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A SPLENDID FORTUNE:

A Nobel.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE GENTLE LIFE."

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A SPLENDID FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

A CONFESSION.

As for Lotty and the doctor, as they were about a good work, they lived naturally in charity with all men; and even the slight feud which Mrs. Lapis would have willingly kept warm between herself and Miss Morton, since she had been pushed from her seat and pride of place by that lady, was allowed to grow cool.

Upon the Sunday on which the Rev. John Bangles exhibited his eloquence, and, as he would have said, "improved the occasion," Mrs. Everingham,

although very weak, showed more consciousness than usual; and Lotty, whose curiosity was not unnatural, felt that the time was coming when some question might with delicacy be put regarding the patient's position.

The poor lady herself gave occasion for this hope by looking at the baby and declaring that it was not unlike its father. She said this very calmly, and without hesitation.

Lotty, who heard her slightest whisper, could not forbear to say, "Yes, dear; like whom?"

"Like his father—like Mr.——" Here she looked suspiciously at her questioner, and was silent. Then she heaved a sigh, and, with a quick-coming tear, said she had now no friend in the world.

"I am sure you must not say that, my dear lady," said Lotty. "Both I and my brother love you like our own sister; as dearly almost as our sister who is dead."

"That can never be," said Emmy, solemnly—"never, never be."

"Perhaps not for me," answered Lotty, always

truthful, and always in earnest; "but, poor fellow! men love differently from women."

She was half sorry for having said this a moment after she had said it. Mrs. Everingham, however, did not mistake her words, because she did not heed them. She was thinking of her own sad loss.

"He was very handsome and very good," she added, looking again at baby, "and would not have lost his life if it had not been for me."

"You mean Lord Somers," said Lotty, quickly.

Mrs. Everingham blushed scarlet. "You know my secret, then," she said, after a pause.

"Of course, my dear lady: was not my brother a friend of Lord Somers? Did he not visit you at your house, the Woodbines? Did he not meet you at Mr. Colquhoun's, and dance with you, before you became——"

Here Lotty paused involuntarily. She would not have done so for the world, but she was really at a loss what to say. She could not use the title "Mrs. Everingham"—she knew it was a false one—and she had not for five years gained her own

living without knowing that such sort of connections as that which most people would presume this one was, existed.

To her delighted surprise, however, her patient herself took up the thread of the conversation.

“Before I became HIS WIFE,” she said.

Lotty ran to her and kissed her, crying out—

“I am so glad to hear you say that word.”

It was all out now. The title was given in a way not to be doubted, and Lotty would have sworn to the truth of Emmy’s word at once and without hesitation. She knew very well what a hard world it was, and not only how prone it is to put bad constructions upon matters, but, alas! how often those bad constructions are the true ones. That was her difficulty. If the sordid, cruel suppositions which people make regarding others did not oftentimes turn out true, how much happier we should all be!

Lady Somers—Mrs. Everingham no more—did not seem, however, to view the matter quite in Lotty’s light. She returned the kiss but coldly, and said—

“You did not doubt me?”

Lotty shook her head.

“Your brother, at least he did not doubt me, I am sure,” said the lady.

“There you are right, madam,” said Lotty. “He never has for one instant doubted you. He saw there was some secret, a necessity for one, and he always spoke of you with as much respect as he would of his own mother.”

“I was sure I was right there,” said the young mother, calmly.

Then she lay back and was silent. She was hurt, and perhaps, in her case, not without a reason, at Lotty’s unexpressed doubts. She felt—as a sick man in a warm chamber may feel the cold draught of air from without—for the first time, the chilling doubts of her acquaintance, the trouble, anxiety, and coldness which she should meet with from her great connections and from the world.

So she lay back and was still, pressing her baby closer to her breast, and closing her eyes as if in sleep.

Lotty crept softly to her, divining her object,

and, kissing her softly on the forehead, withdrew from the room and ran down to her brother, who was in his little study, reading a book, lively at least to him—Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy."

"Oh, Keith! oh, Doctor!" said Lotty, for she sometimes addressed her brother by his title, "I am so glad. Our patient is so much better. I have been talking to her quite cheerfully."

"I am glad to hear it. You did not overtax her strength, I hope, or excite her by talking to her about any private affairs?"

Lotty felt she had been guilty in this way, and did not answer.

"Because," said the doctor, "if you did, Lotty, it is ungenerous, and, I am sorry to say, it exhibits a curiosity only worthy of a woman."

"You are complimentary to your mother and sister, Keith, at least."

"Truth, my dear sister," said the doctor, "is not always complimentary to us. Women are naturally gifted with curiosity, and when there is a mystery they will try to find it out."

"No wonder: you men occasion these mysteries

five times out of six, and we women naturally want to discover the truth of the matter. Now, about Mrs. Everingham, Keith, there is not any doubt but that there is a little secret——”

“Which it is not our business to fathom. can partly guess what it is: I believe that it was necessary. Some time ago I was led to think otherwise, and I was bitterly unhappy. I doubted one whom I never ought to have doubted, and I was punished for it by the misery that doubt occasioned.”

“*Eh, bien!* my dear brother,” returned Lotty, taking his hand, “you are like me. Had any one put that doubt plainly before me, I should have rejected it with eagerness and warmth; but still I felt it, and still its presence occasioned me sorrow and discomfort. At present it is at rest, and for ever.”

“Has she told you anything?”

“She has told me that she was the wife of Lord Somers; that is all, and that is enough for me.”

“Enough for you, perhaps, Lotty,” said Keith, giving his sister a kiss; “and enough for me too,

more than enough: what did I want with any assertion from the lips of that pure young mother, whom but to see was to love? and to love," he added, appropriating unconsciously a beautiful thought from Sir Richard Steele—"and to love her was a liberal education."

"Such power has beauty over the minds of men——" says Burton, in his "Anatomy;" but we need not continue the quotation. There can be no doubt that the doctor was in love; nor can there be a doubt that, with his usual want of luck, he had been forestalled in his love-making by a more fortunate rival.

"Yes," he continued, "it is enough for you, but it will not be enough for the people at Broad-acres, and for those amongst whom she should take her natural and lawful place."

"Ah, Keith," said his sister, "that is what I fear. How will she establish her rights?"

"Not only hers," said the doctor, "but those of her child. Were they only hers, I should hardly advise her to claim them. Of what use would an empty title be to her, save to remind her

of her loss? But it is not only her own rights that she has to establish, but those of her son, and of his son too."

He said this almost with a pang, as he thought of his own disappointed love. He continued, however, firmly and quietly—

"A lawyer will set this all right. There is the certificate, together with the usual witnesses of the marriage, no doubt; and although, when a great property like this is at stake, witnesses have been spirited away and certificates destroyed, yet the Earl is still alive. Lord Somers was, and very rightly too, his favourite son; a noble young fellow, who has never disobeyed his father, save in the instance of this secret marriage; and I do not for a moment doubt that, when everything is put plainly before the Earl, the lady up-stairs will be at once recognised as Lady Somers; and then," added the doctor, with somewhat of a sigh—"then there will be an end of our friendship, Miss Lotty; for I have no doubt that Lady Amethyst, and her little *entourage*, will take her in hand."

"Well, from what I have heard of Lady

Amethyst," said the doctor's sister, "the less she has to do with our patient the better."

"It will be a bitter disappointment to her—to Lady Amethyst, I mean," said the doctor; "for, on the day of *his* funeral, she began to lord it at the Abbey. Her husband is a poor creature by the side of his imperious wife."

"Ah, me!" said Lotty, "what a deal of trouble our poor patient will have to go through!"

"So we all have in this world," said the doctor, putting his hand on his heart, as if to feel an old scar.

"But we must bear these troubles," said Lotty. "If we face them, they run away from us. Trouble is like a London fog, quite local: if we move a very little way out of its range, we shall find a bright sunny day with blue sky, and the birds twittering and singing, maybe, in the autumn warmth."

"A very pretty simile; but about our patient: you, I am sure, were not so unfeeling as to ask her anything directly."

"No," said Lotty, promptly; "it came out in

conversation, what I told you ; and then the poor lady closed her eyes and slept. She is very weak and ill, Doctor."

"Sadly so," said Keith. "She has not much more life in her than the baby has, and that is, indeed, little. Both mother and child hang together by a thread. Oh, if Lady Amethyst knew this ! I believe, now, that a thoroughly strong-minded woman, with vigorous determination and cruel mind, could commit two murders by bouncing into our patient's room and frightening her, or scolding her out of her life ; and, if she died, farewell to the babe's life too."

"Luckily," said Lotty Morton, "there are two or three persons here who will prevent any intrusion of that sort. Lady Somers is quite safe under your roof ; but you, my dear brother, have a very unpleasant duty to perform."

"I know I have," said Keith, shrugging his shoulders.

"You have to go and see Lord Bradstock."

"Yes ; I know that well enough ; and to tell him and the amiable Lady Amethyst that he has

a grandson and heir born to the earldom. That will be pleasant."

"Nevertheless, you must do it; and, as poor papa said so often, when was there a Morton who ever shrunk from his duty?"

"Don't mention his name, Lotty. I know I should like to shrink from mine, in many instances, but I must go forward. In this case, now, I am waiting for information, and for proofs of my assertions, and here is my patient so ill that I dare not say anything to her. When I go to Broadacres what am I to say when his lordship, as he very naturally will, demands a copy of the marriage certificate?"

"It's plain you cannot go yet, Keith," returned his sister, after a pause, during which she had been thinking very seriously. "We must possess our souls with patience: that's the only cure for it. Thank God, we have a good cause."

"The best of causes," said her brother; "the cause of the orphan and the widow."

That was all that was said about the matter then. Brother and sister thoroughly understood each

other, and were determined to do their best to aid one so friendless as the poor lady up-stairs. Keith, on his part, resolved to go as soon as he could to Lord Bradstock, and acquaint him with the fact that his son was married. He did not think for a moment that his lordship was in ignorance of some kind of connection existing between Lord Somers and the lady for whom he had perilled his life. In the country rumours are sure to fly about; but, with a curious inconsistency, these rumours reach the ears of those whom they most immediately concern last of all. Keith Morton felt that he had thrust upon him a difficult task, and that he should need all his thoughts and diplomacy to manage it.

CHAPTER II.

AT SPES, NON FRACTA.

CROSBIE VIVYAN HOPE, Vivyan Crosbie Hope, Hope Crosbie Vivyan, lastly, Sir Crosbie Vivyan, Bart. The family had married cousin and cousin, and had kept the property in a ring-fence—a ring-fence, that is, made by one small gold circle—unbroken and unchanged.

To say it was an old family, in the sense applied by some novelists, would be to say that which is untrue. As regards thorough antiquity, a Jew, a Switzer, a Welshman, a Cornish miner, or a Wallachian peasant would each have exceeded it in its unbroken descent. English descent and English heraldry are, after all, not such great things as some people take them for.

Nevertheless, as the world goes, this family was old, and prided itself on its antiquity.

It gave proof of being old by every now and then being unproductive and childless in its male line; then a cousin of the family would take the descent, put one name before the other, and continue in a different line.

It was a proud family, this three-twisted knot of the Hopes, Crosbies, and Vivyans, which for years had been so tightly tied; simply proud, not good. It had continued to exist from the time when, by a lucky chance, it had been able and willing to buy its baronetcy of King Charles, and had settled down in the country, scarcely ever stirring from its seat, and certainly never regenerating the nation with poets, statesmen, or philosophers. It was, perhaps, too lazy to mingle in politics, perhaps too poor.

There was another cause for retirement. In its own little village its word was law. The old place of the Crosbie Vivyans, with its grand avenue, its chestnut-trees, its peacock, small fountain, and cool lawn, were, in the eyes of the countrymen,

and in their simple eyes alone, as grand as a king's palace; and all those born at Crosbie confessed that, in after-life, they never met with any place which pleased them so much. The Queen's castle at Windsor sunk into insignificance, in the sage estimation of these happy villagers, when compared with the curious old trim gardens and quaint and quiet manor-house at Crosbie.

About one hundred and fifty years before the commencement of our story one Crosbie Vivyan, born a Hope, took it into his head to study heraldry. Whilst the English nation was fired by the continued victories of Marlborough, somewhat to the neglect of the true heroes of the country, such as Sir George Rook and his blue-jackets, this Crosbie Vivyan was deep in the art of blazonry. By the time that the Duke had ratted from the Tory interest to that of the Whigs, Crosbie Vivyan, in his quiet retreat, began to understand what a chevron, a bend, a sinople, or a bezant meant. He then went into colours, furs, and tinctures, and the hidden meaning of the wondrous art, and by the time of the Union found that he was a very fair herald.

The use to which he applied his knowledge of this science was peculiar. He wanted to leave his mark on the house, and so, hired a carver from London, and stuck about the old walls of Crosbie the products of his labours; these products generally being large copies of the crest and motto of the Hope family, which he, as a Vivyan, had assumed. It was—

“A globe fractured, azure, and above it a rainbow, proper, terminating in clouds. Motto: ‘At spes, non fracta.’”

So, according to this proud cognizance, the globe was to be broken, but the Crosbie hopes and Hopes could *not* be broken. In the carving the fracture was represented as having taken place. A huge piece out of the arctic region, carrying away even Spitzbergen and an ice-island or so, had disappeared, but still the rainbow of hope shone above it.

The globe, with its parallels of latitude and longitude, with its zones and tropics, shone out carved and varnished over doorway and mantelshelf, above windows, in the centre of panels, over

archways in the gardens and gateways in the courts of Crosbie. Above it was the rainbow, beneath it the motto of the family; a broken globe, but even then unbroken hope.

It really seemed that the spirit of the motto had communicated itself to the Vivyans. Man and child, by looking upon it and repeating it, became wonderfully hopeful. They lost their quiet country repose; they launched out into speculations, and they found, as the result of these speculations, that field after field disappeared from the estate.

What remained of it was mortgaged; servant after servant was sent away; horses and carriages were sold; and at last the baronet, with his hope perfectly unbroken, but his own little world completely smashed, left Crosbie Vivyan, having had it let to strangers and the proceeds paid into lawyers' hands, and departed Heaven knew whither.

The place of the baronet's present dwelling was a mystery at Crosbie. If a king makes a small hole in this world and falls through it, we generally trace his majesty after his sad fall and

momentary disappearance. Sometimes he is a schoolmaster; sometimes a saint, living at the expense of the monastery he adorns; sometimes a wretched exile, who lives at the expense of another monarch, whom he gets into trouble. The first is the most honourable and rare. It is very seldom that a king will do anything for himself, and in this respect baronets resemble kings. They will *not* work, if they can help it; therefore it was that good folks in the neighbourhood, with some knowledge of such facts, were divided as to the method of living adopted by Crosbie Vivyan, Bart. One said that he was a billiard-marker; another said that he drove a coach in the north of England; another that he had gone to India and had entered the army, but then he was too old for that active occupation.

Neither of these reports was true; and, as a reader is always allowed to know more than the rest of the world, my readers shall see what has become of the baronet.

Lying to the back of the New Road, and running in the direction of the place where the once famous

Belle Isle existed, but which now is blotted out of everybody's recollection by the Great Northern Railway, is a neighbourhood quaint in its nature and in its name. It is called the "Brill."

At the time the reader is expected to visit it, it wore something of rurality about it still. It possessed an Oval and a Crescent or so, and at short intervals were semi-detached houses with back to back, and, consequently, with their neat little gardens lying in front of the houses, sideways to the spectator. A single pear-tree, now and then an apple-tree, or, it may be, a poplar, or, in rare cases, an almond-tree, formed the chief ornament in the garden, in which, however, the proprietor, with a still juvenescent hope, would every spring place a few geraniums and calceolaria, which the proximate winter would systematically and utterly demolish. It was, of course, in the Belgravia of the Brill that such eccentricities on the part of the inhabitants took place—eccentricities for which we must pardon them, as they prove their irrepressible love of nature.

Nearer towards the New Road, and forming

part—as, indeed, we believe the Brill does—of Somers Town, ran a narrow street with small houses; a street which does not now, nor did it then, bear the best reputation. The most respectable houses were let to proprietors of certain shops, to which, from unknown reasons, the north-country name of “tiddlewink” has been given. The articles sold in these establishments were various in quantity and bad in quality. The lady of the house, had she been asked, would have described herself as being in the “general way;” and, if that were a true description, the natural deduction was that the “general way” was a bad one and one that did not flourish. Indeed, the police-magistrates seemed to fall into this deduction very readily.

“She sold this silk gownd,” or dripping, or sheet-lead, or, in fact, anything the reader can imagine, the policeman would depose, holding up the article; upon which the magistrate would say to a person living in the Brill—

“Oh, you are the person, eh?”

“Yes, your worship.”

“You keep a——”

“General shop, your worship; in the general line, that’s what I deals in.”

It is to be noted that the witness was generally in a hurry to supply this kind of information.

“I suppose that means a ‘fence?’” his worship would immediately say, and the attendant satellite in the blue coat and stiff stock would at once corroborate his worship’s suspicions.

It was over a “general shop,” in that part of the house dignified as a second floor, but in reality nothing more than the garret, that an old and important acquaintance of ours is found lodging. It is no one less than Pegwell Bay, Esq., formerly *attaché* of the great Warlock of the South.

Pegwell, as the Warlock moved northward in his triumphant career, had had yearnings for his home, yearnings which every good man has or ought to have, and had at last deserted the conjurer, bringing with him a purse, for Pegwell, munificently furnished. Pegwell, as we know, was valuable in his way, but he was not everybody’s money.

The two rooms wherein he dwelt were very

neat and clean, and Pegwell was not alone. Nor was one of the gentler sex his companion; for Pegwell had long ago ceased to dream of it; but one of his own rough, rude—you may apply as many vituperative terms to them as Lady Clawpole does to her uncongenial husband—one of his own sex, represented by a gentle boy.

A gentle boy, with a fine, handsome, thoughtful face, not unlike Pegwell's, but as much more handsome as it was younger. The very hair, which grew long and fell upon the shoulders, was gentle in its character; the eyes were gentle, the mouth, the nose, the texture of the skin as gentle as a lady's; the forehead gentle too, and, as our novelists are fond of describing foreheads, "full of thought."

Pegwell seemed delighted with the boy, and—it was his first morning at home—showed the lad, upon a map, the various counties he had travelled through, with what he called a commercial speculation. He then examined him in a few scraps of Latin, which the boy answered well for his age, which was no greater than fourteen. Pegwell next

presented him with the large sum of five shillings, all new and bright, and told him to spend them like a gentleman. The poor old fellow kissed his son, and seemed as delighted with him as a child would be with a new toy.

“What did you when I was out, my child? You must have been very lonely. Did you think I was long? I thought of you after every night’s work, and prayed for you too.”

“You were very long,” said the boy; “but I stayed at school as long as I could, then I came home and ate some bread-and-milk for tea; my dinner I had, as you know, at school, and very good it was; and then I quietly put myself to bed, saying my prayers first, and I need not say I prayed for you. But I was very happy, that I was.”

“Poor little chap! poor little lonely chap!” said Pegwell, patting the little thoughtful fellow’s head. “You have pluck, sir; you must have pluck. You are a gentleman. So you know Latin, eh? Look here.” The old gentleman stumped to his sanctum, which was merely a pretty large cupboard, and brought out something like a large dish,

but which proved to be a wood carving of a broken globe, with a motto under it. "Read that, and construe it."

"'At spes, non fracta.' But hope, not fractured—is that it?" Boy-like, he took the nearest word to the Latin.

"'The world may break: our hope remains,'" said Pegwell, theatrically, as he patted the boy's head in recognition of his scholarship. "It is the motto of our house, my boy; one of the oldest families in Europe. Your name is the same as mine. When I die, my boy, you will succeed at least to the title, and become Sir Crosbie Vivyan, Baronet, of Crosbie, Sussex."

"Unbroken hope! unbroken hope!"

From his depth of degradation and poverty the old baronet flashed up, and he walked before his son, transformed to a better man, dreaming on his motto.

Who shall say there is no virtue in pride of race, or no good in heraldry? This poor old gentleman, who, in addition to the ancient blood

of the Crosbie Vivyan Hopes, had inherited a great deal of their laziness, and a slight inclination for what the teetotallers call stimulating drinks, had, when he found that he could not live another year, hardly another month, in the old house, quietly taken counsel with himself and departed. He had a little son with him from whom he would not part, and for whom he had vowed to rebuild the old house of the Vivyans.

But, as we know, or ought to know, country baronets are not much clearer in their ideas than country farmers : the squire has often more brains than the knight. Bemused and troubled, the old baronet did not know which way to turn. He was not able to get any place, for he had dropped his rank, and really, in his pride, stood a very fair chance of being starved. In his wanderings he had the misfortune to be run over, and his leg broken so severely that he was obliged to consent to amputation. He then took himself and his son to the sea-side, where he let lodgings, but found it a losing speculation ; and, what with very little money, a wooden leg, and a young son, whom he had

placed at school, the present representative of the Vivyans stood a chance of selling the old place right out or being ruined.

He was in this dilemma when the Warlock and his crew came down to a neighbouring watering-place to exhibit their wonders, and, finding the town rather full, took up their lodgings with Mr. Palmer, as he styled himself, in his neat little house at Pegwell Bay.

The free-living and off-handed Warlock was making plenty of money, and the poor lodging-house keeper was making none. Mr. Palmer came to a crash, and his goods, much to the Warlock's inconvenience and his own grief, were sold off. In his distress, having, indeed, but very few shillings in his pocket after the sale, Mr. Palmer applied to the man whom he had seen apparently so well supplied with money, and told him part of his story, concealing, however, his name; and the Warlock, who was a very good-tempered fellow, agreed to employ the old gentleman, who had fallen desperately low down in the world.

To the varying fortunes of the Warlock, Pegwell

Bay—such was the name bestowed on him by the conjurer—clung for about three years, during which he managed to scrape and save a fair sum of money, with which he returned to London, determined to place his son in some large office; that of an engineer being not only his ambition, but his son's choice. If the boy turned out a genius, the fortunes of the house would be once more raised; for, during the whole time he was away, it is needless to say that the rents of the few acres and the old house, which alone remained of the once large estates of the Crosbie Vivyan Hopes, had remained untouched in the hands of the solicitors of the last of the family.

To those gentlemen, in the morning, the old baronet, dressed in a shabby suit of black, but looking very much more like an ideal baronet than on the day when first we met him, went, and in a long conversation unfolded his plan.

Happily for him, the solicitors, who knew the rank of their old client and his true worth—for had he not determined to sacrifice himself for his child?—very readily entertained his projects. A large

firm of practical engineers, who were undertaking some very extensive works, had become, as many other firms do become, under an obligation to their solicitors, and these gentlemen knew that they could place any *protégé* of theirs with them. So Crosbie Hope Vivyan went away comforted and pleased, and in a few days had the happiness of seeing his gentle son in the office of Messrs. Sims, Braithwaite, and Co., blundering over large plans, studying engineering and mathematics, and, as he fondly hoped, in a fair way of rebuilding, by the time he should arrive at middle age, the fortunes of his fallen house.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

WHILE our good doctor and his sister are meditating how they can best serve the young widow and her little son, and time flies rapidly over the heads of all the persons in this story, we will turn backwards to take up a tangled thread in the history of Herbert Stannard.

It was not without a certain delight that this jealous and morbidly minded young man felt that he could leave a blood-spotted handkerchief in his wife's room as a testimony of his health.

"She will think," said he to himself, "that she has killed me, or that I am about to die; but I will not: I will live on, to spite her."

It was curious that he never distrusted her in the very midst of his jealousy, and that he formed a very fair estimate of her all the while she was playing with his feelings. The real difference between the two—a very great difference, to be sure, between any husband and any wife—was a want of love on the wife's part. It is more common than is generally admitted. We have, in nine cases out of ten—for such is the practical working of the plan in society—debarred women from making any selection in their husbands; and the consequence is that many, a great deal too many, marry for position and not for love.

Such was the case with Safta.

“Bah!” said her husband, as he struck across the New Road, and, calling at the “George,” in Shouldham Street, Bryanston Square, relieved himself with a dram and lighted his never-failing pipe—“Bah! the woman cares no more for that old put of a captain than she does for me. She will fool him in the long-run: I know her little game.”

He sat there, in the tap room, meditating his

wrongs, and chewing the cud of a sweet and bitter fancy, in which the bitter very greatly predominated. He never doubted his wife's virtue for a moment.

"Love!" he cried, indignantly—"Love! there's no more love in her than there is in the heart of a cabbage. Besides, she would not love such an ape as the captain."

He was quite right. Miss Safta's vice was ambition. She had married her young husband because she knew him to be clever, and she believed that he would raise himself in life. Had he done so, she would have applauded him to the echo, and have made him work like a horse. Our excellent young friend preferred, like many another capable man, loafing to working. He had, moreover, indulged deeply in that vice of indolent men, smoking; and even while he sat there, meditating his great revenge, and turning over in his mind the best way of burning down the captain's house or his theatre, the nicotine had an effect on him, and he became quiet and almost contented.

"Well," he muttered to himself—"Well,

perhaps I am well rid of that unquiet woman. I never was happy with her; and I must say"—he added this after a pause—"I never shall be happy without her. But, bah! what is happiness?"

He gave a great puff of smoke as he said this, a turbid ejaculation which marked his approval of the conclusion that he had come to, and the fact that he considered happiness as a mere myth, an abstraction which could never be realized. Presently he grew a little more sedate, from the effects of his pipe and his pint of porter.

"If I were sure I could burn down the house and reduce the captain to a cinder, I would do it," he muttered; "but I would not risk my neck to do it. Punishment of vice," said he, after another pause, as he put both of his feet on the hob, "is sure to follow its practice. By jingo, that sentence would do for a school-girl's copy-book! What a fancy it is that the wise ones have of setting them moral copies! I declare I never pass a string of school-girls but I think of the

misery the little chits will occasion. And yet, if a man killed them, he would be hanged. Why, we ought to crush them like a nest of cockatrices."

After giving vent to this mild sentence and coughing a little, he put his hand to his pocket for his handkerchief, and recollected that he had left it. A shade of real pain passed over the young fellow's moving and expressive face. He loved Safta truly, and, had he had but a wise guide, a calm, good companion in her, would have been a good man.

He had not taken more than two or three more puffs at his pipe when a shaggy dog shuffled into the room, and, looking up at the young man's face, in which he recognised that of an old friend, gave a short "yap" to wake him up from his abstraction.

The dog was a long-haired fellow of the colour of whity-brown paper. He was not of exactly pure breed, but it is but justice to him to say that both his parents had been of rank amongst their kith and kin, and were highly intellectual individuals, and that their son had inherited the greater part of their accumulated intellects. As

male creatures take much after the mother, I am inclined to think that his estimable mother was of Scotch extraction, her ancestors probably being "located" at an early period in Shetland, while the father was an old English terrier of sterling stuff and good courage. The son, who in the lamp-light looked somewhat like a rather dirty white muff on four legs, wore whiskers, moustache, and very shaggy eyebrows, after the fashion of his mother's family, and had a great deal of long hair about his body and a perfect plume of hair upon his tail, which he elevated, as a proud dog who had nothing to be ashamed of might do.

He was the most familiar and affectionate of dogs to all gentlemen within the circle of his master's acquaintance, but to others beyond that large coterie he was insultingly supercilious. He would station himself on sunshiny mornings at the gate of the forecourt of his master's town house, which we have before described as being in the Brill, and look at all dogs and men with a knowing, but contemptuous air. Now and then he would haul up a smaller or bigger dog, as the case

might be, and, after exchanging a growl or two, and walking round him on the points of his toes, would let him go. It was supposed by those who knew Trim best that he did this to manifest to the world the fact that the other dog was a suspicious character; but beyond this he never interfered with street dogs.

He did not rely much upon his master, and was independent enough to take his walks by himself; principally confining himself to making calls upon the butcher and other tradesmen, the boys employed by whom he condescended to know, on the understanding that they now and then pampered his appetite—for he was a dog of taste—with a few tit-bits. He was well known to the many children in the neighbourhood, some of whom he was very partial to; and those he was fond of he would see safely to school when the morning was fine. With the others he was only coldly polite. He recognised the fact that they were children, and, as such, not so objectionable to him as grown-up people; but that was all. When he was tired of their society, or careless of the bit of cake which they carried to

school, he would turn round and walk back silently and with an air of dignity to his door.

He was, above all things, a dog with a purpose, a happy fellow with an eye to business. He never lost time like Stannard, never smoked pipes till he was bemused and stupid, seldom put himself into rages—causeless, bitter intoxications of passion—never went out, even for his constitutional walk of a morning when the door was first opened, without an evident knowledge of purpose. “He was going somewhere, and he went; and he knew,” said an admiring butcher to a green-grocer’s assistant, “where he was going as well as a Christian.”

“Well, he ain’t worry ’andsome,” said the green-grocer. “He’s too big for my fancy; he’s too big for a spannel, more approaches the size of a setter; he ain’t short-’aired, an’ he ain’t quite long. If he was one or t’other, I’d steal ’im.”

“Steal ’im, would you?” said the butcher. “He’d steal yer, Trim; d’ye hear that?”

Trim looked at one and then the other, and knowingly protruded his tongue, whether as

a hint for a piece of meat, or in disdain at the proposition, it was hard to say.

“There, now, blessed if he don’t know what you say! He’s a clever dog, he is: perhaps he wouldn’t win a prize at Jemmy Shaw’s show, but he’s as wise as one of the ’postles. Steal him! I should like to see you steal Trim.”

As the dog’s name had been twice mentioned, and he presumed the conversation was becoming personal, he quietly wiped the butcher’s sawdust from each of his four feet in succession, and departed. To steal him certainly was a vain boast. Trim’s affections were firmly fixed upon his two masters, the gentle boy and our old friend Pegwell Bay, with whom he had condescended to dwell ever since he was a puppy.

When the dog had given the short “yap” which called Stannard’s attention, he immediately turned round and went to meet his master, to notify the fact that in the little parlour there was an acquaintance, or friend, perhaps, of both of them.

Stannard on his part recognised the dog, and, changing almost immediately his downcast look,



cried out in a congratulatory tone some sort of greeting to Pegwell Bay which had reference to his being a "gallant charger," and, indeed, put into his words a great deal more warmth than casual friends in society put. There is this good in Bohemianism, that they who are imbued with its spirit long remain boys. There is no stiffness, no *hauteur*; although, when required, Bohemians can assume those unpleasant qualities, as some dear friends who have trod the magic shores of Bohemia, and have since risen in the world, have shown.

