pity them! they had better ply their strange trades thus than rob or beg!

There may be seen, for instance, a ragged urchin holding a bundle of onions in his hand, and shouting at the top of his shrill voice, "Here's a ha'porth!"—and, no matter how finely dressed the passer-by, he is sure to thrust the onions under his or her very nose, still vociferating, "Here's a ha'porth!" Poor boy! he thinks every one *must* want onions!

The immediate vicinity of the Victoria Theatre is infested with women who offer play-bills for sale, and who seem to fancy it impossible that the passers-by can be going elsewhere than to the play.

Here an orange-girl accosts a gentleman with two or three of the fruit in her hand, but with a significant look which gives the assurance that her real trade is of a less innocent nature:—there a poor woman with an array of children before her, offers lucifer matches, but silently appeals for alms.

A little farther on is a long barrow covered with toys; and a tall man without a nose, shouts at intervals, "Only a penny each! only a penny each!" Some of these gim-cracks excite astonishment by their extreme cheapness; but they are chiefly made by the convicts in Holland, and are exported in large quantities to England.

In the middle of the road a man with stentorian voice offers "A hundred songs for a penny;" and, enumerating the list, he is sure to announce the "Return of the *Hadmiral*" amongst the rest.

Nearly opposite the Victoria Theatre there is an extensive cook's-shop; and around the window stands a hungry crowd feasting their eyes on the massive joints which are intended to feast the stomach.

In front of the butchers' shops the serving-men keep up a perpetual vociferation of "Buy! buy!"—a sort of running fire that denotes the earnestness with which competition is carried on amongst rivals in that delectable trade.

Perhaps a new baker's shop is opened in the New Cut; and then a large placard at the window announces that "a glass of gin will be given to every purchaser of a quartern loaf." The buyers do not pause to reflect that the price of the cordial is deducted from the weight of the bread.

The pawnbrokers' shops seem to drive a most bustling trade in the New Cut; and the fronts of their establishments present a more extensive and miscellaneous assortment of second-hand garments, blankets, handkerchiefs, and sheets, than is to be seen elsewhere.

The influx and efflux of people at the public-houses and gin-shops constitute not the least remarkable feature of that neighbourhood, where every thing is dirty and squalid, yet where every one appears able to purchase intoxicating liquor!

On the southern side of the New Cut there are a great many second-hand furniture shops, the sheds wherein the articles are principally exposed being built against the houses in a fashion which gives the whole, when viewed by the glaring of the gas-lights, the appearance of a bazaar or fair.

The New Cut is always crowded; but the multitude is not entirely in motion. Knots of men congregate here, and groups of women there—the posts at the corners of the alleys and courts, or the doors of the gin-shops, being the most favourite points of such assembly.

The edges of the path-ways are not completely devoted to provision dealers. Penny peep-shows, emblazoned with a coloured drawing representing the last horrible murder,—itineraut quacks with "certain remedies for the toothach,"—stalls covered with odd numbers of cheap periodical publications,—old women seated on stools, behind little trays containing combs, papers of needles, reels of cotton, pack-thread, stay-laces, bobbin, and such-like articles,—men with cutlery to sell, and who flourish in their hands small knives with innumerable blades sticking out like the quills on a porcupine,—these are also prominent features in that strange market.

In some conspicuous place most likely stands a caravan, surmounted by a picture representing a colossal giant and a giantess to match, with an assurance in large letters that the originals may be seen inside:—then, as the eye wanders from the enormous canvass to the caravan itself, and compares their sizes, the mind is left in a pleasing state of surprise how even *one* of the Brobdignag marvels—let alone *two*—could possibly stow itself away in that diminutive box.

Branching off from the New Cut, on either side, are numerous narrow streets,—or rather lanes, of a very equivocal reputation; their chief characteristics being houses of ill-fame, gin-shops, beer-shops, marine-store dealers, pawnbrokers, and barbers' establishments.

There are two facts connected with low neighbourhoods which cannot fail to attract the attention of even the most superficial observers in their wanderings amidst the mazes of the modern Babylon. The first is that the corner shops of nearly all the narrow and dirty streets are occupied by general dealers or people in the chandlery-line; and the second is that all the barbers' establishments are ornamented with a blind or placard conveying an assurance that each is "*the original shaving shop.*" Here, again, the mind enjoys the excitement of uncertainty, as in the matter of the caravan and the giants; for it is impossible to arrive at any satisfactory decision whether the aforesaid placard means you to infer that the shop to which it belongs was the *first* ever opened in the world for tonsorial purposes, or only the *first* that shed the light of its civilisation upon that especial neighbourhood. We may also observe that some of the proprietors of those establishments are not altogether unacquainted with the mysteries of puffing; inasmuch as we frequently read upon their shop-fronts the truly exhilarating and inspiring words, "*Hair-dresser to the Queen.*"

Such are the New Cut and its tributary lanes.

And it was now along the New Cut that Mr. Greenwood, enveloped in his cloak, was pursuing his way.

He scarcely noticed the turmoil, bustle, and business of that strange thoroughfare; for he was too much absorbed in his own meditations.

The truth was, that his affairs—once so gloriously prosperous—were now rendered desperate by various reverses; and he was about to seek a desperate means of retrieving them.

The reader cannot have failed to observe that the characters of George Montague Greenwood and Richard Markham stand out from our picture of London Life in strong contrast with each other; and it is not the less remarkable that while the former was rising rapidly to wealth, rank, and eminence, the latter was undergoing persecutions and sinking into comparative poverty. Now—at the epoch which we are describing—the tables seem to have turned; for while George Montague Greenwood is about to seek a desperate remedy for his desperate affairs, Richard Markham is leading a gallant army over the fertile plains of Castelciciala.

The former, then, may be deemed the personification of vice, the latter the representative of virtue.

They had chosen separate paths:—the sequel will fully demonstrate which of the two characters had selected the right one.

In the meantime we will continue our narrative.

Mr. Greenwood pursued his way, and, having crossed over to the southern side of the New Cut, repaired to a small row of private houses of which this famous thoroughfare can boast at the extremity joining the Blackfriars' Road.

There he stopped for a moment beneath a lamp to consult a memorandum in his pocket-book; and, having thereby refreshed his memory in respect to the address of which he was in search, he proceeded to knock at the door of a house close by.

A dirty servant-girl opened it just as far as a chain inside would permit; and protruding her smutty face, said, with strange abruptness, "Well, what is it?"

"Does Mr. Pennywhiffe live here?" demanded Greenwood.

"No—he don't; and, if he did, you would n't come in—'cos I know it 's all your gammon," returned that most uninteresting specimen of the female-domestic race.

"Why not?" exclaimed Greenwood, indignantly. "Whom do you take me for?"

"For what you are," replied the girl.

"And what am I, then?"

"Why—a execution, to be sure."

And, with these words, the girl banged the door in Mr. Greenwood's face.

"I must have taken down the wrong number in my memorandum," thought the Member of Parliament, as he turned away from the house, which was evidently in a state of siege. "This is very provoking!"

He then knocked at the door of the next house.

A woman with a child in her arms answered the summons; and, without waiting for any question, said abruptly, "You had better walk in."

Greenwood entered accordingly, supposing that the woman had overheard his inquiry next door, and that he had now found the abode of the person whom he sought.

The woman led the way into a back room, almost completely denuded of furniture, smelling awfully of tobacco-smoke, and very feebly lighted with a single candle that wanted snuffing.

In the midst of a dense cloud of that vapour, a man without a coat was sitting on a trunk; but the moment Greenwood entered, this individual threw down his clay-pipe, and advancing towards the visitor, exclaimed in a ferocious voice, "So you 're going your rounds at this hour, are you? Well—I 'm as far off from having the tin as I have been all along; and as I am going away to-morrow, I do n't mind if I give you a good drubbing to teach you how to pester a gentleman with shabby bits of paper in future."

Thus speaking, the ferocious individual advanced towards Greenwood, squaring away like clock-work.

"Really, sir—you must labour under some mistake," exclaimed the Member of Parliament. "I have never called here before in my life."

"Then who the devil are you?" demanded the pugilistic phenomenon.

"That is quite another question," said Greenwood. "I——"

"Do you mean to tell me, then," exclaimed the man, "that you ain't the Water Rates?"

"No—I am not," answered Greenwood, unable to suppress a smile. "I thought that a Mr. Pennywhiffe lived here."

"Then he do n't—that's all," was the rejoinder. "Blowed if I do n't believe it 's a plant, after all. Come—ain't you a bum? no lies, now!"

Greenwood turned indignantly away from the room, and left the house, muttering to himself, "This is most extraordinary! Every one appears to be in difficulties in this street."

He was not, however, disheartened: it was highly necessary for him to see the person of whom he was in search; and he accordingly knocked at another door.

"Tell him I 'll send round the money to-morrow," shouted a masculine voice inside. "I know it's the collector, because he's rapping at every house."

Greenwood did not wait for the door to be opened: he knew very well that Mr. Pennywhiffe could not live there.

The fourth house at which he knocked was the right one.

A decent-looking servant girl replied in the affirmative to his inquiry; and he was forthwith conducted to a well-furnished room on the first floor, where he found Mr. Pennywhiffe seated at a table covered with papers.

This individual was about fifty years of age. In person he was short, thin, and by no means prepossessing in countenance. His eyes were deeply set, grey, and restless; and his forehead was contracted into a thousand wrinkles. He was dressed in a suit of black, and wore a white neck-cloth—no doubt to enhance the respectability of his appearance. This was, however, a difficult task; for had he figured in the dock of a criminal tribunal, the jury would have had no trouble in coming to a verdict, a more hang-dog countenance being seldom seen, even in a city where the face is so often the mirror of the mind.

"Ah! Mr. Greenwood," exclaimed Mr. Pennywhiffe, rising to welcome his visitor; "this is an unexpected honour. What can I do for you? Pray, be seated; and speak plainly. There's no listeners here."

"I require your aid in a most important business," answered Greenwood, taking a chair, and throwing back his cloak. "To-morrow I must raise twenty or twenty-five thousand pounds, for three or four months—upon bills—*good bills*, Mr. Pennywhiffe."

"To be deposited?" asked that individual.

"To be deposited," replied Greenwood.

"Shall you withdraw them in time?"

"Decidedly. I will convert the money I shall thereby raise into a hundred thousand," exclaimed Greenwood.

"My commission will be heavy for such a business," observed Pennywhiffe; "and *that*, you know is ready money."

"I am aware of it, and am come provided. Name the amount you require."

"Will two hundred hurt you?" said Pennywhiffe. "Remember—the affair is a serious one."

"You shall have two hundred pounds," exclaimed the Member of Parliament, laying his pocket-book upon the table.

"That is what I call coming to the point."

