

THE DEVIL'S CHAIN

*Make a Chain ! For the land is full of bloody crimes, and
the city is full of violence.—EZEKIEL.*

2177

THE DEVIL'S CHAIN

BY EDWARD JENKINS, M.P.,

AUTHOR OF "GINX'S BABY," ETC.



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THE DEVIL'S CHAIN

BY EDWARD JENKINS



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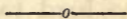


W. B. ELLIOTT AND SONS, MANCHESTER
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY

Dedication,

TO

SIR WILFRID LAWSON, BART., M.P.



MY DEAR LAWSON,

I dedicate this book to you, not as a token of adhesion to all your opinions, but as a tribute of sympathy with you in your gallant fight with a terrible evil, and of admiration for your pluck.

At a time when this latter virtue has grown weak on front benches, it is refreshing to find it vigorous below the gangway. A man who cannot be driven from a frank expression and profession of the truth he holds within him, either by the crackling laughter of a select few

or the outcry of the mob, is in these days a rare work of God, the which, when one sees it, he feels bound to bless heaven for, and to take hopeful courage for humanity.

Perplexed between the extremes of a disease at once so complicated and outrageous as that which you work so hard to remedy, I do not attempt in this book to prescribe the purge. My aim is here—as it was in “Ginx’s Baby”—rather to exhibit in rude, stern, truthful outlines the full features and proportions of the abuses I would humbly help to remove. It is a great thing done if we can get people to think about the reality, bearings, and size of an evil; and in spite of the exposures, through the press, of the dismal fruits of the traffic in drink, I find men going about, and dining comfortably, and voting steadily, in utter disregard of their fell, disastrous, and diabolical effects. I cannot acquit myself of having too long done the like.

I have therefore tried to bring into one small picture a somewhat comprehensive view of these evils, in the hope of rousing some men of quiet digestion out of their apathy, and so of aiding your noble work.

No one knows better than you that there is not an incident in the ensuing pages which is not unhappily not only possible, but probable. In no case have I represented here any individual, yet, I do not doubt that I shall be credited with intentional personalities. No better evidence could be afforded of the extent and variety of the evils against which you so righteously protest.

Believe me,

My dear Lawson,

Yours very faithfully,

EDWARD JENKINS.

20, SOUTHWELL GARDENS,
SOUTH KENSINGTON,

December 1st, 1875.

I have therefore used the paper into the world
and was a natural consequence of these
acts in the hope of removing some more of their
distress out of their misery and social misery
the world.

The two papers differ from you that there is
not a difference in the manner of the paper which is not
necessarily not only good but I am glad to see
you have I repeated that you have done
and I in not think that it will be settled with
intentional personalities. No more volume
could be printed at the extent and width
of the paper against which you are fighting.