Both Pegwell Bay and Stannard were by force of nature Bohemians. Some men are so, and some of the best and worst fellows the world has known: some Bohemians are blackguards, some are gentlemen. Harry Fielding was a specimen of this class; and, with all his faults, Charles Churchill too; whilst Savage, in whose honour our young *litterateurs* have named a club of Bohemians, was, from top to toe, from outside skin to heart's core, a blackguard. So, in the little parlour of the public-house in Shouldham Street, there were the two sorts very strongly marked. Pegwell Bay was the

gentlemanly Bohemian, giving way to his old lazy tricks of haunting taverns and observing human nature with that half-pensive, half-forgetful air of melancholy which was so sweet to the lazy old man; while Stannard, in spite of his handsome face, noble forehead, and delicate make, was nothing less than the blackguard Bohemian meditating revenge for his wrongs in a dirty way.

Pegwell, following his dog, which took a pretty fair estimate of his master and his friend, came in heavily, but, to Stannard's surprise, without the stumping of a wooden leg. A rather shapely limb—in fact, a little too shapely to be real—in an uncreased boot, accompanied his live leg and brought him into the parlour.

The old gentleman had been to visit his son, who lived with his master in Montague Place, and who had already given proofs both of diligence and capacity. Pegwell, or, more properly, Crosbie Hope Vivyan, looked very much better than when Stannard last saw him.

His ample head was surmounted by very sleekly brushed hair; his eyes were brighter and more

hopeful, his bearing erect, and his clothes fairly worn, but good in make and fashion.

“Hallo, Peggy!” cried Stannard. “Why, how now? The earth hath spirits as the water hath!”

“We will mix them,” said the baronet, taking off his low-crowned hat and drawing a Windsor chair to the fire. “I hope the Warlock is making his fortune in his native country. I saw ‘The Era’ the other day, and he was at Perth.”

“Ay,” said Stannard; “at Aberdeen now. He talks of going over to Glasgow, and thence making his way to Dublin, and, *viâ* Cork, to the United States. That is the place to make a fortune.”

“You must be a conjurer to make one anywhere now,” said Pegwell, lighting a pipe, which he had filled previously. “Do you go with him?”

“No; he wants me to do so; but I have other fish to fry.”

As he said this a dark shade passed over the face of the young man, and he looked wearied and ill.

“Nothing serious, I hope?” asked the baronet, giving his first puff. “They sell good beer here,

I think, and—I've had a long walk—I think I will take a little. I couldn't resist dropping in, for I've been playing respectability for some few hours, and I wanted to unbend a bit. It was lucky I did, for I wanted to see you or some old friend."

"Very kind of you to say so, Peggy," returned Stannard; "and I want to see you too. I have a lot to tell you; only I can't, I really can't."

"Well, I will not press you to do so. I've seen that you have been ill at ease for some months. Skittles, you know, hinted that you were not quite well situated at home; and home is a sacred place, which no curiosity has a right to invade."

"By George, Peggy," said Stannard, looking into the old man's kindly face, "one would swear that you had been born a gentleman!"

"Perhaps I have," said his companion, with a smile; "and, if so, perhaps you will allow me to ask what is a poor gentleman to do if he wants to get his living honestly, and don't know what to work at?"

"Ah, I see you're apologizing for joining us: you are not ashamed of us, I hope?"

Stannard said this with something of a sneer.

"No; once a Bohemian, always one," returned Pegwell. "On the contrary, I wanted to see you."

"I thought something had turned up when I saw you," said Stannard. "You are like a man with a landed estate" (here he pointed to Pegwell's new leg): "I see you've cut your timber to clear a mortgage."

"Not a bit," answered his companion, with a smile: "this is only my town and Sunday leg. I can't do rough work, such as canvassing for the Warlock, in it. But when I call upon swells I put it on. Rather a handsome affair, is it not?"

He lifted the leg carefully and crossed it over his knee, much as Mr. Punch does in his theatre, when, as the beholder may notice, that gentleman has a little difficulty in getting his small but shapely legs in the front of his stage.

"Now," said he, kindly, "I am a little better off than I was, and I don't think I shall join our little party again. It was all very well when we

were together; and the wizard saved me at a critical period; but the trial is to a certain extent over."

Stannard yawned. He was thinking of his own trial, and, being a very selfish person indeed, he was so full of his own troubles that he seldom thought of any one else's; whilst Pegwell, with a heart open as the day, quite forgot personal griefs in thinking of those of others.

"But," continued the elder Bohemian, "it is not about myself that I want to speak. I have a commission for you, which will take you out of town some few days, perhaps."

"What is it?" said Stannard, pricking up his ears, like Trim under the table, who was listening to the people who "dropped" into the bar for pints of beer or "goes" of gin, whose legs he could see through the half-opened door, and to the patterns of whose trousers he now and then took a violent objection. "First we are captain, and then we are reduced to the ranks, in Bohemia, my gallant boy. I recollect that one of my literary friends used to tell me that one day he would be

editing a journal and exercising the most tyrannical supervision over a friend who contributed, and that the next he would be, with bated breath and whispering humbleness, seeking admission as a casual contributor."

"Very likely," said the baronet; "but this, my dear young sir"—the old gentleman had the advantage of age over the younger one, and read him like a book—"this is not a commission from me——"

"Which I should be proud to execute," whispered Stannard, who was nevertheless greatly relieved.

"But a speculation," continued Pegwell.

"Aha!" cried the other, assuming a theatrical air; "methinks I like this better. 'Twill be well. When shall I start and do my 'spriting gently?"

"Oh, when you like; but I must consult you first about it. You remember the last place we put up at, the 'Falcon,' at Bilscombe Regis?"

"Perfectly," answered his friend.

"And also, of course, the sad termination of

that grand day, when the king of the county had the heir-apparent slain, to the great grief of most of us, and of his subjects."

"Well," said Stannard, philosophically, "I can't say it was much to my grief. It broke up our campaign. I dare say it was grievous enough to the young fellow who was killed. It is not very pleasant, when one is so well placed in life, to have to lose it all. Now, a poor fellow like I am, or an old chap like you—that is, if you have not come into your fortune with your cork leg—it would be different with us."

"Precisely so," assented his companion; "but, you see, Fortune, or Providence, does not see things in the view which we take of them. You remember how, after seeing the young lord borne off the field, we watched the cause of all the accident brought to condign punishment and very justly slaughtered."

"I'm sure I thought so," said Stannard, referring to the justice of the case. "I remember, however, that you had not cause to be entirely grateful, for you were knocked head over heels

and nearly trampled upon by the hob-nail shoes of the country yokels."

"Precisely so. Now that is the little incident that I want you to recollect. Bear that in mind, and all will go well in my narrative. I am not a very good one at telling a story. You will please to think of me as upon the ground; not a very nice position for a one-legged man, to be sure. Well, my natural impulse was to stretch out my hands, and one of the first things I caught hold of was a purse."

"By Jove!" said Stannard: "I should like to be knocked down every day at the same price; that is, supposing the purse had anything in it."

"Well, I very naturally put it in my pocket to examine it at my leisure. It was a lady's purse."

"That's bad," said Stannard: "they don't very often have much about them. They carry a few shillings, a fourpenny-piece, and a crooked sixpence; all the weight in the purse is halfpence; and then such purses snap unpleasantly with a steel trap, which breaks your finger-nails and sets your teeth on edge. What fools women are!"

“But they don’t make the purses.”

“No; but they buy them when they are made: they have not sense enough to make even such things. It is the folly of their choice which disgusts me.”

The old baronet looked at his companion, and thought that he was a “cad,” although the word was, perhaps, at that time hardly in fashion, and then continued—

“I am sorry you dislike women so, because it is to serve one even more than to serve yourself that I want you to travel down to our old place. The purse was a leathern purse—a purse and pocket-book too—a pretty toy, which one would only buy for a lady. It contained no money, but it contained what is worth infinitely more, a copy of a marriage certificate.”

“Hey-day! then it fell out of the young lord’s pocket. You know they did say something down there about his unwillingness to marry; not that I pay much attention to these things.”

“Nor I. It struck me, however, that some one may be in great trouble about this. I don’t know

whether it be the case or not, but, at any rate, it is worth while going a trip there and seeing Lord Bradstock about it."

"Perhaps he won't thank me for it. Was there not a second son?"

"Yes; Andrew. You remember a young fellow, not very handsome nor very aristocratic, who lounged in and out of the 'Falcon' when we were there? That was Andrew Bradstock; and, if there be no use for this, he is now Lord Somers, and heir-apparent to an earldom."

"Then that dear document would be cheap to him for a hundred pounds; or, if the screw were quietly put on, five hundred?" asked Stannard, his cupidity aroused, and looking very much like a rogue.

"Look you, Mr. Stannard," said Peggy, sternly: "you and I do not well understand each other. You are now my inferior: a little while ago I was yours. I am one of those persons who believe that honesty is the best policy all over the world—ay, and under it too."

"Of course—of course," said his companion,

quickly changing his tone: "you want me to take the document to the right person. Now, perhaps, you will tell me who he or she is."

"That's just what I don't know. I've found something: somebody has lost it. There is no legal receptacle for *cosi perduti*, or we might place it there; but it seems certain to me that some one may be grieving for the loss of this, and I want you to find out who that some one is, and to share the reward with me. As for keeping you quite honest, Mr. Stannard, in this matter," said Peggy, looking at the young fellow's clever, yet roguish eyes, "I've been and examined the original. The church is not a hundred miles from here, and I dare say half a crown would get me as good a copy as this is; so we will not think, if you please, that it is more valuable than it is in reality, although the poor young wife, or widow, will be very glad to see it again. There are one or two letters, and a little miniature portrait, for which she may reward you."

The old gentleman took, as he spoke, the red morocco pocket-book purse from his pocket, and,

opening it, took from it a small miniature painting, set for a brooch or bracelet, of young Lord Somers. There was the face, brilliant in colour, full of life and health, the face upon which Emmy had so often gazed in the absence of the original. He then opened the copy of the certificate and showed it to Stannard.

“Now,” said he, “look here at the witnesses; the clerk of the church and the pew-opener, no doubt. This was a marriage done in a hurry and secretly. No one would think of going to St. —the-Martyr, Bloomsbury, for a fashionable wedding. Well, I have found out that all I presumed is true, and it only remains for me to send this little purse and its contents back to the owner: will you take it?”

“To be sure I will,” said Stannard; “but where’s the ready to come from? I got a letter from my patriotic friend, but money does not last very long with you and me, Peggy.”

To the infinite astonishment of his friend, the elder Bohemian, looking round him carefully, took out an apparently well-filled pocket-book,

and gravely taking out a five-pound note, which he carefully selected as if he had others of more magnitude to choose from, and shaking it so as to make the crisp paper rattle, put it into Stannard's hands.

The recipient was so astonished that he looked at the donor with some curiosity.

"By Jove," Peggy, said he, "something wonderful has happened! Has some rich relation died? have you robbed a bank? or have things taken a turn?"

"My dear young sir," said Pegwell, tenderly taking him by the hand, "I am not so flush of money that I can afford to throw away five-pound notes, and I shall look to you for repayment if all turns out well. But, in addition to this, I may tell you one thing. Things have taken a turn: they are not now what they were. In the good time coming it is probable that, if the turn continues, Richard will be himself again. Here is my card: I hope to hear from you soon. Adieu; that is, good evening."

He took off his hat like the most polished

gentleman in Europe, and bowed gravely, and, in company with his four-footed friend, withdrew, leaving Herbert Stannard very much astonished, and somewhat conscious of "playing second fiddle," as he called it, to Pegwell Bay.

The young man looked after the old one with some surprise, as he and his dog walked away in the direction of the New Road. "I never quite could understand that old gentleman," said he to himself, "and I think I am further off than ever now. I wonder whether he has come into a fortune! Well, be it what it may, something has turned up which may put a little money in my pocket; and I will try to divert it thitherward, at all events, in spite of our friend's scruples."

CHAPTER IV.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

WHILE the pocket-book purse of Mrs. Everingham had been lying *perdu* in the pocket of the eccentric old baronet, the little garrison of Cold Blow were in a terrible way about its loss.

Mrs. Emmy had recovered, bodily, and was well enough in health to walk about the very un-horticultural-looking square yard which the doctor dignified as a garden, but her mind was by no means so strong as it should be. She had grown suspicious of everybody, and fancied that she had been robbed of her little red book-purse, which contained a document so precious and a portrait which she loved so much. She had had every

nook and corner of the Woodbines searched, but the book was not found, and its owner first let her suspicions fall upon the old cottager who once lived at that now desolate place, and next upon poor Mrs. Lapis, who was as innocent as a sucking dove.

As the suspicions grew up in the gentle, weak, and timorous mind, and vague doubts circulated in her brain, the poor lady began to doubt even her kind friends at the refuge they had so kindly provided for her ; and, at the same time, a phenomenon took place which is, I believe, well known to all those who study the human mind : she lost her memory, not of things passing around her, but of those which had happened antecedently to that great event which made her life a blank.

Had her memory remained clear, it would have been easy for her to have recalled that, on the day of the accident, she held in her hand, so careful and so jealous was she of them both, the certificate of her marriage and the portrait of her husband. In the rapid race which she had run to escape from danger she had held her treasure tightly enough ; but when she saw, with a great terror which paralysed

her, her husband fall, she had unwittingly flung the little book-purse from her, and it had fallen, as we have seen, into the hands of Pegwell Bay.

Anxious as he was, for his own purpose, or from some fear which he entertained of his father, to keep his marriage secret, Lord Somers had still been more anxious to provide against any shame or trouble falling on his wife, either in his absence, or in case of an accident in the hunting-field occurring to himself. He had, therefore, procured the marriage certificate, and had given it to Emmy, telling her to be most careful of it.

Satisfied with his love, and knowing him, as she often repeated to herself in his absence, to be the most generous and best of men, the young wife was ready to do anything which he suggested. She had, like most women, a profound respect for rank and position in the world; and the notion that the young Jupiter of Broadacres Park should have descended to her sphere and caught her up to his own filled her with such an intense respect for his generosity and munificence of spirit, that even a hint from him was law to her.

She never quite comprehended why her marriage had been a secret one. She knew that the heir to the great Earl was, to be sure, hardly to be married off like a mere commoner, without any preparation, and she knew also the impetuous and hasty disposition of her husband. Had she put those matters together, she might have arrived at the right conclusion. Felix Lord Somers was a very good young man in many points. Like all young men, however, he liked to please himself more than any one else in the world, although he never owned this to himself. Some things which the world can guess easily enough remain profound secrets during life to those most concerned about them. The young lord had been such a favourite with fortune and with nature, and presented such a favourable contrast to his brother, that all around him, and the very centre of the circle, namely, himself, gave him credit for being quite incapable of doing a selfish or an ungenerous action.

In marrying Miss Everingham he obeyed the dictates of his passion, and, as he thought, prudently concealed his marriage from his father for

a good purpose. There was no one in the world whom he would not have offended rather than that father who had, during his whole life, endeavoured to give him happiness and pleasure. Had he at once told Lord Bradstock of his passion, and introduced the object of it to him, it is probable that he would have gained his end just as easily. Neither the citizen-marriage of convenience nor the more aristocratic union was greatly to his lordship's taste, and he would have done very much indeed to make his son happy. But it was precisely the timidity arising from the fear of making his father unhappy which made Lord Somers take the hasty step he did ; and yet, with a blind indulgence of the love he bore his wife, he brought her to a little cottage on the very borders of his father's estate, where, of course, whispering tongues spread sad stories, which in due time reached his father's ears.

As these stories came unofficially, the old lord took no notice of them. Had he spoken to his son, an explanation would have occurred, and all would have been well ; but Lord Bradstock was too proud

to notice common rumours, and much too proud to stoop to inquire of any underlings of the mode of life lead by his son. Nor, indeed, in those days, if all that he heard whispered had been the truth, would the matter have occasioned much surprise or regret to his lordship. Young men of estate and fashion were young men, and a *liasion* of the sort hinted at rather added *éclat* to them than otherwise; so, unhappily, things were allowed to remain as they were. The father and son knew that there was something between them which should have been explained, and which grew every day more difficult of explanation, until the fatal accident on the Ryde took away from one of them, forever, the possibility of explanation.

Lord Somers had more than once hinted to his wife this difficulty, and she, to whom experience as a governess had not given a very high opinion of great people, had with a timid dread put off any explanation, and had remained satisfied with her sweet country home and the love of her husband.

There was indeed in it something beautiful and entrancing. There was there no intrusion of the

cold world. Everything was as fresh to the young lovers, as full of romance, as they could make it. Emmy was Psyche, with envious sisters, who would, if they only could, take away her Cupid from her; and Cupid, who came in at all times, when he was taking long rides, or when he managed to get lost in coming home from the hunt, snatched all his blisses with a kind of fearful joy, believing in the utter secrecy of his men, and fancying that, like another king, he stole unobserved to the bower of fair Rosamond; to him, indeed, a *Rosa Mundi*, the rose and flower of the world.

So the time passed. Every day was to be the last of this indulgence, and at each approach Emmy and her husband both drew back. When anything has been done in secret it is not very easy to bring it to light. Lord Somers had some idea, even when riding so swiftly to defend his wife, of bringing her back in triumph, and presenting her to his father. We have seen the result of his good intentions.

The widow felt all this, and felt that, although

she was much to blame for this concealment, yet that, after all, the indulgence of her husband was but a cruel kindness. Things had happened so. She had desired too selfishly to keep him to herself; and now she did not even possess the benefit of his name, at any rate in the opinion of the world.

The very joy which Lotty Morton and her brother suffered to become apparent when she said she was married was a proof that they held it possible that she was not so. She felt that she was now single, against the world.

In this state the loss of her little book was a great blow to her, and more than ever because it was accompanied by that suspense of memory of which we spoke.

She searched and searched again, without hope and without system. Then she sat down quietly, to remember, or, rather, to try and recall the name of the church where the marriage took place.

But all efforts were unavailing. She failed to recall the name of the church so completely that she doubted if she had ever heard it. She remem-

was the interval between the journey, the kind of carriage, the narrow streets of London, and some other things, and a question: but whether the church was in the year the square, or whether there were objects that had passed like a dream before her in the wedding morning, she failed entirely to recall.

Her thoughts took in her husband, her knowledge that at the time he would make her marriage public, and driven from her mind any necessity for providing the strict ceremony. She was anything but a woman of business; she had given herself to her husband in all purity and simplicity, and what he had done was, in her eyes, perfect in its wisdom. She had, therefore, never thought of any doubt or precaution against deceit.

She could only remember that she loved him. When she tried to recall a locality she only saw his fond and loving face; when she wished to summon up the face of the clergyman she only remembered the feeling of awe which took possession of her during the service, and the prayers she made with him as they knelt together. In fact,

so intensely had she felt the responsibility of her situation that she had failed to note anything that passed around her.

No; to think any more was useless. The young widow rose and went to the window and opened it, looking over the beechen woods which lay at the bottom and climbed half-way up the hill. It was a peaceful autumn afternoon; the sun was shining on the soft landscape, and everything seemed happy; everything except one person—no-body less than Doctor Sangrado—who was pacing to and fro on the little gravel walk which ran round his house, his head bent, and in deep thought.

He was thinking of the young widow. She knew that well enough. She knew also that he loved her and was entirely devoted to her, and she received his love as a property to which she was born, and had a perfect right to; just as some proud monarch might look upon the devotion of a poor vassal to his high and mighty person.

She had no idea of pitying him, or, indeed, of doing anything to return that love. Her heart was entirely another's. But it struck her that

Doctor Sangrado might be extremely useful to her and that other monarch who lay peacefully sleeping in the cradle, and who had succeeded to the throne of her heart as soon as his father had died. *Le roi est mort : vive le roi!* Mrs. Emmy was one of those ladies who are so thoroughly loyal that they submit easily to tyrants, especially if the tyrant be of the right line. The baby, in the little rude bassinet which the doctor had smuggled into his house, and which Lotty Morton had decked up and lined with pink glazed calico, was the king, *in esse, in posse, and in futuro*, over the heart of his mother. It was his rights, his position in the world, of which she was thinking, and not her own.

Mrs. Emmy, after watching the doctor some time, and, of course, divining that it was about her that he was thinking, saw him turn round slowly and sadly, and approach the house. She ran down into the parlour and met him.

He looked surprised and pleased at her eagerness, and asked her about her health. "Are you well, my lady?" he said, courteously.

She noticed the title he applied. "Very well," she said, "Doctor, thanks to your goodness, and that of your sister. I am getting quite strong, too. But I need strength. I must go to the Abbey."

Lotty, who was sitting down to an interminable piece of work for some recondite female adornment, a piece of work which was never finished, looked up to her brother with a meaning smile.

"It will be hardly right, or, indeed, possible, for you to go in the first instance, madam," he said. "Lord Bradstock certainly should have sundry matters explained to him. His position as your most powerful connection demands it. Remember, you bring him an heir to his titles and estates."

"They will receive me, of course, and entertain me as becomes the wife of Lord Somers," said Emmy, half proudly, half timidly.

"Undoubtedly," answered the doctor; although he spoke hypocritically, for he very much doubted it himself; "but yet"—here he paused—"but——"

"But what, sir?" she asked in an almost angry tone; for doubt and alarm had long ago taken possession of her breast—"but what? Why

should not my relations receive me as they should do?"

"Alas!" thought the doctor, looking at Mrs. Emmy somewhat piteously, "what does this poor little soul know of the interests of others? She only thinks of her own. Her very innocence would be construed by some as extreme cunning and guilt. What can I do to awaken her to her position?"

Then, presuming that a pious fraud would be the very best organ for working upon her, he continued, "You must at least concede, my lady, that one should be prepared to meet every investigation, and that it is incumbent upon you to be able to overthrow every doubt."

"Doubt!" answered Emmy. She herself had an exaggerated idea of the difficulty in which she was placed, and the tone of the doctor did not go very far to reassure her. There was a delicacy and a reticence about him which she did not like, and of which, indeed, she felt half afraid. As Emmy looked from brother to sister with that suspicion which extreme weakness always breeds, or by which

it is, at least, always accompanied, the latter took up the speech.

“Will you pardon me, my lady?” said Lotty. “My brother, here, is about as innocent of the ways of the world as yourself, and perhaps I am not very much wiser than either of you; but it does seem to me that you have really a difficult task before you, and that looking on one side of it, over it, behind it, or any way else but full in its face, will not do you any good whatever.”

“Bravo, Lotty!” said her brother, his face beginning to clear. “Pray, Lady Somers, if you are strong enough to favour us with your company, sit down, and let us hold a council of war.”

Emmy did as she was required, looking cautiously again from brother to sister with that same kind of suspicion which the poet tells us “always haunts the guilty mind,” but which, under some circumstances, will also accompany the most innocent.

Miss Lotty again took up the thread of the discourse. “My brother,” said she, waving her hand towards him, as to one in whom she placed extreme confidence—“My brother just now used

should not my relations receive are grated should do?"

"Alas!" thought the doctor,

Emmy somewhat piteously, "Will the speaker little soul know of the interest

only thinks of her own. After all, be used. would be construed by some unless you are and guilt. What can I do to do so. That position?"

Then, presuming that a mistake, the very best organ for an end to, will tinued, "You must his estates, titles, and one should be prepared, who now live in and that it is incumbent, to what they overthrow every and obscurity. Can you

"Doubt?" and suddenly upon them an exaggerated : should doubt you?"

was placed, and approvingly, as one very far to his sister had packed the a reticence in his delicacy, had of which, in as neat a case looked for which had reviewed all this

plainly enough in solitude, merely looked rather more alarmed.

“You frighten me, Dr. and Miss Morton,” she said; and then she looked up to the ceiling, not, indeed, in any prayerful ejaculation, or in calling for help from above, but with the timid fear of the mother, which had made her cast her eyes in the direction in which the helpless child lay.

“But,” said Lotty, again coming to the charge, “if we frighten you, you must, at least, concede that your claims will frighten others; others, too, who will oppose you.”

“Yes,” added the doctor; “and, as their interest leads them, they will believe you wrong. Remember that outside the martyr’s pile there have stood many good, earnest believers, as well as inside it.”

“That is to say,” said Lotty, translating her brother’s simile into plain prose, “that both sides believe themselves to be in the right. Now let us presume that they who will oppose your claim demand, as they surely have a right to demand, and will do, the proof that you are what you

represent yourself to be, the wife of the late Lord Somers: have you the necessary documents?"

"No," said Emmy, blankly; "I have lost them in some mysterious way, and, as you know, I have not been able to find them."

Lotty looked disappointed; but the doctor, whose spirits rose with a difficulty, said, wisely and boldly enough—

"Well, then, that is not irremediable. Let me know where the church is. I can write to the clergyman, and, if I send him his fee, by return of post we shall have a copy of the certificate. It is merely a job for the clerk."

But, although merely a job for the clerk, it seemed to affect Emmy very considerably. She looked confused and anxious, and her face fell again into that blank, meaningless expression which more than once had alarmed the doctor.

"Pray," said he, anxiously, "do not trouble yourself now; merely give me the name of the church and the parish, and at another time we can finish our little debate."



The young widow looked hopeless enough, and remained silent.

“The fact is,” said Lotty, who was one of the most downright souls in the world, “we have not one moment to lose. Of course, if you are all right, as I know you are, in this matter, we shall establish your rights easily. I, for one, do not believe in innocence that is always trampled upon, nor in wrong which is for ever on the throne whilst right is on the scaffold. But I am for instant action. Let us go forward. Let the doctor write, as he says: where is the church?”

Emmy, looking straightforward into the doctor's face, and answering him rather than his sister, told him that her memory was helplessly confused; that they were married, that was all she knew, under the surname of her husband, whom she had met in London by appointment; that it was in some little-church near a square of old-fashioned buildings; that the entanglement of her mind grew closer and deeper the more calls she made upon it; and she wound up her appeal by putting her two pale, thin hands together, and

looking up into the face of the doctor as if to plead with him and ask him if he doubted her.

Much as he loved her before, the good doctor loved her then more than ever. In after-years he never forgot that pleading, gentle attitude. He at once gave up his whole faith to her; or, rather, in that dark moment, the doctor's faith in the woman whom he had loved through disappointment, in trouble, in sickness, and in the disdain even in which it was sadly evident she held him, rose in the darkness, and shone more brightly. Emmy's eyes filled with tears as she looked upon his open, manly face.

"You are the best friend, I believe, that I have in the world, doctor. I shall never forget your generosity. I will always love you as a brother; indeed I will."

This was exactly the love the doctor did not want; but Emmy's situation was too critical, and her loss too recent, for him to dream of any other love at the time; so he answered by remaining silent and bowing respectfully.

"But," urged Lotty, who, like Lady Amethyst,



was a woman of business—"But what are we to do? As I said, I am for action. If the doctor cannot find out where you were married, we, at least, believe that you are the wife of Lord Somers, and that the little boy up-stairs is the heir to Broadacres. Now, the question arises," continued the doctor's sister, who had had the advantage of being governess for some time in a most systematic family—"the question arises as to the best plan of proceeding. What do you say, Doctor?"

"Let me go to town and find out the church. It will not be difficult. You were married by license, as I take it, in the diocese of London."

"Yes," said Emmy; "I think so."

She said this half-dreamily, and in doubt.

"Well, but, during the time that you are away, Doctor, what is to become of us? Lady Somers may fall ill. At any rate, had we not better give Lord Bradstock notice? Do not his position, his age, and the very relationship in which he stands towards Lady Somers demand it?"

"There is something in that, certainly," said the doctor. "Even if we are not prepared,


Lord Bradstock can only ask us for the proofs."

"I am decidedly for an open course of action," said Lotty. "The time which has elapsed since the fatal day—now some three months—can be easily accounted for. You were nearly all that time in attendance on her ladyship, whose health, even now, is hardly re-established."

"Let us see: what is to be said on the other side?" asked the doctor, looking up to his sister for advice, whilst the young widow turned from one to the other.

"Well," said Lotty, after a pause, "I am, I repeat, for a decided and open course of action. Let us presume that you go to town and bring back the certificate: what is to prevent the Honourable Andrew and his clever wife, who have already assumed the title which, by courtesy, belongs to this lady and her little one, from declaring that, to serve your own purposes, you have concocted a conspiracy?"

Mrs. Emmy jumped up at the word, and looked boldly defiant.



“Let them say so!” she said, clenching her little fist: “I will maintain my right. *Dieu et mon droit!*”

The action was somewhat theatrical, but emotion is essentially so. A period of doubt and trial had come, and the young mother felt she had to meet it. Her trial had brought her face to face with harsh reality, and, for the moment, she was equal to it.

The doctor, gazing admiringly on, thought that she looked as noble as Joan of Arc. He willingly persuaded himself that the most open action was the best, and willingly, therefore, undertook a very difficult mission, which others would have shrunk from. It was agreed between them that the doctor should seek out Lord Bradstock, and inform him of the surprise which Providence, or fate, had laid in store for him. Doctor Sangrado, who knew that since Lord Somers's death his father had hardly held up his head, fondly persuaded himself that the old lord would welcome the news with joy.

CHAPTER V.

LADY AMETHYST'S HENCHWOMAN.

AMONGST the many devotees who rejoiced at Lady Amethyst's good fortune when Lord Somers was killed, and who upheld her state upon all occasions, none was more prominent than Miss Nightley; and, although an ex-governess and at present a companion, she deserves an introduction to the reader.

She was a fine woman, and one of those well-grown women whom everybody allows at once to be "fine," but of whose personal appearance very little else is said. Little else, indeed, could be said. The figure of Lady Amethyst's companion was superb; she was five feet eight inches in height, and well

made withal ; but her face was nothing. It was not ugly, but low and coarse in expression. Her hair was of a dark red, her eyebrows white, her eyes of a deep, sad brown, *en suite* with her hair. Had her face been beautiful, she would have been queenly. As it was, her face lost her all her advantages—all but one : under those white eyelashes, and in those brown eyes, proceeding from that lofty, capacious forehead, was power, undoubted power.

Everybody felt it, and none more so than Miss Nightley herself. It made her ugly, she knew. Her forehead was a great deal too high for her face to be pretty, even supposing her hair had not been red ; but what did she care for good looks ?