Mr. Pennywhiffe rose from his seat, and opening an iron safe, took thence a memorandum-book and a small tin box.

Returning to his seat, he handed the memorandum-book to Greenwood, saying, "There is my list of noblemen, wealthy gentlemen, and great mercantile firms, *whose names are familiar to me*. Choose which you will have; and make notes of the various sums the bills are to be drawn for. Let them be for the most part uneven ones, with fractions: it looks so much better."

While Greenwood was employed in examining the memorandum-book, which contained upwards of five hundred names of peers, and great landowners, in addition to those of the chief commercial firms of London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Glasgow, and other places,—besides several belonging to Paris, Lyons, Bordeaux, Havre, and Lille; Brussels, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Hamburgh; New York, the West Indian Islands, and Montreal; Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras;—while Mr. Greenwood, we say, was examining this strange register, and copying several of the best names of noblemen, gentlemen, and merchants, upon a slip of paper, Mr Pennywhiffe opened his tin-case.

The contents thereof were numerous paid checks, and bills of exchange, respectively bearing the signatures of the persons or firms whose names were entered in the memorandum-book.

How Mr. Pennywhiffe became possessed of such important documents,—which, seeing that they had all been duly honoured at maturity, ought to have remained in the hands of those who took them up,—was a mystery which he kept to himself. Whether he had collected them by degrees, or had obtained them in a heap by robbery, or any other means, he never condescended to acquaint his clients.

"I have chosen eleven names," said Greenwood; "and have appended to them the various sums for which I require the bills to be drawn. The aggregate is twenty-three thousand two hundred and seventeen pounds, nine shillings, and sevenpence half-penny."

"A good total, *that*," observed Mr. Pennywhiffe,—"an excellent total—sounds uncommon well. Nothing could be better. Am I to provide the stamps?"

"If you please. I will pay you extra for them."

Mr. Pennywhiffe once more had recourse to his

iron safe, and returned to his seat with a small paste-board box, long and narrow, and containing a vast number of bill-stamps adapted to sums of all amounts. As the usual formula of such documents was printed (though in various ways, they having been procured at different stationers' shops) the process of filling them up was by no means a tedious one.

But now the ingenuity of Mr. Pennywhiffe mainly exhibited itself. Each bill was filled up with a different ink and a different pen; and so skilful a caligrapher was he, that the most astute judge of writing could not possibly have perceived that they were all written by the same hand. Then, by the aid of red ink, a few flourishes, and little circles containing initial letters or figures as if each document corresponded with some particular entry in some particular leger or bill-book, the papers speedily assumed a very business-like appearance.

And now the most difficult and delicate part of the entire process was to commence—the signatures. But Mr. Pennywhiffe went to work with the air of one who fully understood what he was about; and with the originals before him as a copy, he perfected acceptance after acceptance in so masterly a manner, that Greenwood, when he compared the fictitious signatures with the genuine, was astounded at the caligraphic proficiency of that man whose dangerous agency he was now rendering available to his purposes.

"So far, all goes well," said Mr. Pennywhiffe.

"The bills are excellent in every point save one," observed Greenwood.

"Which is that?" demanded the caligrapher.

"They look *too new*—the paper is too clean."

"I know it," returned Mr. Pennywhiffe; "but the process is not entirely complete."

He rose and threw a quantity of small coal upon the fire, so as to smother the flame, and create a dense smoke. He then passed each bill several times through the smoke, until the documents acquired a slightly dingy hue. Lastly, he placed them between the leaves of a portfolio scented with musk, so as to take off the odour of the smoke; and the entire process was terminated.

Mr. Greenwood now counted upon the table bank-

notes to the aggregate amount of the two hundred pounds promised, and the price of the stamps; and in exchange he received the bills for twenty-three thousand two hundred and seventeen pounds, nine shillings, and sevenpence halfpenny.

"This seems to be a most extraordinary neighbourhood, Mr. Pennywhiffe," said Greenwood, as he placed the bills in his pocket-book. "I knocked by mistake at three houses before I came to yours, and the inmates of each seemed to be in difficulties."

"No doubt of it, my dear sir. This part of London swarms with members of the Swell Mob, broken-down tradesmen, fraudulent bankrupts, insolvents playing at hide-and-seek with the sheriff's-officers, railway projectors, and swindlers of all kinds. I have got a very queer kind of a lodger in my attic: he has no visible means of living, but is out nearly all day long; and he dresses uncommonly well—gold chain—polished boots—figured silk waistcoat—and so forth. He only pays me—or ought to pay me—five shillings a-week for his furnished bed-room; and he is six months in arrears. But what is more remarkable still, I don't even know his name; and he never receives any letters, nor has any friends to call. He is about thirty-six or thirty-eight years old, a good-looking fellow enough, and an Irishman."

"Perhaps he also is some railway projector," said Mr. Greenwood, rising to take his departure.

At this moment a double knock at the front-door was heard.

"That must be my lodger," exclaimed Mr. Pennywhiffe.

Urged by curiosity to catch a glimpse of the mysterious gentleman alluded to, Greenwood hurried on his cloak, took leave of the caligrapher, and left the room.

On the stairs he met the lodger, who was ascending to his attic, with a brass candle-stick, containing an inch of the commonest candle, in his hand.

The moment he and Greenwood thus encountered each other, an ejaculation of surprise issued from the lips of each.

"Hush! not a word!" said the gentleman, placing his fore-finger upon his lip. "And, of course, Greenwood," he continued, in a whisper, "you will never mention *this* to a soul."

"Never—on my honour!" answered Greenwood.

They then shook hands, and parted—the gentleman continuing his way to the attic, and Greenwood hastening to leave the house.

"Wonders will never cease!" thought the latter, as he proceeded towards the cab-stand near Rowland Hill's chapel in the Blackfriars Road: "who would have thought of one of the Irish Members of Parliament living in an attic in the New Cut?"

CHAPTER CLXXXVII.

THE FORGED BILLS.

At half-past four o'clock on the following afternoon, Ellen Monroe was in the immediate vicinity of the Bank of England.

She had been to receive a small sum of money which an old debtor of her father's, residing in Birchin Lane, had written to state that he was in a condition to pay; and she was now on her return to Markham Place.

The evenings of January are obscure, if not quite dark, at that hour; and the lamps were lighted.

As she was proceeding along Lothbury, Greenwood suddenly passed her. He was walking rapidly, in a pre-occupied manner, and did not perceive her.

But she beheld *him*; and she turned to speak to him; for in spite of all the injuries which her parent, her benefactor Richard, and herself had sustained at his hands, he was still the father of her child!

Scarcely had she thus turned, when he drew his handkerchief from his pocket—still hurrying on towards Tokenhouse Yard.

Ellen quickened her pace; but in a few moments her foot encountered an object on the pavement.

She stooped, and picked it up.

It was a pocket-book.

Conceiving that Greenwood might have dropped it, as she had found it on the very spot where she had seen him take his handkerchief from his pocket, she ran in the direction which she supposed him to have pursued; but as, in the mean time, he had turned into the narrow alley called Tokenhouse Yard, and as she continued her way along Lothbury towards Throgmorton Street, she did not of course overtake him.

Finding that her search after him was unavailing, she determined to examine the contents of the pocket-book, and ascertain if it really did belong to him; in which case, she resolved to proceed straight to Spring Gardens, and restore it to him.

Retracing her steps along Lothbury, she entered Cateaton Street; and turning into the Old Jewry, which was almost deserted, she stopped beneath the light of a lamp to open the pocket-book.

It contained several letters, addressed to "G. M. Greenwood, Esq., M.P.;" and thus her doubts were cleared up at once. But as she was thus investigating the interior of the pocket-book, her eye fell upon a number of bills of exchange, all drawn and endorsed by Mr. Greenwood, and accepted for large sums by noblemen, well-known landowners, and eminent merchants. A rapid glance over these documents convinced Ellen that the aggregate amount which they represented could not fall far short of twenty-five thousand pounds; for, in addition to the fictitious bills obtained from Pennywhiffe, Greenwood had placed in his pocket-book several genuine ones which he legitimately possessed.

Miss Monroe's scrutiny did not altogether occupy a minute; and, carefully securing the pocket-book about her person, she hurried towards Cheapside, where she entered a cab, directing the driver to take her to Spring Gardens.

She did not forget Greenwood's former conduct in having her carried away to his house in the country; but she did not apprehend any ill-usage at his hands in a part of London where succour would be so readily obtained as in Spring Gardens. It was therefore without hesitation that she resolved to proceed direct to his own dwelling in that quarter.

In due time the vehicle stopped at Greenwood's house in Spring Gardens.

With a beating heart Ellen knocked at the door, which was almost immediately opened by Filippo.

"Ah! Miss Monroe!" he exclaimed, as the light of the hall-lamp fell upon her beautiful countenance.

"Yes—it is I at Mr. Greenwood's house," she answered, with a smile: "is he at home?"

"No, Miss—he has gone into the City; but he will be back at six o'clock at the latest."

"Then I will wait for him," said Ellen.

Filippo conducted her up stairs.

In the window of the staircase still stood the beautiful model of the Diana, holding a lamp in its hand,—that model which was the image of her own faultless form.

On the landing-place, communicating with the drawing-room, was also the marble statue, the bust of which was sculptured in precise imitation of her own.

And, when she entered the drawing-room, the first object which met her eyes was the picture of Venus rising from the ocean, surrounded by nereids and nymphs,—that Venus which was a faithful likeness of herself!

Oh! how many phases of her existence did these permanent representations of her matchless beauty bring back to her memory!

When Filippo left her, and she found herself alone, she fell upon a sofa, and gave way to a violent flood of tears.

Then she felt relieved; and she began to ask herself wherefore she had come thither? Was it because she was glad to have found an excuse for calling upon him who was the father of her child? was it because she was anxious to receive his thanks—from his own lips—for restoring to him his pocket-book? She scarcely knew.

Half an hour passed in reflections of this nature—reflections which branched off in so many different ways, and converged to no satisfactory point—when a cab suddenly drove up to the house.

In another minute hasty steps ascended the stairs—they approached the drawing-room—and Greenwood rushed in, banging the door furiously behind him.

"My God! what have I done?" he exclaimed, frantically—for he did not immediately perceive Ellen, whom a screen concealed from his view. "The pocket-book is lost—gone! I am ruined—should those forged bills——"

He said no more, but threw himself upon a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

Ellen instantly comprehended it all:—the bills which she had seen in the pocket-book were forgeries!

Rapid as lightning a train of new reflections passed through her brain:—a project suggested itself;—she hesitated for a moment—but only for a moment:—she thought of her child—and she was resolved.

Assuming all her calmness, and calculating in an instant all the chances of her scheme, she rose from the sofa, and slowly approached the chair on which Greenwood was seated.

He heard a step in the room, and raised his eyes.