Yours truly

Wm Lloyd Garrison

57 North Street

New York

Received of

Wm Lloyd Garrison

57 North Street

New York

2177
JP

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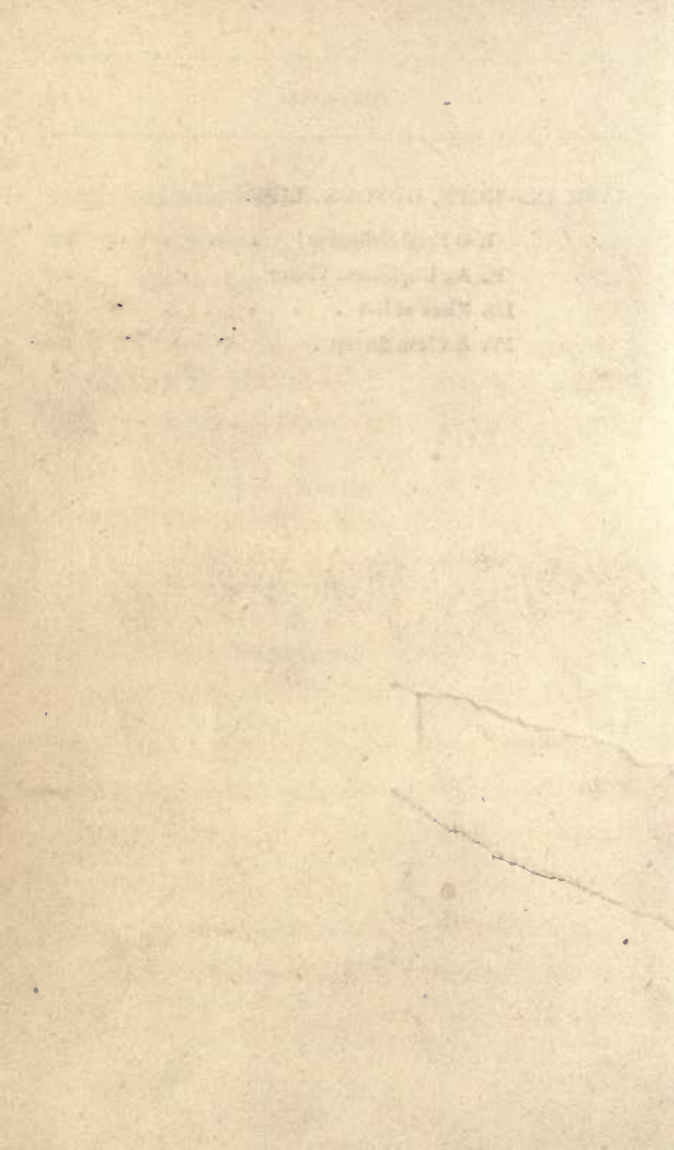
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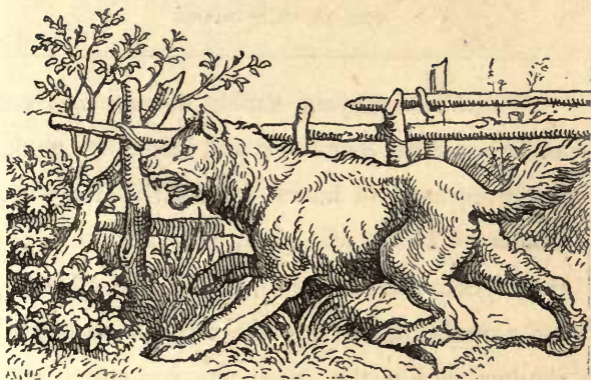
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LINK THE FIRST.

INNOCENCE AND DUTY.

I.—Two Falls in One Day.

ONE February afternoon, just as the yellow, dingy thing in London called light was deepening into absolute darkness, and the gas was beginning to flicker in streets and shops, passengers in St. Martin's Lane, about half-way between St. Martin's Place and the crossways, were startled by a shriek which came from a window in the third floor of a house on the east side.

A shrill, harrowing shriek it was, that cut and pierced the dismal air, and seemed to make it quiver as with horror—the shriek, too, of a woman. Those who, hearing it, at once lifted their eyes to the window whence it came, discerned for a moment, through the dusk, a struggling shadow within the casement, struggling with some unseen hands, struggling only an instant, for the next moment it sprang through the window, with a second shriek more keen and terrible than the first, turned once, struck with its head almost noiselessly on a projecting sill of stone, turned over again, and then dropped head-first with a dull thud on the stone pavement. And there it lay, a bundle of clothes and clay.

Within three feet of the fallen heap, whatever it was, a man who had been reeling up the street, with alternate lunges towards the kerbstone and the houses, and had brought up just

then against a door-post, looked down with bleary eyes upon the object so suddenly presented to his gaze.

“W—w—wy!” he said, “d—d—damn you, w—w—were do you come from, eh? w—w—ho’s a meaning o’ shis? G—g—get out o’ the way, will you!”

And reeling forward, he made an attempt to strike the heap before him with his foot, but, missing his blow, he stumbled over it prone upon his face.

Accustomed though it was to London sights, a thrill of horror ran through the small group that immediately formed on the footway. Hands were stretched out swiftly, and drew the cursing vagabond, with his bleeding nose and forehead, from off the awful heap of humanity that lay there dark and motionless, and he was thrown with maledictions on some stone steps not far away.