This knowledge of herself added to the effect she created. She was so thoroughly conscious of her weight and worth, that, like an actress who fills her part well, she moved about easily, and so gracefully that she attracted little attention, and yet grew upon everybody's acquaintance. Even great lords and ladies asked, "Who is that person?" when she entered the room, and, when told who she was, said, "Ha, indeed ! a very proper person,

no doubt; a most valuable person; one who knows her place."

They were, further, not surprised when they heard that this person was very accomplished; nay, even more than that, she was learned. Conceding these as possibilities to be achieved by very common-place people, although never so thoroughly achieved as by one of their own order, the nobility in question were agreeably informed—no, not informed; they seemed to know things by instinct—agreeably instructed, or, rather, instilled with the fact that Miss Nightley was a person of very high birth, but that a series of misfortunes had obliged her to gain her living in a capacity—we quote here her own phrase—"a little less than menial."

In this capacity, however, Miss Nightley did as she would have done had she been a *prima donna*, a housemaid, or a queen; that is, she managed to hold her own. She had seen many cities and many people. There were few places whereto she had not travelled, and wherever she travelled she acquired more than the tongue. She had charmed

the celebrated Russian Prince Bobrinski, by talking Polish as fluently as he spoke English. She had attracted the notice of a Neapolitan prince, and had talked a semi-philosophical infidelity with more than one Romish cardinal. It was in this sort of conversation, indeed, that she excelled; for Miss Nightley, amongst many other amiable qualities engendered by her consciousness of power, possessed a kind of spiteful Atheism, not unfrequently indulged in even in the best society. "*Le bon Dieu*," she said, patronizingly, "has really done so very little for me: what should I do for him?"

"Indeed," said the Abbé to whom it pleased her for the hundredth time to make the confession, "I should rather say, so much——"

"Ah, *mio padre, non*: in France it might be much, but in our frozen England, our land of moral and social icicles, our favoured Protestant country, it is not so. Beauty, talent, high birth, and power are nothing without money, and money itself is second to position. Therefore, I repeat," and again she used the wickedly patronizing tone and expression, with a hot pride about her heart,

“since *le bon Dieu* has done so little for me, it would be unfair if I did much for him.”

“Behold,” said the Abbé, in his own epigrammatic tongue—“Behold a woman, an English miss, who is, it would seem possible, more thoroughly devoted to the lower regions than our good John James himself. Truly she is a woman *bien dangereuse*, formidable even to herself.”

She was dangerous to other people as well as to herself, as many found out.

She was dangerous even to M. l'Abbé, who found that, when playing with her, he was playing with edged tools. She exposed his sham cynicism, his mock Atheism, his stupid French hatred of everything decent and orderly, his constant insurrection against what his own heart felt to be true. But it is not with the Abbé that the present story has to do. That unfortunate ecclesiastic perished in the Revolution of 1848, and died, as many of his Church have died, in a perfect storm of doubt as to whether the religion he had for so many years openly professed and secretly maligned might not be true at last.

Miss Nightley never had any doubts; at any rate, if she had, she drove them back with a strong hand. At the time we introduce her to our readers she was at that period of life when a wise man is said to "suspect himself a fool." Miss Nightley had made up her mind upon that point, we need not say, in the negative.

She was the companion of Lady Amethyst, and the teacher *in futuro* of her son, that is, if she should ever have one. She taught the mother as well. She had fixed herself for life. She early abandoned youth, and would cry, "A woman of my years, sir, is not to be deceived," and then propound a startling subject, enough to silence a whole dinner-table of gentlemen. She had set herself to win by force that which she knew she could not gain by favour.

The second son of the Earl of Bradstock, the husband of the Lady Amethyst, and the heir to the title and estates, was, as we have long since seen, one of those young fellows who bid fair to give little satisfaction to their families. It had been the pride of the Bradstock family, that

although the heads of the house had, now and then, been a *roué*, and sometimes not conspicuous for plain dealing nor for honesty, yet there had never been an actual fool. This, by the death of Lord Somers, seemed to be reversed. The Honourable Andrew was, as we have already been told, a fool in more senses than one, and his wife knew it.

In the first place, he did not appreciate his position, and, in company with a celebrated marquis of the day and one or two other choice spirits, set himself to imitate, as far as he was able, the actions of cab and coach-men. As the imitation comprised the vices, and not the virtues of the class, it is not to be wondered at if the attempt was not very gratifying to his relations, especially as, by the elegant means employed, he accumulated those debts which Mr. Naylor had to settle.

Nor did the Honourable Andrew wholly appreciate his wife. As there was a certain novelty in the position, and as it placed him in possession of some thousands in ready money, and, moreover, as he knew her to be a woman of business, who, for her own interest, would keep him pretty

straight, he had gone through the ceremony at St. George's, Hanover Square, with even some decorum. Even after the happy couple left in their chariot for one of the Earl's country seats, the young fellow behaved for some few days, a long period for him, decently. But Lady Amethyst, beautiful, cold, and calculating as she was, born to govern and to form a household, found that she was sometimes powerless with Andrew. He now very often left her alone for the more congenial society of his grooms.

The termination of the matter was this: the lady retired to live with her father-in-law, but took care to take with her her husband, whom she looked pretty sharply after, although when he could he escaped, he pretending an immense love for hunting, shooting, or some new acquaintance. The wife, therefore, naturally fell back on her old companion Miss Nightley, and, nursing her own ambition, appeared to retire from the hopeless task of cultivating her husband, and to console herself with the bright future which seemed about to open for her children and herself.

Miss Nightley liked her place. She admired the old Earl, and she hated Lady Amethyst, apparently for the simple reason that the former was much richer and more highly born than she. She despised the heavy country gentleman Andrew, who occasionally would spend an hour or two with her and his wife; but, by great tact, by flashing out the points, the very points of certain secrets which she had gleaned from the servants, she at once established a great interest in the husband's breast.

"By gad!" he swore—"fore gad, sir, that woman has a headpiece!" and, being cloyed with beauty, he began seriously to think of falling in love with the ugly governess merely to pass the time in the dull country.

It was all she wanted. Her place was formed. She would rise early and meet Andrew about the stables or park, and talk to him learnedly and interestingly of horses, plants, rocks, seaweed, or anything she wished. Her quick mind would master a subject overnight, to speak with him in the morning. She would forerun his thoughts, tell him of



his behaviour to his father, to his wife, and make him act for the time better. He begged a lock of her red hair, and she gave him one, and a slight pressure of the hand, and told him to "be a good boy." She then looked a world of love, and laughed when he drew nearer, adroitly turning the subject. Samson was caught and sported with by this ugly Delilah.

Few knew her secret, but all at Broadacres confessed her power. She would go away for two or three days purposely, and, returning, find the family "at sixes and sevens," as she phrased it. She was like oil on the waters.

"'Fore God, marm, you know the length of my foot, and the governor's too, and the missus's," as he sometimes pleased himself by calling his wife. "What should we do without you? You set us all to-rights."

"I am so glad you are come, my dear," said Lady Amethyst. "I have written to the jeweller's for a present for you: here it is, a turquoise bracelet; it will suit your complexion. Keep it for my sake: you are invaluable to me."

She buckled it on her arm.

"No one gives a present without hoping for an equivalent," thought the astute companion as she grandly thanked her friend. "Am I to be the bear-keeper? or what is it, eh? Time," she said, looking at her little watch, a present from the Abbey—"Time will show."

Miss Nightley was one of those ladies who always gain presents. There are two sorts of people in this world: people who give, and those who receive. Smith, who is a generous fellow and wants now and then a lifting hand, never gets it, but continually buys some little fond testimonial to present to Jones, who, twice as well off as his friend, is yet always in luck's way. A presentation to the Blue-coat School falls due. Smith has ten children and would be much benefited by it, but, of course, he never gets it: it falls to the lot of Jones, who has perhaps only one son, whom he can afford to educate.

The like happened to Miss Nightley. She was certainly not very poor, and yet people were always giving her presents, which she wore for a day or

two and then quietly put away in her little hoard. Sometimes she wisely sent them back to the jeweller's whence they came; and, being a woman of power with these timid tradesmen, would get the full price in money returned to her. Altogether, mademoiselle knew very well how to feather her little nest, and feathered it accordingly.

"I wonder," she said to herself, "what Lady Amethyst wants with me. By the pricking of my thumbs, it is something wicked, I will swear."

The companion knew her friend pretty well. In the course of the next morning, when the two ladies were walking in the park, Lady Amethyst told her companion that she wanted her to do her a favour.

"I thought so," said that lady, quietly. "I have noticed that your ladyship is generous when you want anything done."

Miss Nightley knew how to hit out. Part of her power was, perhaps, derived from that fact. Cæsar, in one of his battles, told his troops to strike at the faces: they did so, and won the day. Miss Nightley never spared anybody's beauty, and

had probably based her line of action on this very plan of Cæsar's. She carried too much heavy metal for Lady Amethyst, who, woman of business as she was, answered, meekly—

“I am sorry you put such an interpretation on my present, and, if you please, I will do what I want myself.”

Now this was precisely what Miss Nightley did not want. She was, perhaps, hardly a “perfect woman, nobly planned,” because all perfect women should be without curiosity, and this lady had plenty.

“Oh, my lady,” she said, as if she were the injured party, “pray don't speak like that in return for my harmless badinage. I will do, as you well know, all I can to serve you.”

Lady Amethyst had her own opinion about the sincerity of this answer; but she knew that no one could so well serve her as her companion. Therefore she said, with a sweet smile, “My dear Nightley, I meant nothing: you shall execute my little commission; it is only a trifle.”

“A trifle!” said her companion to herself.



“She calls it a trifle, does she? Then it is something important.” She said aloud, however, “If it were the weightiest thing on earth, and I could do it, I would. I suppose it is one of your ladyship’s pensioners to visit.”

“No,” said Amethyst; “it is nothing of the sort.”

She looked round to see that no one followed her or was in ear-shot.

“We are quite alone,” said the companion, to show that she interpreted the look.

“Well,” commenced the wife of the Honourable Andrew, “you, my dear, are, I am sure, well acquainted with the world.”

“Pretty well,” was the answer. “A woman of my age and of my experience, who has lived in some of the very best families of England, ought to know it—and its wickedness.”

Lady Amethyst again left the sneer unanswered.

“Well,” she said, “it is something about the world’s wickedness that I am about to tell you. Poor Lord Somers was not so good as he should have been.”

“We none of us are.”

“And, unhappy young man, he had formed a connection with some young lady——”

“A governess, like myself. I have heard the story, my lady.”

“Then you know more than I do. I merely heard a hint from our legal adviser—that is, Andrew’s solicitor—a gentleman, I believe, well acquainted with the doings of young men of fashion. Alas that the world should be so wicked! Now, my dear Miss Nightley, I cannot help sympathizing——”

Her companion caught at the word.

“Sympathizing, I think you said. Ah, I can understand your feeling : it does you honour.”

“With this poor young creature ; and I should like you to visit her, and ascertain whether she is in any want, or——”

“Whether there might have been a secret marriage. I suppose that fact would be useful.”

The lady was silent.

“When I say secret of course I mean false,” continued Miss Nightley. “Men of your class,

my lady, are so generous, so chivalric to women of ours; they consider them fair game for their deceit and entanglements; but then——”

“But what?”

“They sometimes get entangled themselves, do they not?”

“Alas!” said Lady Amethyst, with a very well-executed sigh—“Alas! sometimes the wicked man is caught in the nets which he has spread privily for others.”

“And serve them right too,” said Miss Nightley, with great emphasis and earnestness; for she felt what she said. She hated men, and despised them. Perhaps she was right. “The vain, empty puppets! to be caught by merely pretty faces, and to neglect—as, alas! they too often do—women of spirit and mind.”

“Yes, it serves them right,” said her ladyship; “but at present we will not think of that. Here, his lordship has died, and suddenly. He has left no will. He was too young to think of doing that which most men put off to the very end of their lives. In the full career of life and youth—and,

alas! vice—he is suddenly cut off. He is here to-day——”

“And there to-morrow!” said her companion, finishing the quotation.

The two ladies had reached the artificial waterfall in Broadacres Park, by which the waters of the Slugg fell with an artificial haste and ardour which they did not usually possess down some manufactured rocks of an almost preternatural wildness.

“Here is a pretty place for a suicide, if any one were crossed in love, now,” said Miss Nightley, aloud; and then she added to herself, “And I dare say she wishes this poor creature, this possible rival to her ladyship, would take advantage of it.”

Lady Amethyst looked at the quiet pool, which was indeed very quiet, beyond the little roar which the small cascade made. It was a dreary little place even in the daytime. One or two rocky caves had been formed at the side, and there was a little path made, so that they who were adventurous enough might, by stepping-stones, reach the very rock whence the stream fell, and stand

under the splashing waters. Bittern and wild-fowl built their nests in the long reeds on the other side, and pendant trees dipped their branches in the stream.

The two ladies did not look long upon the waters. Lady Amethyst was silent, and turned to walk back to the house.

“Breakfast is ready by this time. These early walks will do us good.”

“Yes—give us quite a brilliant complexion,” said her companion, gaily. “I think I understand your ladyship, and I will, in my own way, set about executing your commission.”

And this was all that was said about the business.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH THE EARL IS SURPRISED.

ON the following morning, while Emmy and her baby were employed in that sweet occupation of dreaming, which, it is supposed, the youngest share with the oldest, Doctor Sangrado was up and early out, looking over the woods towards the park, and wondering how he should execute his difficult commission.

Over the beech-woods the soft breeze blew, bringing up from the town the pleasant sounds of activity and labour, and from the fields now and then the call of the bird-boy, or the report of a gun, as the keeper, or some young Nimrod, "popped" at a rabbit. The skylark sang high

above the woods in the bright autumnal sky, the wood-pigeon was cooing away pleasantly enough, and the wood-lark was singing gently to its mate, whilst linnet and finch chirped and twittered in the hedges. Presently, in the doctor's early house, a casement opened, and the venerable head of Mrs. Lapis was popped out, looking all the fresher and brighter for a thorough ablution and polish.

"Good morning, madam," said the doctor, politely. Mrs. Lapis withdrew her head hurriedly, and seemed to scuttle down-stairs in acknowledgment of the fact that it was quite time to get the doctor's breakfast.

Sangrado was walking across his yard to the stable of his gray mare the "Countess." There was an obscure legend that this horse, when in the pride of youth and beauty, had formed one of a pair belonging to one of the most beautiful and dashing of countesses, who used to surprise the whole of the Ring in Hyde Park with her mettlesome steeds. Sangrado was proceeding to his stable when another window opened, and Miss Lotty put forward her head—a comely one, to be sure—and

was rude enough to whistle to her brother as she would to a dog.

“Ah!” said the doctor; “we are all alive this morning. I wonder what that old proverb means about a whistling woman and a crowing hen being neither good for God nor men. I suppose it is some of us men’s girdings against that sex we cannot do without.” He looked up to Lotty and bade her cheerfully good-morning.

“You are going to ride early, Keith,” she said. “Give my compliments to the Countess, and give her that.” She cleverly threw across the little yard an apple. “Was there ever a horse that did not like apples, or a woman who did not like flattery?”

“I don’t know,” answered Keith, laughing: “come down and look at the mare, and mind you don’t waken any one else.”

He opened the stable-door and went to the horse, which was standing, as was her wont, as far from her rack as her halter would let her. She had already been groomed, and looked in fine condition. “Come, old girl,” said her

master, giving her the apple on his open hand; "come, we shall have to go to the Abbey this morning."

The Countess rubbed her nose fondly against the doctor's sleeve, as if to show that she was quite ready to go anywhere; and very quickly munched the apple, crushing it in pieces with her front teeth, for the side teeth had long since disappeared.

"Well," said Lotty, who had joined him, "the Countess is a beauty, although she is old. Oh, this time, this time! how can any one of us stop it? Why, Keith, I declare, there are two or three gray hairs in your head!"

"Nonsense," said the doctor, laughing. "It is all the effect of the light. Come, let us have breakfast: Lord Bradstock is an early man, and I shall have to be early to catch him. Pray Heaven I may succeed!" said he, piously.

"Indeed, Keith, I hope you may," said his sister, and that was the last sentence said about the matter. After breakfast Dr. Morton mounted and rode seriously forward.

Here was he about to deal a mortal thrust at his best, perhaps his only friend in the world. Lord Bradstock's patronage and countenance had won for Sangrado a great many more patients than did his own talent; for it is a curious enough fact, that the people of the small towns, like those of the larger, are so very modest that they seldom judge for themselves, but take upon trust everything, from fashion to physic, which is adopted by the great man.

Once upon the main road of Bilscombe Regis, the doctor's gray mare went tit-up and tit-up upon the gravelly road to such purpose that in a very short time she brought him near the park gates of Broadacres.

The gate-keeper's children, with whom he was a favourite in spite of his physic, ran to throw open the heavily carved and studded gates, and the gray mare and her rider went on, past the artificial waterfall, built many years ago, and now so overgrown with brushwood and verdure that it looked more and more natural every year; past the little artificial island, upon which stood a temple to Fortune, wherein, after

the fashion of Pope's time, "the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease" would scribble their foolish effusions, and called it worshipping the "Muses;" past the iron gate which, opened with the doctor's crop whip, swung backwards and forwards half a dozen times with a metallic creak till it was caught and held fast by the hasp; past the few deer, which bounded off in the distance as the doctor approached; past his lordship's favourite breed of Scotch cattle, a few of which raised their long-horned heads and rewarded the doctor with a stare; and, finally, past Lady Amethyst's polled Suffolk, which, with the lazy, overfed exterior of a favourite, whisked the flies from her sleek skin, and continued her rumination without even staring at Saugrado—past all these, till he slackened his pace at the hard gravel which surrounded the Abbey.

The Abbey had no doubt been an "abbey" in by-gone days, but upon the foundations of the holy house a more modern building, after the approved taste of Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, and the Castle of Otranto, was raised. It had

plenty of "rich windows which exclude the light," and boasted of at least two "galleries which led to nothing." To the doctor's eyes there was something terribly grim and dreadful in the dull gray stone, the trimly kept garden, and the cold, clean hall.

The bright suits of armour, scrupulously dusted every morning, which stood round this hall seemed to wink and blink with innumerable eyes, and to peer at him from shut vizors as he entered after a dreadfully loud bell had clanged, when stirred by him, and re-echoed over the whole Abbey.

"His lordship, Lord Bradstock, is he at home?"

"The fam'ly was at home; leastways, he b'lieved so," returned John Thomas, superciliously.

John Thomas, a London J. T., was in black. He looked quietly at the sky, the waving trees, and the cawing rooks as he said this. He yearned inwardly for London habits and haunts, for his carriage exercise and his magnificent plush, and felt mourning to be unbecoming to his figure.

"I should wish to see his lordship."

"The fam'ly was strictly privut—doesn't see

nobody, leastways, no pusson 'cept connected *with* the fam'ly, since the infliction——”

“His lordship will see me : Dr. Morton.”

“P'raps he would,” returned J. T., again inspecting the rooks. “He would gow, an' see. Didn't know his ludship wanted a medical man. Would 'oo walk in 'ere?”

Dr. Morton followed the menial—literally a menial in this case—into a small room indicated : it was that devoted to the waiting of undignified strangers, and wherein John Thomas himself often sat when expecting with well-bred indifference the return of the carriage and the other footman. A small and old-fashioned mahogany table, the cards of one or two advertising tradesmen from London yet littering it, and the equally old-fashioned chairs, which had long ago been turned out of the Abbey dining-room, formed the furniture of the place. The doctor, who had tied up his gray mare to a ring outside the stone porch, sat down in one of these chairs, sadly enough, waiting till supercilious J. T. should return.

J. T. was not long before he did return. He

was altogether more respectful. He had yawned—in a polite and subdued way—his message into the private room where “the fam’ly” were assembled, expecting to meet with a flat denial to the doctor, when he was told to admit him instantly. Impressed with the idea that he must be some one of consequence, but yet not being quite satisfied with the country exterior of the “medical man,” he altered, as we have said, his manner, and ushered Sangrado to the family.

The Abbey had been, as we have said, altered at various times, and consequently in various styles of architecture. The style of the sitting-room in which Dr. Morton found the “fam’ly” was Palladian. Over the door were busts of the Bradstocks *à la Romain*. The windows were in the recesses of Roman arches, and festoons of flowers with knots of ribbons drooped from above the lintels and the windows. Books in low cases lined the room; heavy curtains swung gently in the wind; gilding and picture, lustre and mirror added to the sombre magnificence of the chamber. And yet the doctor felt that, had it been

hung with black, it could not have been more sadly melancholy.

The old lord sat in an easy-chair, which became him like a throne. He was proud of bearing and bold even in his grief, and looked a "lord" to the life. He was one of those who never bend to the stroke, and who, to follow the words of the old motto, would be broken sooner than bend. Not far from him sat Lady Amethyst and her friend and companion—like the footman from London, in deep mourning—Miss Nightley. The ladies returned the doctor's salute somewhat coldly.

"Well, Doctor," said he, extending his hand, but not rising, "you are come to see me in my trouble. Welcome, welcome: you were a friend of his."

He indicated, partly with his finger, partly with his head, a portrait before which hung a curtain.

"Why veil it, Amethyst?" he said, almost angrily. "Draw the curtain, and let me see my son's face."

Lady Amethyst rose, and, drawing back the curtain, let the sunshine fall upon a bold, forcible

portrait, so lifelike, indeed, that Sangrado started as if his friend's face looked upon him from the grave.

"He was," returned the doctor, with a pause, looking blankly at the picture—"He was a very good friend and patron of mine."

Lord Bradstock smiled, as if pleased with the deferential word, and returned—

"Ah, Doctor, Doctor, he will be no one's friend or patron now!"

"There are no patrons up there," whispered Miss Nightley, somewhat bitterly, to Lady Amethyst, pointing with a spiteful finger up through the ceiling and roof to the sky above.

Lady Amethyst looked daggers, but used none. There was no possible way in which she could answer Miss Nightley: that lady was too valuable to be entirely dispensed with, and she knew her value, as, indeed, most of us do, and should do in this world of worldlings.

The old lord, who had let his thoughts run quietly on, broke out suddenly with a burst of natural grief.

“Ah,” said he, “I am alone now, quite alone! I shall have no male heir to my estates——”

Lady Amethyst looked astonished.

“At least, none whom I can love. My boy left no son. I had often urged him to marry, but he would not. Oh that he had done so, and that I might clasp to my bosom some living likeness of my boy!”

Miss Nightley’s eyes, which were very peculiar, and possessed of something like the chatoyant lustre of a moonstone, darted a glance of fire into those of Lady Amethyst. Lady Amethyst cast down her eyes. Doctor Sangrado, to whom an unexpected opportunity had occurred, at once took it and spoke out.

“My dear lord,” said he, taking the old man’s hand, “my kind patron, the news which I have to tell you will make you happy; will be some return for the kindnesses received at your hands. In a few hours you shall see your son’s son and your heir. Your son was married, though secretly, and, as I know, unknown most certainly to you. His wife, an honour to him and your family, my

lord, lives—I had thought she would have died—and has brought you a son and heir to his father's virtues and your lordship's name."

"Good God! what is all this?" cried Lord Bradstock: "an heir to Broadacres—a boy belonging to my son! How is this?"

"Can you prove what you say, Doctor?" whispered Lady Amethyst, as pale as death.

"Almost a miracle; quite romantic, indeed," said Miss Nightley, looking at Lady Amethyst. "How rejoiced your ladyship must be!"

"Will your lordship see this lady and your grandson?" said Dr. Morton, addressing his patron, and putting aside the question put so earnestly by Lady Amethyst.

"Bring him to me, quickly!—no, in a day or so: I cannot see her now." His lordship covered his eyes with his hands. "Put the curtain before that portrait, Amethyst," he said.

"And," said Lady Amethyst, as she did so, "we will write, Doctor, for you and this—this lady. Our legal adviser will be here; and, when you produce the wife, pray do—I am sure you will not

forget to produce all the necessary proofs. Need I say more?"

The doctor bowed. He could not well trust himself to answer anything; and he felt that his position was such that the less he said the better.

"I presume," said Lady Amethyst, looking first in the face of the doctor, and then at Lord Bradstock—"I presume that the lady who claims to be Lady Somers is the same for whom his lordship so generously lost his life."

The doctor again bowed.

Lord Bradstock started up.

"Was she the cause of his death? Then I will never see her: keep her from me! I renounce my words. She killed him—killed my son!"

"My lord," cried the doctor, "she was as innocent as the unborn babe."

All his love for the young lady beamed from the doctor's face as he said this. Lady Amethyst and Miss Nightley noticed the sudden enthusiasm.

"She might be innocent," said the father, again sitting down; "but, innocent or guilty,

she took my son's love from me for many days, and when he dies she comes, by her deputy, to claim the position of his wife."

"A startling claim, certainly, to Lord Broadacres and the family," added Miss Nightley; "a claim which, if I were permitted to say anything, should certainly be substantiated by every possible means. There can be no uncertainty allowed in such a case, surely."

Lord Bradstock was a gentleman, but he was, also, a man of pride. He did not like to hear a governess or companion give her opinion on a matter of such importance to the family, and it irked him somewhat sorely that there should be any necessity for her to do so, or, rather, that any question should occur which should give her an opportunity to offer her advice. He had, moreover, that instinctive dislike to Miss Nightley which an open and transparent nature has for one which is secret and cunning.

So, when his lordship spoke, it was in reproof of Lady Amethyst's henchwoman.

"Madam," he said, with a stately severity, "I

am sure our family is much obliged by your interference on its behalf, but I believe that interference was scarcely needed. Dr. Morton we have known for some time; he was a personal friend of my son's; and I am sure that he would be the very last man to approach us with any story that was not strictly true——”

Dr. Morton bowed at this well-deserved compliment. Even in that solemn moment he felt that “praise from Sir Hubert Stanley” was praise indeed.

The nobleman continued—

“I confess that this news came very suddenly upon me. The very sad bereavement which we all feel so much was of itself so sudden that it was, perhaps, impossible for my dear boy to have acquainted me with that which, alas! from some misunderstanding of his father's heart, he had hidden from me.” The old gentleman's voice faltered as he spoke. “But I do believe that, had the Almighty given him only a few minutes to live, he would have told me all. What we have to do now is to respect the rights of every one and

to obey the law. If matters be as Dr. Morton represents them to be, then I may say that none of our family will be found to be wanting in its duty. Dr. Morton, good morning.”

With a stately bow Lord Bradstock gave our friend his *congé*, leaving him divided between a feeling of admiration for the old nobleman's character, and of perplexity as to what his next step should be.

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE TREES.

WHILST the doctor, in a very perturbed state, was trotting along the road towards Bilscombe Regis, the party in the Palladian parlour was not quiet, but was, at least a portion of it, already in arms against him. It is said that there is not a suggestion thrown out in conversation but that it divides the hearers into two parties, the one for, and the other against the speaker. If this be the case in common conversation, how much more is it when a startling communication is made which very narrowly affects those to whom it is made!

“An extraordinary tale,” simpered the Lady Amethyst, as if she did not even heed it. She

was an adept in tones, and the inflection was carefully managed.

“Most extraordinary,” said the old lord, motioning with his hand to the curtain of the picture.

Miss Nightley rose, and, withdrawing the curtain, let the light fall on the picture of the son so suddenly taken away and so much beloved.

“Most extraordinary,” said he again, looking earnestly at the portrait. The voice was deeper this time, and Lady Amethyst, who seldom mistook anything, read rightly when she interpreted a wish to believe in the marriage in its tones.

“We must remember,” said Miss Nightley, in a manner which showed that her opinions would be listened to in spite of the temporary check she had received, “that Dr. San—Dr. Morton, I mean, is a very peculiar man: he is easily led away, and very easily imposed on. He evidently believes what he says, but that is hardly a reason why we should do so.”

“Possibly,” said Lord Bradstock.

“And, upon my word,” returned the lady, coming to the relief of her friend and patroness, “one does read such tricks in the newspapers—I am obliged to read them to your lordship—such instances of cunning even in the innocent and the young, that women of our age grow to doubt everything and to credit almost every rascality.”

Lady Amethyst winced. She did not like to be bracketed amongst “women of our age.”

Miss Nightley became lively. To dictate opinions to a lord and lady was, to her, something; and, moreover, she was determined to show that she could not be hurt by reproof, but had an elasticity of mind equal to the occasion. To be able occasionally to drive a pin into one of her listeners and patrons was something more. Strong-minded as Miss Nightley undoubtedly was, she loved the society of great people. There was polish, quietude, ease, everything, in short, which that worldly woman liked.

Lord Bradstock, after looking very long and earnestly at the picture, turned away from it with a sigh. “After all,” said he, “whatever the real

truth of this story may be, one thing is certain, the doctor is convinced. His known honesty, his love for my son, his talent and integrity, nay, the very earnestness of his voice when he told us of the matter, and everything connected with the strange story, forbid any possibility of collusion. Nor is it easy to convince a man of his capacity. He may be simple, but he is wise, and has been seriously through the evidence, no doubt, before he came here. We must examine matters before we pass judgment."

"*Eh, bien!* how delightful it will be," cried Miss Nightley, as she arose from her chair, "to find, all of a Sunday, an heir male to the estates of Bradstock, and a child, too, of your favourite son!"

The lady intended this congratulatory speech to act on her friend, and it took effect. Lady Amethyst looked aghast at her companion.

"I suppose," continued the companion, "that the heat of the morning has an effect on her ladyship. I myself am indifferently well. Shall we take a walk in the park, whilst his lordship remains here to think over this romantic story?"

Before she had finished the sentence Lady Amethyst had risen, and, with a slight inclination of her head, had left the room. The companion followed her, and the two ladies, in charming little country hats and strong walking-boots, sallied forth into the park.

"Miss Nightley," said her ladyship when fairly out of ear-shot, "I am surprised you can speak of this trumped-up story of the wretched doctor in the way in which you do."

"Trumped-up story!" returned Miss Nightley, with surprise.

"Yes; trumped up."

"An elegant expression for your ladyship to employ," said the companion, with a sneer.

"Elegant! what do we care?" returned Lady Amethyst, fiercely. "We must sometimes speak as we hear our governesses, our nurses, our companions—the creatures about us—speak. We speak in earnest sometimes."

"Yes; to the creatures," retorted Miss Nightley.

"To any one; to ourselves, to our husbands and

fathers. It is time to speak. Every one is against us. 'Tis only to have a title, a place, a name, a fortune, and all the world will be ready to cheat and deceive you. Those below you combine, by fair means or foul, and the fairest sometimes the foulest, to dispossess, rob, and cajole you."