"Ellen!" he exclaimed, starting back in surprise.

She murmured a *Christian name*—but it was not *George*.

"Call me not *that*, Ellen!" cried Greenwood, fiercely: "the time is not come! But tell me," he added, speaking thickly, and at the same instant casting upon her a glance which seemed to pierce her inmost soul,—"tell me—were you here—in this room—when I came in?"

"I was," answered Ellen, gazing, in her turn, fixedly upon him.

"And you heard——"

"I heard every word you uttered," continued Miss Monroe, keeping her eyes still bent upon him.

"Ah! then you know——"

"*That you have committed forgery*," added Ellen, in an emphatic tone; "*and that you are ruined!*"

"Damnation!" ejaculated Greenwood. "What did you come for? why are you here? To gloat over my falling fortunes—to make yourself merry at my ruin—to taunt me with the past—to laugh at me in my adversity—to——"

"Then it *is* true," thought Ellen, within herself: "these bills *are* forgeries—and he is in my power.—No," she exclaimed aloud; "such was not my object."

"Then, go—leave me—depart!" cried Greenwood, frantically. "I am in no humour to listen to you now! But, Ellen," he added, suddenly becoming cool—desperately cool:—"tell me—speak—you will not betray me?"

"No—that is, on *one* condition," answered Ellen.

"One condition!" repeated Greenwood: "name it!"

"That you make me your wife," was the steady reply.

"My wife!" exclaimed Greenwood, laughing hysterically. "Do you know whose wife you would become?—the wife of a forger! Have you not learnt that dread secret? But, perhaps, it is to mock me that you offer to become my wife! Oh! I understand you full well, Ellen! When I was rich and beyond the reach of the law, I would not marry you;—and now you mean me to comprehend that since I am ruined, and every moment in danger of being dragged to a station-house, *you* would scorn the alliance! The jest is good:—no—the revenge is just! But it is not the less bitter to me, Ellen!"

"By heavens, you wrong me!" cried Ellen. "Listen with calmness—with composure—if you can!"

"I cannot, Ellen—I cannot! I am mad! A few months—nay, even a few weeks ago, I was happy—wealthy—prosperous:—now I am ruined—miserable—lost! Oh! the grand prospects that were so lately open before me!"

"Again I say, listen. All is not so bad as you imagine," said the young lady, in a hasty tone.

"What do you mean, Ellen? what *can* you mean?" he exclaimed, bewildered. "Do you not understand the nature of a forgery—the consequences which it entails? True—I did not perpetrate the forgery with my own hands;—but the bills are all drawn—all endorsed by me! Oh! it is dreadful—it is terrible!"

"I will not keep you any longer in suspense," said Ellen. "Your pocket-book is found——"

"Found!" repeated Greenwood, electrified by that word, and not knowing whether it imported good or evil to him: "found! Did you say——"

"Yes—found," answered Miss Monroe;—"and by me!"

"By you, Ellen?" cried Greenwood. "No—it is impossible!"

"How, then, should I know that you had lost a pocket-book?" asked the young lady.

"True! And you have found it? Oh! then I am saved—I am saved! Give it to me, Ellen—give it to me!"

And he advanced towards her, with outstretched hands.

"No—not yet," exclaimed the young lady, in a firm tone. "In this room—yes, in this very room—I went down upon my knees, and implored you to

save me from disgrace—to give a father's name to the child who was then as yet unborn. And you refused my supplication—you turned a deaf ear to my agonising entreaties. Oh! I remember that scene but too well. You would not do me justice—and I told you that you might live to repent your cruelty towards me!"

"What! you will now avenge your alleged wrongs!" cried Greenwood, his countenance becoming livid with mingled fear and rage: "you will deliver me up to justice? No—I will tear the pocket-book from you—I will destroy the proofs of my folly—my crime; and then——but why should I waste time in idle words like these; I must act! Give me the book!"

And he rushed towards her, as a tiger springs upon its victim.

But Ellen, light as the fawn, glided away from him, and took such a position that a table was between them, and a bell-pull within her reach.

"Dare to attempt violence towards me," she exclaimed, "and I summon your servants. Then—in their presence—I will proclaim their master a forger! Provoke me not—my spirit is roused—and your fate hangs upon a thread!"

"Damnation!" cried Greenwood, grinding his teeth with rage. "Can nothing move you, Ellen?"

"Yes—the *one condition* that I ere now named," she answered, drawing herself up to her full height, and assuming all the influence of her really queenly beauty.

"Agreed!" ejaculated Greenwood. "Give me the pocket-book—I take God to witness that I will make you my wife within a week from this day."

"You regard an oath no more than a mere promise," replied Ellen, calmly, and with a slightly satirical curl of the lip.

"I will give you the promise in writing, Ellen," persisted Greenwood, urged to desperation.

"Neither will *that* satisfy me," said the young lady. "When our hands are joined at the altar, I will restore you the proofs of your crime; and God grant," she added solemnly, "that this peril which you have incurred may serve as a warning to you against future risks of the same fearful kind."

"You have no faith in my word—you have no confidence in my written promise, Ellen," cried Greenwood: "how, then, can you be anxious to have me as a husband?"

"That my child may not grow up with the stain of illegitimacy upon him—that he may not learn to despise his mother," answered Ellen, emphatically; "for *he* need never know the precise date of our union."

"But you know, Ellen," again remonstrated Greenwood, "that there are circumstances which act as an insuperable barrier to this marriage. Could you tell your father that you have espoused the man who ruined him—ruined Richard,—and also admit, at the same time, that this man was the father of your child! Consider, Ellen—reflect——"

"There is no need of consideration—no need of reflection," interrupted Miss Monroe. "I care not about revealing the fact of my marriage for the present. In a few years—when our child can comprehend his true position,—*then* it would be necessary to declare myself a wife."

"But there is another difficulty, Ellen," persisted Greenwood: "my name——"

"Let us be wedded privately—in some suburban church, where you stand no chance of being recognised as George Montague Greenwood, and where your *right name* may be fearlessly inscribed upon the register."

"A woman who is determined to gain her point, annihilates all difficulties," muttered Greenwood to himself.

"How do *you* decide?" asked Ellen. "Remember that *I* am firm. I have these alternatives before me—either to obtain a father's name for my child, or to avenge the wrongs of my own parent and myself. Consent to make me your wife, and the proofs of your crime shall be returned to you at the altar: refuse, and to-morrow morning I will prepare the way for vengeance."

"Ellen, I consent to your proposal," said Greenwood, in a tone of deep humiliation; "but upon condition that our marriage shall never be proclaimed until that day, when——"

"I understand you; and I cheerfully agree to the proposal," interrupted Miss Monroe. "You can believe *my* word:—besides, you *must* know that I also should have reasons to conceal our union, until you chose to declare your real name."

"Then be it as you propose, Ellen. To-morrow morning, early, I will procure a special license, and we will be united at Hackney. You can meet me at the church precisely at ten o'clock in the morning: I will have every thing in readiness. But whom will you ask to accompany you?"

"Marian—the faithful servant who has been so devoted to my interests," answered Miss Monroe.

"I think that I should prefer the wife of that surgeon—Mrs. Wentworth, I mean—as the witness to our union," said Greenwood. "I dislike the idea of domestics being entrusted with important secrets. Besides, Mrs. Wentworth has never seen me—knows not that I am passing by the name of Greenwood—and, in a word, is a lady."

"Be it as you will in this instance," returned Ellen. "Mrs. Wentworth shall accompany me—I can rely upon her."

She then rang the bell.

"What do you require, Ellen?" asked Greenwood, alarmed by this movement on her part.

"Merely to ensure the presence of one of your servants, as I pass from this spot to the door of the room," replied Ellen. "You can give him some order to avert suspicion."

Filippo made his appearance; and Ellen then took leave of Mr. Greenwood, as if nothing peculiar had occurred between them.

Oh! with what joy—with what fervid, intoxicating joy—did she return to Markham Place! She had subdued *him* whose cold, calculating, selfish heart was hitherto unacquainted with honourable concessions;—she had conquered him—reduced him to submit to her terms—imposed her own conditions!

Never—never before had she embraced her child with such pride—such undiluted happiness as on that evening. And never had she herself appeared more beautiful—more enchantingly lovely! Her lips were wreathed in smiles—her eyes beamed with the transports of hope, triumph, and maternal affection—a glow of ineffable bliss animated her countenance—her swelling bosom heaved with rapture.

"You are very late, my dear child," said Mr. Monroe, when she took her seat at the tea-table: "I began to grow uneasy."

"I was detained a long time at the office of your debtor," answered Ellen. "To-morrow morning I intend to pay a visit to Mrs. Wentworth, and shall invite myself to breakfast with her. So you need not be surprised, dear father," she added, with a sweet smile, "if I do not make my appearance at your table."

"You please me in pleasing yourself, dear Ellen. Moreover, I am delighted that you should cultivate Mrs. Wentworth's acquaintance. Most sincerely do I hope," continued Mr. Monroe, "that we shall have letters from Richard to-morrow. The communications which we have already received are not satisfactory to my mind. God grant that he may be by this time safe in Naples—if not on his way to England."

"Alas! the enterprise has been a most unfortunate one for him!" returned Ellen, a cloud passing over her countenance. "I understand his noble disposition so well, that I am convinced he deeply feels the defeat of Ossore."

We must observe that the news of our hero's success at Estella had not yet reached England.

"It will be a happy day for us all," said Mr. Monroe, after a pause, "when Richard once more sets foot in his own home—for I love him as if he were my son."

"And I as if he were my brother," added Ellen; —"yes—*my brother*," she repeated, with strange emphasis upon these words.

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On the following morning, a few minutes before ten o'clock, a post-chaise stopped at the gate of the parish church of Hackney; and Mr. Greenwood alighted.

He was pale; and the quivering of his lip denoted the agitation of his mind.

The clock was striking ten, when a hackney-coach reached the same point.

Greenwood hastened to the door, and assisted Mrs. Wentworth and Ellen Monroe to descend the steps.

As he handed out the latter, he said, in a hurried whisper, "You have the pocket-book with you?"

"I have," answered Ellen.

The party then proceeded to the church, the drivers of the vehicles being directed to await their return at a little distance, so as not to attract the notice of the inhabitants.

The clergyman and the clerk awaited the arrival of the nuptial party.

The ceremony commenced—proceeded—and terminated.

Ellen was now a wife!

Her husband imprinted a kiss upon her pale forehead; and at the same moment she handed him the pocket-book.

In a few minutes the marriage-certificate was in her possession.