Then two or three trembling men laid hold of a woman's gown and petticoats, and drew them down decently over a woman's feet, which a glance showed to be covered with gay shoes and stockings. And then they turned over what they knew must be a body, for there were drops spattered about the flags that told their own tale. Ah! the pavement was dented and split, but what terrific vengeance it had taken on the tender object which had so broken it!

The crowd had now grown large. Among the men and boys, the women and girls, who thronged together and stood there, with shocked faces and chilled hearts, shuddering at the spectacle I dare not describe, was a young woman in her teens, neatly and rather coquettishly dressed, carrying a milliner's box. A minute before, she had been tripping rapidly along the street with a light step and jaunty air, her face brightened with a smile

as she hummed to herself a familiar catch. Glued to the spot by a fatal fascination, she had seen all we have been describing; and now, when the silent men lifted the dead creature, the sight was too much for the young girl to bear. Her face grew pallid, and she began to stagger. As she was about to fall, a young man saw her, caught her round the waist with his right arm—a right strong arm—and said :

“Hold up, my dear! Don’t look at it any more. Here, I’ll lead you out of the crowd.”

He succeeded in getting her to a doorstep, and, fanning her with his hat, she soon began to revive.

“Thank you,” she said, trying to smile at her benefactor, “I shall be better presently. Thank you ever so much.”

The face she turned up to the young man was a very sweet one. It was plump and full; the

round cheek was evidently not often so colourless as it was then. The delicate aquiline nose, cherry lips, and bright blue eyes, the fair, long hair she left disporting about her shoulders, and the dainty little hat upon her head, altogether formed a striking picture; such a picture as in our dull city often makes an honest man turn round and, with a kindly wish, say to himself, 'How pretty she is!' It was a modest face too. The long lashes immediately drooped over the eyes under the young man's ardent gaze, and the colour began to gather in her cheeks as soon as she knew he was looking at her intently and did not mean to go away.

"You are still seedy," he said; "come, let me give you an arm and help you along. I dare not leave you like this."

His voice was rather deep and full. His face, though not a handsome one, was open and

manly. His eyes were large and brown. They seemed to speak frankness. She thought so, though she hesitated. London streets were familiar to her. She had trodden them unharmed, but she knew something of their perils.

“I think I can manage,” she said, trying to get up.

But her knees trembled, for the crowd was still there, and the police were taking notes over the body of the dead woman. It was clear the shock had unnerved the girl too much for so rapid a recovery. He held out his arm, and she took it.

“Now,” he said, “which way are you going?”

“To Russell Square,” she said. “And there! I nearly left my parcel!” (stooping to pick it up). “I am taking this lace to a lady at No. fifty-two.”

“Ah! then you work in a shop, eh?”

“Yes, Cutter and Chettam’s. But I think I can get on alone now. Please let go of my arm, sir. Thank you very much, I don’t want to keep you.”

“O, nonsense! I mean to see you now as far as Russell Square. I am going to Bedford Row. Suppose you were to faint in the street and some wicked people were to get hold of you, and you so pretty?”

The world was too young to her for this obvious stroke to set her on her guard, and at that moment her attention was diverted by the noise of the crowd coming close behind them. In the midst were the silent men bearing the dark, dread object. It recalled her terror, and she nearly swooned away.

“Look here,” said the young man, “I see what you want. You must have some brandy. Here is a public.” And he dragged her into

the side-bar of a public-house, and put her on the seat against the wainscot.

“Two brandy-and-waters *hot!*” he said, “and be quick, please. The young lady is unwell.”