"You speak too forcibly, Amethyst," said Nightley, patronizingly—"too forcibly, but with some truth, for you feel as you speak. In return for this, do not these people cringe to you, give you title, place, respect, and flattery? You are made to pay—and, my lady, 'tis the only way to make you pay—for this by the method you speak of. But this has nothing to do with the question."

"It has," said Lady Amethyst, sharply. "Some one would rob my husband and my children." Of the latter she spoke, of course, as in the future.

"It would not matter were it only the first," retorted the companion: "the others will surely be more worthy and more innocent than he."

"It would," returned the lady. "I would see no one the victim of a conspiracy."

"It is none."

"None!" gasped the lady.

"None. Who told you that it was one? You sometimes speak roughly, *vous autres*; you sometimes follow nature, my lady; so do your brothers, in another way. What had the dead lord to do? The young ladies his equals tried to make him love them, but he declined the offer with his brother, whom fortune brought to you. To do you justice, he found you the most available creature offered to him. You were the finest *odalisque* in the slave-market. The others were simply spindly, thin, high necked and shouldered girls, with Roman noses and pale cheeks, whom neither the lying brush of the fashionable painter nor the black and white falsity of the engraver to the "Book of Beauty" could make good-looking. He would not marry amongst his own class. He had an alternative: a little house in the suburbs, a lady, a family of children finer and more beautiful than his legitimate offspring of the future, but who would be an immense burden on the estate, and whose commissions would burden his

purse, and to push on whom in the Government offices would mortgage his votes. I know the sort of thing pretty well."

"You know everything wicked," said Lady Amethyst.

"I have lived long amongst lords," was the retort. "Your late brother-in-law was too good, I fancy, for that kind of work; or perhaps he did not find a syren ready to hand, and disdained seduction. He was a man of honourable mind, and I honoured him."

Miss Nightley drew herself up to her full height, expanded her chest, and looked down upon Lady Amethyst like a tragedy queen upon her victim. They had reached an elevated spot in the park, where some fine lime-trees grew, scenting the morning air, and the companion had taken the highest ground. "Well, as I said, these spindly, aristocratic girls (frequently the sisters to idiots: I know three of a family, and so do you, and pretty creatures they would be to marry!) not suiting his lordship, he found some one whom he could love and honour. Some beautiful girl, a

cottager or a farmer's daughter, or, let us say, the daughter of a man of talent and a gentleman, prettier, Heaven knows, and educated more soundly and as well as you, but not of your caste, a lower caste, my lady, he did find. He loved and married her. Children are plentiful from such unions; one of them enough, perhaps. Do you like the picture?"

Lady Amethyst was carried away by the narrative. She had so long believed in Miss Nightley's divination that she listened to it as a truth. She was pale as death, and put out her gauntleted hand to grasp the bole of a tree. Miss Nightley stood above her, her red hair falling over her shoulders, her hat in her hand held in mockery above her head, and bowing to her as if to beg applause.

"*Plaudite cives!* as the actor-boys cry after the Westminster epilogue," said she. "But you look ill, Amethyst. The truth is, you want me to help you. Well, only put out a signal of distress, and I'm your man, or woman, rather. I wish I had been of the male sex."

Amethyst did put out a signal of distress. She felt she was in the power of that mocking, coarse, masculine woman: everything seemed to combine against her. The signal she put out was to close her eyes and to reel half backwards; for, indeed, she nearly fainted.

Miss Nightley stepped quickly from her eminence and with a strong arm held her round her waist. She smiled, half in triumph, half at her own solecism. "I'm your man!" she said again. "How these colloquialisms gain on us! Well, well; I am nearly a man, very nearly as strong, and twice as clever. Look up, Lady Amethyst: there's always a way out of the thickest wood, and I'll pilot you."

CHAPTER VIII.

STANNARD IN BOW STREET.

AFTER the departure of the eccentric baronet and his dog, Mr. Herbert Stannard, like Æneas on a certain occasion, sat by himself, revolving many ideas in his mind. He had, as most of us have, many good qualities and many bad ones; and perhaps the worst, certainly the most dangerous of these bad qualities was a certain irresolution which had dogged all his steps, and which had rendered his fairest promises without result and his fairest hopes of little avail.

Had he had but determination and principle, the young man might have risen in the world and have achieved anything. He knew this very well himself, and yet he would waste hour after hour, and,

although the very dogs of an unperformed task were upon his heels, he would not work with a will, or, indeed, at all.

After Mr. Brawl's election, that gentleman, with the pertinacity which distinguished him, had proceeded to London, begged some friend to propose him at the Reform, had entered into correspondence with several newspaper editors, and had invited many people to his town house or hotel. He had picked up ideas, and intended to make them serve him for a parliamentary reputation, just as he made the beech-woods of Bilscombe Regis serve him for chairs.

"Now, Mr. Stannard," he said in his downright way—"now, sir, you have been on your beam ends, and know what poverty is. Now, I am going in as a friend of the poor man. Tell me, what grievance has the poor man?"

"None," answered Stannard, "that I know of, I never was poor. I always had enough to eat and drink, and read with the best, and thought with the best. Poor living and high thinking, that's my motto."

“It’s the way for a man to be healthy, at any rate,” returned his patron; “but what you say is wrong. I want to know what prominent grievances the poor have, so that I may go in to redress them.”

“None,” said the secretary, bluntly—“None, both ways.”

“How both ways?” asked the radical patron, with some dignity. He was hurt at the tone of his secretary, although, being a generous man, he was ready enough to own that but for him he would never have been M.P. for his native borough.

“Well, in two ways, at least,” said the imperturbable young fellow. “The poor Englishman has not one evil which he cannot himself redress——”

“Pshaw!” cried the radical; “you said very different the other day.”

“Yes; because it suited me; but, look you, if you don’t want to make yourself a fool in Parliament, you must talk sense. The working man is beginning to awaken, and will no longer trust demagogues. He knows very well what I say. There is no evil in England that a working man cannot redress. If it be want of education, look at Gifford,

editor of the 'Quarterly,' a very pretty scholar, I assure you; if it be fortune, look at Hudson, now the king of railways; if it be position, look at Peel; if it be all these, my dear sir," said the secretary, with cutting sarcasm, "look at yourself."

There are people who do not love satire, and who are bitterly moved by it. It is precisely because they do not comprehend it that they are so quickly hurt. Had they the humour to see and understand those delicate and sharp passes, they would surely forgive the satirist. Mr. Brawl was one of those who looked upon a satirist as a most dangerous animal, and he had begun to suspect, for some time, that his secretary had a tendency towards that dangerous weapon; dangerous, perhaps, more to him who uses it than to him who suffers, but oftentimes unpleasant to both.

Mr. Brawl made a mental note of this one, and then, after a little pause, asked, "But what would you have me do? My constituents will not expect me to sit in mum-chance. They will look for my name in the papers."

"Will they?" said Herbert Stannard, in a tone

of deep pity; precisely the tone which, as a secretary to a rising man, he never ought to have assumed.

“And being disappointed,” said the M.P., in a tone of distress and commiseration—“And being disappointed, they will very likely seek for another Member.”

“Now, my dear sir,” said the secretary, “when I consented to become your servant, in which I did myself great honour”—here he bowed gravely—“I determined to give you the best advice that I could. I liked your ways: you seemed honest and industrious. I don’t exactly know that I am either.”

“Well, to be sure!” said Mr. Brawl, with an indignant laugh.

“It is quite true; but I will be honest in this, I have told you one reason why you can do nothing for the working man. If I am wrong in saying he has no trouble to redress, no wrong to remedy, I am right, at least, in telling you the second reason, which is more true than the first. It is this: if there be a wrong to be redressed, you are not the man to do it.”

“Why not, sir? why not?” cried the new M.P., indignantly starting up.

“Simply a philosophical reason. You have energy, I grant you; and if you are wise, you can buy brains and understanding—there is plenty of the former to be sold—but, remember, you are an employer of labour. You know that any man who will lay his bones to, and has health and brain, can do well with you; therefore you do not believe in these panaceas which the demagogues declare to be necessary, and, moreover, everything you said would be used against you in your factories. No, Mr. Brawl; it may be a noble ambition to get into Parliament for you gentlemen who make money: I think it a foolish one; however, you have gratified it. Now you want me to advise you more, and all I say to you is, Shake down.”

“‘Shake down!’ what do you mean by ‘shake down?’”

“Just this: when people are travelling in an omnibus, more get into it than can sit comfortably. The conductor calls to the driver to

drive on, and the people gradually shake down."

"And how does that apply to me, sir?"

"Why, you are in the popular omnibus. You cannot all have front places: there are too many of you already. You cannot all be speakers; so just follow the men really fitted to be your leaders, and shake down, sit quiet. If there is an opportunity to make yourself heard, you will take it."

"Very well, sir; very well," said Mr. Brawl: "I shall not come to you for advice again."

"Very good: I am very sorry, I am sure. Perhaps you will not want me any more this evening, sir."

"No; certainly not: you may go."

Both secretary and principal had become tired of each other. Great men's secretaries generally grow disgusted at the service, and in a very short time too. Mr. Brawl made a secret determination to "go in" for the working classes and the wholesale redressal of their wrongs, and to get rid as soon as he could of his secretary. Mr. Stannard, as he smoked his pipe, voted Mr. Brawl an old "pump,"

and determined to get rid of him by quietly going away, and leaving a note to the effect that he had done so.

Mr. Brawl, who let his temper ferment more quickly than the philosophic and changeable Bohemian, anticipated him.

“It is evident,” he said—“It is evident, sir, that you and I no longer agree with each other.”

“I am sorry to hear it,” said Stannard, with a smile which he did not take the trouble to conceal. “I always thought that it would be so. We are very dissimilar in disposition.”

“Then the sooner we part the better; and I must say that it seems to me that you have taken unwarrantable liberties with me in intruding your advice so unpleasantly. It seems to me——” Mr. Brawl here fell into a trick common enough with angry men, of repeating himself.

“Well, it does not seem so to me,” returned the secretary. “I have merely a little common sense which I sell at so much per quarter. You have agreed to buy it. In the exercise of that common sense, I have told you that you had much

better hold your tongue in Parliament. You cannot find a ready-made evil to redress every day in the week; and if you take—according to the Mayor of Harwich, who used the phrase to her Majesty Elizabeth—‘the wrong sow by the ear,’ farewell to your parliamentary reputation.”

Mr. Brawl would have willingly submitted to this advice from any of his friends, but to be thus patronized by his secretary was too much; beyond this, he had a lurking suspicion in his own breast that Mr. Stannard was quite right in his conclusions, and this, it may be, irritated him the more.

“Pray let me have no more of your opinions, sir,” said the new Member. “I dare say I can trust to myself, or find advisers of a higher standing in society, at least. I shall be glad if you wish me good morning: any claim you may have upon me will be duly honoured.”

“Very capitally said,” answered the secretary, carelessly. “Sits the wind in that quarter? then we must be packing;” and the young fellow took up his hat and, with an easy nod, departed.

Mr. Brawl was glad to “see the back of him,” he

said; and he called him a conceited puppy and many other pretty names. Stannard was altogether too independent for the chair-maker, who, having commanded carpenters, did not unnaturally believe that he could also command secretaries.

The offer of the patriotic gentleman to settle "any claim" which his secretary might have against him might just as well have never been made. Mr. Stannard had an awkward habit, prevalent with Bohemians, of anticipating these claims in an extraordinary manner; and, indeed, the money he thus obtained from Mr. Brawl went very quickly with him, for he had a heavy back-way to pull up, and to replenish his wardrobe as the gentleman needed required some little money and considerable management. When Herbert Stannard, therefore, sauntered down the steps of the town house of the new Member for Bilcombe Regis, one need hardly assure the reader that the eccentric young man had not a five-pound note in his pocket.

"Well," said he to himself, confidently clinking the few remaining pounds and shillings, which were all in one pocket, "here am I again on the

world. Let us see how the world looks. I rather like it: there is such a precious freedom about not knowing what to do. Now I am in a really much more noble position than when with that wretched old chair-maker. I have no doubt I shall fall upon my feet. At any rate, the world is a wide one, and will serve."

He did not continue his sentence, but walked rapidly away from Bryanston Square eastward. Crossing Oxford Street, and sauntering down the wicked side of Regent Street, the young gentleman passed quickly and jauntily along, noticing many people as he went; and it was to be observed most of these were of that peculiar order which equally excludes men from being either thorough gentlemen or thorough tradesmen. They had, as Stannard owned, "a betwixt and between look." There was plenty of intellect, and even "breed" amongst them; but there was a wandering, restless, sharp eye which the gentleman has not. Some were very handsome, most of them clever—all, to a certain degree, and some exceedingly—vivacious, and intellectual.

Striking across the Haymarket and Leicester Square, and calling at the south-eastern corner thereof, at the Sablonnière Hotel, Mr. Stannard had an interview with a young Frenchman, who—wonder of wonders!—spoke very sound English, and carried on a conversation with him in two languages, changing from French to English and English to French, in the most rapid way, as the ideas struck them.

“Eh, mon ami!” cried the Frenchman. “Here he is again. Come, sit down; make yourself, as you say, comfor-table.”

“Very good,” said the other, sitting; “and how long have you left Paris, Gérard?”

“Depuis huit jours; mais reviens-nous dire comment se porte M. Herbert.”

“Well, he carries himself pretty well,” answered Stannard, with a smile, as he took from his pocket a handsome cigar-case. “Fumez-vous encore, Gérard?”

“Oui, certainement,” answered the other, taking a cigar. “C’est un épreuve de civilisation.”

“Umph!” grunted Stannard: “perhaps of

savagery, so far as I know. On dit qu'en Amérique les sauvages fument depuis la Création."

"Eh! ils ont restés sauvages toujours," added Gérard. "Now what do you want?"

On this his friend told him that he was on his beam ends, and that he wanted something to do. He had been in a confidential situation with a "Membre du Parlement Britannique," but the "Membre" was "un bête," and that he left him. To all this M. Gérard assented, telling him that he was philosophical and quite right. But it seemed that with our lively M. Gérard matters were very bad too. He had certainly put one or two managers on to two or three French plots; but nowadays English authors were beginning to learn "the magnificent language of the beautiful France," and every day his chances of employment in that way grew less. He was now engaged in carrying forward the proposals of an English manager for the engagement of a French *première danseuse*; but the dancer was too eager to come to England, which she believed was a land flowing with bank notes and ruby brooches: hence he believed that he

should not make the excellent terms he believed he otherwise could. The manager was a man who believed so thoroughly in the attractions which the first female dancer would offer to the British public, that he was willing to give almost anything.

“Well, it’s a queer case: you must put Mr. Manager off. Who pays commission? both of them, I suppose.”

“I shall try the matter,” answered Gérard.

“And who is the manager?”

“No one less than Mr. Dunne, who is with Captain Tophill.”

“Eh!” answered Stannard, shutting his teeth, “I think I know him.” He had already heard rumours, he said, about Miss Montague and the captain, but he seldom gave any heed to them.

M. Victor Gérard might have been about to enlighten the young fellow a little more on the subject, when that gentleman rose to go. He said that he had an engagement, and hoped to find some of his old friends down Bow Street.

Gérard the vivacious embraced him, called him a brave boy, and let him part. “Hang it,” said

Stannard, when he got out of the vast and rambling hotel again—an hotel which sempiternally smelt of garlic and stale tobacco—“how very near he was coming upon my skeleton! Ugh! I wish I could bury it, bury it alive, too!” Then the idea of a live skeleton struck him as being ridiculous, and he sneered at himself for making use of the expression.

He soon found himself in Bow Street, and in a neighbourhood which deserves some attention.

A theatre, a police-court, one or two taverns thoroughly theatrical, and a hundred shops more or less theatrical, in one irregular street, would be enough to make it remarkable, had it not, in its determination to be the most original street in London, possessed itself of a fire-engine maker at the top, and on certain days a lively assemblage of greengrocers' carts, traps, trucks, barrows, and other vehicles in the middle. It also boasts of one or two musical shops; the first floors of the houses in which these shops are being let to gentlemen who are “musical and dramatic agents,” and who have, or are supposed to have, constant engage-

ments open for first old men, *soubrettes*, first comics, second juveniles, walking gentlemen, second old men, singing chambermaids, and those who "do the heavy business."

Up and down this street parade, at certain portions of the twelve hours, gentlemen and ladies of whom it may universally be said that they look much better by night than by day. The gentlemen and ladies are equally destitute of any complexion to speak of, and the latter supply the defect by pearl-powder and a little rouge; whilst the gentlemen, disdaining anything but the puff-ball and powder, and, moreover, shaving with such ferocity and determination that they seem to have scraped their beards up by the very roots, present a bare-cheeked appearance such as is presented by no other class of men in existence; the theatrical barber, for the benefit of his own wigs, being in the habit of shaving his victims close up to the ears and under the base of the skull; so that every actor who wears his own hair labours under the serious imputation of having somebody else's wig on his head.

The perversity of nature, of which a certain French author has written very learnedly, is seen in Bow Street to perfection: the light comedy man is very often fitted, and always presumes he was intended for heavy tragedy; the tragedian has a vivacity which plainly bespeaks comedy; and each of the professors of the mimic art firmly believes that he alone wears the mantle of Kean, which has fallen upon his shoulders, only that the public, and a venal press, have entered into a tacit arrangement not to see this very patent fact. Even in smaller things than this nature's perversity can be here studied. As there is such need of shaving, one would hardly have presumed that every actor has a beard so strong that it looks like a *chevaux de frise*, composed of black hedge-stakes, in a few hours after it has been cut; nor that, having submitted to the cruelties of the barber so long, each *histrion* was not to the manner born. This is, however, so far from being the case, that, immediately an actor is out of an engagement, he commences to grow, and the beard, as we know, has an eagerness to "pousser,"

as the French say; so that in a very few days there may be seen some extremely rough chins down the busy side of Bow Street, and by these chins are known, it is supposed, those gentlemen who are on their own resources.

Gorgeous dresses of cloth, of gold and silver, helmets, hats with feathers, crowns, stars, garters, jewelry of the most terrific description, fill some of the shop-windows of the street; and at these windows announcements, seldom seen elsewhere, from theatres beyond the general knowledge of mankind, hang dangling in proud prominence. These bills generally record the triumphs of some gentleman of great "provincial," but small London celebrity, and the keeper of the shop is not unfrequently a personal friend and admirer of the actor whose fame he thus zealously forwards. Now and then an autograph letter from the great actor himself is exposed, hanging, possibly, from the spur-rowel of a theatrical buff boot, in which "Dear S——" is informed that "the business is glorious—money turned away by hatfuls," and that "my *Don Cæsar* has taken the town by storm.

I never had such an ovation, except at Edinburgh, in my great part *Sir Giles*."

Other shops there are in this magic neighbourhood where the fairy foot of the queen of the ballet is filled with a white or pink satin shoe, the sole of which, a very small one, has the peculiarity of ending where the toes begin, thus enabling the fair dancer to exercise those terrific jumps, and yet to fall on the ball of the foot. A theatrical shoemaker has a shop-window which is worth studying. Great splay-footed, puffed velvet shoes for King Henry VIII., boots with square toes for Charles II., and red-heeled straights for the comedies of the last century set out the window; and the shoemaker is so accustomed to different fashions that he can make you a shoe of any period you like to name, and is not the obstinate and unteachable fellow that the ordinary shoemaker is. The theatrical jeweller's is also worth a peep, as many little boys, who flatten their noses against the glass windows, think. Diamonds larger than the Koh-i-noor, rubies as big as raspberry tarts, and emeralds the smallest of

which is the size of a Brussels sprout glitter in the sunshine or gaslight, and dazzle both the young and the old.

The great attraction, however, to the juvenile population of this prolific neighbourhood is the armourer's shop, where swords, axes, helmets, and other of the stock and provender of theatrical battles are to be found. Here is the crusader's sword; and that golden-hilted weapon, with an emerald as big as a pigeon's egg, which the lover-prince of mediæval tragedy is always tied to, but with which he never fights. The prince's sword, which is as bright as a piece of looking-glass, when drawn, has lying at its point a humble weapon of the same kind, with basket hilt and blunted edge, known as a combat-sword. Hence, when the rich villain challenges the virtuous prince, and the virtuous prince, after disdaining to stain his sword with the villain's blood, is taunted into accepting the challenge, the curious may observe that, previous to fighting, the combatants approach the wings and exchange their fine swords for two working-day "combats," held ready by the

convenient prompter. With these swords the heroes wage hot war, striking sparks of fire from the ill-used blades, to the great delight of the gallery.

The boys of the neighbourhood, who gaze on these treasures, bring down juvenile friends to behold such sights as must infallibly delight every boy's heart; and if, whilst gazing at the wondrous blades and guessing their value—which they imagine to be enormous—a gentleman with a tragedian's strut, prominent chest, and large person, enter the shop, he is pointed out with much jubilation as the reigning favourite in tragedy, and his young admirers are rendered exceedingly happy, and far more delighted than if they had seen the Queen herself, or the Lord Mayor of London, attended by those knightly persons in armour of whom his lordship is very proud in his out-of-door progresses, but whom he, with the unfeeling heart of a *nouveau riche*, never invites to his feasts, and always leaves out in the cold.

As Stannard was sauntering up and down this fairy street, on the pavement of which so much

Heaven-gifted genius (in its own opinion) daily walks neglected and unknown, he met with a gentleman with a limp moustache and pale countenance, exceedingly like those of the third person in the little group to which the reader was introduced in the beginning of this history. What he had to say we will reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

A MEETING AND A JOURNEY.

THE professional gentleman who met our friend no sooner saw him than he threw himself into an attitude expressive of greeting on the stage, but, happily, nowhere else, and, in a voice of anxious inquiry, also existing only on the stage, asked—

“ Ah, ha! and so at last we meet again !”

“ Well, it seems so,” returned our young friend, with alacrity. “ How are you, my boy? and how’s the Warlock? Making his fortune, as usual?”

“ Have you not seen the papers?”

“ No; at least, not any purely theatrical papers. I have been immersed in politics.”

“ Poor young fellow! and you have let the wine

of life pass through your lips untasted. Gracious heavens!" said Skittles, looking up to that smoky and too generally cloudy covering which serves Londoners for a sky, "can any man be so lost to propriety as not to take in 'The Era?'"

"Well said, Skittles," returned Herbert; "so you are still in your old lunes, I see. As to the paper, you remember what Liston said to the doctor, who did not know him, and who advised him to cure melancholy by going, looking, and laughing at himself. 'Alas,' cried he, '*I* am that unhappy man!' So, with regard to 'The Era:' you ask if there be any one so blind as not to see that admirable print; I answer you, I am that deplorable individual."

"Well, we each move in our own circle, don't we? We mount our dunghill and fancy it all the world. Now, I do not care a halfpenny for politics. How do they agree with you?"

"Not at all: I have cut them."

"What! and the fine prospect promised you by the independent Member! By the way, I think that, if we had only votes, he would have taken

Drury Lane, for the wizard. Would-be Members are good ones to promise, are they not?"

"Yes; and, for what I know, good ones to perform. Mr. Brawl, at least, did not break any promises with me. I found that we could not agree, and so left him."

"And cut the concern?"

"Exactly," returned Stannard.

"And what do you mean to do? Will you join the Warlock again? There is plenty of fun in our little camp."

"Well, I don't know what to do at present. Come and have a glass of wine at the 'Harp,' or, if you like it better, more familiar beer."

"Very good, since you are so pressing. By the way, will you forget the name of Skittles, and our little antagonism? I am no longer under that name. I have revived my own illustrious cognomen. 'My name is Belville: on the Grampian Hills'—I dare say you are familiar with the quotation, so I will not continue it." So saying, the two young men, with the friendly and familiar manner which distinguishes all true Bohemians, strolled

into the "Harp," an ancient house given thoroughly up to players and their likes, in the parlour of which, a dingy place enough, redolent of stale tobacco and staler beer, the great Edmund Kean was accustomed to preside at a free-and-easy, and set the table in a roar with his wit.

"I don't know how you feel," said Stannard to his friend, as they lighted, one a cigar, and the other his never-failing pipe, "but I never enter one of these places but I feel degraded."

"What places—public-houses, taverns?" cried Mr. Belville, with astonishment. "Why, you might knock me down with a feather. This comes of the study of politics!"

"No, no; you mistake me," returned Stannard. "I only mean those places devoted to theatrical people. There is such a sordid appearance, so many circumstances about them which must abase the pride of the most aspiring of the neophytes, such meanness, dirt, and squalor about the whole matter——"

"Well, you're right there, Stannard," said Belville, philosophically. "Wash the paint off

our faces, and we *are* pretty fellows; but——” He then, without finishing the sentence, consoled himself with his pipe.

“Yes; and the worst of it is that the illusions must so soon fade. Look at the bright dresses, the glitter, the order on the stage, before the curtain, and then consider the turmoil, dirt, misery, hatred, envy, vice, and bickering behind those scenes, and you will have enough to make you wonder that any decent people continue on it. Now, there’s my unhappy wife——”

“Oh, by jingo!” said Mr. Belville—we will call him by his assumed name—“there, now the secret’s out. I wondered why you were abusing the blessed boards, and I see now very well. You have reason, as the French say, or did say when I was at school: I don’t know what they say now. By the way, have you seen that talented young lady lately? for she has a genius, and a true one——”

“No,” said Herbert, unhappily; “nor do I want to.”

He said this in a weak, undecided tone, which told his friend that he did not mean what he said.

“Well, you know where she is?” asked Mr. Belville, with more delicacy than one would have expected of him.

“Not I,” said Stannard: “the young lady is too independent to let me know where she is.”

“She has been engaged by the celebrated Mr. Dunne, who is manager for Captain Tophill in his grand speculation of playing one great theatre against another. He is a wiseacre, is he not? one who will ruin himself.”

“And serve him right too.”

“I presume that your wife will make a name in the world,” said Belville; but, seeing that his friend winced, and evidently did not like the conversation, he did not continue it.

“The Warlock, where is he?” asked his companion, reverting to something else.

“In Glasgow, doing wonders. I am up here for him, getting some apparatus. If you have left your Member of Parliament, why not come and join us?”

“Well,” said Stannard, “I will think about it. In the meantime, let us go: I have a call to make.”

The young fellow was uneasy about that wife of his, whom he loved, although she despised him. After parting from the companion of the Warlock in friendly terms, he went over to the stage-door of the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street, and, giving a shilling to the stage-doorkeeper, to whom he was not unknown, inquired the whereabouts of his wife, although he knew well enough where she lived, more from an uneasy feeling which he could not control, which was analogous to that which retains a rabbit in the immediate vicinity of its living tomb.

Unable to fix himself to any purpose, burning to revenge himself both on his wife and on Captain Tophill, who, although very willing to do him an injury, had not succeeded, and probably never would succeed in doing it, Herbert Stannard determined that the way to win back his wife and to revenge himself on his enemy was to get money.

“Money,” he said, as he walked to his humble lodging not far from the New Road, after parting from Pegwell, “is the root of all evil, as we well know. Not that I am quite sure of that. To

some of us it is the root of all blessing. I wish I had more of it. There was precious little of it to be got out yonder," he said, apologetically, tossing his head and long hair backwards in the direction of the patriotic Mr. Brawl; "but there may be something to be picked up in this little job. I'll go down to-morrow."

In pursuance of this purpose—for when he fixed upon a purpose he was very energetic in carrying it out, at least for a short time—he turned back and walked to the "Black Bull" in Holborn, and inquired about the Bilscombe Regis coach.

"It leaves at ten in the morning—at ten sharp, sir," said the boots. "Shall I keep a place for you?"

"Yes, do," returned Stannard, walking off. "I will be here in time."

Ten o'clock came, and with it the coach, one of the few which had not, even at that time, been driven off by the railways. But Bilscombe was a little place, always destined to be somewhat behind the age, and has only within these five years been blessed with a branch line, which does not pay the

shareholders, and has cut up a great deal of the quiet and romantic beauty of the little town.

The coach was a delusive affair, which started and went to the end of the first stage only with four horses, and before a quarter of its journey had been gone through came down to two. The coachman was but a shadow of the grand coachmen who had been driven into despair, bankruptcy, and suicide by the railways, or, if they escaped the latter fate, had taken refuge on the boxes of London cabs and omnibuses. The travellers were few. An old lady in a brown silk dress, very much faded, was the only "inside." The outsiders consisted of our friend Stannard, who occupied the box-seat, three travelling bagmen, each in a very small way, who sat immediately behind him, and a stout cook, who was going down to visit her family, was exceedingly nervous about an enormous box on the top of the coach, and who was honoured by having a special ladder brought out for her to ascend. Behind the coach, and causing great anxiety to the motherly apprehensions of this good woman, who was in a continual state of tremor

lest they should fall off, were two little boys, who were bound to a cheap school in the country. Happily for them, the cook left the uncongenial society of the commercial travellers, who smoked bad cigars and talked continually about their business, and sat opposite these poor little fellows, whose feet, not being long enough to reach the foot-board, rolled about, at each jerk of the old coach, like little Chinese mandarins, and, to keep each other warm, stuck as closely together as a couple of love-birds.

Providence is generally very kind to these callow fledglings, and had, no doubt, sent the cook to do her duty by them, which she did nobly, stuffing them with currant buns, and warming them with a pleasant drink somewhat stronger than tea, a good supply of which she carried in a black bottle artfully concealed in wickerwork and further disguised by an old newspaper.

Wrapped up in a handsome coat with a fur collar—for, as we have said before, or ought to have said, Herbert Stannard was somewhat fond of adorning his thin, and elegant figure—our young

Bohemian sat by the driver moodily enough, and hardly enlivened by the bright and beautiful autumn morning, which, although bright, was sharp, and, indeed, somewhat cold.

He was stamping his feet with impatience, when the coachman crawled up to his perch, reins in hand, and, giving them to Stannard to hold, covered up his legs like an old stager, and made himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

“What time do we reach Bilscombe,” asked Stannard—“eh, coachey?”

“Well, I should say about two, maybe. The roads are not very heavy now.”

“Six mortal hours!” said the impatient young man. “I suppose we shall be half-dead by that time.”

“Maybe,” returned the coachman. “I’ve known the time, when we had four good ’uns all the way, that we did it in four and a half. But, Lor’ bless you, sir——”

“All right!” cried the ostler, starting the horses by taking their cloths off.