Drawing her husband aside, she said, "Let me now implore you—for your own sake—for the sake of your child—if not for *mine*—to abstain from those courses——"

"Ellen," interrupted Greenwood, "do not alarm yourself on that head. My friend the Marquis of Holmesford lent me ten thousand pounds last evening; and with that sum I will retrieve my falling fortunes. Yes—you shall yet bear a great name, Ellen," he added, his countenance lighting up with animation; "*a name that shall go down to posterity!* But, tell me—has your father received any tidings from Richard?"

"None since those of which I wrote to you. We are not yet aware whether he be in safety, or not."

"You will write to me the moment you receive any fresh communication?"

"Rest assured that I shall not forget that duty."

"And now, Ellen, we must pass the day together. We will spend our honeymoon of twenty-four hours at Richmond. Mrs. Wentworth can return home, and send word to your father that she means to keep you with her until to-morrow morning,"

"If you command me, it is my duty to obey," replied Ellen.

"I do—I do," answered Greenwood, earnestly. "You are now mine—the circumstances which led to our union shall be forgotten—and I shall think of you only as my beautiful wife."

"Oh! if this be really true!" murmured Ellen, pressing his hand fervently, and regarding him with affection—for he was the father of her child!

"It *is* true," answered Greenwood;—but his bride perceived not how much of sensual passion prompted him on the present occasion. "I know that you have been faithful to me—that the hope of one day becoming my wife has swayed your conduct. Of *that* I have had proofs."

"Proofs!" repeated Ellen, with mingled surprise and joy.

"Yes—proofs. Do you not remember the Greek Brigand at the masquerade, where you met and so justly upbraided that canting hypocrite, Reginald Tracy?"

"I do. But that Greek Brigand——"

"Was myself!" replied Greenwood.

"You!" exclaimed Ellen, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Yes: and I overheard every sentence you uttered. But we may not tarry here longer: speak to Mrs. Wentworth, that she send a proper excuse to your father; and let us depart."

Ellen hastened to the vestry where the surgeon's wife was seated near a cheerful fire; and the arrangement desired by Greenwood was soon made.

The party then proceeded to the vehicles.

Mrs. Wentworth bade the newly-married couple adieu, having faithfully promised to retain their secret inviolate; and Greenwood handed her into the hackney-coach.

He and Ellen entered the post-chaise; and while the surgeon's wife retraced her way to her own abode, the bride and bridegroom hastened to Richmond.

CHAPTER CLXXXVIII.

THE BATTLES OF PIACERE AND ABRANTANI.

We must now request our readers to accompany us once more to Castelcicala.

In an incredibly short time, and by dint of a forced march which put the mettle of his troops to a severe test,—at which, however, they did not repine, for they were animated by the dauntless courage and perseverance of their commander.—Richard Markham arrived beneath the walls of Villabella.

During his progress towards the town, he had been joined by upwards of four hundred volunteers, all

belonging to the national militia, and armed and equipped ready for active service.

The daring exploit which had made him master of Estella, had created an enthusiasm in his favour which he himself and all his followers considered to be an augury of the final success of the Constitutional Cause; and in every village—in every hamlet through which his army had passed, was he welcomed with the most lively demonstration of joy.

When, early on the morning of the 1st of January, his advanced guard emerged from the woods which skirted the southern suburb of Villabella, the arrival of the Constitutional Army was saluted by the roar of artillery from the ramparts; and almost at the same moment the tri-coloured flag was hoisted on every pinnacle and every tower of the great manufacturing town.

"We have none but friends there!" exclaimed Richard, as he pointed towards Villabella. "God grant that we may have no blood to shed elsewhere."

The army halted beneath the walls of Villabella, for Richard did not deem it proper to enter those precincts until formally invited to do so by the corporation.

He, however, immediately despatched a messenger to the mayor, with certain credentials which had been supplied him by the Committee of Administration at Estella; and in the course of an hour the municipal authorities of Villabella came forth in procession to welcome him.

The mayor was a venerable man of eighty years of age, but with unimpaired intellects, and a mind still young and vigorous.

Alighting from his horse, Richard hastened forward to meet him.

"Let me embrace you, noble young man!" exclaimed the mayor. "Your fame has preceded you—and within those walls," he added, turning and pointing towards Villabella, "there breathes not a soul opposed to the sacred cause which heaven has sent you to direct."

Then the mayor embraced Richard in presence of the corporation—in presence of the Constitutional Army; and the welkin rang with shouts of enthusiastic joy.

The formal invitation to enter Villabella was now given; and Markham issued the necessary orders.

The corporation led the way: next came the General, attended by his staff; and after him proceeded the long lines of troops, their martial weapons gleaming in the morning sun.

The moment our hero passed the inner drawbridge, the roar of cannon was renewed upon the ramparts; and the bells in all the towers commenced a merry peal.

As at Estella, the windows were thronged with faces—the streets were crowded with spectators—and every testimonial of an enthusiastic welcome awaited the champion of Constitutional Liberty.

Then resounded, too, myriads of voices, exclaiming, "Long live Alberto!"—"Long live the General!"—"Down with the Tyrant!"—"Death to the Austrians!"

In this manner the corporation, Markham, and his staff, proceeded to the Town-Hall, while the troops defiled off to the barracks, where the garrison—a thousand in number—welcomed them as brethren-in-arms.

All the officers of the troops in Villabella, moreover—with the exception of the colonel-commandant,—declared in favour of the Constitutionalists; and even that superior functionary manifested no particular hostility to the movement, but simply declared that "although he could never again bear arms in favour of the Grand Duke, he would not fight against him."

When he had transacted business at the Town-Hall, and countersigned a proclamation which the municipality drew up, recognising the Committee of Administration of Estella, and constituting itself a permanent body invested with similar functions,—Markham repaired to the barracks.

Thence he immediately despatched couriers to the excellent banker at Pinalla, to the mayor of Estella, and to the Committee of Government at Montoni.

He then issued an address to his army, complimenting it upon the spirit and resolution with which the forced march to Villabella had been accomplished; reminding it that every thing depended upon the celerity of its movements, so as to prevent a concentration of any great number of adverse troops, before the Constitutional force could be augmented sufficiently to cope with them; and finally ordering it to prepare to resume the march that afternoon at three o'clock.

By means of new volunteers and a portion of the garrison of Villabella, Richard found his army increased to nearly four thousand men.

At the head of this imposing force he set out once more, at the time indicated, and commenced another rapid march in the direction of Piacere.

On the ensuing evening—the 2d of January—the towers of that important city broke upon the view of the van-guard of the Constitutionalists.

The commandant of the garrison of Piacere was an old and famous officer—General Giustiniani,—devoted to the cause of the Grand Duke, and holding in abhorrence every thing savouring of liberal opinions.

Markham was aware of this fact; and he felt convinced that Piacere would not fall into his hands without bloodshed. At the same time, he determined not to pass it by, because it would serve as a point of centralisation for the troops of Verronezzi and Terano (both being seats of the military administration of Captains-General), and moreover afford the enemy a means of cutting off all communication between himself on the one hand, and Villabella and Estella on the other.

Certain of being attacked, Markham lost no time in making the necessary arrangements. He ordered the vanguard to halt, until the troops in the rear could come up, and take their proper places; and he planted his artillery upon a hill which commanded almost the entire interval between his army and the city.

Nor were his precautions vainly taken; for in a short time a large force was seen moving towards him from Piacere, the rays of the setting sun irradiating their glittering bayonets and the steel helmets of a corps of cuirassiers.

In another quarter of an hour the enemy was so near as to induce Richard to order his artillery to open a fire upon them: but General Giustiniani, who commanded in person, led his forces on with such rapidity, that the engagement speedily commenced.

Giustiniani had about three thousand five hundred men under his orders; but although this force was numerically inferior to the Constitutionalists, it was

superior in other respects—for it comprised a large body of cuirassiers, a regiment of grenadiers, a corps of rifles, and twenty field-pieces: it was, moreover fresh and unwearied, whereas the Constitutionalists were fatigued with a long march.

For a few minutes a murderous fire was kept up on both sides; but Richard led his troops to close quarters, and charged the cuirassiers at the head of his cavalry.

At the same time the Cingani, in obedience to an order which he had sent their chiefs, turned the right flank of the rifles by a rapid and skilful manœuvre, and so isolated them from their main body as to expose them to the artillery upon the hill.

Excited, as it were to desperation, by the conduct of our hero, the Constitutional cavalry performed prodigies of valour; and after an hour's hard fighting in the grey twilight, succeeded in breaking the hitherto compact body of cuirassiers.

Leaving his cavalry to accomplish the rout of the enemy's horse-guards, Richard flew to the aid of his right wing, which was sorely pressed by the grenadiers, and was breaking into disorder.

"Constitutionalists!" he cried: "your brethren are victorious elsewhere: abandon not the field! Follow me—to conquest or to death!"

These words operated with electrical effect; and the Constitutional infantry immediately rallied under the guidance of their youthful leader.

Then the battle was renewed: darkness fell upon the scene; but still the murderous conflict was prolonged. At length Richard engaged hand to hand with the colonel of the grenadiers, who was well mounted on a steed of enormous size. But this combat was short; the officer's sword was dashed from his hand; and he became our hero's prisoner.

These tidings spread like wild-fire; and the enemy fell into confusion. Their retreat became general: Richard followed up his advantage; and Giustiniani's army was completely routed.

The Constitutionalists pressed close upon them; and Richard, once more putting himself at the head of his cavalry, pursued the fugitives up to the very walls of Piacere—not with the murderous intention of exterminating them, but with a view to secure as many prisoners as possible, and prevent the enemy from taking refuge in the city.

At the very gates of Piacere he overtook General Giustiniani, and, after a short conflict, made him captive.

He then retraced his steps to the scene of his victory, and took the necessary steps for concentrating his forces once more.

That night, the Constitutionalists bivouacked in the plains about a mile from Piacere.

Early in the morning of the 3d of January, the results of the brilliant triumph of the preceding evening were known. Eight hundred of the enemy lay dead upon the field; and fifteen hundred had been taken prisoners. The Constitutionalists had lost three hundred men, and had nearly as many wounded.

Scarcely had the sun risen on the scene of carnage, when messengers arrived from Piacere, stating that the corporation had declared in favour of the Constitutionalists, and bearing letters from the municipal authorities to Markham. Those documents assured our hero that the sympathies of the great majority of the inhabitants were in favour of his cause; and that deep regret was experienced at the waste of life which had been occasioned by the obstinacy and self-will of General Giustiniani. Those letters also contained an invitation for him to enter the city, where the tri-coloured flag was already hoisted.

These welcome tidings were soon made known to the whole army, and were received with shouts of joy and triumph.

Richard returned a suitable answer to the delegates, and then sought General Giustiniani. To this commander he offered immediate liberty, on condition that he would not again bear arms against the Constitutionalists. The offer was spurned with contempt. Markham accordingly despatched him, under a strong escort, to Villabella.