The bar-maid, with her withering painted cheeks and garish dress, looked over the bright handles of the beer pumps and the tall bottles and the ranged pewters, at the pretty face of the girl on the seat, with a meaning leer. Then she winked to the young man. He understood her directly, and his face crimsoned. The devilish idea this woman—let us admit naturally in the circumstances and with her experience—had suggested to the young man, had really not before crossed his mind. He was no greenhorn—no Christian—no moralist—no born gentleman—he was, in fact, a lawyer’s clerk, who ought, at that time, to have been hurrying to his employer’s offices in Bedford Row, with the

bundle of letters and papers that made his side pocket bulge so much. At the same time he was not a *roué*.

“Mind your own business, miss,” he said to the bar-maid. “A woman has just fallen out of window close by, and this young lady nearly fainted.”

“Oh! I see,” said the other, handing over two glasses of hot stuff. “One and fourpence, please. . . . A woman out of window, Mrs. Stingo,” she shouted through a small aperture behind her to some one in a back room. “Another inquest for us, I shouldn’t wonder.”

“Thank God!” cried a woman’s voice.

Other people who had witnessed the catastrophe and found it too much for their feelings, now began to pour into the outer bar, and called off the attention of the bar-maid from the

young couple. The young man drank his toddy like one who took kindly to it. The girl sipped it slowly. It soon began to revive her. Her blood grew warm, her eyes brightened, her cheeks flushed. She looked more boldly in her companion's face, and her tongue, unloosed, spoke more readily and cordially to him. On his part, he was not unaffected by the spirit. His glances at her face became more frequent and direct, and once or twice, in speaking, he placed his hand on her shoulder in a familiar way. Alas! she seemed not to notice it. Seeing she had not half finished her glass, he ordered a second to be prepared for himself. He was forgetting his papers and his master. Her parcel was lying unregarded by her side. At length, as they each looked at the bottoms of their empty tumblers, they spoke of going.

“Thank you,” she said with brightening eyes.

“That has made me feel ever so much better. Good-bye.”

She put out her hand and smiled.

“Good-bye?” he said. “Are you going to desert me so soon? How ungrateful you are. Let me walk part of the way with you.”

Her face looked rather silly. When they got outside, the street seemed to reel about her. The sounds struck upon her ear with confusing loudness; her eyes saw dimly and strangely in the dull darkness. And her steps—her steps were stumbling and uncertain! She grasped his arm tightly.

“Hallo!” he cried. “You’ve taken too much.”

“Yes. I never took so much before. I feel ill. I can scarcely stand.”—

It was then that the Devil entered into the heart of Joseph Cray, and whispered to him that this young girl was now in his hands to do with

her as he would. And the mind of Joseph Cray, after those two glasses of hot grog, was feeble to repel the insidious hints of the Evil One. The girl clung to his arm, and spoke thickly in his ear :

“You—you’re so good. I like you so much. It is so kind of you to help me.”

“Look here,” he said, laughing. “Do you know you can’t stand? You’re not fit to walk about the street now. I must take you somewhere where you can rest till you get better. Here, I’ll call a cab, and take you to my place.”

“Oh! you’re so good—so good,” the poor girl cried, putting her arm round his neck, while the maudlin tears ran down her face.

Joseph Cray held her up a moment, and hesitated. She was nearly insensible. The struggle within him was short. That which twenty

minutes since he could have bravely withstood, he had cast away the power to resist. He called a cab and lifted her in. She lay there now unconscious.

“To Pentonville,” said Joseph Cray, as he shut the door, and from that moment he was a lost man.

And, my fair reader, virtuous and pure and gentle, from that day your sister, Lucy Merton—herself fair and pure, and sweet and gentle—from that day on for ever, was to know virtue and honour no more.

LINK THE SECOND.

CITIZENSHIP.

I.—A most Judicious Scene.

THERE was some slight commotion, noticeable even amid the everlasting stir and bustle of London, in the vicinity of the 'Wetted Whistle,' a public-house in St. Martin's Lane, duly licensed by the Middlesex magistrates to retail wine, spirits, and beer, to be drunk on the premises.