The coach did not even boast a guard; so the driver looked round to see all right, and then set off with a little dash of spirit; a spurt, or, rather, ghost of a spurt, which the solid old horses, stiff in their joints and disgusted with their position, felt to be hypocrisy.

"They will be all the better when they be a little warm in the collar," said coachey, touching up the near leader: a proceeding at which that used-up animal only wagged his tail, and for which he disclaimed to mend his pace.

"Will they?" returned Herbert: "and I shall be glad of it. Are they long before they get warm?"

"Well, old blood ain't so soon heated as young: is it, sir?" asked the driver, with a sly look at the companion by his side. "No, no: it requires a good row or warm 'em, that it does."

"Ay, I dare say," assented Herbert.

"And, as I was saying, 'ness is not what 'ness was. No man would be a coachman if he wanted to get himself into the voracious and that's a fact."

The coachman, with a gloomy imagination, and certain thick-coming fancies of present, and probably perpetual ruin staring him in the face, was not a very merry companion for Stannard, and he turned for relief to the commission-agents behind him with but very little success. Before he reached Uxbridge he had ascertained the price of dry goods of various sorts, had heard that cotton was a drug on the market, and how old Tinpan, the jeweller, who died worth a million of money, had started in life; how he, Tinpan, had, with indomitable perseverance, hawked oranges and lead-pencils from door to door, until some gentleman set him up with five shillings, and his fortune was made.

“Ah,” said one of these shrewd gentlemen, “it is very well to say that his fortune was made; but he made it.”

“Why, o’ coorse: nobody said that he didn’t go to do it. He made it, sure enough: no one else could make it for him.”

“Ah, but what I mean to say is,” persisted the other, “that old Tinpan used, when he was

thirty year old, to sleep under his counter in a mere dog-hole of a place; that he never left off work till twelve o'clock at night; that he never took no pleasure, except at his company's dinners and city feasts; and that he never got drunk, leastway unless it was at them; that for the last thirty years of his life hard work had knocked him up, and he couldn't live on nothing stronger than oatmeal."

"And yet he died with a million, or, it may be, half a million o' money," said one of the bagmen. "What a wonderful man!"

"Say, rather," interrupted Stannard, breaking in, "what a wretched old hunks! Why, I declare the life of a convict or a galley-slave is worth such a life ten times over."

"Well," said the other, with something like pity on his countenance—an inexpressive plane of human flesh surrounded by a ring-fence of brown, stubby hair, and stumpy whiskers—"Well, different 'pinions, different people. With all his misery, he died worth a sackful of money."

"And much good did it do him," said Stannard.

Then he "pulled himself up short," as the bagmen termed it, asking himself of what possible use it would be to argue with such fellows.

"All their ideas," he reflected to himself, as he lighted a cigar—"All their ideas are set upon money. Now, there is just as much difference between one of these fellows and a noble-minded man who gives himself up to hard work for the mere duty as there is between a pig and a race-horse. Why, I would rather have the tinsel ambition of Safta, with her paltry belief that, when one hears the clapping of gloved hands and the music of applause, one is in Paradise."

Having by the time he had drawn the first few whiffs of his Havannah, composed himself, and set himself to think out the business he had in hand, he again reverted to the constant talk of the young and middle-aged men behind him on money. It was nothing but money with them, except that now and then their erratic speech touched upon the beauties of certain barmaids at the hotels and taverns they passed. To men who are in the pursuit of golden riches perhaps nothing is more

pleasant—at any rate, if we judge from their conversation—than a perpetual flow of talk as to the best way to amass them. To others this kind of talk is very annoying, and to a poor man sometimes dangerous. It was so in this case.

“Money, money, money!” said Herbert to himself: “what a powerful god it is!”

It is noticeable that he did not add, And what a dirty set of worshippers it has amidst the motley crew who bend to it!

“Money; always money! Why, those wretched fellows behind there would think more of a millionaire than they would of Shakspeare. Well, it is very pleasant to have, at any rate: when we want it we find out that secret. I wish I could get some; but how to do so, except through this little pocket-book, I don’t know. I wonder whether the secret be worth buying. I dare say not; but if anybody tries to purchase it, I do not see why I should not sell it. Old Pegwell will not know any better; and if I could only get a hundred pounds or so, why, then I might secure an American engagement for Safta, and, getting into the New

World, get rid of this worn-out, wretched old country.”

People who have thrown away time, talent, and one or two good opportunities in life may be excused if they are somewhat dissatisfied with their surroundings. Such was the case with Mr. Stannard; and, to say truth, the little exercise of ingenuity he contemplated rendered his stay in his own country unwise on his part.

Before he reached Uxbridge he had settled within himself to do the best he could for himself, and to do so by the aid of the document he held. And when he arrived at that town he strengthened his resolution by one or two glasses of rum-and-water and a light and sportive conversation with the cook, to whom he handed up a glass of ale, not only to warm herself, but also for the benefit of the two little children who were balancing themselves as well as they could on the basket of the coach.

So, while poor Doctor Sangrado and his sister Lotty were troubling themselves for the lost certificate, and poor Mrs. Emmy, puzzled beyond control, was allowing herself to fall every moment into

a state of worse confusion and mental irritation, Mr. Pegwell's messenger was making a bargain with himself to gain as much as he could by their loss.

"Upon my word, Doctor," said Lotty to her brother, after a long talk upon their best mode of acting, "I do not know what you should do now, unless go to London."

"I was quite right in what I did?" asked the doctor, apologetically. He was a man whom many disappointments had taught to distrust himself, and, moreover, he liked to be backed up—which of us does not?—by one whom he esteemed and honoured as much as he did his sister Lotty. "I was quite right in what I did?" He repeated this because the young lady was musing.

"Oh, quite right. There is no doubt about that, no doubt. What there is doubt about is the future. Had we have kept this very important announcement from the Earl, we should have been culpable. As it is, we are somewhat troubled. Having commenced the business, we must go on with it; and I do not see anything else

for you to do but to run up to London, as they say, and find out the church where the marriage took place."

"Well, there is some difficulty about that," said the doctor.

"Difficulty or not," answered Lotty, "things cannot remain as they are. The marriage must, I suppose, have been registered. A lawyer would put you on the right scent at once if you told him the day and the year. We can ascertain at least that much from Lady Somers. Her mind is not too hopelessly confused for that."

"It has had a severe shock, and has hardly yet had time to recover. We must give it time, at least, and must not trouble her too much, or I don't know what will be the consequences. But I think with you. We must have at least some excuse for my absence from the Abbey. I will write to his lordship and say I am unavoidably called up to London upon business of much importance; only, by the way, he will not unnaturally imagine that the business of the greatest importance is that which concerns himself only."

CHAPTER X.

A MODERN MISSIONARY.

It was, indeed, quite possible that the Earl of Broadacres should think that his own business was of the utmost importance.

Ever since the death of the elder of his sons he had been very mournful and sad; for he was a shrewd, clever man, and knew the measure of Lady Amethyst and Mr. Andrew Bradstock as well as any one. The doctor's strange announcement brought hope into his breast, and, far from being angry with his son for his marriage, or irritated at the announcement of a son and heir to his estates, he was really very glad about it.

Lady Amethyst, on the contrary, was very sadly

annoyed. She had, in some way which she could not very well account for, a presentiment that Lord Somers was married; a presentiment which she had long endeavoured, but very vainly, to stifle. She did not exactly know how to act, and she, therefore, fled for refuge to Miss Nightley; for, although Lady Amethyst was a very good woman of business, there were some businesses in which she felt it difficult to act. Perhaps even more than with men it is true with women, that there are times when they can act better by others than by themselves. She knew that the old lord was neither very cordial to her nor to her husband, and she also knew, even more acutely than he did himself, that he would welcome such an announcement as the doctor had made.

So Miss Nightley and the lady had taken sweet counsel together under the lime-trees in Broad-acres Park, and the governess had found herself "detached," to use a military phrase, with a roving commission to make herself useful in any possible way that she could against the enemy. With this she was delighted, being of a deeply

satirical nature, and, rather than otherwise, fond of hunting and worrying humankind whenever she could. What had humankind done to her to deserve this treatment? Well, not much. It was precisely because humankind had not done much that she so cried out against it. She was a woman of very irregulated ambition, and she had been, unfortunately for her, born in a position much too low for the fanciful exercise of that ambition.


Being proud, and of a nature which possessed a considerable deal of that which its owners call emulation, and plainer people, envy, Miss Nightley disliked the aristocracy and the rich, because they were above her; but, much more than these, she detested persons of her own class who raised themselves, either by merit or fortune, over her level. To keep these down, to keep servants in their proper places, and to snub the bold and ambitious of her sex who by a lucky marriage were better off than she was, formed a peculiar delight to this good woman, and one so keen and enjoyable that she seldom missed an opportunity of seizing it.

With great willingness, therefore, this lady

undertook to find out all the holes in the coat of Mrs. Everingham ; and to do so she made her way, one morning, towards the house of a gentleman who, she thought, would prove her ally.

This gentleman had been in the Church of England, but was so no longer. He was a man of nearly fifty years of age, of tall and commanding stature, somewhat bent by study. He had a pale, observant face, a high forehead, on which he somewhat prided himself, and restless and piercing eyes, which at the same time interested and puzzled those who looked at them.

His career, up to the time at which Miss Nightley first met him, had not been without interest. He was a man of merit and note, and would have been so in any company, and also of that restless ambition which urged him to do extraordinary things which set the world talking about him. When he came down to a little mission in the midland counties, which enabled him to take a house not far from Bilscombe Regis, he was known as the Reverend Father Gargle. But he had not always borne that honoured title.



He came of a good but poor family ; a family so poor that, after giving a good education to its sons, it was obliged to leave them to make their own way in the world with as little help from the fountain-head as need be. But this had the effect of making the boys work, and Pen. Gargle—his Christian name was Peniston—had an immense deal of work in him. Few men were so restless and active, few men so fond of being everywhere in the very first rank, or as near to it as he could get.

Mr. Pen. Gargle soon became noted as a hard-working man in his college, and the reputation he gained not only smoothed his path, but cheered him on in it. Every one acknowledged his capacity ; and, with all the kindly help which a man of reputation makes, it was much to his credit that he seldom made an enemy. He was soft in his demeanour, kindly, and very much of a gentleman. If there was any want about him, it was that he wanted a certain manliness ; but this did him more service than he was aware of. It is the strong and independent men in life who make enemies :

it is the men who seem to ask and to seek help who gain friends. Society is, after all, much more generous than we take it to be.

And so, as an undergraduate, with a reputation of having read more Greek plays than many others had heard of, and of spending his vacations in London, reading in the British Museum, and studying the Semitic languages, Mr. Pen. Gargle was backed by enthusiastic friends of his college to come out a double-first, and did not wholly disappoint them. Double-first is not a position achieved every day; and if Pen. did not gain it, he came very near it, and when he set up himself as a college tutor he had the very pick of the young men to enter his classes. When a fellowship in his college fell vacant, universal acclaim shouted—if it could ever be supposed to shout at Oxford—the name of Gargle, and to Mr. Pen. Gargle it fell.

In his place he might have been happy; but college dons are not very happy men generally. If they stay in the gentle and peaceful shades of Alma Mater, they have the reputation of getting fatter and more stupid every year; a reputation

which did not suit the thin, studious, mild, but ambitious Pen. Gargle.

Had he only have kept quiet, he would, no doubt, have been presented with the most presentable college living which should fall vacant ; for he was that sort of man to whom the world does not care to offer little favours ; and he might then have married well, and gradually risen from rural dean to archdeacon, employing his learned leisure in editing Greek plays, or translating German metaphysics, until he stepped into the throne of a lord bishop of the English Church.

As a bishop Mr. Pen. Gargle would have had employment, and would have shone. He had a capital way of dealing with men, and was of sufficient learning to have come down with a heavy hand upon any innovating or recalcitrant curate who might have entered, as some unwise curates will do, into a paper war with his diocesan. The bishop *in nubibus* would have had the world on his side. He was just the man to have a certain portion of that vast assemblage on his side ; but his fault was a very general one. "All think,"

wrote a clever lady—"All think their little set mankind;" and Mr. Pen. Gargle was no exception. Success to a great extent spoiled him, or, rather, it spoiled the little caution which had room to reside in that clever, restless brain by the side of so many talents.

And so, when Mr. Pen. Gargle became a tutor, although men flocked to him, he was not content solely to wait at the gate of knowledge. His busy brain was continually delighted in broaching new subjects and coming in contact with many fresh minds: it soared high into the regions of novelty. His ambition was to fill other people's minds, and to occupy and distract other brains besides his own.

It was a stirring time at Oxford when Mr. Pen. Gargle, to show his devotion for the Church to which he hoped to owe much, took orders. The celebrated "Tracts" had appeared, and they were acknowledged to be so full of novelty, so clever, alive, and earnest, that many men were glad to bear even the reputation of having written them. Mr. Pen. Gargle bore more than the reputation:

he actually was a Tractarian, and one not unknown or unhonoured.

He had read patristic divinity to some purpose, and his opponents, and these were many, had to wade through ponderous volumes, with which he was familiar enough, before they could answer him. Many went down before the strong steel pen of Gargle, and the reputation of this literary Churchman increased on all sides.

It would have been well, perhaps, had he stopped there; but Pen. had not a mind that he could easily pull up. Delicate, learned, and with a fine appreciation of beauty, he became enhanced in the study of architecture, carried his Bloxam with him, went into the country and rubbed brasses, made sketches of sedilia and piscinas, and finally grew to ask himself, as a very natural sequence, why he was not of that Church which had power, beauty, and a purpose for all those antiquities which he loved and revered.

Other people had asked themselves the question long before. Enthusiastic young pupils who had followed the road which their tutor pointed out

had, to their great surprise, perhaps, and certainly to the surprise of their relatives, found themselves in Rome. When they were safely landed in that Church of which I am speaking, and not the city, they saw plainly enough that the resting-place they had chosen was an inevitable conclusion, and they wondered, perhaps with some bitterness, why Gargle did not take the steps they had taken.

But for a long time Pen. Gargle hesitated. His was an honest mind, although eager Protestant papers called him a Jesuit. He was really enamoured of beauty, and his mind was finely touched with the art element and art worship which underlie religion. But he loved his friends, his companions, his Church. Success and applause may have turned his head, but they never corrupted his heart. Urged, at last, by one side to speak out, and plainly; urged by the other side to declare himself—for many a Christian brother sent to him letters full of Christian love—Pen. Gargle, his thin, commanding form bent lower, his fine, delicate, if somewhat weak face looking more wearied than ever, and his hair getting early thin

and gray, met with an old pupil of his own who had entered the service of the proud Church which claims the sovereignty of the world, and had with him a long, long talk.

Gargle, his mind torn with doubt, was no match for the younger man, who had seen some months of service, and who had all the ready confidence of a convert. There was no doubt about him : it was, he said, all peace within. He was like the man who, in the lines of Lucretius, sat upon a bank and saw others struggling in the stream beneath him : he wondered what they struggled for.

Is not this the old story? Is there not a good deal of truth mixed with the exaggeration of these men? Do not the bathers at Brighton and St. Leonards, as well as the little vulgar boys in Leech's caricatures, assure the gentleman in the machine that he had better tumble in at once—it is so nice and warm—all the time they are trembling with cold? Is it so nice and warm, after all? Perhaps not; but we are all glad when the plunge has been taken, and the shock is over.

So in went the Rev. Peniston Gargle, head over

ears. There was great rejoicing in the Protestant Church when this incubator of so many ducks—who, by the way, men could not say belonged to the water or land—plunged boldly in and swam after his brood.

“ Out goes the parson, illustrious spark ;
And, scarce less illustrious, follows the clerk,”

wrote Cowper. In this case the most illustrious followed last, and the “ Record ” sang pæans, intimating that the last of the band of spies had returned to the camp which sent them out.

In calm truth, it was probably nothing of the sort. Poor Pen. Gargle, when he took this plunge into the sea, felt very cold and miserable, and shed many bitter tears ; but he struck out boldly and soon reappeared swimming. He was, in good truth, of too much consequence and too great an activity to lie concealed ; and if the Church which received him had no hand in enticing the deserter, she did not fail to profit by his talent.

And so the literary Churchmen on the other side—those gentlemen who print their effusions

on such bad paper, and who edit organs which always seem to be in a chronic state of that which our American friends, not brothers or cousins, call indebtedness—sang their little songs of triumph. Why should they not? These gentlemen, too, believed that they were fighting and writing for the truth. They pitied the darkness of the benighted Protestant just as heartily as the more vigorous Anglican and Protestant Dissenter did of the benighted Romanist !

So, for awhile, Father Pen. Gargle—he had, of course, joined what the Rev. Tubbins called, in his presence, the ministry—had plenty to do in answering congratulatory, angry, threatening, declamatory, minatory, laudatory, and consolatory letters. He adopted the tonsure, and felt cold and uncomfortable on the top of his head. He found that he could not kick about half as much as he had done, and that the Church which was so full of ease, comfort, and delight held, as Mr. Skittles or the Warlock would have said, a pretty tight hand over him. “Hey-day !” thought he : “I suppose it is all right. We want authority ;

we want a rule of faith; we must subordinate our human understanding to the Church.”

And so this restless, unquiet spirit became still. But he had, and he enjoyed, his consolations.

These chiefly arose from the articles, printed, as we have said before, on thin paper and with shabby type, and with much inferior spirit in the writing than our worldly papers have, which reminded the world of the learning, piety, and grace which Father Gargle possessed, and of the sacrifice he had made.

Sometimes a devotee of the female sex, who took care to let the readers know that she could not be the bride of such a saintly man now that he was a priest, would address a somewhat weak and flabby set of verses to him. Sometimes a letter would thank him for having sacrificed position, luxury, and wealth, to become a follower of the poor fisherman.

Nor did, as has been before hinted, his new Church forget to reward him. He was made head of the Piscatorians, a company of very active fathers, who set up their mission in the midland counties,

who had a very pretty church—all painting, glazing, and gilding inside—and who sang beautifully and looked very romantic and novel to English eyes.

Yes, the return had come at last. Ultra-Protestants shuddered: some of them even wept. We of England, who had been so often foremost in the fight against ignorance, superstition, and cruelty, &c., &c., who had bearded the intolerance of the Pope, and who had—as everybody knows we have—ever so many thumb-screws and iron gags in our Tower; we, who had sent missions to the heathen, flooded the Continent with tracts, and had cast sackfuls of Bibles over benighted Spain and darkened Portugal; we, who had even sent to lecture the Pope himself, and had built a church, very much like a stable, outside the gates of Rome—we had, at last, not one, but many missions sent “into our midst;” and at the head of one of these, the most active and dangerous—alas! the most talented and seductive too—at the head of these Piscatorians, was Father Pen. Gargle, a pervert.

CHAPTER XI.

STANNARD'S MISSION.

DOCTOR SANGRADO was a simple man. In saying this one is not to suppose that he was one without talent, or, indeed, that highest kind of talent which approaches so nearly to genius. Indeed, in his own profession he had, at the time spoken of, sent certain observations to medical journals which did him the highest honour, and which won over certain deep students to entertain the highest opinion of his patient observation and acute analysis, and consequent bold suggestions.

But in the ways of the world he was very simple. Mr. Richard Stephen Naylor, who was, as far from a genius as a man well could have been, might have

put in an affidavit, and have possibly got Dr. Morton to swear to, things which he did not quite believe, or upon which he had not yet made up his mind. He was so simple that the difference between the men may be thus stated: Keith Morton believed in goodness, and Mr. Naylor did not. Morton was a disciple of what he thought or knew to be truth, and Mr. Naylor scorned to recognise the existence of any such quality.

Of course it happened, as it frequently does happen, that the only man thoroughly devoted to her cause and determined to serve her was, perhaps, in this case the least adapted to do Truth service. If Mr. Naylor, who was a cunning, but not a very clever lawyer, had taken Mrs. Emmy's suit in hand, he would have proceeded in a way very different from that of Dr. Morton, and would have brought the matter very shortly to a successful issue. As it was, Dr. Morton was her only champion, and, possibly at the very time he should have stayed at home, he went to London in great haste, and was on the top of the coach which, within two miles on the other side of Uxbridge,

passed Mr. Herbert Stannard, calmly smoking his cigar on the Bilscombe coach which brought him from London.

Stannard, who had a capital memory for faces, and a very bad one for names, an arrangement far from uncommon with busy men, recognised that of Dr. Morton.

"I have seen that face before," he said to the coachman: "whose is it?"

"It's a gentleman who is well known in Bilscombe," answered the driver, "and should be better. It's the best doctor i' the place."

This coachman had reason to know: he was a family man, who had been physicked and fed out of a bad fit of rheumatic gout—not an unfrequent ailment with hard drinkers who live in the open air—by our good doctor.

"That's all very well," returned Stannard, "but you forget that I do not live at Bilscombe. What is his name?"

"Dr. Keith Morton. He lives on the side of the hill. They calls his place Cold Blow."

"Umph!" answered the *ci-devant* secretary; "I

don't remember the place. He didn't vote for Mr. Brawl."

"No; he is hard and fast true blue with the rest of us," answered the coachman. "We have known the old family for many years, and we don't put up for no innovationers."

He had indeed lengthened the word by a syllable, but what he meant lay in the right direction. The coachman and those about him, especially those who lived under the wings of the "Falcon," believed in "the old family" and were true to them, and looked upon the election of the chair-maker as an innovation hardly to be understood.

"Him 'twas," volunteered the coachman, jerking his whip back to the flying coach, now fast disappearing along the level road—"Him 'twas as brought home the young lord when he had abroke his neck, along o' his foine lady here."

"Oh, indeed! I recollect the incident well enough. Will you take a cigar, coachman?"

"'Twill be soon in now, an' 'twont let 'un smoke in the 'Falcon,' more by reason that a stupid groom, years ago, set fire to a stable with his

poipe. Nevertheless, I'll take 'un, and thanks for her. She will do to-morrow mornin'. Mornin' air's uncommon raw to th' throat at this time o' year."

Coachey took the cigar and carefully put it away in the fold of his large sleeve, on the top of his wrist, where he could not easily break or damage it.

"I did not hear anything about the fine lady," said Stannard, who found in the driver's talk some little hint upon which he might act. "I thought that Lord Somers was thrown merely in driving a bull away from a young lady who got very inopportunately in the way, as, to say the truth, they most of them do."

"You be right there," said his companion on the box, who was himself a woman-hater of no ordinary force; "right enough, sir. No; it wur all along o' Farmer Groughem's bull. And a werry good bull he was; leastways, he made a decent piece of beef. We had a bit on him up at the 'Falcon.'"

Mr. Stannard was delighted to hear it. But

he would have rather heard about the young lady; so he continued the conversation, looking at the coachman with a pitying superiority, and now and then prompting him to speak.

“And who, pray, might this young lady have been—a cousin of my lord’s?”

The coachman looked on him with much contempt. What! not know that Lord Somers had no female cousins! Here was a cockney indeed!

“No; not a cousin,” he said with emphasis. “Lord Bradstock didn’t have no female sisters, as he knew on, and therefore didn’t ought to have no cousins. Some people said ’twas my lord’s lawful lady, and others said that it was his unlawful lady. Coachey’s nephew, who was a very impudent boy, was took on as page-boy by his lordship, and brought down from Lonnon to look after the pony, because his lordship did not want any one about the town to know of his goings on. But, Lord! how things do happen!”

Upon this profound reflection, one, indeed, sufficient to make us all pause, because things do happen in a very strange way, the coachman fell

into a brown study, and, flicking his horses in a meditative way, passed by the first straggling houses which formed the suburb of Bilscombe Regis.

“Yes; they do happen very strangely,” said Stannard, quietly swearing at the man’s slowness. “And how, then, about this lady? She was not his cousin, nor his wife?”

“Well, some on ’em say not. Some do say as she was his miss. But Jim swear, he do, that she was his lawful own wife, and had the marriage lines too. But Jim was such a conceited chap, he wur: he (the coachman) would not believe him on his testamentary oath.”

“Jim is, however, in the right, though,” said Stannard to himself.

He did not whisper this to the coachman, because he saw that the matter of opinion had resolved itself into a quarrel between the uncle and nephew; the latter looking down upon the former, and the former despising the latter; a pleasant arrangement, which will sometimes take place in the best-regulated families.

"Ah," the passenger continued, in a reflective way, adopting the old man's side that he might get the more out of him, "some young men are awfully conceited, and fancy they know as much as the old ones."

"As conceited as pison," said coachey. "Farmer Groughem's bull cost Jim a good place, though. He" (it was Jim, and not the bull, to whom he alluded) "stood at the head o' the pony when the bull lep' the fence and runned at the soldiery. When madam caught sight on 'im" (the bull, and not Jim)—"she was awful frightened o' them animals, as a'most all women are——"

Here the coachman broke off, to say, in parenthesis, "cussed fools!"

"I don't know that," said Stannard, who was weak and nervous himself. "A bull like that is no joke, you know, coachman."

"No; 'taint," answered that dignitary; "but I'm speakin' o' cattle in general. *They*" (he dwelt upon the pronoun with great contempt) "are just as afraid of a great cow as of a tearin', flyin', roarin' beast of a bull."

“ Well, they don’t know any better,” returned Stannard, “ and so I pardon them for once.”

“ Ah, so say I, when I’m good-natured, you know, not when I isn’t. But, as I was saying, madam, when she see the bull, whips pony like a wild thing, and off he bolts, upsetting Jim and rolling ’im over like a ninepin. Then comes bull——”

“ Ah, I saw what afterwards happened. Poor thing, it was a sudden blow !”

“ It was a blow to Jim ; for doctor comes and fetches the lady away from the Woodbines up to Cold Blow, and there she a’ bin ever sin’. Jim lost his place, and has bin up to London to get another—a fool.”

“ Well,” said Stannard, perceiving that nothing Jim could by any means do would please the old driver, “ he could not have gone to a better place, could he—that is, if he wanted to get into work ?”

“ Many peoples likes Lonnon, and many does not. Now, I’m amongst those as does not, and I don’t see much good as Jim can do with it. Wo-ho, will you, now ?”

The horses, which had put on a little spurt of extra speed as they neared the "Falcon," now pulled up. The landlord, who had for five-and-twenty years stood ready to receive any guest who might arrive by coach, stood there now. The one stableman tried to make himself as active as two; and the waiter, who, with a white handkerchief, had, in the exceedingly awkward way which only country waiters can achieve, whisked his napkin under his arm, opened the coach-door to the single female passenger, who received the attention in a somewhat testy way, as tired passengers are wont to do.

The old coachman gave up his reins and his whip, and hobbled down the side of the coach very stiffly, as if his legs were badly fitted on to the upper part of his body, and he was not quite sure they would not come off at the hips. The landlord, a staunch old boy, who still kept up his spirits, tried to give a thin gilding of cheerfulness to the proceeding by asking each passenger whether he would stay to dinner, generally without the remotest hope that he would do so, always except-

ing the commercials, who, as they were themselves busied with their packages, met with but business-like courtesy.

"Dinner, ma'am?" said the landlord to the inside passenger. "Have soup, ma'am? Dinner or luncheon?"

"A biscuit and a glass of wine will be enough," said that lady, haughtily. "I expect a conveyance for me soon. I will wait a little."

She hesitated to call a rattling tax-cart, drawn by a little shambling pony, a carriage, although she would have been delighted if she could have done so; and, after rustling in her faded silks, and unpacking herself from the mouldy inside of the coach, which her presence seemed to make even more faded and mouldy than it was, she shuffled in.

"George, see the lady into the coffee-room. Biscuit and a glass of wine, George."

"Yezzir," said George, in a feeble imitation of a London waiter.

"Here, waiter, 'ave you got the steps for me and these young gentlemen?" cried the cook.

"And 'as anybody called for a Mrs. Brown?"

“Not at present, ma’am.”

“George, fetch the ladder. Two young gentlemen from Chiswell Street. All right. The tutor of Dr. Gradus is in the coffee-room waiting their arrival.”

Stannard had descended, and stood under the doorway of the “Falcon,” looking like a gentleman of small fortune and much dissipation, his handsome face puckered into a somewhat puzzled expression; for he did not know what to do next.

“Hang it!” said he at last to himself. “If that doctor had only been too late for the coach, or I had come down yesterday instead of to-day, I reckon that it would have saved one of us a journey. Now, how am I to set about this job?”

“Dinner, sir? dinner or luncheon?” said the polite landlord. “Soup, sir? Hare soup; nice kidney potato, and a mutton chop.”

“Not a bad dinner, landlord,” said Stannard. “I won’t affect to call it luncheon, for I always dine early.”

“Yes, sir,” said the landlord, looking across the

yard to an old turret clock which ornamented a small belfry in the centre of a handsome set of stables now going somewhat to decay. "It's half past two, sir: it will be three before you sit down; and that's too late for luncheon and too early for dinner; an awkward time, sir."

"Maybe," returned Stannard, with a smile: "it is not so to me. I will have what you say at three: hare soup, and a mutton chop, and some dry sherry. You have very good wine here."

"Oh yes, sir," said the landlord. "I see you have been here before. Why, you were the gentleman with the great Warlock of the South, to be sure. You carried Mr. Brawl's election; and how is he, sir?"

"Mr. Brawl, or the Warlock? You have mentioned both of them."

"Mr. Brawl, sir. I understood you were going to join him in London. He was on the wrong side; but still one likes to hear of an old fellow-townsman. Many a good pound has Mr. Brawl and his spent in this old house."

"I have no doubt of it," returned Stannard.

“Well, he was very well when I last left him. We didn’t agree about his line of conduct. He wanted to do wonders all at once; and I, believing that he had better be still——”

During this conversation Dr. Gradus’s tutor came out of the coffee-room. He was a melancholy young gentleman, with a thin white hand, long fingers, with almond-shaped nails, which he kept busily employed in picking numerous pimples on his chin; pimples which he seemed fondly to believe took the place, and usurped the dignity, if not the beauty of a beard.

This young gentleman took charge of the two little boys, who, finding themselves in a strange town and amidst people they did not know, were huddled together, and looking around them piteously in the hopes of gathering some crumbs of comfort to sustain them in their new situation. The good-natured and stout cook had given them the remains of a plum cake, and, with this in their hands, they were consigned to the safe keeping of the melancholy young fellow, who did not look on them over kindly, seeing possibly in them more

occupation for the limited and overtaxed quantity of brains of which he was possessed.