At nine o'clock Markham entered Piacere, amidst the ringing of bells, the thunder of cannon, and the welcome of the inhabitants. The corporation presented him with the keys, which he immediately returned to the mayor, saying, "I am the servant, sir, and not the master of the Castelcicalans."

This reply was speedily circulated through Piacere, and increased the enthusiasm of the inhabitants in his favour.

Richard determined to remain until the following morning in this city. Having seen his troops comfortably lodged in the barracks, he adopted his usual course of despatching couriers, with accounts of his proceedings, to Villabella, Estella, Pinalla, and Montoni. Need we say that every letter which he addressed to the worthy banker contained brief notes—necessarily brief—to be sent by way of Naples, to Mr. Monroe and Isabella?

Having performed these duties, Richard repaired to the Town-Hall, where he countersigned a decree appointing the municipal body a Committee of Administration; and a proclamation to that effect was speedily published.

He next, with the most unwearied diligence, adopted measures to increase his army, for he resolved to march with as little delay as possible towards Abrantani; where a strong Austrian and Castelcicalan force was lying, under the command of the Captain-General of that province. At that point Richard well knew an important struggle must take place—a struggle in comparison with which all that he had hitherto done was as nothing.

But his endeavours in obtaining recruits were attended with great success. Volunteers flocked to the barracks; and the city-arsenal was well provided with all the uniforms, arms, ammunition, and stores that were required.

On the west of Piacere was a vast plain, on which Richard determined to review his troops at daybreak, and thence march direct upon Abrantani.

The order was accordingly issued; and half an hour before the sun rose, the army defiled through the western gates. Nearly all the inhabitants repaired to the plain, to witness the martial spectacle; and many were the bright eyes that glanced with admiration—and even a softer feeling—at the handsome countenance of that young man whose name now belonged to history.

Colonel Cossario, the second in command, directed the evolutions. The army was drawn up in divisions four deep, and mustered five thousand strong.

And now, on the 4th of January, a morning golden with sun-beams, the review began. Each regiment had its brass band and its gay colours;

and the joyous beams of the orb of day sported on the points of bayonets, flashed on naked swords, and played on the steel helmets of four hundred cuirassiers whom Richard had organised on the preceding evening.

Stationed on an eminence, attended by his staff, and by his faithful Morcar, who had comported himself gallantly in the battle of the 2d, Markham surveyed, with feelings of indescribable enthusiasm, that armament which owned him as its chief.

Cossario gave the word—it was passed on from division to division; and now all these sections are wheeling into line.

The line is formed—the bands are stationed in front of their respective corps: and all is as still as death.

Again the Colonel gives the word of command—"General salute! Present arms!"—and a long din of hands clapping against the muskets echoes around.

The bands strike up the glorious French air of the *Parisienne;* and Markham gracefully raises his plumed hat from his brow, in acknowledgment of the salute of his army.

The music ceases—the word, "Shoulder arms!" is passed from division to division, along that line of half a mile from flank to flank.

Then Markham gallops towards the troops, followed by his staff; the ranks take open order; he passes along, inspecting the different corps,—addressing them—encouraging them.

Again he returns to the eminence: the line is once more broken into divisions; close columns are formed; and the whole army is put in motion, to march past its General, the bands playing a lively air.

From the plain the troops defiled towards the road leading to Abrantani.

But scarcely had Markham taken leave of the mayor and the municipal authorities, in order to rejoin his army, when a courier, covered with dust, galloped up to him. He was the bearer of letters from Signor Viviani. Those documents afforded our hero the welcome intelligence that Pinalla had hoisted the tri-colour, declared in favour of the cause of liberty, recognised Markham as the General-in-Chief of the Constitutional Armies of Castelcicala, and had despatched a reinforcement of two thousand men to fight under his banner.

Richard hastily communicated these tidings to the corporation of Piacere, and then joined his army, throughout the ranks of which the news of the adhesion of so important a city as Pinalla to the great cause diffused the utmost joy.

"Every thing favours me!" thought Richard, his heart leaping within him. "Oh! for success at Abrantani; and such will be its moral effect upon my troops that I shall fear nothing for the result of the grand and final struggle that must take place beneath the walls of Montoni! And, then, Isabella, even your father will acknowledge that I have some claim to your hand as a reward for placing him upon the ducal throne!"

The road that the army now pursued was most favourable for the rapid march which Richard urged. It was wide and even, and afforded an easy passage to the artillery.

Shortly after mid-day the van-guard entered the beautiful province of Abrantani; and there the troops were received by the inhabitants with an enthusiasm of the most grateful description. For it was in this district that the tyranny of the Grand Duke's *régime*, under the auspices of Count Santa-Croce, had been most severely felt.

No wonder, then, that the Constitutional Army was greeted with rapture and delight;—no wonder that blessings were invoked upon the head of its General! The old men went down upon their knees by the road-sides, to implore heaven to accord success to his mission;—mothers held up their children to catch a glimpse of the youthful hero;—and young maidens threw garlands of flowers in his path.

Volunteers poured in from all sides; and the army increased in its progress, like the snowball rolling along the ground.

At sunset the entire force halted in the precincts of a large town, the inhabitants of which hastened to supply the soldiers with provisions and wine.

During that pause, couriers arrived from Veronezzi, with the joyful tidings that it had declared in favour of the Constitutional cause, and was sending reinforcements. Thus the whole of the south of Castelcicala was now devoted to the movement of which Markham was the head and chief.

For two hours was the army permitted to rest: it then continued its march until midnight, when it bivouacked in a wide plain, a wood protecting its right wing, and a hill, whereon the artillery was planted, defending its left.

Richard adopted every precaution to avoid a surprise; for he was well aware that the Count of Santa-Croce was not a man to slumber at such a crisis. But it afterwards appeared that the Captain-General did not dare to quit the neighbourhood of the city of Abrantani, for fear that it should pronounce in favour of the Constitutionalists.

It was, therefore, under the walls of Abrantani itself that the contest was to take place.

There was a flat eminence to the east of the city; and on this had Santa-Croce taken up his position at the head of seven thousand men—three thousand Castelcicalans, and four thousand Austrians.

Against this force was Richard to contend, at the head of six thousand soldiers, the volunteers who had joined him since he left Piacere amounting to a thousand.

But to return to our narrative in the consecutive order of events.

At five o'clock in the morning of the 5th, the Constitutionalists quitted their position where they had bivouacked, and pursued their way towards the city of Abrantani.

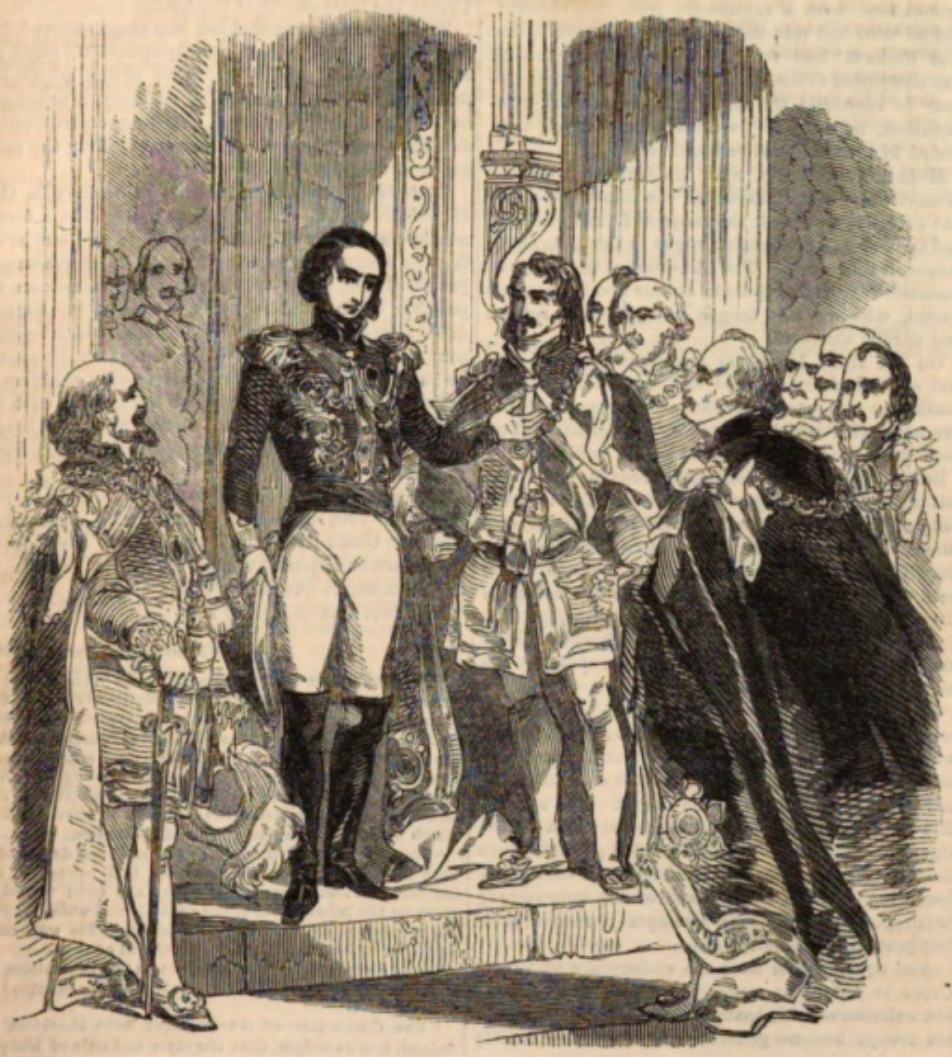
The day passed—night came once more—and the troops bivouacked in the immediate vicinity of a large hamlet.

The morning of the 6th saw them again in motion; but Richard allowed them to proceed with diminished celerity, as he had already enough chances against him to warn him not to increase them by over-fatiguing his army.

It was not, therefore, until the evening that he came in sight of the tall spire on the Cathedral of Abrantani.

"By this time to-morrow," exclaimed Richard, pointing in the direction of the city, "the tower on which yon spire stands shall echo with the sounds of its bells to celebrate our triumph!"

"Amen!" ejaculated Morcar, who was close behind him.



The Constitutionalists took up a strong position, with a village on their right and a range of extensive farm-buildings on their left. They were all animated by an enthusiasm worthy of the great cause in which they were embarked; and their ardour was manifested by singing martial songs as they crowded round the fires of the bivouac.

Richard never closed his eyes during the night. Confident that his want of experience in military tactics must be compensated for by unceasing exercise of that intelligence and keenness of perception which had enabled him to direct the movements of his troops so as to achieve the victory of Piacere, he reconnoitred all the positions adjacent to his own—marked those where troops would be advantageously placed, and observed others where they would be endangered—visited the outposts—studied the maps of that part of the country—and held consultations with his most skilful officers. These subordinates were astonished at the soundness of his views, the excellence of his arrangements, and the admirable nature of his combinations.