From the alleys in the rear of that well-known trysting-place, limp, dirty-looking women and drowsy, lousy-looking men, had sauntered to the pavement, and there, on the strength of many meetings at the bar, were comparing

notes upon the event that had drawn them together. The rumours they exchanged were vague, and their comments of doubtful wisdom and indifferent wit. It was 'generally understood in well-informed circles' that an inquest upon the body of the woman who had fallen out of the window of No. — would be opened at eleven o'clock that morning by the Coroner for Middlesex, and that it would be held in the public room of the Wetted Whistle. The appearance upon the scene of an inspector of police and two privates, who went into the public-house by its side door, tended to confirm this news.

As these officials entered the house, they were received with marked deference by Mrs. Stingo. She had donned a silk dress, and a new cap of bright blue ribands, all in honour of the day.

“Well, Mrs. Stingo!” said the inspector, cheerily, “here we are again! Two hinquets in one ’ouse in a month is luck you don’t often meet with.”

“No, to be sure,” said Mrs. Stingo, smiling graciously; “hand we’re deeply obligated to *you*, Mr. Hinspector, for bringin’ us the business. To be sure, that hother hacciden’ with the horange peel (has they *swore*, though between you and me an’ the post, Mr. Hinspector, I believes the *lemon peel* which he left behind in the tumbler wen ’e went hout ’ad more to do with it!) ’appened a little nearer the ‘Buckle and Feathers’ than hit were to us; but, you see, they ha’n’t got sich a commojus room for ’olding a hinquet as our public room, let alone the respectibility of our ’ouse before theirn. But Big Gill, our barman, he measured the distance to the spot where the blood was last night, and

this 'ouse is three yards an' a little hover nearer to us than them. So I hold we're by rights hentitled to it."

"So you are, Mrs. Stingo," said the inspector, wiping his mouth significantly with the back of his hand—a movement which, from habitual discipline, was closely copied by the rank and file. "So you are, and your 'ouse, as you say, is the most respectable 'ouse for sich a hinqiry to be 'eld in."

"What'll you have, gentlemen?" replied the landlady. "They're tryin' work, them hinqests, ain't they?"

"Ah!" replied the functionary, affecting to heave a sigh from his gigantic breast, "it's tryin' to the feelin's o' one's 'art, Mrs. Stingo. Sometimes I gets so nervous I can't skeersely stand."

"Ah! then, you'll be better to take a quartern o' gin, won't you? Mariar! three quarterns

o' gin for the gentlemen ; and see, walk hin 'ere an' 'ave it ; nobody won't see you 'ere."

The officer and his men entered the parlour, where, safe from observation, they could, with the aid of the stimulant, string up their shattered nerves to the pitch of the strain they were about to endure.

The bar outside was crowded with persons who had been summoned as jurors or witnesses, and who were preparing themselves in a similar way for the ordeal of the inquiry.

Among these was a man in charge of a policeman. His face was grimy, and showed traces of blood. His head had been bound up with a dirty handkerchief. Over it was perched, in grotesque challenge of the laws of gravitation, a broken hat, whereof the lopsided rakishness was amusing to see. The poor wretch's eyes looked red and bleary ; you could scarcely believe

such orbits to be capable of sight. His flabby cheeks were pale, his head shook, his hands trembled, he quivered on his legs. Indeed, he seemed so rickety and unbound, that a bystander had compassion on him.

“Hallo,” he said, “you look seedy enough, my friend. Is he a witness?”

The policeman nodded. The man drew himself up, and tried to assume a dignified air.

“He looks as if he was breaking up. What'll you take, old fellow? Come, cheer up!”

In an instant the man was enlivened.

“Gin, sir,” he replied with a husky voice, “gin—Old Tom, if you please, with a dash of bitters.”

His manner and tongue told of better days.

“You're under the weather, I think,” said his benefactor, as he handed him the tonic.

The man drained it in a moment, shook his

head, drew a few breaths, as if he were recalling the aroma of the delicious lubricant which had passed down his throat, and looked somewhat re-established.

“Ha!” he said, “if I could only have another, I should be set up for the day.”

Bystander No. 2 volunteered to supply another, and he was set up for the day.