“Now, boys,” said the young gentleman, “leave your boxes and your names with the waiter; Dr. Gradus will send over his cart and horse for them; and, if you please”—he said this in a dignified way, as if he knew very well that if they pleased or not it would be the same thing—“we will walk across the park to the Doctor’s.” So saying, he marched off with his two little pupils, who had been parting with their kind companion, trotting behind him, and also rather admiring his stiff walk and authoritative way.

“Yes, sir,” continued the landlord; “and what you thought was surely right. Bless you, Mr. Brawl won’t make no figure in the House. He ain’t a orator.”

“Well,” said Stannard, “whether he be one or not, he knows his own business best.”

“As long as it was confined to his own business, no doubt, sir,” said the landlord. “The mischief of it is when we take up a business that we don’t understand. I think you said dry sherry, sir?”

“Exactly; and, landlord, after I have done dinner, I shall be glad if you will come and finish the bottle with me.”

Stannard said this for more reasons than one. He was fond of company, and did not like to be alone; and then, moreover, from the landlord he could very easily find out how the land lay.

He was not disappointed. After a very good dinner in the coffee-room, which was a much superior apartment to the sanded parlour in which we first made his acquaintance, the ex-secretary was soon joined by the landlord, and enjoyed a very good glass of sherry, with a very excellent cigar.

“This is very sound,” said he to his host, looking at the wine; “a nice light colour, too.”

“It ought to be good, sir,” returned the landlord: “I laid it down fifteen years ago, when there was a great deal more drunk at this house than there ever will be again. I don’t like to use it at market-tables and elections. Some of the people in this town, sir, don’t know what sherry

is. They like the rich brown-red fiery sort, sir; something that bites."

"And which will make you feel bilious for a week," returned Herbert. "Ah, I know it well. Now, this is capital. I think we could manage a little bottle more; just a pint, in a black bottle."

"Will you allow me to order?" said the landlord, pleased with his guest.

Stannard bowed. The wine was brought. The landlord opened the pint himself, and showed the cork with decent pride; and then, lighting a cigar which Stannard offered him, the two sat down very amicably together.

"It is a glorious afternoon," said Stannard. "How sweet and peaceful this country town looks after great noisy London!"

"Ay, sir, it does, indeed. I only wish, though, we had a little of the bustle and the business. It is a deadly-lively look-out here during the winter months."

"No doubt; but if you had the bustle and business, you would soon have the smoke and the dirt. Sometimes I like quiet myself, and hate

London turmoil; and, at other times, I feel that I could not live out of the little village, as we'll call it. Now, does your great family ever leave this part for long? I suppose, like other great families, it spends the best part of its time in town. And, with such a splendid park, too—such beautiful trees!—it seems almost a pity, does it not?"

"Ah, sir," said the landlord, "you are wrong there. They don't leave us for long. All the families down here stick to us pretty well, the great family best of all; and, since the loss, sir, I think that the Earl will go away even less than he did."

Of course Stannard, after this, found the road open to him. The landlord had been under-butler in the family when a very young man, and his father "before him," he said—as if a man's father could, by any possible means, commence his existence after him—had known the old lord and the young lord, who was now the old lord, very well. He told Stannard how secluded Lord Broadacres had kept himself, and that he had never lifted his head up after his son's death.

Perhaps he told him even more than he knew. He gave rather a graphic sketch of Andrew Bradstock—the Honourable Andrew—and his wife, and seemed to entertain a very wholesome dislike to that gentleman, who had, in his younger days, borrowed money from him as if he was doing him a favour, and had left his debts to be settled in a very summary way by Mr. Naylor, from London. It seemed to the landlord that, if a settlement was to be made, the family solicitor, who was, indeed, the solicitor to the “Falcon” and its proprietor, should have been consulted.

“Yes, landlord; you are right there,” said Stannard; “but this gentleman now, I presume, has got money: he had some with his wife, of course?”

“Very little,” answered his companion; and then he told Stannard that Lady Amethyst was, in his opinion, a Catholic, and had a Catholic companion, and that they both went to confession to a little town some miles away, where Father Gargle and the Piscatorians were seated. It grieved the innkeeper sorely that this Catholic lady’s husband

should take the title of the young gentleman who died, and that Andrew should stand next to Lord Bradstock, "and him so worn and feeble, too!" For rumours had travelled from the Abbey of Lord Bradstock's illness; and they who love news often are glad to make some in anticipation, and to moan over evils which they go out to meet long before they are coming that way.

From the landlord, also, before the wine was finished, Stannard heard enough to satisfy himself that the very best person to apply to was Miss Nightley, of whom the servants at the Abbey, who kindly took upon themselves, in the absence of a local journal, to convey news to the "Falcon," had reported that she was the mistress of Lady Amethyst just as the latter was of the Honourable Andrew. Indeed, the landlord took upon himself to add that this remarkable woman knew the length of everybody's foot in the family.

Of this Stannard made a mental note.

"She may be of some use to me," he said to himself. "At any rate, I will apply there first, and then go up to the doctor's. But he has left

no one at home, I suppose, but an assistant, or some old woman. A pretty thing for him to neglect his patients and go running up to town just as he might have been useful! Never mind, he must take the consequences. I hate dealing with anybody but principals, or as near to the principals as I can get. Miss Nightshade, or Nightley, or whatever her name is, is the woman for me."

As they had finished the wine, and this resolution was fresh upon his mind, Herbert Stannard, after ordering a bed, went to take a walk in Broadacres Park.

CHAPTER XII.

TOWN AND COUNTRY.

"SHE can take care of herself; she can take care of herself," said Herbert Stannard, thoughtfully and rather bitterly, as he walked over the yielding tufted grass of Broadacres Park, towards those celebrated cedar-trees, the Sisters, of which mention has been made in the first volume. The sun was already low in the horizon; the autumn tints had made more beautiful than ever the forest trees, and in the fading year the two cedars had grown darker in foliage and more massive than ever. There they stood, seeming to stretch their branches over the land with a solemn protective beauty which struck the weary, listless, and unhappy

young man, and, with the calm peace of the evening, sunk into his heart.

He stood for some little time looking at those trees, marking the sky-outline and branch beauty of them, and still repeating those words, "She can take care of herself."

Now, to take care of one's self is a very necessary matter, and the person who can do so need not call for any exceeding bitterness of remark. But when men apply the phrase to woman they always use it as a term of reproach; as if the ideal woman should be weak and unable to help herself; an ideal which is soft and effeminate, and well enough for Mr. Stannard and those Romans of the Lower Empire of whom we have too many.

And who was able to help herself? Not Lady Amethyst, for of her Stannard knew nothing; and certainly not Miss Nightley, for of that estimable woman he was not fitted to pronounce. The truth is, the young man was thinking upon his wife, and of the situation in which he had left her. "That captain," he said, "will find himself fooled, as I have been, and serve him right too. The

best thing I can do is to look out for myself too ; but I am a child to that woman. She has the innocent look of Eve and the cunning of the serpent.

“ Now, if I am able to make a little money by this job here, I will go to America, out of the way of all this nonsense, and take her with me or leave her to her fate ; or, just to plague her, I will send her a letter, to say that I have made a hole in the water. Though, upon second thoughts, I am afraid that might please rather than displease her. I had better say nothing about it.”

So he walked onwards, not at all satisfied with himself or his fate, and very much inclined to mischief ; and, unfortunately for our poor little Emmy, he arrived at the Abbey and discovered Miss Nightley very opportunely for his business.

In the meantime the doctor arrived in London, not having the slightest notion of his best method of proceeding, but very willing to do his best for the widow and child whom he had taken under his protection.

“ My best plan,” said he to himself, “ is to do

the thing respectably. A good place to put up at is essential enough, that I do know; and then I must contrive to get hold of a good lawyer."

Good lawyers are not always to be found when you want them, although I have been assured that they undoubtedly do exist somewhere; but good hotels are easily found in London, and at Brown's Hotel, in Dover Street, Dr. Keith Morton found himself as comfortable as one can well be who is not at home.

The doctor's next expedient was to find out "Jack;" and this Jack, it would appear, was an old school and hospital friend of the doctor, of whom Sangrado had the highest opinion. So, like Stannard in the country, the doctor in town sat himself down to a mutton chop and a glass of wine, and passed the time, as every healthy Englishman must do, in the pleasant occupation of eating.

After dinner the doctor lighted a cigar, and went forth to meet Jack; and as, in doing so, he had to walk through Seven Dials—Jack living in Lamb's Conduit Street—the pockets of the kind doctor, which he had filled with a sufficient

quantity of halfpence, were emptied quickly : no pitiable object, and there were many, was sent away without some kindly word from this good-natured and somewhat stout gentleman, who, as he strode over the pavement, looked by far too big a man for any garrotter to tackle.

“’Tis a desperately wicked place, no doubt, this London ; but yet, somehow or other, I like it. I should not mind living in it. There would be more excitement than at Bilscombe, after all.”

It was one of the crazes of the good-natured doctor that he wanted excitement. He was always laying himself out for more work than he could well get through, and his benevolent schemes for the improvement of society covered a vast amount of ground, and had taken up a great deal of the doctor’s time and a considerable quantity of paper. He was a reformer in the most vigorous sense of the word : there was to be no unhappiness and not even a trace of tears in his scheme of regeneration ; but, although upon the threshold of commencing this vast crusade, Keith Morton was kept from promulgating it by a shrewd suspicion

that a much wiser intelligence than that of man had some concern in the sorrows and troubles of the world, and had, at any rate, for some wise purpose, never put a stop to them.

But although he acquiesced in the proposition suggested to him, that sorrow and tears might be for our good, and, indeed, did fit us for something higher and better than mere enjoyment, tears and sorrow so touched this soft, good creature, that he never saw any approach to them without exciting his brain with fervent recollections of his old schemes.

“Dear, dear!” said he, putting sixpence into the hand of a poor woman, with a poorer child: “go home, or go somewhere, my good woman, and feed yourself: that child should never be out on such a day as this.”

The woman replied, with a miserable whine, that she had no home, and the doctor hastened on. He had a delicate ear for voices, and the doubt struck him, as he passed onwards, whether that whine was not, after all, too professional; at any rate, it was not in good taste. The woman having

got sixpence out of the country gentleman, who, by his boots, hat, and coat, she knew well was not a dweller in Babylon, she had given, according to the best of her art, an extra sorrow to the voice, so as to excite pity, perhaps to the extent of a shilling. That was the account which Jack gave of the matter, when the doctor found him.

Jack Juniper, the fondest and best friend of the doctor, was a doctor himself. He had been the wit of the hospital, friendly with all the men of his time, the hardest worker, the hardest drinker—let us say, only as far as beer and pale ale went—the most enthusiastic, cleverest, and crotchety of a number of men to each of whom the doctor's good-nature endowed with great genius.

Jack was pounding some medicines with great energy, and giving directions to his boy in buttons, who stood by assisting him, so far as putting labels on bottles and pouring in some drops of *aqua pura* went. When Jack was tired, buttons went on, fetched down his bottles, weighed the medicines, and, in short, was a double right-hand to his

master. Sangrado, who had stolen in on them, watched the operation for some time before Juniper, who was very busy, looked up.

When he did so his round and somewhat red face beamed with delight; he gave a kind of fraternal howl, pushed away the mortar to buttons, and then, coming with a big jump over his little counter, fairly hugged the doctor, after the manner in which Mr. Keeley on the stage was wont to hug a brother performer whom, in the play, he had not met since childhood.

“Come in, Sangrado. Where did you drop from? Of all men else, I have avoided thee; at least, I should have avoided, for I am dreadfully busy, and I know now that I shall not get any work out of myself. Come along in. Sam, get along with that prescription, you rascal, and look at the book, will you? There’s Mrs. Smith’s child, with the bad eyes—you know what to put up—and there’s Mr. Robinson’s lumbago: don’t forget the lumbago, or he will throw his wife out of window. And, Sam, when you’ve done that, go and put the mare to: she hasn’t had half enough rubbing down, you

lazy beggar. Her coat ought to shine like a new piece of oiled silk."

With this professional simile, he led the way through the little shop into a consulting-room at the back, where the "Medical Times," "Lancet," and some of the newest works on surgery and medicine were ranged. Jack was a desperate reader, and knew more than most men, because he worked more, which is, perhaps, a general case. He was a good mechanic also, and, in a little third room beyond his consulting-room, had a lathe and a small carpenter's shop, neatly fitted.

"Now, I say, Jack," remonstrated the doctor, "don't let me take you away. I want only to consult you on a case."

"Bravo! What is it like? A consultation! anything acute, now—brain fever, for instance?"

"No, no; it's a law case."

"Law!" returned Jack, with his face considerably longer. "Don't touch it. I never prescribe in those cases—sure to dodge you and to become chronic."

Sangrado laughed. "Well, we shall see. But,

I say, Juniper, you don't want to poison anybody, do you?"

"Why, you wicked wretch, can't you do it in the country? must you come to town for it? Well, if you are hard pushed, I don't mind helping you. M. Raspail has a notion here of a new and subtle poison that absolutely evades discovery."

"Then he ought to be shot for suggesting it: it will set people thinking. But I did not mean that. I meant, did you want to poison any one by your boy Sam? because I think you are taking a very good way to do so."

"Oh, Sam," said Juniper, with a laugh: "he is the cleverest boy in London—such a chemist! I created Sam. I took him on to clean boots, and then taught him to read; through which, penny numbers will be the ruin of him. He is already deep in the mystery of 'Ada the Betrayed; or, The Murder of the Old Smithy.' Here's a number I took from his pocket. But the boy has really a genius for chemistry, and understands drugs by intuition. He can prepare a prescription as well as I can; only he is so terribly conceited."

Sam went on with his work, pounding away in the little shop, which was attached only to Dr. Juniper's establishment for his own use, and didn't boast any red or blue bottles. And the country doctor, after taking a glass of ale, poured the whole of his story into the sympathizing ear of Juniper, interrupted now and then by the most admiring and sympathetic exclamations of—

“God bless me!” “Well, we will see to this.” “I know your man, Morton, that I do!” the last having reference to an eccentric lawyer, an acquaintance of Mr. Juniper, who certainly had not much practice, but who somehow had acquired the reputation, with gentlemen who were not of his profession, of being the cleverest fellow in the world.

“Hallo, Sam,” shouted the town doctor to his helpmate, “just you finish that job, and bring round the mare. Sangrado, you will go my rounds with me; you can talk as we ride along; and, when we come back from Barnsbury, we can call upon Mr. Hosier—that's the lawyer, I mean—he will settle it all in a twinkling. There's

nothing like going to the right person. Sangrado, you have shown infinite sense and discernment in coming to me, and at the right time."

Sam, who had packed up the physic very neatly, and was checking off the bottles and pill-boxes from a long day-book, summoned an inferior boy of much smaller dimensions, and selected his portion, which was hastily glanced over by Juniper, dismissed him, and then disappeared himself.

"Quick boy, that," said Sangrado, who had watched him: "why, he would beat a dozen country boys to fits. He is safe, you say?"

"Safe as houses," answered Jack; "only he knows his value. He went away from me for two months, a short time ago, and came back a deplorable object. The fact is, he is too clever: people won't believe him. And then, Sam is such a preciously conceited fellow. I had to give him a good licking, t'other day; and—would you believe it?—he wouldn't take it quietly, but stood up to me."

At the picture of the burly Juniper setting to fisticuffs with the clever boy, in the little shop

where Jack received his patients from ten to four, Sangrado laughed outright, and Juniper joined him.

“Bless you, he was as quick as an eel,” said Juniper, his face beaming with delight at the recollection. “He turned very pale when I clouted him, and, having his sleeves already up at the pestle and mortar, he stood out just here and put himself in position. ‘Do you mean it?’ said I.

“‘You do it again,’ said he, ‘and I’ll show you.’

“I will say that he was respectful enough not to hit his master without due provocation. Of course I couldn’t stand that, you know.”

“You discharged him there and then?” suggested Sangrado, with a smile.

“Not a bit of it,” said Juniper: “I was not going to balk his inclination. I jumped over the counter and gave it him. He was, as I have said, as quick as an eel, and just grazed my chin; but I gave him a poult of the head with my left, and he dropped into the patients’ chair. He is a sensible lad, Sam, and saw when he had had enough. He

shook hands, and he begged my pardon. He has been more humble ever since. There is nothing to take the conceit out of a man like a good poult of the head."

"That was a Bedfordshire word, was it not, Juniper?" said Sangrado, smiling at the incorrigible doctor, who carried out his ideas of equality so far as to have a turn-up with his servant.

"It might have been, or might not; at any rate, we said it at Aspley; I recollect that very well. You must know," he continued, "that Sam is not an every-day bird. He is a match for any of us. Only let him drop his conceit, leave off horses and betting, and stick to medicine, and he might rival Astley Cooper himself."

The future rival of Astley Cooper, as Juniper said this, came round in a smart phaeton. He was dressed as a groom, drove with a light hand, and looked a *beau-idéal* of a gentleman's servant, smart, active, and willing.

"There," said his master: "when you see him like that you think it is a pity to spoil him by

making him mix physic. He is a wonderful fellow."

Sam jumped down and held the reins for the doctor; and Sangrado and his friend having nicely filled the front seat, Sam, with his arms crossed in the true professional style, sat in the very middle of the seat behind, to give a good balance to the doctor's spider phaeton. As he sat there he seemed to have forgotten all dreams of physic, and to be only engaged in glancing with a knowing eye and the judgment of a horse-dealer on the various animals that passed, and summing up in his mind their value to a shilling.

CHAPTER XIII.

LOTTY MORTON'S FEARS.

POOR Lady Somers, when left alone with Lotty and Mrs. Lapis, felt very lonely and deserted. A fear stole upon her that her baby would be taken from her, and vague dreams of her own guilt, even in marrying the man she loved so much, grew gradually upon her.

The conversation of Miss Morton did her some good; but she had been from childhood accustomed to attach much importance to the actual presence and advice of a lord of the creation, and she missed the kind doctor as she would have missed a brother.

She was not a strong-minded woman. She

would have no more gone to a social science gathering than Miss Blueskin would have kept away from it; and yet she was "all a woman," a woman to the very tips of her fingers; and now she had completed her womanhood in its most sacred significance: she was a mother too.

The way in which she regarded her baby, as being hers and yet not of her, as something more than she was, and as having greater hopes and a greater destiny than she had, was very indicative of her timid, retiring, and yet gentle nature. The boy was to her everything in the world: it was for him that she had to live and had to struggle; and there seemed to her fancy a significance in the fact that the baby was a boy and not a girl; that he was to succeed his father as a great person, a proprietor of one of the ancestral estates, a bearer of one of the great names in the first country of the world. Had it been a girl, she would have been less careful or less jealous about it. Had it pleased God to have taken her husband from her and have left her childless, she would have gone silently away, have forgotten her rank, and have yielded

up her property; and in resuming, if she could, her humble sphere as a teacher, a sphere which she hated, and for which she was not fitted, she would have lived in perpetual widowhood and have died alone.

When we are utterly alone in the world it is difficult to speculate on our actions. A man's countenance is not only brightened by a friend, but his whole manner is altered by the knowledge that he has friends about him—friends who will judge him rightly, believe in his honesty, applaud his actions, if good, and, if not, at least speak up for him to the world and defend him. It is just the same with boys at school, or with a potentate in Europe. If a big boy, in fighting with a little one, whom he may have but led into a frantic resistance, finds all his companions against him, he will soon "give in." If a dog finds himself alone in a battle, he will soon give it up. He looks up to man as his *melior natura*, and man, if not to a higher nature, to his friend. Men deserted by all, in London, and worn out with want and trouble, will retire to die alone and without spirit, and broken and hopeless.

But the chief feeling which friendlessness breeds is that of utter suspicion. Many women, immediately they become mothers, grow violently distrustful. Female prejudices—feelings which never enter into the heads or hearts of men—crop up and grow abundantly in the lone heart of a widow. Not without cause do many of their own sex dislike them. They are often *exigeantes*, grasping, even avaricious, not to be daunted or put back in their demands, and all for their children, the dearest half of themselves, upon whom they fancy the whole world looks coldly.

Upon this charmed stage in her progress our poor pilgrim had entered. She was already in the grounds of Doubting Castle, and had begun to look with some suspicion upon Mrs. Lapis, Miss Lotty, her nurse, and even the good doctor himself, although she regretted his absence, and really felt grateful for his kindness. When suspicion and fear enter into our heads and hearts we are not very reasonable, and Mrs. Lapis had no claim to being either logical or just when her animosity was awakened.

“It is a very curious thing, Miss Morton,” she said, after watching the baby being dressed and fed: it had a prodigious appetite, and “throved,” as Mrs. Lapis said, “to the wonder,” although of a silent nature, not at all lively, and somewhat unobservant—“It is a very curious thing, Miss Morton, that your brother should have been in such a hurry to leave us.”

Lotty bit her lips, with some vexation. Leave a woman alone to understand another, and she will do it. She saw how much Keith loved this woman, and how totally indifferent he was to her. The very woollen shoe of the baby—a shapeless, utterly inartistic thing, which was always dropping off its fat foot—was dearer to Lady Somers than the heart of Keith Morton.

“You don’t answer me,” said the widow, in a little alarmed tone. “Don’t you hear me say that I think it was very curious for Dr. Morton to leave me and the baby—especially the baby, who is ailing with the thrush—so early in the morning, without saying good-bye, and going up to London too? He might have consulted me, I am sure.”

She said this very petulantly. She was by no means sure that it was what she wanted to say, or that it was the very best thing she could have said. She wanted to say something, to blame somebody for the terror, alarm, and suspense that she felt.

Now all this feeling, natural enough with the widow, so suddenly bereft of one to whom her whole life was devoted, was rather incomprehensible to downright Lotty Morton. And, inasmuch as Keith Morton's heart and character were perfectly transparent to his sister, but very opaque to the other lady, it was natural that Lotty should feel offended at any tone which seemed for a moment to reflect on her brother.

But when she looked on the pretty puzzled face of the young mother, clasping the baby so closely, and even somewhat too tightly, to her breast, Lotty's better nature triumphed, and she forgave her her suspicion even against Keith.

“My dear Lady Somers, will you recol——”

Here she was interrupted by an alarmed cry from Mrs. Lapis. “Now, my lady, my lady,” she said,

“you will kill that baby! just look how the poor thing is kicking and plunging, to be sure. Poor duckey-darling! do give it me.”

It is with women with babies as it is with men in regard to poking fires: each believes that no one can handle and dandle the poor creatures so well as herself. Mrs. Lapis was of this opinion; and if she compared herself to the young mother, she was undoubtedly in the right. But Lady Somers must be excused from holding a directly contrary opinion.

“No, Mrs. Lapis,” she answered, sharply, lifting the baby up and patting his lordship’s back with gentleness, a proceeding which brought him round after a slight fit of coughing—“No, Mrs. Lapis. I have heard say—I have heard my mother say—that no woman could nurse a baby so well as its own dear mother could; and I am sure she was right.”

This appeal to her mother was, with Emmy, final. She referred to that parent as a master in Israel, one of the scribes, would have referred to the Rabban or Right Reverend Rabbi; whereas, in regard to this belief, Mrs. Lapis was a very Colenso.

“Oh, it’s all very well, my lady,” she answered; “I dare say those used to be the ideas; but many mothers never nurse or touch their babies now.”

“Shame on them, then!” said Emmy. “But that will do, Mrs. Lapis: he is all right now. And now, Miss Morton, perhaps you will favour me with your opinion about your brother’s absence.”

Thus appealed to, Lotty had no alternative but to draw her sword and stand on the defence. Perhaps she had better have held her tongue and have left matters as they were; for the true way to cultivate suspicion is that which gardeners employ to a grass-plot: to press it down and roll it.

“Keith,” said Lotty, “quietly consulted with me, and we thought that the best thing he could do was to go up to London. You are not yet prepared with your proof——”

Emmy, at these words, again fell into that vacant look she wore before; a look which had alarmed and frightened both Keith and his sister. Miss Morton, however, affected not to notice it, following out her brother’s advice to the letter.

“And,” continued Lotty, “he is gone up to

London to consult some solicitor about the matter."

"And what were the last words he said to you about me?" asked Emmy, suddenly, with an increased spirit and vivacity, as if the light of her recollection had flashed up as brightly as ever.

"He told me especially to take care of you," answered Lotty, quietly. "He need not have said that, poor dear fellow, for he knew very well that I should do so."

Lady Somers looked with increased suspicion on Lotty, and said—

"Miss Morton, he said something more than that; something, too, which struck me as more important."

"Indeed, then, I cannot remember it. It must be very stupid of me to forget it."

"Shall I recall it to you?" asked Emmy.

"Pray do," said Lotty, looking with astonishment at the young widow, and wondering to what point the conversation would tend. Then, as Emmy was about to speak, she seemed to read the sentence in her face; for she said, quickly—

“Oh yes; I remember now. He said something about your not going to the Abbey. I did not remember it, because I thought it of little importance.”

“Of little importance!” said Lady Somers, with *hauteur*. “I can repeat every word he said. ‘Mind and keep her from going to the Abbey. If she once gets there, all our plans will be spoiled: it is of the utmost importance that she should be kept in.’”

“Poor dear fellow! yes,” answered Lotty. “I know how anxious he was about your health; and I know that I thought, at the time, that he was wandering. What should you do at the Abbey, my dear lady, until you go there armed with all proofs of your right to be there as the wife of Lord Somers and the mother of the heir to the peerage and the property?”

That a little patience would be the better policy seemed so incontestably plain to Lotty Morton, that she did not waste a further thought upon it. But it seemed by no means so plain to Lady Somers. It is not only your dreadfully dark and

secret nature which grows suspicious. The most sweet and gentle, guileless and innocent, will, when left helpless and alone, turn to suspicion as if it were some guard to their weakness.

Lady Somers had been pondering over her situation for a very long, sad time; and, having heard her husband always speak with the greatest affection of his father, she very naturally imagined that the best way in the world for her to proceed would be to walk to the Abbey, ask for Earl Bradstock, tell him who she was, and, in the middle of the interview, put the baby into his hands, and fall upon his venerable neck in a flood of tears.

“It is so easy to do right,” she thought. “No one could for a moment suspect her story. The old nobleman would ring the bell for Lady Amethyst, beg her to admire the very fine boy who was to replace his lost son, kiss his daughter-in-law upon both cheeks, and insist upon one of the best, if not the very best, bed-rooms in the Abbey being got ready for the invading lady, and turned into a nursery.”

To those who know anything of romantic people it will not seem strange that, with this idea in her

head, Mrs. Everingham did not wish to be checked. The weakest and most foolish of us are often the most obstinate; and I see no reason why Mrs. Emmy, who is pretty and young, and very innocent, should be different, because of those charming qualities, from other people. Weak as she was, she had a will of her own; not a very strong one, except in spasms, but certainly spasmodically strong, and therefore dangerous.

Moreover, in her weakness and want of judgment, there had arisen an idea that she must hurt somebody who was, in one particular, weaker than herself. Do not women pinch babies and make them cry, and hurt those who love them, and then try and console the weeper? Do not we all behave worst to those whom we love best of all? I am afraid we do; and our heroine was certainly no exception to the rule. She knew that Dr. Morton loved her, and she knew very well that she did not love him. And she reasoned thus within herself:—

“Men have done strange things for love! Why may not this simple doctor, who appears so open,

so innocent, and so quiet, be working out his own ends here? Why should he hinder me from seeing Lord Broadacres? To go forward is now the best policy, and he wishes to keep me back. I will disappoint him: I will be very obedient, no doubt; but I will keep my own way. I will hold my own, for myself and for the baby."

She put this baby forward as an excuse, and she needed to make one for anything she was about to do against Keith Morton. She did not love him; but she honoured him, and felt herself powerless against his constant upright endeavour; and so she determined to hurt and pinch him, as we may sometimes find women will do.

Lotty, who was herself a woman, but of a very different calibre, read a great deal of this feeling in the face of Lady Somers, as it was lighted up by the flickering firelight, and she watched the emotions which played over it as the light and shadow play over a landscape.

"She suspects us," said Lotty to herself. "I fear this suspicion: I have heard Keith say that, when the mind begins to wander, suspicions arise."

“What would you have Dr. Morton do, my dear lady?” said Lotty, tenderly, after a long and awkward pause.

“I do not know. How should I know? Men know most about business. They keep us blinded and shut up all our lives, and when we most want knowledge we are left without it.”

“That is very true of many of us,” returned Miss Morton; “but, remember, my poor dear brother had nothing to do with this. All he has done is to endeavour to put your business on a firm footing. He wishes you to approach the Abbey as the future mistress, and that those who are interested against you should be able to satisfy their doubts.”

Lady Somers was silenced, but not convinced, and she took an opportunity of withdrawing early, in company with the baby, who formed a very excellent excuse for withdrawal. As she went away she had that resolution about her which convinced Lotty that she distrusted all the inhabitants at Cold Blow, and that the doctor’s love-suit, even if he could have or wished to press it upon her at such a time, was not likely to make much headway.

“She will be after some mischief, Mrs. Lapis,” said Lotty, as she took her solitary supper of bread-and-milk by the parlour fire.

Lotty had been employed all day in dusting and arranging the doctor’s study.

“Law, bless you, no, ma’am!” said Lapis, who stood opposite to her, gazing into the fire with a fixed stare. “Law, bless you, she is like a dove! only young mothers, ma’am, ’as their little ways: they thinks their offspring is allus the eighth wonder of the world.”

“I can quite understand that, but I don’t quite understand the suspicion with which she regards us—and *you* most of all.”

Lotty said these last few words with emphasis, since she had been betrayed into thinking aloud. It was quite true. Our excellent Mrs. Lapis was a subject of much dread to Emmy, of much very unjust and suspicious dread, of which, luckily for the peace of mind of the old lady, she was quite unconscious.

“If it’s suspicion,” returned the innocent Lapis, “I don’t wonder at it, not for a moment of my life.

My dear departed, who was one of the freest and noblest hearted of men, and who you don't no how recall, seeing that he used to be acquainted in the character of regimental servant with Dr. Morton, when he was in the 50th, and you was only six years old ; about which time, coming out of a hay-loft when he was not steady on his legs, and always weak upon one ankle, in which there was a bullet, which was never extracated, he made a false step and turned over, and, being a heavy man, my dear, and forty-two inches round his chest under his arm-pits, he naturally fell head foremost, and upon the back of his head too, which was a fractured skull. He never recovered from that fall exactly, and all the time that he lay ill and moaning he was the most suspicious of men, and couldn't abear me for a moment out of his sight. Oh, I don't care for suspicions, not one bit."