Markham was resolved to effect two objects, which, he felt convinced, would lessen the chances that were now against him. The first was to throw up a small redoubt, where he might place a portion of his artillery, so as to command the flat eminence on which the Austro-Castelcicalan army was stationed. The second was to send off a small detachment before day-break, to gain a wood about two miles distant, whence it might debouch at the proper time, and fall upon the left flank of the enemy.

The redoubt was commenced, and proceeded rapidly; and an hour before sun-rise the corps of Cingani departed on the important service which the General-in-Chief confided to it, with strict orders not to move from the wood until the enemy should have left the eminence and descended to the plain.

Thus, by the time the sun rose on the morning of the 7th, the Cingani were safely concealed in the wood; a redoubt, bristling with artillery, commanded the enemy's position; and the Constitutionalists were formed in order of battle.

Richard commanded the right wing; and Colonel Cossario the left.

The engagement began on the part of the Constitutionalists, with a cannonade from the redoubt; and so well did this battery perform its part, that —as Richard had foreseen—the Captain-General was compelled to descend into the plain, and endeavour to surround the right wing of the Constitutionalists, in order to terminate the carnage occasioned by that dreadful cannonade.

Meantime, Cossario, with his division, advanced to meet three battalions which the Captain-General had detached to attack the range of farm-buildings; and for an hour the combat raged in that point with inconceivable fury. The Austrians precipitated themselves with a desperate ardour upon Cossario's troops, who were at length compelled to retreat and occupy the farm.

On the right, Markham sustained a fearful contest with the force opposed to him. The fire of the musketry was at point-blank distance; and the firmness with which the action was maintained on both sides, rendered the result highly dubious.

But now the Cingani debouched from the wood, and fell upon the left wing of the enemy. The impetuosity of their attack was irresistible: the wing was turned by them; and the Austro-Castelcicalans were thrown into disorder. Then Richard, at the head of his cuirassiers, charged upon the centre of the enemy, and decided the fortune of the day.

In the meantime Cossario had completely rallied his division, and had succeeded in repulsing the battalions that were opposed to him.

The Captain-General endeavoured to effect a retreat in an orderly manner towards the eminence which he had originally occupied; but Richard, perceiving his intention, was enabled to out-flank him, and to gain possession of the height. For an hour this important position was disputed with all the vigour and ardour of military combat; but, though the Austro-Castelcicalans manifested a vehemence bordering on rage, and a perseverance approaching to desperation, all their attempts to recover their lost ground were ineffectual.

And equally vain were the endeavours of Santa-Croce to secure an orderly retreat; his columns were shattered—his battalions broken; the flight of his troops became general; but they were closely pursued by their conquerors.

The Cathedral of Abrantani proclaimed the hour of three in the afternoon, when Richard, on the eminence commanding the city, sate down to pen hasty dispatches, announcing this great victory to the Committees of Montoni, Piacere, Villabella, Veronezzi, Pinalla, and Estella. Nor did he forget to enclose, in his letters to Signor Viviani, brief notes addressed to his friend Monroe and the Princess Isabella.

The results of the battle of Abrantani were most glorious to the Constitutional arms. While Richard's loss was small, that of the enemy had been enormous. Two thousand men—chiefly Austrians —lay dead upon the plain; and nearly as many were taken prisoners. Two of the Castelcicalan regiments rallied at a short distance from the scene of the conflict, and placing themselves at the disposal of Colonel Cossario, who had pursued them, joined the Constitutional cause.

The Captain-General, Count Santa-Croce, succeeded in effecting his escape, with several of his superior officers; and, hastening to join the Grand Duke, who was still besieging Montoni, the vanquished chief was the first to communicate to that Prince the fatal result of the battle.

That same evening Richard Markham entered the city of Abrantani, which joyfully opened its gates to receive him; and, as in the other towns which he had occupied, the thunders of artillery, the ringing of bells, and the plaudits of admiring crowds testified the enthusiasm which was inspired by the presence of the youthful General.

Richard determined to remain some days in the city of Abrantani. Montoni was besieged by a force nearly twenty-five thousand strong; and our hero felt the necessity of waiting for the reinforcements promised him, and of raising as many volunteers as possible, ere he could venture to cope with so formidable a force. But in every despatch which he had sent to the Committee of Government at Montoni, he had given the most solemn assurances of his resolution to march to the relief of the capital with as little delay as possible; and it was now, at Abrantani, that he anxiously expected official tidings from the besieged city.

Nor was he kept long in suspense. On the morning of the 10th a courier arrived with despatches from the Committee of Government. These documents are so important, that we do not hesitate to lay them before our readers.

The first was conceived thus:—

"*Montoni, January 9th*, 1841.

"The Committee of Government of the State of Castelcicala have received the various despatches which the General-in-Chief of the Constitutional Army has addressed to them respectively from Villabella, Piacere, and Abrantani. The Committee must reserve for a future occasion the pleasing duty of expressing how deeply they rejoice at the General-in-Chief's various successes, and how anxiously they watch the progress of that cause of which he has become the guide and champion.

"The Committee cannot, however, omit one duty which they now perform by virtue of the full powers of administration and government that have been vested in them by the inhabitants of the capital, and which powers are recognised by all faithful Castelcicalans who have declared in favour of the Constitutional cause.

"This duty is rendered imperious on the Committee by the eminent and unequalled services of the General-in-Chief.

"The Committee of Government have therefore ordained, and do ordain, that the style and title of *Marquis of Estella* be conferred upon the General-in-Chief, the most Excellent Signor Richard Markham.

"And a copy of this decree shall be forwarded to every city or town which has pronounced in favour of the Constitutional cause.

"By order of the Committee of Government.

"GAETANO, *President*.
"TERLIZZI, *Vice-President*."

The second despatch ran thus:—

"To the Marquis of Estella, General-in-Chief of the Constitutional Armies of Castelcicala.

"My Lord,

"We, the members of the Committee of Government of Castelcicala, have the honour to lay before your lordship a few particulars relative to the condition of the capital city of that State. Closely besieged by the foreign force whom the traitor Angelo has invited into the country, and blockaded at sea by the fleet of the Lord High Admiral, Montoni already enters upon the dread phase of *famine*. The garrison performs its duty nobly in defending the capital from the attacks daily directed against it by the insolent Austrian invaders; but it is impossible that we can hold out for any length of time. We are, however, happy to be enabled to assure your lordship that the inhabitants endure their lamentable condition with exemplary fortitude and patience, the bril-

liant achievements of your lordship and the Constitutional Army having inspired them with the most lively hopes of a speedy deliverance. So sorely are we pressed, that it has been only with the greatest difficulty that your lordship's couriers have been able to pass the lines of the besiegers, and gain entrance into the city.

"We feel convinced that these brief statements will be sufficient to induce your lordship to lose no time in marching to the deliverance of the capital.

"We have the honour to remain, My Lord,

"Your lordship's obedient servants,

"For the Members of the Committee } GAETANO, *President.* TERLIZZI, *Vice-President.*

"Montoni, January 9th, 1841. (Six o'clock in the morning.)"

Most welcome, in one sense, to our hero were these documents. Although he deeply deplored the condition to which Montoni was reduced, he could not do otherwise than experience the most thrilling and rapturous delight at the impression which his conduct had produced upon the Provisional Government of the State, and of the inhabitants of the capital.

Nor shall we depreciate the merits of Richard Markham, if we admit that he received, with the most heartfelt joy, that title of nobility which, he felt convinced, must lead him nearer to the grand aim of all his exertions—the hand of Isabella!

And as he looked back upon the events of the last fortnight,—when he reflected that at the commencement of that short interval he had issued from Pinalla on a desperate undertaking, and that these fourteen days had shed glory on his name, and placed the coronet of a Marquis upon his brow,—he was lost in admiration of the inscrutable ways of that Providence to whom he had never ceased to pray, morning and evening—as well when crowned with success as in the hour of danger!

But as we do not wish to dwell too much upon this grand and remarkable episode in our hero's history, we shall continue our narrative of these events in their proper order.

The Marquis of Estella each day saw his army increasing. The promised reinforcements arrived from Pinalla and Veronezzi: Lipari and Ossore declared for his cause, and furnished their contingents to the Constitutional forces; and each hour brought to Richard's head-quarters at Abrantani tidings of fresh movements in his favour. Troops poured in; and he was compelled to muster his forces in an encampment on the northern side of the town.

Indeed, the battles of Piacere and Abrantani had electrified Castelcicala; and the tri-coloured banner already floated on the walls of the principal cities and towns of the state. Addresses of confidence amd congratulation were sent to our hero from all parts; and large sums of money were raised and forwarded to him, to enable him to reward his troops and equip his volunteers.

It was on the 20th of January that Markham put his army in motion. He was now at the head of sixteen thousand men, with a formidable train of artillery. Although the numerical odds were fearfully against him, he reposed the most perfect confidence in the valour of his troops—elated as they were by previous successes, and glorying in a cause which they deemed holy and sacred. Moreover, he knew that the moral strength of his army was incomparably superior to that of the mere drilled Austrian troops, who were trained under a soul-crushing system of discipline, and who regarded their chiefs rather as tyrants and oppressors than as generous superiors exercising a species of paternal influence over them.

On the morning of the 22d, the Constitutional Army reached Ossore, all the inhabitants of which town came out to behold the glorious procession, and testify their admiration of the young General.

It was during a brief halt near this place, that a courier, travel-soiled and sinking with fatigue, arrived from Montoni, with a letter addressed to the Marquis of Estella and containing only this laconic but urgent prayer:—

"Hasten, my lord—delay not! In forty-eight hours it will be too late!

"GAETANO."

Richard instantly despatched a messenger, on whose prudence and daring he could rely, with an answer equally brief and impressive:—

"Fear not, signor! By to-morrow night Montoni shall be delivered, or the army which I am leading to your rescue will be annihilated.

"ESTELLA."

The city was indeed sore pressed. The inhabitants were reduced to the utmost extremities in respect to provision; and the Austrians, headed by the Grand Duke in person and Marshal Herbertstein, were pushing the siege with a vigour that was almost irresistible.

But on the 22d of January those commanders were compelled to concentrate nearly all their troops on the southern side of Montoni: for they were well aware that the Constitutional Army was now approaching.

In the afternoon of the same day, the light cavalry of Richard's force entered upon the broad plain through which the Ferretti rolls its silver way; and at a distance of three miles the tower of Saint Theodosia reared its summit far above the white buildings of Montoni.

By nine o'clock on that night the entire Constitutional Army had taken up a strong position, its left being protected by high sand-banks which overlooked the sea, and its right defended by a large village.

Oh! it was a great cause which was so soon to be justified—and that was a glorious army which was now preparing for the final struggle!