“Ee’s the ’usband of the diseased,” said the policeman, in a confidential undertone, to Bystander No. 1.

“You don’t say so! Good God! What’ll you take?”

Presently a middle-sized and middle-aged gentleman entered the house by the side door. He was portly and rubicund, and, by his appearance, gave no indication of his ghastly office. It was the Coroner—not the present, nor the last, nor any one you, my reader, may

have known. Him Mrs. Stingo straightway encountered with her best manners.

“Good morning, your washup!” she said, curtseying. “Glad to see your washup again. Hevery heffort ’as been made, your washup, to harrange things accordin’ to your wishes. It’s not quite heleven yet, your washup. Will you step into the parlour?”

In the back parlour—not the bar-parlour where the inspector and his men were refreshing themselves—Mr. Stingo was waiting for the Coroner. On the table were decanters, glasses, and biscuits.

“Glad to see your washup again!” said Mr. Stingo, a well-distended host, of broad face and flabby cheeks.

“Hem! well,” said the gentleman, “the business is not a pleasant one. A serious inquiry, my dear sir. A serious inquiry.”

“Ah! yes,” said Mr. Stingo. “But then, you see, sir, hif folks is to die by haccident, it ’elps along our livin’ has well as yours, sir; don’t it, now?”

The Coroner did not answer. He was a gentleman, and he had a sensation that his position was not a dignified one at that moment.

“What’ll you take, yer washup?” said Stingo, “port or sherry?”

“Well, let me see,” replied the Coroner. “I’m a little out of sorts this morning. Dined with the Lord Mayor last night. Have you any of that ‘extra’ brandy I had when I was here last?”

“La! yes, your washup,” cried Mrs. Stingo, “we keeps that for speshul friends.” And she produced from a mahogany case a square bottle, out of which the reviewer of mortality poured a generous dose, which he gently qualified with

water. Mr. and Mrs. Stingo joined their visitor from pure motives of courtesy.

The Coroner proceeded upstairs to the Court-room. It was a strange scene, and would have been amusing, separated from the tragical grounds of it. A long low room, decorated with the insignia of a secret society; at the end a dais, in the middle of which was a huge chair of abnormally high and broad back, adorned with curious emblems, and with a tendency to gothic point. This was flanked by two other chairs of inferior size, but also gothically and emblematically inclined. Over the large chair was a painting of some mystery, formed by an eye, rays and other circumstances, which I dare not more particularly describe, lest it should seem to some of my good readers that I was profanely quizzing these sacred emblems, whereas I merely wish to indicate that they were there.

A sort of altar stood in the corner, evincing the tabernacular and moveable character of the services to which the hall was dedicated. A bundle of gilt-headed staves in the other corner seemed to import a harmless addiction to barbaric ceremonies.

The Coroner occupied the great chair of the master, or whatever other eminent officer usually filled it with his august person and more august apron. The jury were arranged on one side. A table, generally devoted to convivial purposes, as its dented surface proved, was appropriated by the Coroner's clerk and the reporters.

A ghastly service, certainly, to which to put such a place! But there is no end to the variety of uses to which a public-house may be perverted. From the 'Goose Club' upwards, through every form of union, friendly and benefit societies, amalgamated or otherwise,—to farmers' dinners,

to Masonic, Druidic, Odd fellows', and Foresters' lodge-meetings—to bar messes, charity balls, or the temporary worship of Dissenters, not to mention political committees at elections and Saturday 'free-and-easys,'—the great room of many a public-house shifts its scenes with all the comic and tragic consequences of a stage. Trysting-places of thousands of good and sober men, there should be written over their doors alongside of 'licensed to be drunk on the premises,' the stern warning of a peculiarly quiet and gentle judge, 'Men go into public-houses respectable and respected, and come out felons.'