Poor Mrs. Lapis did not add, as she might easily have done, that her good husband not only could not abear her *out* of his sight, but had also taken a great dislike to her when *in* his sight. It was to the last illness of this exemplary man that

she referred in all her troubles, and from his cracked head or his weak ankle that she drew most of her experience in nursing.

In his wanderings of mind—and what little mind he had was quite right in going out of doors after being so badly treated by its owner—he had said many bitter things of his wife, and had made that lady the subject of sundry grievous and unfounded imputations, which she had borne “like a lamb,” as she said. She was a woman of faded individuality, but of good intentions; but her peculiar mental capacity was not calculated to be of much service to Lotty.

“Well, never mind, dear Mrs. Lapis,” said Miss Morton, with a puzzled air, which she always wore after for some time trying to dodge after the housekeeper’s confused meaning. “I hope you sleep lightly.”

“Bless your heart,” said the person addressed, “I am awake every blessed hour of the night, and hear all the sweet bells chime, as the song says, which Lapis sung well, being bass and very tender in his every expression. I can call you at any

time you like, bar none, which was also a term which he picked up from a sporting veterinary surgeon, who he attended to mostly on intimate terms when he was in the Scotch Grays, which is calvalry."

"Then I don't want you to call me at all. I am pretty wakeful myself. But if you should hear anything stirring in the lady's room, pray come to me."

"The child sleeps like a top, mostly, day and night," answered Lapis, "which is considered a good sign by some, mostly bad. I don't like it myself, though the child grows stout on it, and Lapis, when his brain could not well move, was very quiet and noways abusive nor suspicious. I likes a lively child, which is not pleasant to mothers, but gratifying to young mothers, who is made for such by nature."

"Remember what I have said," returned Lotty, thinking not of the child's restlessness, but of the mother's.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH MISS NIGHTLEY STRIKES A BARGAIN.

WHEN the Abbey bell had done clanging, which it took some time to do, being a bell of importance, and lately not being so often put in motion as it could have wished, the supercilious footman opened the glass door in the hall and admitted Stannard. "An' what," said he—"what individual may you please to want?"

Herbert had taken care to make himself acquainted with the names of the persons with whom he had better occupy himself, having noted them down as they fell from the lips of the landlord of the "Falcon;" and so he told the footman that he wished to see Miss Nightley on especial business.

“ Well, if you do,” answered the footman, curtly—for it must be borne in mind that Herbert, although well dressed, had not arrived on horse-back or even in a gig, not to mention a larger and more imposing carriage—“ Well, if you do, you must wait a little. Will you walk in here and favour me with your kiard ?”

That passport to respectable society was just the thing which Stannard had not got. He therefore took an extraordinary liberty with the footman by putting his finger on the right side of his nose, taking a shilling from his pocket, holding it delicately between his finger and thumb, and then putting it into the footman’s open palm ; after which he said, solemnly, as if nothing had passed between them, “ I must see the lady, and at once. I have exhausted all my cards, and have not time to send to the printer. Will you tell her, my good man, that Mr. Stannard, from London, wishes to see her especially ? Mind you do not forget my message : tell her, ‘ especially,’ from London.”

This proceeding certainly did not elevate him in the servant’s opinion, but it put him on a powerful

level with him, and, instead of letting him remain kicking his heels for half an hour in the waiting-room, John promised at once to tell the lady.

“I will go to her, you know,” said he, comprehending at once that magic sign which Stannard had so opportunely exhibited to him; “but, you know, she is rather a Tartar when she is disturbed, and she is now with Father Gargle. I think you said from London?”

“From London especially; don’t forget that,” answered Stannard as John creaked away. “I always make a point of being mysterious to this sort of cattle on a point upon which no mystery can exist. Now I have fixed that in that fellow’s dull brain, and he will go and find a mare’s nest through it, I will be bound.”

With all his fine contempt of those below him, Stannard was not always a match for his friends.

“I don’t believe he comes from London,” said John. “Just as likely to come from Birmingham. He looked like a traveller from a button manufacturer, soliciting orders about my lord’s crests on his dies. From London! and what does he

want with her? He is too well dressed for a real gentleman in the country, and looks like a Birmingham traveller, or some actor. Lord, Lord! what a terrible set she have got round us!"

Just as he approached the door of the little green drawing-room in which Miss Nightley and Lady Amethyst were, in company with their spiritual adviser Father Gargle, that gentleman came out, with a soft, gentle step, and a bent and reverend head, looking something so different from the worldly people round him, that even the footman bowed his head with involuntary respect.

"John, I will show the reverend gentleman down-stairs," said Miss Nightley, tripping after the priest graciously, and somewhat gracefully too.

"Yes, mum," answered John. "There is another gentleman from London as wants to see you, 'special. He is quite in a hurry, mum."

"He can wait for a moment, at least."

"No; pray go to him, my dear Miss Nightley," said Father Gargle, in the softest voice. "Pray make no ceremony with me. My order is bound to reject any ceremony."

“A noble order, *mon père*,” said the lady, looking at him with feigned admiration. “However, I will obey you.” So saying, with a courtesy, made in a capital style, and as lowly in its bending obeisance as if to a monarch, Miss Nightley withdrew.

The door being open, Mr. Herbert Stannard had a very good opportunity of seeing all this little pantomime. He was struck with the father, with his noble yet gentle bearing, and with his long coat, high waistcoat, and plain linen band round his throat. Father Gargle would have been a remarkable man in a large company, whence any one would have singled him out as different from all the rest. In the quaint old house, in the midst of a glorious park, bowed to by a lady of the noblest proportions and the softest voice, moving himself majestically and noiselessly away, he seemed even more remarkable. “By Jove!” said Stannard to himself; “here we have gone a hundred years back. We have Jesuits and deep plotters here. We shall soon have the secret doors, with the sliding panels and strange staircases built ‘in the

thickness of the wall,' as novelists who are somewhat too ignorant of architecture describe them. Well, truth *is* strange, stranger than fiction!"

The gentleman from London started rather sharply, and fancied that indeed the "secret door business" as the Warlock and his disciples termed it, had been applied to him personally, when a deep and stately voice said to him, "Well, sir, may I ask to what I am indebted for your kindness in calling on me?"

The voice spoke from a corner of the room at his back, and Stannard smiled at his own simplicity when he saw the half-opened door through which Miss Nightley had approached. She was fond of creating sensations either large or small, and so had come upon our friend suddenly, especially as she saw him staring, with some admiration, at her clerical adviser.

"Really," said Stannard, smiling, "you must excuse my trepidation. You startled me, that is all. My brain is somewhat used to castle-building, and I let it occupy itself in that useless work, partly, I suppose, because I was surrounded

by a strange mixture of antiquity. I was thinking of other things, and did not hear you approach."

Miss Nightley bowed her consent to this explanation but very curtly, as one who should say, "This is all very well for your startled appearance, but it will not do for your visit." Stannard, in the meantime, was looking at the lady, and calculating upon her power in the house, and whether it would be better to trust all his secret to her, or to wait and endeavour to have an interview with some one her superior. But this man was of a tortuous nature: he never cared to go the direct and straightforward way, but was one of those persons who, had they to go from one point to another in a direct line, would still deflect and vary the route as much as they well could.

After some little pause upon each side, as skilful fencers indulge in, trying the strength of each other's guard, or measuring each other with their eyes, Miss Nightley again commenced:—

"I quite understand your starting when spoken to in this old house and in the waning light, especially when awakened from a reverie; but I

don't think you have yet told me why you have called upon me."

"Well," said Stannard, with a smile—for Miss Nightley's directness of purpose had rather gained upon him, and he was somewhat more inclined to trust her—"I came all the way from London to inquire whether you had lost a pocket-book purse."

Miss Nightley was puzzled. She had not lost a purse, and Lady Amethyst certainly had not; and so she told the gentleman from London. At first she did not quite credit him, and put aside the question by remarking that it was a curious matter to journey all that way for, when the family, too, was in deep affliction, and when a letter, with a description of the article, would have served.

"It was precisely because the family was in this deep affliction that I came down," said the gentleman; "and I did not like to trust my message merely to the post."

"Was the matter of such great importance, then?" asked the lady.

Now, unfortunately, Stannard did not know of

the importance that the pocket-book purse possessed in the eyes of Lady Amethyst ; nor did the old travelling baronet himself suspect its value, or he would, perhaps, have trusted it to some one of more honesty of purpose than Stannard. So the messenger, in the absence of knowledge, thought it best to take a very high hand, and answered firmly enough—

“Yes; the article in question contains something of great value: it may be, indeed, of inestimable value to the family.”

“And so it might, by jingo!” thought the Bohemian, “if a fire were to burn down the church.”

Now a family jewel or a will may be of great value, or a ring containing the last remaining shred of hair of a dear departed parent may be richer than a big diamond in the eyes of a daughter or a son ; but Miss Nightley’s mind did not for a moment rest on these.

Giving credit to this young gentleman from London for really more knowledge of the matter than she had, she asked herself what could be called of inestimable value, to that family, which

could be contained in a purse. She knew that none of the family jewels were missing, because they were locked up in a wainscot-oak case, with iron clasps, and large, curious, locks, in the cellars of the family bankers; so she rejected any idea of a jewel. She knew, also, that Lady Amethyst was completely at peace with regard to any of her possessions, about the loss of which her ladyship would have made a great cry; and so she abandoned the idea, in a moment, of anything being in a purse of much importance, and her active mind looked at once to the pocket-book portion of the little morocco souvenir.

Miss Nightley was a very good hand at charades. All women are, more or less, actresses; and Miss Nightley was much "more" than "less." But it was not her exceeding aptitude for acting that fitted her for being good at charades: it was that she was really so excellent at guessing. She had a quick, active, vigorous mind, used to all sorts of surprises, and dashed or defeated by no disappointment. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the lady divined Mr. Stannard's

secret a little more quickly than he would have supposed. She made a jump at it just as she would have jumped to a conclusion in regard to the proper word of three syllables about which sundry people in a drawing-room had been making fools of themselves for an hour or so before.

"It's a certificate," she said to herself. "It is what Betty Overman, down in the almshouses, would call the marriage lines! I must get hold of it somehow."

The game began to be interesting; and it was to some advantage to the lady that she sat with her back to the waning light, and Mr. Herbert Stannard with his face to the window and in the full soft glow of it. Miss Nightley wanted exceedingly to know if the messenger knew the value of the document.

"Well, sir," she said, cautiously, "I presume you have lived long enough in the world; for, although apparently very young, you seem to have seen a good deal of it——"

"You may well say that, madam," interrupted

Stannard, with a smile, which showed the lady that her compliment had pleased him. "I have seen a good deal of the world."

"In that case, sir, you know very well that matters connected with such a family as this are not done in a corner, and that, unless the very title-deeds are lost, nothing can be lost which may be termed 'inestimable.' Even if a large bank-note is lost, it may be stopped at the bank, and any one who is found dealing with it may be severely punished, unless he gives a very straightforward account of the manner it came into his possession."

"Exactly so," said Stannard, carelessly. "If it had been merely a note, you would not have seen me here."

"What is true of a note is true of a *document*," said the lady, with an emphasis on the word. "I have heard that after Lord Somers's death something of that sort was missing, but I was quite careless concerning it. I did not even inquire what it was, and I can assure you that I have not heard a syllable of conversation about it." This was quite

true; for when no one knows what is lost it would be hard to talk about it.

Some such conviction seemed to be carried to Stannard's mind; but he failed to read Miss Nightley completely. If he had done so, he would not have shown the eager trepidation which he did in negating the next question from the lady's lips.

"But in all these matters it is very much better to consult principals. Shall I call Lord Broadacres, Lady Amethyst, or her husband?" That unfortunate husband always came last, under any circumstances, and very naturally so, for Andrew Bradstock could not well be first even in the mind of his wife's companion.

"By no means," said Stannard, starting up. "I am afraid I am mistaken. What I speak of could not have been lost here. I will call upon some one else in Bilcombe. Dr. Morton, I believe, knows a good deal of the domestic losses and gains of the inhabitants of this pastoral town, and he may be able to set me right."

As he said this Stannard rose, and, giving a

very graceful bow, begged pardon of the lady for occupying her valuable time, and bade her good-day.

Lady Amethyst's henchwoman saw that she had lost a move.

"Pardon me, sir," she cried: "do not be in such a hurry. Perhaps I do not know all that concerns the family. May I ask them?"

"Oh dear no," said Stannard. "I am quite on the wrong scent. If it had concerned your house, you would have known it. I had better be returning to my hotel."

"But at least you can let me look at it. The honour of a lady in such a house as this is to be trusted. It is not to be supposed that, if it do not belong to this house, I will claim it."

Stannard shook his head.

"No, madam," he said; "not for a moment; although in real life, with which I have been acquainted for some few years, things which are quite as strange have been done. But, unfortunately, I am so good-natured, and so much in the habit, when I play a game of whist, of showing

my opponent my hand, that, in order to guard against that, and without any possible suspicion, latent or otherwise, I have left the precious pocket-book in London !”

Miss Nightley was foiled. If she were right in her conjecture, that certificate would be worth something to her. Lady Amethyst, had she known of it, would not perhaps have carried it at once to Lord Bradstock ; but, after a short concealment, would have told the old nobleman the truth ; but, really suspecting, as it was her interest to do so, the marriage spoken of by the doctor, and the legitimacy of the child, she might, if in Miss Nightley’s power, be ready to do many things which would place her further in the hands of her companion. Stannard’s last move had somewhat discomposed his companion. He had played a trump : the lady determined to trump higher.

“ Ah, sir,” she said ; “ I see how it is : you are determined to sell your secret at a good price. Now, I want part of that secret, and therefore you will perhaps not be unwilling to share it with me. Will you tell me the price ?”

This direct attack somewhat puzzled Stannard.

"Hang this woman!" he said to himself: "she is too plain for me." Then he spoke aloud: "We must not call it a secret, madam, or assume that it is mine."

"Call it by any name, I suppose it is the same?" said the lady, interrogatively.

"Names make a very great alteration in all of us, and in all things," he answered.

"I will call it a secret. Women are fond of secrets," said the lady, with a smile.

"Let me, then, call the money a reward," said Stannard. "Men are fond of rewards, and I want to gain one from the accidental possession I and my friend have in this."

"Then there are two persons who know all?"

"Yes, two; but only two: I will give you my word of honour. You are dealing with a gentleman." The young man did not feel the deep satire that his words were upon his deeds: very few of us do, although we are constantly speaking sentences which, if properly emphasized, would scorch and burn.

“And this other person, can you answer for him—answer for him truly, certainly, and without doubt?”

“I can, madam. He himself will know only a portion of the value of what I hold; and after I have arranged with you I shall leave the country as quickly as I can. I am tired of England, with its false ways and its social laws, which hurt and gall all true men.”

There was a great deal of earnestness in the tone of Stannard's voice, and earnestness also in his feelings. He believed what he said, and was undoubtedly irritated at the vices of others; but it would not be too much to say that he, like the rest of us, cared very little for his own.

“It will be worth at least something to Amethyst,” thought the companion within herself; “and if she will not repay me, why, I can repay myself. Why, the reward,” she said aloud, “for so important a document ought to be of itself of some importance. I shall be happy to make you a present of one hundred pounds when you place it in my hands.”

“Will you, madam?” cried Stannard. “Then I will do so at my earliest convenience.”

His notions of a reward had been running up and down the scale in a very strange way during the last five minutes. At one time he imagined, from the self-possession of the lady, that he should get nothing; at another he thought that forty or fifty pounds perhaps might be her ultimatum. When, however, he heard her mention one hundred he was delighted, and his quick mind immediately formed a resolution what to do. He would enclose to his old friend Pegwell, say, thirty pounds, which would handsomely reward him for his trouble, and with ten pounds more he would, in Liverpool, rig himself out with a kit sufficient for a short voyage, and take his passage in a sailing-vessel for New York. Once there, he did not doubt that, either on the newspapers or in connection with the stage, he should find sufficient employment for his fertile brain.

Miss Nightley was equally well satisfied with her bargain. She was a lady who, as the reader is aware, was careful of her pence, and therefore

always able to command her pounds. She told Stannard, therefore, that if he would, by striking across country to the nearest coach-town, get a night-coach and by it get up to London that night, he might bring the precious document to her at the end of the long walk near the waterfall, where there was a little Roman temple, wherein a faun, a copy from the antique, upon two brown stone and shaky legs, was perpetually grinning and holding aloft his Pandean pipes. If by to-morrow afternoon Herbert Stannard could produce the purse, pocket-book, and its contents, at that place, one hundred pounds in notes and gold would be ready for him.

“That’s a nasty lonely spot, madam,” said Stannard.

“If it be so, it is I who should be afraid, and not you. I am a single woman, and I trust myself to you.”

“Well, it is all very well if you are single,” returned Stannard; “but sometimes——” Then he paused. He would have added, that sometimes people seeking rewards for lost property had been

intimidated by the awkward interference of the police to give up their prize without any pecuniary benefit accruing to themselves.

"But sometimes what, sir?" said the companion, who, to do her justice, was far from contemplating the cunning trap into which Stannard's imagination had plunged him.

"Well, never mind. I will not finish my sentence. I can only say that I would rather meet you here, or in the park in the open."

"To come again here would create suspicion. Servants in great houses poke their noses into everything," said the lady, more earnestly than elegantly; "therefore that will not do. I will meet you, if you like, just outside the park at the lodge-keeper's cottage."

Stannard saw the same objection to that place. A man on the watch in the lodge cottage might observe him, mark him, and in due time nab him. He was by far too cunning a bird to be caught with chaff. "No," he said, "madam; I think if we were in the open road, about a mile from the lodge-gate, I could drive up, meet you at four

o'clock, if that time would suit, place the purse in your hands——”

“And allow me time to examine it, to see if it be of value,” said the lady.

“Exactly: a glance will do that; and then, if you give me the money, in small notes and gold, fifty pounds each way, we could bid each other good-bye, never to meet any more.”

“That will do, sir,” said the lady, rising and ringing the bell. “At the park palings under two spreading beeches, a mile, or about a mile, to the right of the lodge: you will not fail?”

Stannard bowed and took his hat, and the footman, who had been wondering at the long interview given to the gentleman from London, appeared, to show him to the door.

At the appointed time Stannard, who, of course, did not come from London, although he had quitted the “Falcon” and made his way to a neighbouring town, met Miss Nightley under the two spreading beeches. He was in the yellow-bodied light gig of a commercial traveller, and the man who drove him boasted that he had a fast horse.

It was not, however, needed. Miss Nightley was too full of her own schemes to pay much attention to Stannard's. She received the purse, opened it, took out the copy of the certificate, looked at it hastily, and then placed the money in Stannard's hands. That gentleman counted it carefully, put it in his trousers' pocket, raised his hat gracefully, and drove off as rapidly as the fast horse could carry him.

CHAPTER XV.

AN HONEST LAWYER.

MR. JOHN JUNIPER, Doctor of Medicine, and, in Sangrado's opinion, one of the best fellows in the world, did that which he was always ready to do when a friend from the country called upon him; that is, he "knocked off his calls" in double-quick time. As country friends were very fond of calling on Jack Juniper, and he was equally fond of receiving them with all the jolly acclamations of good fellowship, which were equally sweet to the young man from the country and the hard-working town doctor, it is perhaps to be doubted whether his patients much benefited by the practice.

Perhaps, indeed, it was because Dr. Juniper

occasionally "knocked off" some of his patients that his practice did not grow so large as it should have done, or as, indeed, it would have done had it been in anybody else's hands. When people get on in the world, and are rich, they like some little attention from the medical man; and, possibly, as useful a quality as any professor of the healing art can possess is that which enables him to retail the latest news, and to give a new turn to the last bit of newspaper scandal. When a lady-patient of this sort, who was not acutely ill, but merely ailing, had been waiting for some hours for Jack, expecting to be revived and comforted by the visit of a healthy, cheerful, chatty doctor, with a few new notions of things, and a determination not to be hypochondriacal himself, it was naturally somewhat of a disappointment if he did not come. Nor did he mend the matter when he called the next day, and, after listening somewhat impatiently to the record of ills which the particular piece of female flesh was heir to, interrupted her with, "Now, my dear madam, let me tell you that you are mending rapidly. I shall soon have you out of

my hands. *You* don't want a doctor : what you want is a cheerful companion and a glass of wine."

"But, Doctor, I must tell you I was so ill : I thought I must have died ; the pain was so great that I really thought I should have given up the ghost long ago."

"Pray do not give it up yet, madam," Dr. Juniper would answer, cheerily. "You will be well enough in a day or two ; and if you give life up now, I don't know when you will be able to catch it again." Jack was ever imperturbably good-natured with his patients, but he hated anything like sham or pretence ; and when doctors want to make their way in the world they should be able to put up with a good deal of both.

With his poor patients Dr. Juniper was always kind. Poor people have their vices and follies as well as the rich ; and the sick poor are sometimes very obstinate and foolish, as the doctor well knew ; but they had not time to give up to any vagaries of the sick, and, when ill, found the amusement too expensive to indulge it." It was not to be wondered, therefore, that Juniper's rich

patients sometimes fell off, while his poor ones stuck to him with a fidelity that gave him plenty of hard work, if it brought him little pay. He was, however, one of those kind, earnest men who are sometimes to be found, who really seem to care less for making a fortune than for doing their duty, and who flourish upon a very little with a good-nature and a complaisance which others find hard to understand.

Upon the morning in question Pentonville, Holloway, and Gray's Inn Road witnessed the doctor dashing about in great vigour.

"We shall have done work by about one o'clock, I should think, and then we can take a cab and go and see my honest lawyer."

"Very good," said Sangrado. "I suppose that will do well enough; but pray don't hurry yourself."

"It is astonishing what some of these poor people endure," said Juniper. "That poor man with whom I have been is down with a slow fever. I don't exactly know what to call it: I only know it will kill him. It has taken two children out of

seven lately; and I believe it all comes from his poor, wretched house. He is a greengrocer, you see; and how they manage to make a living by turning over that poor little insufficient stock of his, I can't say."

Sangrado looked at the place. It was a poor holding enough: just one back room and a shop. The upper rooms of the house were let off, or, had they not have been, the whole of the profits would have been eaten up, as Juniper exclaimed when he came out after making a somewhat long call.

"He's no better," he said, shaking his head; "and if he continues much longer, he will infect his wife. The poor woman does not look very well. A good dinner off a nice roast leg of mutton would do them all good."

Sangrado had marked the pale, anxious face at the door, and said—

"Well, Jack, I'm good for the leg of mutton, at any rate."

"And I for a ~~bottle~~ of port. We will send up Sam with it when I get home. If I could have only got him into the hospital in good time, it

would have been all well ; but those people, you know, have their prejudices. And now for home."

The fast-trotting mare and spider phaeton, an undocorlike turn-out, which savoured rather more of the sporting drag than anything else, soon brought them to Juniper's door. Dr. Jack was fond of bargains, and had bought both "trap" and horse from a publican whose family he had attended. But, while fond of bargains, he was altogether too regardless of appearances, and it was not until he had lived a few years longer that he bought his first brougham, and condescended to listen patiently to the invalid bores who make the fortunes of physicians.

Sam, after he had put up the mare, was duly intrusted with the bottle of fruity port and the money for a leg of mutton, and sent on his errand of charity ; and then, after a luncheon from Stilton cheese and Dublin stout, which was quite a treat for Sangrado, the two sallied forth.

"We can very well walk," Juniper, said Keith Morton : "Gray's Inn, or Lincoln's Inn, is not far from here, I am sure."

“Bless your innocent heart, Sangrado!” said Juniper, beaming on him with great affection; “you won’t find my honest lawyer in either of those places. I don’t say, mind you, that honest lawyers are not to be found in those vast assemblages of useless people who inhabit those eminently respectable quarters. I would only go as far as to say that, if they be, they are greatly in the minority; one to a hundred or so. My phoenix would get corrupted if he went up there. No, sir; he lives in a fashionable quarter of the town; but then he is an eccentric.”

“What! to live in Tyburnia? why, that is a nice fashionable quarter, is it not?”

“Oh yes, nice enough, to be sure, if a man had fashionable clients; but our friend, who exists on the outskirts of it, hardly numbers a client with three hundred a year. His practice, I believe, should be found in the neighbourhood of Portugal Street, or near one of those newly established county courts; but he, happily, has no children, and supports himself partially by literature. He is such a jolly bird, to be sure!”

At a small house in one of the streets which run from Cambridge Terrace to the Bayswater Road, the cab which Juniper hailed deposited the two doctors. A scrubby little fellow of about forty, who might have passed for some years younger, opened the door and showed the two friends into a back parlour, which had been fitted up in an eccentric way as a lawyer's office. The two stout doctors seemed to fill it very fairly, when they had, with some difficulty, found themselves chairs and sat down. That "Mr. Frederick Hosier, Solicitor," as his door-plate described him, was at home was sufficiently apparent; for from the closed folding-doors which shut off the back parlour from the front issued a melancholy sound, which proceeded, whispered Juniper, from the honest lawyer amusing himself by playing on a fourpenny tin whistle, which he did execrably, but which Jack assured Dr. Morton that he could do to admiration.

"Give him this card," said he to the clerk:
"I dare say you know me."

The attendant satellite to the honest lawyer,

who looked, by the way, very dishonest himself, gave a grin as he took it, and said, "Yes, sir;" a grin which was meant for the eyes of Mr. Juniper himself, and was caused by the side-splitting remembrance to the clerk of an evening which the doctor and a few choice spirits, the friends of Mr. Frederick Hosier, had lately spent, at which the doctor immortalized himself by playing the tambourine with the office-ruler and a tea-tray, in accompaniment to Mr. Hosier's fantasia on the fourpenny whistle, which was blown by being inserted in one nostril. For Mr. Hosier himself had attended one or two lectures on anatomy, and was a dabbler therein, as he said it might be of use to him if he ever became a coroner. And it may be as well to remark here, that that unpleasant occupation of sitting in company with twelve fellow-citizens properly empanelled was Mr. Hosier's chief ambition.

The musical lawyer had no sooner read Jack Juniper's card than he threw away the tin whistle and gave a frantic yell of delight, as he called out his name, and, opening the door, embraced him.

“Beg your pardon, Fred,” said the doctor, “but I have a friend to introduce to you.”

Dr. Morton stood up, looking with a pleased face at the two men, who, with the hearts of boys inside their stout bodies, greeted each other in this exceedingly unbusinesslike way.

Mr. Frederick Hosier, solicitor, drew himself up to his full height, which was not very much at its utmost, and said, cordially, and with the manner of a gentleman—

“I beg pardon, sir, I’m sure. I did not ask my clerk whether Dr. Juniper had any friend with him, and he is such a very old crony that we sometimes forget ourselves.”

“We do indeed,” said Juniper, laughing heartily, in which Hosier joined — “We do indeed; and, what is more, I think my friend, Dr. Keith Morton, is one who will readily forgive us for doing so. Let me introduce you.”

The introduction passed, Jack said that Morton was one of the right sort, and that he had a little difficulty about which he wished to consult a solicitor.

“Then I’m sorry for him,” said the honest lawyer, very heartily. “I don’t shout it out on the top of Tower Hill, but I tell it, Jack, here, and I will repeat it to you, as his friend, that the very best thing a man can do is to keep out of the hands of the lawyers. I have kept out of law as much as I could, myself——”

“That you have, Fred,” said Juniper, interrupting him; “and a great deal too much so, I think, for the good of your fellow-men.”

“Well, I believe that,” said Hosier, plumply. “I have prevented many an honest fellow from being ruined; but that does not make one’s fortune. And really I am sorry, knowing what English law is, and how far equity and law are kept asunder, when I hear of any good men having aught to do with it.”

“Why, I thought,” said the simple Sangrado, “that the grand old maxims you have about Law and Justice being one were quite true.”

“Law and Justice being one!” said Hosier, with an honest scorn on his square brown face: “tell that to the marines. Why, a poor man cannot

get his rights without ruining himself. No one but a rich man should go to law; and he will keep out of it, if he be not a fool. If you want to spend your money, sir, give a guinea to Juniper as my fee. He has my permission to pay it into the nearest police-court poor-box, and the presiding Beak will see it well bestowed; and, in return for that guinea, I will give you a piece of advice as old as the Scriptures, as well known as Temple Bar, and yet worth ten guineas, although never acted upon."

"Oh, indeed," said Sangrado, smiling: "I suppose it is a caveat against law, and a strong one."

"That's just it," ejaculated Mr. Hosier.

"Then I cannot take it," answered Sangrado; "for I really do come for your advice and assistance; however, I must say, luckily, not for myself, if you pity me."

He gave a great sigh as he said this; for his heart went back to the poor young widow and her baby, whom he had left at home under the guardian care of Lotty and Mrs. Lapis.

Mr. Hosier took the sigh for one of relief, and beamed up again.

“Oh, very good,” he said. “I see you are a determined man; so come into the spider’s web, and I will do my best. Mr. Parkins, tell Mrs. Hosier who is here, and tell her to send up any quantity of pale ale. Dr. Juniper, pray retire from the meshes with which I shall surround my client, and make yourself comfortable. Don’t tread on Venus, there”—he pointed to a dog—“she went out for unwonted exercise, and is tired. Come along, sir.”

He quietly opened the folding-doors and shut Juniper out, although Sangrado protested that he had no secret from him, and that he knew all about the case; and then, getting behind his table, sat down in his chair, and, taking out a pen and note-book, prepared to listen.

Mr. Frederick Hosier, the honest lawyer, was a very different person from our friend Naylor, and, if he did not look so much like a lawyer, was a far abler man. But then it requires an able man to be thoroughly honest in life and to make

it pay, in spite of the old proverb about honesty being always the best policy ; and, if people would only consider it, a career of turning, twisting, and chicanery, which always takes what it considers immediately best for itself, does not require either talent or genius to indulge in.

As Mr. Hosier had determined to conduct his business with perfect peace to his own conscience, and as he found that a wearying Chancery suit would often render him sleepless and ill for weeks, in answering the untruth of his brethren of the law, he troubled himself with as little business as he could undertake ; but this business he did well.

When he entered the " spider's web," as he had nicknamed his office, and sat down in his chair, he was an altered man. His voice, which at other times had in it a jolly tone, enlivened by a frequently exuberant fun, which would break out in boyish remarks and more boyish laughter, assumed the severity becoming a solicitor ; and he opened his note-book, and entered name, question, and date with a precision which would have done honour to the driest old stick of a solicitor that

had ever conned Noy's "Maxims" and laughed in his inky sleeve at them.