A discharge of cannon from the walls of Montoni announced that the capital awaited its deliverance; and the Committee of Government issued orders that the bells of every church should ring for mass at daybreak, in order that the inhabitants might offer up prayers for the success of the Constitutional Army.

As on the eve of the glorious fight of Abrantani, the Marquis of Estella was actively employed during the whole night in making the various dispositions for the great battle which, on the following day, must decide the fate of Castelcicala.

And most solemnly and sublimely interesting was that night! So close were the two armies to each other—only half a cannon shot distant—that every sound on either side could be mutually heard. The very outposts and sentinels were almost within speaking range; and the lights of the two positions were plainly visible. Watchfulness and keen observation characterised both sides.

An hour before sunrise—and by the lurid gleam of the bivouac fire in the grove of Legino—Richard addressed a letter, full of tenderness and hope, to

the Princess Isabella; and this he despatched in another epistle to his excellent friend, the banker at Pinalla.

Then, when the first gleam of twilight heralded the advent of the sun, and while the bells were ringing in every tower of Montoni, the hero mounted his horse and prepared for the conflict that was now at hand.

CHAPTER CLXXXIX.

THE BATTLE OF MONTONI.

THE morning of the memorable 23d of January dawned, and the bells were ringing in every tower, when three cannon gave the signal for the fight, and the battle of Montoni began.

The light troops of the Constitutionalists opened a smart fire upon the Austrians, and dislodged a strong corps from a position which it occupied on the bank of a small stream. In consequence of this first success, Richard was enabled to stretch out his right wing without restraint; and, remembering the operation effected by the Cingani at Abrantani, he instantly despatched that faithful corps, with a battalion of rifles, to make the circuit of the village, and endeavour to turn the Austrians' left flank.

The left wing of the Constitutionalists soon came to close quarters with the right wing of the enemy; and a desperate struggle ensued to decide the occupancy of the sand-banks, which were quite hard and a desirable position for artillery-pieces. Colonel Cossario, who commanded in that point, succeeded, after a desperate conflict, in repulsing the Austrians; and twenty field-pieces were dragged on the sand-banks. These speedily vomited forth the messengers of destruction; and the dread ordnance scattered death with appalling rapidity.

The Grand Duke, seeing that his cause was hopeless if that dreadful cannonade was not stopped, ordered four battalions of grenadiers to attack the position. Markham, who was riding about the field,—now issuing orders—now taking a part in the conflict,—observed the manœuvre, and instantly placed himself at the head of two regiments of cuirassiers with a view to render it abortive.

Then commenced one of the most deadly spectacles ever performed on the theatre of the world. The Grand Duke sent a strong detachment of Austrian Life-Guards to support the grenadiers; and the two squadrons of cavalry came into fearful collision. The Constitutionalists were giving way, when Markham precipitated himself into the thickest of the fight, cleared every thing before him, and seized the Austrian colours. Morcar was immediately by his side: the sword of a Life-Guard already gleamed above our hero's head—another moment, and he would have been no more. But the faithful gipsy warded off the blow, and with another stroke of his heavy brand nearly severed the sword-arm of the Life-Guard. Richard thanked him with a rapid but profoundly expressive glance, and, retaining his hold on the Austrian banner, struck the ensign-bearer to the ground.

This splendid achievement re-animated the Constitutional cuirassiers; and the Austrian Life-Guards were shattered beyond redemption.

Almost at the same time, the Cingani and rifles effected their movement on the left wing of the enemy, and threw it into confusion. This disorder was however retrieved for about the space of two hours; when the Marquis of Estella, with his cuirassiers, was enabled to take a part in the conflict in that direction. This attack bore down the Austrians. They formed themselves into a square; but vain were their attempts to oppose the impetuosity with which the cuirassiers charged them. By three o'clock in the afternoon, the left wing of the enemy was overwhelmed so completely that all the endeavours of Marshal Herbertstein to rally his troops were fruitless.

Then, resolved to perish rather than surrender, the Austrian commander met an honourable death in the ranks of battle.

In the centre the conflict raged with a fury which seemed to leave room for doubt relative to the fortune of the day, notwithstanding the important successes already obtained by the Constitutionalists.

The Grand Duke had flown with a choice body of cavalry to support the compact masses that were now fighting for the victory: he himself rode along the ranks—encouraging them—urging them on—promising rewards.

For nearly four hours more did the battle last in this point; but at length our hero came up with his cuirassiers, all flushed with conquest elsewhere; and his presence gave a decided turn to the struggle.

Rushing precipitately on—bearing down all before them—thundering along with an irresistible impetuosity, the cuirassiers scattered confusion and dismay in the ranks of their enemies. And ever foremost in that last struggle, as in the first, the waving heron's plume which marked his rank, and the death-dealing brand which he wielded with such fatal effect, denoted the presence of Richard Markham.

He saw that the day was his own;—the Austrians were flying in all directions;—confusion, disorder, and dismay prevailed throughout their broken corps and shattered bands;—Marshal Herbertstein was numbered with the slain;—the Grand Duke fled;—and at eight o'clock in the evening Montoni was delivered.

Darkness had now fallen on the scene of carnage; but still the Constitutionalists pursued the Austrian fugitives; and numbers were taken ere they could reach the river. A comparatively small portion of the vanquished succeeded in throwing themselves into the boats that were moored on the southern bank, or in gaining the adjacent bridges; and those only escaped.

Montoni saluted its deliverance with salvoes of artillery and the ringing of bells; and the joyous sounds fell upon the ears of the Grand Duke, as, heart-broken and distracted, he pursued his way, attended only by a few faithful followers, towards the frontiers of that State from which his rashness and despotism had driven him for ever.

Meantime, Richard Markham issued the necessary orders for the safeguard of the prisoners and the care of the wounded; and, having attended to those duties, he repaired to the village before mentioned, where he established his temporary head-quarters at the *château* of a nobleman devoted to the Constitutional cause.

Then, in the solitude of the chamber to which he had retired, and with a soul full of tenderness and hope, as in the morning in the grove of Legino,—he addressed a letter to the Princess—the only joy

of his heart, the charming and well-beloved Isabella:—

Head Quarters, near Montoni. Jan. 23.
Eleven at night.

"Long ere this will reach thee, dearest one, thou wilt have heard, by means of telegraphic dispatch through France, of the great victory which has made me master of Castelcicala. If there be any merit due unto myself, in consummating this great aim, and conducting this glorious cause to its final triumph, it was thine image, beloved Isabella, which nerved my arm and which gave me intelligence to make the combinations that have led to so decided an end. In the thickest of the fight—in the midst of danger,—when balls whistled by me like hail, and the messengers of death were circulating in every direction,—thine eyes seemed to be guiding stars of hope, and promise, and love. And now the first moment that I can snatch from the time which so many circumstances compel me to devote to your native land, is given to thee!

"To-morrow I shall write at great length to your honoured father, whom in the morning it will be my pleasing duty to proclaim ALBERTO I. GRAND DUKE OF CASTELCICALA.

"Although men now call me *Marquis of Estella*, to thee, dearest, I am simply

'RICHARD."

Our hero despatched this letter in one to Signor Viviani at Pinalla, by especial courier. He next wrote hasty accounts of the great victory which he had gained, to the chief authorities of the various cities and towns which had first declared in his favour, as before mentioned; and these also were instantly sent off by messengers.

Then soon did rumour tell the glorious tale how Montoni was delivered; and how the mighty flood of Austrian power, which had dashed its billows against the walls of the ducal capital, was rolled back over the confines of Castelcicala into the Roman States, never to return!

We shall not dwell upon the particulars of that night which succeeded the battle. Our readers can imagine the duties that devolve upon a commander after so brilliant and yet so sanguinary a day. Suffice it to observe, that Richard visited the houses in the village to which the wounded had been conveyed; while Colonel Cossario took possession of the Austrian camp.

That night Montoni was brilliantly illuminated; and the most exuberant joy prevailed throughout the capital.

The Committee of Government assembled in close deliberation, immediately after the receipt of the welcome tidings of the victory; and, although they consulted in secret, still the inhabitants could well divine the subject of their debate—the best means of testifying their own and the nation's gratitude towards that champion who had thus diffused joy into so many hearts.

Early in the morning, the entire Committee, dressed in their robes, and attended by the chief officers of the garrison, repaired on horseback to the village where Richard had established his head-quarters.

Our hero came forth to meet them, at the door of the mansion where he was lodged, and received those high functionaries with his plumed hat in hand.

"My lord," exclaimed Signor Gaëtano, the President of the Committee, "it is for us to bare our heads to you. You have saved us from an odious tyranny—from oppression—from siege—from famine! God alone can adequately reward you: Castelcicala cannot. We have, however, further favours to solicit at your lordship's hand. Until that Prince, who is now our rightful sovereign, can come amongst us, and occupy that throne which your hands have prepared for him, you must be our chief—our Regent. My lord, a hundred councillors, forming the Provisional Committee of Government, debated this point last evening; and not a single voice was raised in objection to that request which I, as their organ, have now proffered to your lordship."

"No," answered Richard: "that cannot be. The world would say that I am ambitious—that I am swayed by interested motives of aggrandizement. Continue, gentlemen, to exercise supreme sway, until the arrival of your sovereign."

"My lord," returned the President, "Castelcicala demands this favour at your hands."

"Then, if Castelcicala command, I accept the trust with which you honour me," exclaimed Markham; "but so soon as I shall have succeeded in restoring peace and order, you will permit me, gentlemen, to repair to England, to present the ducal diadem to your rightful liege. And one word more," continued Markham; "your troops have conducted themselves, throughout this short but brilliant campaign, in a manner which exceeds all praise. To you I commend them—you must reward them."

"Your lordship is now the Regent of Castelcicala," answered the President; "and your decrees become our laws. Order—and we obey."

"I shall not abuse the power which you place in my hands," rejoined Markham.

The President then communicated to the Regent the pleasing fact that the Lord High Admiral had that morning hoisted the tri-coloured flag and sent an officer to signify his adhesion to the victorious cause. In answer to a question from Signor Gaëtano, Richard signified his intention of entering Montoni at three o'clock in the afternoon.

The principal authorities then returned to the capital.

Long before the appointed hour, the sovereign city wore an aspect of rejoicing and happiness. Triumphal arches were erected in the streets through which the conqueror would have to pass: the troops of the garrison were mustered in the great square of the palace; and a guard of honour was despatched to the southern gate. The windows were filled with smiling faces: banners waved from the tops of the houses. The ships in the harbour and roadstead were decked in their gayest colours; and boats were constantly arriving from the fleet with provisions of all kinds for the use of the inhabitants.

The great bell in the tower of Saint Theodosia at length proclaims the hour of three.