This, then, was the scene in which the Coroner opened his court. His clerk had been refreshing himself at the bar with a mixture of ale and gin. The Coroner's Court, therefore, held in this public-house half full of intoxicating liquor, consisted of the following persons: The Coroner,

who had taken brandy and water ; his clerk, who had taken gin and ale ; the inspector of police and his men, who had taken at least a quartern of gin a-piece ; a foreman and eleven jurymen, of whom the majority had taken 'something' once or twice at the bar ; and a number of witnesses, nearly all of whom had fortified themselves against errors of memory by doses of spirit. Lastly, there was the general public, prepared in the same way to bear the harrowing details of the evidence to be given. Thus it might be said that one chain linked together all these incongruous bodies ; or, to change the figure, one spirit possessed them all.

* *
*

II.—A brief Interjectional Shout.

WILL it ever strike the Legislature that there is something almost hideous in this practice of holding inquests in public-houses? Just con-

sider a moment the indecency of the custom. Perhaps two-thirds of the deaths by violence or of a suspicious nature, are caused by drinking the liquors sold at public-houses. And the publican body, which has already made money out of the stuff by which the deceased was killed, is invited to take a second haul out of the ghastly proceedings consequent on its enterprise. The present Coroner for Middlesex, who is not concerned in this recital, would, like many of his predecessors and colleagues, be glad, I doubt not, to see some provision made, more conducive to the dignity of his Court and the gravity of its inquiries. To witness this anomaly from year to year, and never to heed its impropriety, is eminently British; but there are not wanting proofs enough under heaven to show that that may too often mean eminently stupid and brutal.

III.—Of Honourable Family.

THE proceedings having been formally opened, the jury sworn, and a postponement of the 'view' agreed upon until the police had given their evidence, those public guardians were examined.

Their evidence was that, owing to information they had received, they had come to the spot immediately after the 'haccident.' They had found the deceased quite dead. (Description of her state, and other details not pleasant to publish, for which see the *Morning Register* and other newspapers.) Inquiry had been made at No. ——. It appeared a woman had been living there for some time, of the name of Helen Bellhouse; was supposed by the tenants of the house to be 'respectable.' That the previous' afternoon she had been with two gentlemen in the front room, her parlour,—

how they got there to be explained afterwards,—the bed-room being behind. She or they had ordered refreshments (evidence of respectability), a bottle of sherry, a bottle of champagne, and a bottle of brandy (further tokens of respectability). The gentlemen, who were unknown to the keeper of the house, had left it unnoticed during the confusion created by the accident. The room showed signs of a scuffle near the window, but was otherwise neat and comfortable. The gentlemen had not been traced. But, meanwhile, a very important piece of evidence had turned up. Among the deceased's effects were books and letters proving her real name to be Helena Hurlingham; and also a number of letters from a person named Hurlingham, who evidently was, or professed to be, her husband. They were well written and expressed, and indicated a person of superior

education, though of degraded character. By an extraordinary chance the police had been obliged to remove to the station the man who, in a state of drunkenness, had, in the outrageous way before detailed, stumbled over the body of the deceased. In an old pocket-book found upon him his name was written, and there were three or four letters in a woman's handwriting. The name in the pocket-book was Hurlingham. The letters were addressed to 'Mr. Hurlingham,' and were signed 'Helena Hurlingham.' They contained answers to claims for money from the man to the writer. One of them was read. It was only a week old.

HENRY,—*I send you the last £10 I have, and the very last you will ever get from me; I borrowed it from a gentleman last night. I have told them at Nibb's* to take in no more letters for*

* A grocer in Notting Hill.

me, as I shall never go there again. You need not try to find me out, for I am determined you shall never see me again alive. You want to know where our poor child Celia is. You hound! I can scarcely hold my pen for rage and contempt of you. I know why you wish to get hold of her. You would sell her for a night's drinking, and make her, as you tried to make me, the minister of your vice. Oh! I think if you were here, I could stab you, and I warn you to keep out of my way. By God's help, my poor, poor girl shall be honest. Take my advice, and leave her alone. I tell you I have a powerful protector, and he likes me. Good-bye.

HELENA HURLINGHAM.

While the letter was being read, the miserable creature we have described passed through several changes of manner and feeling. He first looked with brazen assurance round the room.