As he was of a sanguine temperament, and a good, hopeful man himself, he did not make much difficulty of the case of Lady Somers, but he was careful to inquire as to the person most interested in the discomfiture of Emmy and her son.

"Let me see," said he: "the 'Peerage'?" Thank you, I can find it. I have not many law books here, Dr. Morton: I hate them."

Having found the book, he looked at it carefully, for his own satisfaction.

"Oh, I see," he said: "second son, the Honourable Andrew; and, I find, married, too. His children, therefore, as well as himself, will be shut out from the title and estates, should this claim be made good."

"Exactly so," said Dr. Morton; "that is in the nature of the case. I am very sorry for Lady Amethyst. She has no children at present, but she has not been married very long."

"Lady Amethyst; yes, I see: a daughter of the

Viscount Stormore, a very nice nobleman, that is quite a flower in the cap of Britain's nobility," said Mr. Hosier, as if he were familiar with the Viscount, and with the slightest possible inflection of satire. "The lady, as the daughter of a Scotch nobleman should be, is, no doubt, ambitious, and will be bitterly disappointed if you succeed."

"*If* we succeed!" said Sangrado. "Why, surely, Mr. Hosier, while there is law in England you cannot doubt our success?"

"My dear sir, pray let the 'if' stand. Have you not heard of the glorious uncertainty of the law? Were a man to die and leave me ten thousand pounds to-morrow, and another man were to say to me—without the shadow of a right, mind you—'Mr. Hosier, that money is mine, and I shall contest its possession with you,' I would say to him, 'Pray, my dear sir, do not trouble yourself: I will give you half not to go to law;' and, if he consented, I should think I had got off very easily. Bless your innocence! if he still continued the fight, he might take all and be welcome. Have you not heard of great estates melting to

mere pittances, and of certain firms of solicitors living entirely upon suits in Chancery, which have descended like heirlooms from father to son?"

Dr. Morton looked very blank, and confessed, with a sigh, that he had heard such tales.

"Tales, my good sir!" said the solicitor: "they are not tales; they are truths—facts, absolute facts. God bless your innocence! how do you think we all live? Not by conveyancing, or by looking over leases and drawing up agreements, or by making wills. We may, and do certainly depend very much upon wills, we lawyers, who are so powerful in the country and everywhere else; but it is by drawing them up in so nonsensical a style that our fellows make their fortunes in trying to understand what we have written, and the legatees spend their last farthing in quarrelling for a few hundreds left them in such obscure language that no two judges can understand it alike: at least, they affect not to understand it," said Mr. Hosier, a little more coolly.

"But is not some of this obscurity owing to our language?"

“Bless me, no, sir!” said Hosier. “If you have studied our great writers, you will find that it is the plainest, most direct, and most copious language in the world. There is a word to every shade of meaning, and there is not a loophole for a lawyer who understands his own tongue to escape. But there is the mischief. Few lawyers do understand English. The utmost they strive at is to comprehend law jargon. The Norman tyranny, after eight hundred years, still oppresses us.”

“However,” the lawyer continued, after a pause, “that is neither here nor there. How about the marriage certificate? and where was it solemnized?”

“Alas!” said the doctor; “this is what I have called about. It is lost, irretrievably lost, and we only know that it took place in London. As for Lady Somers, she seems too ill, too anxious, and really too weak to afford us much information. It was a hurried marriage. The parties met by appointment, and were taken at once to the church. I doubt whether, in the fear, hurry, and excitement of the scene, the lady knew where the church was; and the carriage in which they drove away was

with closed blinds. But, surely, this is an easy matter. We have only to get the proximate date, and advertise."

"Yes; so as to give your opponents warning: no, that will not do. Very extraordinary, this lapse of memory."

"Not so much as you may think, in my experience," said Sangrado.

"Well, well, there are only a certain number of churches in London, and a sharp clerk would soon find the right one out, if necessary. You do not know at present whether the marriage be legal; whether Lord Somers did not really deceive this girl as he had deceived his father; whether the license were taken out in a feigned name. At any rate, her name remains: I have a note of it, and we can find out. I happen to know a gentleman who is Lady Amethyst's solicitor: at least, he boasts that he is so. If it be so, then all I can say is, that he will fight us with some queer weapons, and we shall have an exceedingly tough job. And now let me finish my notes, and let us join Dr. Juniper."

The honest lawyer rapidly entered what he wanted to know, putting down one or two notes and here and there asking a question, and then, throwing the law to the dogs, he opened the folding-doors and greeted Jack Juniper with a shout of relief, in which feeling Dr. Keith Morton did not by any means share, being still timidly fearful as to the result of the inquiry Hosier was about to undertake.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MEETING IN LONDON.

THE honest lawyer, after he had closed his office, which he did by shutting the folding-doors of his back parlour, seemed greatly relieved. The spider's web, he said, was vacated, and now the spider himself would come out and feast on the blood of his victims.

"You will have something to eat, I am sure," said he. "Men with sound consciences can eat at any time; can they not, Dr. Juniper?"

"You can ask Morton as well as me. He, also, is in our profession. Yes, sir; he has the happiness of belonging to a noble order in which a

man is called upon every day to use the noblest charity——”

“If he choose to do so,” interrupted Mr. Hosier, cynically.

“Of course, that is granted; and to put up with a mere pittance for pay. It is true there are some weighty prizes in our profession; but the best men do not get them, I think.”

“I do not suppose they do. You want a courtly man for a doctor, just as you want not exactly a genius, but a gentleman, to be president of the Royal Academy,” said Hosier. “Lord bless us! I can understand all about that. You don’t expect the right men to be in the right place in this world, do you? It’s all nonsense—all terrible nonsense! You had better get that idea out of your head at once. Why, if every man who did a good thing was to be ticketed, and docketed, and packed in tissue paper, and rewarded, as they do good little boys at school—why, we should be little boys at school still; should we not? Now, you and I, Doctor, and, I dare say, our good friend here, to whom you have introduced me, are determined to

make our best in this world. I don't want to be made a knight; do you? I think that the Prime Minister is quite right when he advises the Queen only to knight and ennoble rich grocers, aldermen, successful merchants, tea-dealers, and lord mayors. Now and then a doctor is made a baronet; and, if any great swell takes to literature, and gets a great name by pleasant Review-writing, he may be made a lord. But the rank and file of the professions have to fall in and do the fighting and starving, and endure hardness, like good soldiers; and that's what I take to be my duty."

Jack Juniper was radiant with delight.

"Morton," said he—"no, I must call you Sangrado: that will be more familiar; will it not, Hosier?"

"To me, certainly. I knew his immortal namesake in 'Gil Blas,'" said the solicitor.

"Very good. Well, then, Sangrado, have I not introduced you to the eighth wonder of the world? Is it not delightful when a solicitor talks like this one?"

Keith Morton, who was, as we know, innocence

itself, said that he was happy to hear the character given of Mr. Hosier, and very proud to make his acquaintance; but that, for his part, he did hope that there were many more honest lawyers in the world.

“Then,” said Hosier, clearing his throat and looking very fiercely—“Then, Dr. Morton, let me beg you to disabuse yourself at once. Come out of that opinion, sir: it is a dangerous one. Don’t believe in goodness where it cannot well exist. Of course, I am an exception: I do not say it with any spirit of exaltation; but I say this fairly, that I am an exception; and, in the eyes of my uncle, who is a solicitor, and some of my wisest friends, I am a fool. I would rather make a pound by literature than twenty by law. Our laws are made purposely obscure. They are framed by those who do not know their effect, and cut and hacked so in their passage through both Houses, that a new Act of Parliament often permits the wrong it was intended to remedy. Then, they are so vast that no one man can master them; and there is no one to

codify or arrange them. What is all men's interest is no man's business. Can you imagine anything more insane than paying for law, not by the job, but by the folio, so that incomprehensible verbosity is called in to confuse, irritate, and to rob? No, doctor; lawyers are like the *sepia*, or cuttle-fish: try to catch them, and they eject a cloud of inky words, and so confuse and darken the sense that the brightest understanding in the world cannot pierce their meaning."

The warmth of feeling in this gentleman against his own class was curious, and delighted Jack Juniper amazingly. Indeed, that worthy had whispered to his friend from the country, that if he could succeed in drawing out Hosier against the law, he would.

"It is a pity," said Juniper, caressing Venus, a black Newfoundland dog of much beauty, who was a constant companion to Hosier—"It is a pity that, feeling the necessity of a reform so much, you do not try to remedy it."

Then it was that Fred. Hosier burst out into a

discordant laugh, which quite startled Doctor Sangrado.

“By jingo, Juniper,” said he, “you know I am a little mad upon some points.”

“There are very few of us,” said Jack, “but who are so. I hold that the generous man who thinks deeply must be now and then a little cranky—just a little, you know. There is a great deal of occult madness about—a great deal.”

“Well,” continued his friend, “mad as I may be, I am not prepared to run a muck against those gigantic windmills, Chancery and Common Law. They would smash and pound to atoms half a thousand such Quixotes. No; I justify myself to myself by keeping poor, and advising every man to have as little to do with law as he can. I would advise, as a Christian man—and I am a Christian, although I do not go to church so often as I might do—every mother, as she values her son’s welfare, not to bring him up to the law. In short, I do all a man can do singly against this giant; but I cannot be expected to go in single-handed against it, or I should be mad.”

Mr. Hosier meant what he said, and looked as if he meant it.

“Come, come,” he continued, good-humouredly; “life is too short for such long ‘jaws.’ Let us think what we shall do, lads. Will you dine with me at five? Hot mutton, potatoes nicely boiled, Dublin stout, and a glass of port. No kickshaws for me or from me.”

The two doctors said they desired nothing better; and that being agreed upon, the three gentlemen separated, Sangrado feeling as much at home with the honest lawyer after speaking with him for a few brief moments as he would with most men after an acquaintance of several years.

“That is a curious friend of yours,” said he to Jack Juniper, as they left the street: “he is even more eccentric than yourself.”

“He may be,” said Juniper: “he is a rare bird, as honest as the day, and as full of talent and kindheartedness.”

“Is he clever in his profession?”

“Immensely so,” said Jack, who always praised his friends, and in this instance with truth and

reason—"Immensely so. He very seldom undertakes a cause without gaining it, and perhaps more especially for this reason; namely, that he never undertakes one in which he does not believe he has justice on his side."

"Very good," said Sangrado; "then he is the very man for me;" and the doctor's thoughts wandered to his little woodland house upon the hill at Bilscombe, where lay the poor helpless widow and her orphan child. Surely there is justice," said the doctor to himself—"Surely there is justice on our side. Surely, too, I feel very certain, our cause will be opposed. I dread Lady Amethyst and her party; and if we have the slightest flaw in our documents, they will take advantage of it. Perhaps they are quite right. We must not blame them too much because they are against us. Poor Emmy! her fate is a sad one that it should be so."

"Now, what are you musing about?" said Juniper. "I have got to call in this street, and I want to show you a piece of mechanism. Wo-ho! driver."

The cabman pulled up at a shop, of which there

are always to be found one or two in the neighbourhood of hospitals, devoted to the sale of surgical instruments, the very sight of which is enough to make the heart of the stoutest patient quail within him. Here are knives, saws, scissors—everything calculated to rip, tear, cut, or pinch the quivering flesh. The collection of wrenchers and pincers for tooth-drawing alone is curious; and the high state of polish and finish in which those instruments, made to alleviate rather than to cause pain, are kept often attracts wandering boys to those mysterious windows—for boys are naturally fond of cutlery—where they gaze and gaze, and relate bloodthirsty stories to each other with a wild, and to them not unnatural delight.

“Mr. Faber,” said Jack Juniper, who had a word of praise for everybody, and, curiously enough, never one word of blame for anybody—“Mr. Faber is one of the most intelligent men I ever knew. You have only to hit out an idea, and he will carry it out. His splints are wonderful. He has invented a machine which very nearly supersedes the human vertebræ——”

“Now, don’t, Jack,” said Morton; “don’t let us hear any more. Of course he is a good fellow, or you would not know him, and a clever one, I dare say; but he can’t put a back-bone into a man, anyhow. That is one of the finest of the Maker’s handiworks, and——”

“Bless you, I was only speaking of a steel cradle which supports the shoulders and depends upon the hips. But you should see my leg: now, do come and see it.”

Morton could not resist this appeal, and followed his friend. If Mr. Faber were only half as clever as he was meek, mild, and obliging, he must have been a very clever man indeed. He bowed down to the doctors, and stood rubbing his hands in a most slavlike and Eastern fashion; a fashion which, in his youth, he had caught from a celebrated West-end surgeon, who owed his immense success to the fact that he could more readily put on the manners of a flunkey than any other medical man in England. In the days of George IV. this brought him into repute; and, as he very frequently employed Mr. Faber, then quite a boy, the

mechanician had almost imperceptibly caught his fine style.

“Now, Mr. Faber,” said Jack, “let me introduce to you a friend of mine—a gentleman from the country, Mr. Faber; in the profession, too. The news of your skill has reached him even in the depth of his native wilds”—Jack, in an aside, whispered to Morton, “because I’ve just told him”—“and he wishes to see some of your pretty things.”

“I am sure,” said Faber, in a tone of the utmost humiliation—“I am sure anything that I can do in my humble way to please either of you two gentlemen I will, sir. Dr. Juniper is so good that——”

“He always speaks well of everybody,” said Keith, interrupting the speaker; for his deferential tone was somewhat painful to him. “He tells me that you are an admirable mechanician; and that I can readily believe. However, I do not want anything for any of my patients just now : when I do you may——”

“Oh, I’m sure, sir,” said Faber, with a little

only worth, as if you had given him a twenty-pound note. "and what shall I show you?"

"Nothing, if you please. I know too much of human weakness and pain to wish to be reminded of it by the machines made to alleviate it."

"Well, you must see my leg, Sangrado," said Juniper: "it is the most wonderful thing going. I and Faber have been laying our heads together, and we have a system of springs and joints about the thing that will surpass every leg ever made in the world. Faber will make his fortune with it."

"If you were to do his advertising," said Keith, with a laugh: "at any rate, I don't mind looking at it."

"Is it done, Faber?" said Juniper. "By jingo, it seems as if I were speaking of a leg of mutton!"

"Well, my young person is just putting its black silk stocking and pump on. It's a very neat thing, sir—a very neat thing. It ought to do Dr. Juniper infinite credit for his suggestions. Ah, here it is."

The leg was brought in very carefully by one of the workwomen, and a very good leg it was. It

had the benefit, as Mr. Faber explained, of feeling like flesh and bone; and it could be pinched by the curious—of which, of course, Sangrado was one—without the wearer feeling it, it is needless to say, but also without the too curious person being deceived.

“The fact is,” said Juniper, putting the leg on the counter and lecturing about it, “I and Faber here have found out the grand secret. We follow Nature as our only guide. We cannot put flesh and bone in this stocking; but we have done what we could, and have put iron joints at the ankle. We have imitated the foot: we have an os calcis and a curious spongy ligature which somewhat resembles the flexor pollicis; so that my friend will be able to point his great toe. Then we have not quite the metatarsal bones, but nearly so; and the foot can bend: look here!” and the doctor, full of delight, moved the limb as if it were walking up and down the counter.

The piece of mechanism was, indeed, cleverly made, and Juniper’s praises of Mr. Faber were well deserved. Jack became so ardent in its

admiration, that he proposed at once trying it on his patient, or otherwise wanted a one-legged man to try it on.

“We shall have time before dinner, and can get back to Tyburnia again,” said Juniper: “come along, Doctor.”

So, after the leg had been carefully packed by Mr. Faber, who parted with it as a father would from a very fine boy, of whom he had great ideas and large hopes, the two friends took it in the cab and drove off with it to our friend Pegwell at the Brill.

The truth is, that everything had been prospering with that eccentric individual. One of the numerous branches of the family, one of the Crosbies of Yorkshire, who had in his youth been wise enough to enter trade, had lately died, and had left his ample fortune to the head of the house; so that Pegwell was now rich enough to come out of his hole-and-corner retreat; only he contemplated still adding guinea to guinea for the sake of the gentle boy. But, although almost penurious, and living in his humble, but com-

fortable and pretty house in Somers Town, our old friend had determined to treat himself to a new leg, and, having taken a fancy to Dr. Juniper, had given him the commission.

How this commission was executed one need not say. The only person who took any umbrage at the new leg was Mr. Trim, the dog, who, having walked round and round it, hardly forbore giving it a very serious bite, probably with a view of ascertaining whether the elastic substance of which it was formed, so praised by Dr. Juniper and Mr. Faber, was, in reality, flesh and blood, or not; for the shape was really so excellent, and the lightness and strength, as the wearer declared with vehemence, so remarkable, that we may forgive a dog even so sagacious as Trim having his canine doubts about it, and expressing them with a low and continuous growl.

“I hope your dog, sir,” said Keith Morton to Juniper’s patient—“I hope your dog, sir, has not taken any dislike to me. I am proud to say that I am, in a general way, a friend and a favourite of dogs. I should be especially with this one, for

I had an old favourite for many years just like him. Poor old Boxer! he grew into the vale of years, lost his teeth, his health, and his good looks, and became, poor old fellow, a nuisance to himself and to everybody."

"And what was his end, sir?" said Pegwell, smoothing down the black silk stocking of his new leg, and expressing his admiration of that felicitous limb to Dr. Jack Juniper in dumb show.

"Well, I was obliged, at last, to give the poor fellow a few drops of prussic acid on a lump of sugar. It was the most merciful way, sir."

"Well, you need not provide for my dog in that way, sir, said the baronet: he shall die of old age, and be buried at my place in the country, sir; Crosbie Place, sir; a very fine old place, everybody tells me. I mean to invite you down, Doctor, some of these days, when I get it to-rights again. You see Trim has got used to it—the leg, I mean—and is quiet now."

The tone of the old man's voice recalled some recollections to Doctor Sangrado, but what they were he could not well make out. He was mys-

tified at the old gentleman's confident bearing, his talk about his seat in the country, and his face, which Doctor Sangrado was certain that he remembered. But it was in a very different scene; and Keith Morton, though he once called up the great night of the Warlock at Bilscombe Regis, failed to connect the face of Pegwell Bay as there seen with that of the mannerly, well-dressed old gentleman who was trying on the "newly invented succedaneum for the human leg and foot" which had just been so successfully turned out by Mr. Faber. Moreover, Dr. Morton had in Bilscombe but hastily noticed Mr. Pegwell Bay; and indeed the old baronet looked very different from the Bohemian attendant on the travelling conjurer.

"I am certain," he said to himself, "that I have seen that old gentleman before, but where I don't know, nor can I recall his name."

On the other hand, our eccentric baronet, who had no spark of pride about him, and, as we have seen, was, in the midst of his misfortunes, not ashamed to turn his hand to anything, recollected

the doctor's face very well, and also the place where he met him. But, perhaps unfortunately for the heroine of this story, he was, on this occasion, and for sundry good reasons of his own, very unwilling to refer to the scene where he last met him; so, having paid Dr. Juniper for the "newly invented succedaneum," and having warmly thanked him into the bargain, repeating his invitation, but without fixing any date for his visit, the old gentleman bowed his visitors out, and bade them good-morning.

"Now, Morton, come along," said Juniper: "we shall have just time to drive round home and wash our hands, and then we will dine with our honest lawyer."

The cab was waiting at the door, and Trim, who, at the garden gate, had quietly superintended the departure of the two doctors, strolled in an unconcerned way to his master's door-step, and let off one or two short barks, expressive, probably, of his delight at having got rid of his visitors.

"That's a curious old fellow," said Keith

Morton to his friend, raising his voice above the unpleasant rattle of the cab windows. I am sure I have seen him somewhere."

"Well, perhaps you have, or perhaps you have not: there are so many faces alike in London, and we see so many people in our profession, that you may be mistaken. He is a queer old fellow. He strolled into my place, some months ago, and asked me to attend to his son, who was ill of some childish ailment. I think he is rich, although why he buries himself in that queer little house and obscure neighbourhood I cannot imagine. Quite an eccentric old gentleman, I can assure you."

"Rich!" said Sangrado; "then it can hardly be the same; and yet I could have sworn that I saw him in company with a travelling conjurer down at Bilscombe Regis."

The only answer which Dr. Juniper vouchsafed to this wild assertion was a loud laugh.

CHAPTER XVII.

TACTICS.

“THE partisans of a more liberal philosophy, who could not suppress the consciousness of humane and benevolent dispositions in themselves or the proofs of them in others, but yet knew not how to reconcile these feelings with the supposed selfishness of human nature, have endeavoured to account for the different impulses of generous affection, from habit, or the constant connection of the pains and pleasures of others and our own, by which means we come at last to confound our own interests with theirs, and to feel the same anxiety for their welfare, without any view to our own advantage.”

Those readers who are students of human nature may read over again that somewhat long-winded sentence from William Hazlitt's "Argument in Defence of the Natural Disinterestedness of the Human Mind," and reconcile, if they can, the existence of that disinterestedness with the known fact that a great many persons really do seem to employ themselves chiefly in hurting and annoying others, without any, or with very little apparent cause.

If, however, some readers believe in the natural disinterestedness, many others believe that human action, about which Hazlitt has undoubtedly talked with much less than his usual grasp or clearness, arises from many motives, some of which are based upon the principle of self-interest.

Miss Nightley had been soured in the course of her life; and she was, moreover, of a disposition naturally envious; a kind of mind very frequently found in the subordinates of great families, and in servants who have the hard task allotted to them, in this life, of looking on while others enjoy, or apparently enjoy, all the good things. Hence Lady Amethyst's henchwoman was "free to

confess," in her cynical moods, that, if she had been consulted in the disposition of certain honours and rewards, she would have acted very differently to the great Ruler. She saw no reason—even on the grand system of compensation—why coronets should almost universally fall on heads unfitted to wear them, nor why the mouths which are popularly supposed to be born with silver spoons in them should be only fitted for wooden ladles.

This kind of railing against Providence, which some people have thought to be very witty, and by which a man or woman will often raise a more applause laugh than by anything much more profound and a little more good-natured, was a favourite exercise with Miss Nightley; and it so happens that the mind will fashion itself to the words which the mouth utters; or, if we take the matter the other way, "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

Miss Nightley, in attaching herself to Lady Amethyst, undoubtedly found something congenial in that lady, who, as we have seen, was something of a woman of business, but had neither brain nor

courage enough to stand against the superior cleverness of her companion. So, as the lady managed her husband, the companion managed the lady, and, even in her meanest moods, found her more liberal of her money and kinder towards herself than any one else did.

When the doctor, after very foolishly breaking the ice without being provided with any such apparatus for saving and extricating those who should tumble in as the Royal Society furnishes, left the little party in the Palladian parlour, Miss Nightley sat herself down and gazed at a bust of Claudius Cæsar over the door, with a feeling of triumph about her heart which was very delightful. Here was her friend and patroness let down very considerably. "Of course," she said to herself, "this doctor may be the dupe of some designing woman—some men are such fools—but, on the whole, I am inclined to think it true; and, if so, Amethyst, my darling, farewell, a long farewell, to the favourite scheme of your lifetime. A countess's coronet shall never grace your back hair at a coronation, my dear."

You see Miss Nightley was not one of those whose benevolence is directed by an involved and curious combination towards the good of others. The evil which others endured pleased her: she was like the philosophic seaman in Lucretius, who was delighted in sitting on a promontory after escaping from a shipwreck and seeing his mess-mates go down.

Lady Amethyst was the first to break the silence, which was becoming painful to her.

“What do you say,” she said, softly laying her gentle hand on the old lord’s arm, as he sat still, looking on his son’s picture—“What do you say, my lord, to this sudden revelation, this strange story?”

The old nobleman looked coldly round. He never liked Lady Amethyst, and since his son’s death he had liked her even less, and, by a haughty toss of his head towards the companion, plainly hinted that it would be better if she withdrew. That lady was one to whom a nod is as good as a wink; and, rising very gracefully, so as to put the exclusion, as it were, in the light of a

voluntary act on her part, she said, "I think, my lady, I have something to do for you up-stairs: if you will allow me, I can withdraw."

"Ay; she can turn and turn," thought the old Earl, to himself; then he said, aloud, "That woman is a discreet and valuable companion, Amethyst; she is well broken to harness; but it is just as well that she should know as little of our family affairs as possible."

"I am sorry she stayed when Dr. Morton was here," she said, apologetically. "I really was so surprised that I quite overlooked her presence, or I would have told her to withdraw." Thus much Lady Amethyst; and part of thus much was untrue.

"Oh, that don't matter," said Lord Bradstock, haughtily. "She may as well know what will be all over the town and in part of the newspapers soon. It will make a paragraph in 'Fashionable Intelligence.' It is the price we pay for pride and place—that eternal, silly gossip about us."

"It is, indeed, my lord," said the lady, who, however, did not agree with him, she having inherited a great deal of the spirit of her father,

Lord Stormore, who, as we have seen, liked to be talked about—"it is, indeed. But surely Dr. Morton will not be so indiscreet——"

"I don't know, Amethyst," said the Earl, cynically. "Morton is an honest man—I have found him so, and my son who is dead found him so—and you know that honest men are generally indiscreet: at any rate, the world calls them so, truly or not."

Amethyst did not like the answer, but yet she saw in it something which she might turn to her own advantage.

"If you think Dr. Morton so indiscreet, my lord, don't you think that he may have been misled in the report he brought us? I confess that what little I have seen of him impressed me with the idea that he is singularly hasty in forming conclusions."

Earl Bradstock gave a curiously sharp look at his interlocutrix, and read her with the practised eye of a man of the world. "Ha, ha!" said he to himself; "her idea of the matter is not mine. This little babe, ever so young though it be, will

unseat Andrew and my lady, will he?" Then he gave a sigh and leaned back in his chair. For himself, he wished most heartily that the whole story were true. Next to having his dear son alive, the fact that a son of his should be living, for him to dandle and to nurse, seemed the most charming thing in the world. But, although he felt this, he determined not to let his wishes be seen, nor, indeed, to allow them to have any external effect on his action; for he was a just man in his dealings, and not to be put aside even by his own interest or wishes.

"Dr. Morton, Lady Amethyst," said her father-in-law, slowly, "is a man who would be hasty in forming conclusions, and in many things, no doubt, would be led by his heart rather than his head. But then he is a man of clear judgment, and an able man not very likely to be deceived. We may depend upon this, that he believes the story he has brought to us, and that it has a substratum, at least, of probability in it. Whether the fact of the marriage be true, I do not know: that, of course, remains to be proved."

Poor Lady Amethyst's heart sunk at this ; and Miss Nightley, who was listening outside, shook her head meaningly, and hastened up-stairs. "The old man wishes it were true ; a haughty old fool ! and I believe it true. I wish it may not be so, that I do."

Amethyst, when she came away from the Palladian parlour in which the old Earl still sat, but spoke little after his oracular sentence, ran up-stairs to her friend and counsellor, and unburdened her heavy heart ; but Miss Nightley held her peace, except in administering the discomfiting assurance that the old lord, it was evident, was not unwilling that the story should be true. She held back that which would have been sweet to the wife of Andrew Bradstock ; namely, that she well knew that, however much his lordship might wish that the matter were true, he would let justice be done ; for, as the motto of the Crosbie Vivyan Hopes, engraven upon their spoons and their hearts, indicated a belief that all the world might go to rack and ruin, but that yet their hope would shine over all, so that of Lord Bradstock, the

head of the family, was that heaven itself might fall—their heaven, that is—but justice should be done.

“And now, my lady,” said the ex-governess, leaning against the corner of the mantelshelf in an easy way, “I should look out for myself.”

“Look out for myself!” thought the puzzled woman of business—“Look out for myself! Have I not been looking out for myself ever since I took the management of my father’s house? and a pretty pickle I’ve brought myself to here, as I often tell Andrew.”

Pretty as the pickle was, it was infinitely preferable to the cold Scotch home, or to those dreadfully mean Italian and German dwellings in which one sat down to a Barmecide feast of pride and state, and always got up hungry and dissatisfied as a matter of course. Amethyst felt this, and so did her friend; but the lady felt also that it was very unpleasant to have her hopes dashed aside so unceremoniously as they had been.

“If I were you,” said the henchwoman, “I

would go up to your confidential lawyer, Mr. Naylor, and see how matters stand. Where did Lord Somers live?"

"About six miles from here," said Lady Amethyst. "Why do you want to know?"

"In what direction?" said the other, shortly.

"Towards London, on the Oxford road."

"Then that is not far from Father Pen Gargle's retreat. I dare say he confesses half the people about there. Country bodies are just as fond of a novelty as town people, and I hear they have taken to him immensely. He is a mild sort of a genius, but I dare say he knows a thing or two. Had you not better take a drive out to his retreat—what do they call it?—the 'Piscatory;' a good name for his crew: 'Be ye fishers of men.' Well, he won't catch me, that's all I can say."

"Oh, Ellen!" said the lady, calling her by her Christian name, a great condescension on her part; "how you do talk! Why, when you were with the father you said very differently. He is a perfect gentleman, and, I think, as nearly a saint as a man can well be."

“Well, he is a gentleman,” said Miss Nightley, with a smile—even her bitter tongue could say nothing against the gentle father—“and I am fond of drawing him out. But now what do you say to my plan?”

“It is a very good one, and ought to be acted upon,” returned the lady; “but I’ve two objections to it: in the first place, I cannot go, or rather I would stay here in preference with my lord; and, in the second, Father Gargle may confess some of the people about there, but he is as secret as the grave. The confessional is never violated.”

“Pish!” said Miss Nightley, with great contempt: “we Protestants know better than that.” The fact is the lady was one of those Protestants who protest against any good or any honesty existing in any religious orders, and who consequently believe all the scandalous stories told against each and all. “Pish!” she repeated: “an hour’s conversation would bring a great deal out of the holy man, I am thinking.”

“Well, Ellen, will you try, if I furnish you with the means? Take one of the park phaetons,

and take a drive out there, and try what you can find out. If any one can serve me, you can."

"Oh you flattering dear, you!" said Ellen, in imitation of a school-girl. "Well, I'll try. At any rate, I can inquire about there, and find out something."

So away went the spy against the fortunes of Emmy and her baby; but, in spite of an interview with Father Gargle and many other persons, after being about four hours absent, she returned with nearly as little information as she went.

END OF VOL. II.