And, now—hark! the artillery roars—Montoni salutes her Regent: the guard of honour presents arms; the martial music plays a national air; and the conqueror enters the capital. The men-of-war in the roadstead thunder forth echoes to the cannon on the ramparts; and the yards are manned in token of respect for the representative of the sovereign power.

What were Richard's feelings now? But little more than two months had elapsed since he had first entered that city, a prisoner—vanquished—with shattered hopes—and uncertain as to the fate that might be in store for him. How changed were his circumstances! As a conqueror—a noble—and a ruler did he now make his appearance in a capital where his name was upon every tongue, and where

his great deeds excited the enthusiasm, the admiration, and the respect of every heart.

Then his ideas were reflected still farther back; and he thought of the time when he was a prisoner, though innocent, in an English gaol. Far more rapidly than we can record his meditations, did memory whirl him through all past adversities—reproduce before his mental eyes his recent wanderings in Castelcicala—and hurry him on to this glorious consummation, when he finds himself entering the capital as the highest peer in the State.

On his right hand was Colonel Cossario; and close behind him—amidst his brilliant staff—was Morcar,—the faithful gipsy whose devotedness to his master had not a little contributed to this grand result.

On went the procession amidst the enthusiastic applause of the myriads collected to welcome the conquerors,—on through streets crowded to the roof-tops with happy faces,—on to the ducal palace, in whose great square ten thousand troops were assembled to receive the Regent.

Richard alighted from his horse at the gate of the princely abode, on the threshold of which the municipal authorities were gathered to receive him.

Oh! at that moment how deeply—how sincerely did he regret the loss of General Grachia, Colonel Morosino, and the other patriots who had fallen in the fatal conflict of Ossore!

Nor less did memory recall the prophetic words of that departed girl who had loved him so devotedly, but so unhappily;—those words which Mary-Anne, with sybilline inspiration, had uttered upon her death-bed:—"*Brilliant destinies await you, Richard! All your enduring patience, your resignation under the oppression of foul wrong, will meet with a glorious reward. Yes—for I know all:—that angel Isabella has kept no secret from me. She is a Princess, Richard; and by your union with her, you yourself will become one of the greatest Princes in Europe! Her father, too, shall succeed to his just rights; and then, Richard, then—how small will be the distance between yourself and the Castelcicalan throne!*"

CHAPTER CXC.

TWO OF OUR OLD ACQUAINTANCES.

We must again transport our readers to the great metropolis of England.

It was late in the evening of the 24th of January, 1841,—with Byron, we "like to be particular in dates,"—that a man, of herculean form, weather-beaten countenance, and whose age was apparently somewhat past forty, was passing down Drury Lane.

He was dressed like a labourer, with a smock frock and a very broad-brimmed straw hat, which was slouched as much as possible over his face.

Passing into Blackmoor Street, he continued his way towards Clare Market; whence he turned abruptly into Clements' Lane, and entered a public-house on the right hand side of this wretched scene of squalor and poverty.

No one possessing the least feeling of compassion for the suffering portion of the industrious millions—(and how large is that portion!)—can pass along the miserable thoroughfare called Clements' Lane without being shocked at the internal misery which the exterior appearance of many of the dwellings bespeaks. There is ever a vile effluvium in that narrow alley—a miasma as of a crowded churchyard!

Entering the parlour of the public-house, the man with the weather-beaten countenance and slouched hat was immediately recognised by a lad seated apart from the other inmates of the room.

This youth was about eighteen or nineteen years of age, very short in stature, but well made. On a former occasion we have stated that his countenance was effeminate and by no means bad-looking; his eyes were dark and intelligent; his teeth good; and his voice soft and agreeable. His manners were superior to his condition; and his language was singularly correct for one who was almost entirely self-taught, and who had filled menial employments since his boyhood.

He was dressed in a blue jacket and waistcoat, and dark brown trousers; and that attire, together with a boy's cap, contributed towards the extreme youthfulness of his appearance.

A pint of porter stood, untouched, upon a table at which he was sitting.

The man with the weather-beaten countenance proceeded to take his seat next to this lad: he then rang the bell, and having ordered some liquor and a pipe, entered into conversation with his young companion.

"Have you heard any thing more of that villain Tidkins, Harry?" asked the man.

"Nothing more since I saw you yesterday morning, Jem," replied Holford. "I have lost all trace of him."

"But are you sure that it was him you saw the day before yesterday?" demanded Crankey Jem—for *he* was the individual with the weather-beaten countenance and slouched hat.

"Don't you think I know him well enough, after all I have told you concerning him?" said Henry Holford, smiling. "When you and I accidentally met for the first time, the day before yesterday, in this parlour, and when in the course of the conversation that sprang up between us, I happened to mention the name of Tidkins, I saw how you fired—how you coloured—how agitated you became. What injury has he done you, that you are so bitter against him?"

"I will tell you another time, Harry," answered Crankey Jem. "My history is a strange one—and you shall know it all. But I *must* find out the lurking-hole of this miscreant Tidkins. You say he was well dressed?"

"As well as a private person can be," answered Holford. "But did the Resurrection Man put on the robes of the greatest monarch in the world, he could not mitigate the atrocious expression of his cadaverous—hang-dog countenance. I confess that I am afraid of that man:—yes—I am afraid of him!"

"He was well-dressed, and was stepping into a cab at the stand under the Charterhouse wall, you said?" observed Crankey Jem.

"Yes—and he said, '*To the Mint—Borough,*'" replied Holford: "those were his very words—and away the cab went."

"And you have since been to see if you could recognise the cab, and pump the cab-man?" continued Jem.

"By your request I have done so," answered Holford; "and my researches have been altogether un-

successful. I could not find the particular cab which he took."

"Why did n't you question the waterman and the drivers?" asked Jem.

"So I did; but I could glean nothing. Now if you really want to find the Resurrection Man, I should advise you to go over to the Mint, and hunt him out amongst the low public-houses in that district. Depend upon it," added Holford, "he has business there; for he is not a man to run about in cabs for nothing."

"The fact is, Harry," returned Jem, "that it does n't suit my schemes to look after Tidkins myself. He would only get out of my way; and—as I have missed my aim *once*—I must take care to *thrust home* the next time I fall in with him."

"You mean to say that you have poniarded him once, and that he escaped death?" whispered Holford.

"Yes: but I will tell you all about it presently, Harry," said Crankey Jem; "and then, perhaps, you will be induced to assist me in hunting out the Resurrection Man."

"I certainly have an old score to settle with him," returned Holford; "for—as I told you—he once laid a plot against my life. To-night you shall tell me how you came to be so bitter against him: to-morrow night I will visit the Mint, and make the inquiries you wish concerning him; and the night afterwards I must devote to particular business of my own."

"And what particular business can such a younker as you have in hand?" asked Crankey Jem, with as much of a smile as his grim countenance could possibly relax itself into.

"I now and then visit a place where I can contemplate, at my ease, a beautiful lady—without even my presence being suspected," answered Holford, in a mysterious tone.

"A beautiful lady! Are you in love with her, then?" demanded Crankey Jem.

"The mere idea is so utterly absurd—so extravagant—so preposterous," replied Holford, "that my lips dare not speak an affirmative. To acknowledge that I love this lady of whom I speak, would be almost a crime—an atrocity—a diabolical insult,—so highly is she placed above me! And yet," he added mournfully, "the human heart *has* strange susceptibilities—*will* indulge in the idlest phantasies! My chief happiness is to gaze upon this lady—and my blood boils when I behold him on whom all her affection is bestowed."

"She is married, then?" said Crankey Jem, interrogatively.

"Yes—married to one who is handsome and young, and who perhaps loves her all the more because he owes so much—so very much to her! But I actually shudder—I feel alarmed—I tremble, while I thus permit my tongue to touch upon such topics,—topics as sacred as a religion—as holy as a worship."

"You have either indulged in some very foolish and most hopeless attachment, Harry," said his companion; "or else your wits are going a-woolgathering."

"May be both your remarks apply to me," muttered Holford, a cloud passing over his countenance. "But—no—no: I am in the perfect possession of my senses—my intellects are altogether unimpaired. It is a fancy—a whim of my mine to introduce myself into the place I before alluded to, and, from my concealment, contemplate the lady of whom I have spoken. It gives me pleasure to look upon her—I know not why. Then—when I am alone—I brood upon her image, recall to mind all I have heard her say or seen her do, and ponder on her features—her figure—her dress—her whole appearance, until I become astonished at myself—alarmed at my own presumption—terrified at my own thoughts. For weeks and weeks—nay, for months—I remain away from the place where she often dwells;—but at length some imperceptible and unknown impulse urges me thither; I rove about the neighbourhood, gazing longingly upon the building;—I endeavour to tear myself away—I cannot;—then I ascend the wall—I traverse the garden—I enter the dwelling—I conceal myself—I behold *her* again—*him* also,—and my pleasures and my tortures are experienced all over again!"

"You 're a singular lad," said Crankey Jem, eyeing the youth with no small degree of astonishment, and some suspicion that he was not altogether right in his upper storey. "But who is this lady that you speak of? and why are you so frightened even to think of her? A cat may look at a king—aye, and *think* of him too, for that matter. Human nature is human nature; and one is n't always answerable for one's feelings."

"There I agree with you, Jem," said Holford. "I have often struggled hard against that impulse which urges me towards the place where the lady dwells—but all in vain!"

"Who is she, once more?" demanded Jem.

"That is a secret—never to be revealed," answered Harry.

Crankey Jem had commenced an observation in reply, when one of the persons who were sitting drinking at another table, suddenly struck up a chant in so loud and boisterous a tone that it completely drowned the voice of Holford's companion:—

FLARE UP.

Flare up, I say, my jolly friends,
And pass the bingo gaily;—
Who cares a rap if all this ends
Some morn at the Old Bailey?
"A short life and a merry one"
Should be our constant maxim;
And he 's a fool that gives up fun
Because remorse attacks him.

Here Ned has forks so precious fly,
And Bill can smash the flimsies;*
No trap to Tom could e'er come nigh,
For he so fleet of limbs is.
Bob is the best to crack a crib,
And Dick to knap a fogle;†
And I can wag my tongue so glib
A beak would wipe his ogle.

Who are so happy then as we—
Each with such useful knowledge?
For Oxford University
Can't beat the Floating College.‡
To parish prigs one gives degrees,
To lumber-lags§ the latter:
But I would sooner cross the seas,
Than in a humbox‖ patter.¶

Each state in life has its mishaps:—
Kings fear a revolution;
The knowing covey dreads the traps—
And *both* an execution.
Death will not long pass any by—
Each chance is duly raffled;
What matters whether we must die
In bed or on the scaffold?

* Pass fictitious Bank-Notes. † Handkerchief.
‡ The Hulks. § Transports. ‖ Pulpit. ¶ Preach.