When the child's name and the foul aspersion on her father were arrived at, he began to cower and tremble, and then subsided into silent maudlin weeping. This was the man suggested by the police to be the husband of the deceased woman, whose real name was undoubtedly Helena Hurlingham.

After this evidence, the man was put forward—certainly a man to look at. I have looked on wrecks by the sea-shore, whose very desolation made one shudder. Such a wreck was he. He seemed to be fifty years old, or more; for his face, though flabby, was withered, and his eyes were sunken and his forehead wrinkled. He attempted to steady his trembling head and assume a bold stare, but the effort miserably failed. His coat had been the coat of outward gentlemanliness. It was well cut, and once fitted him well, but it now sat loosely on the palsied

limbs. It had but one button on the front; its frayed edges, and shining seams, and badly mended rents, showed how the hard usage of shouldering walls and rolling in the gutter had tried its texture and its gloss. There was no waistcoat beneath the garment, a want which had been partially concealed with the aid of a pin in the two flaps of the coat. The wretched piece of silk which did duty as a neckerchief had long since lost its colour; and the glimpse of shirt-front which its slovenly ease permitted, showed only a yellow, dirty, and ragged apology for linen.

Nevertheless, as the man stood up, strengthened a bit by his cordial, with his hand thrust into his breast, and his eyes fixed as steadily as was convenient upon the Coroner, you saw that he had at some time been used to the dignity of a gentleman. There was a shocking air of fallen fineness about him.

“Who are you?” said the Coroner, briskly.

The man started, and looked an instant indignantly at his querist, as if the sharp address had touched within him some long-lost chord of self-respect.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he replied with a certain dignity; “are you addressing me?”

The Coroner noticed the tone, and was reproved.

“Yes, sir,” he rejoined. “Will you oblige me with your name?”

“Certainly, sir,” said the other, with a ludicrous air of condescension. “My name, sir, is Lucius Shafto-Grenville Hurlingham.”

“Any relation of Lord Shafto-Grenville, may I ask?”

“Remotely, sir; very remotely; in fact, as you may observe, too remotely to profit by it.”

He waved his left hand in the air. The little

finger stuck out as if it had a jewelled ring upon it, but that had long ago become liquescent and gone down his throat.

“May I ask, sir, are you the husband of the deceased, Helena Hurlingham?”

“I am, or *was*,” said Mr. Hurlingham, putting out his dirty hand to emphasize the distinction; “I am, or *was*, the husband, sir, of a certain Helena Hurlingham; but, as I have not had the pleasure,—I—I mean the honour, of seeing the deceased, sir—I am unable at present to say whether she is my wife or not.”

“Ah! well, then, gentlemen of the jury, this would be a convenient time to view the body, which has been removed to the Marylebone dead-house.”

It was not long before the Coroner, the jury, and several witnesses were standing beside the body of the dead woman, which had been laid

out on boards and tressels.

The man came forward with a jaunty step and air, his hat on one side, and looked at IT. He, with that countenance so befouled and shameful, yet living; she, with those battered features—still and dead! Face to face with the bruised relics of his early love, with his wronged, neglected, blighted, and alas! sinning love; and she, turning up the ghastly wreck of her beauty towards the man between whom and her there had been wrongs too sad and evil to speak of! For a moment or two he gasped for breath, and caught for support at a bystander, who shrank away. Then he took off his hat. Then he noticed a slight derangement of her dress, and, with a gentle touch, put it right. Then for an instant he glanced at the left hand, where there still remained that token of so much faithlessness, crime, and sorrow—a wedding-ring.

Then he looked at the face again, and, assuming a bolder manner, he put on his hat, and turning to the Coroner, said :

“ *Yes, by G—, sir, that's the woman !*”

The jury turned away. They had seen enough.

LINK THE THIRD.

POSITION AND PROPERTY.

I.—A Doubtful Aspect.

ON their return to the Watted Whistle, the Coroner's Court was adjourned for refreshment, and the Coroner took his lunch, while the bar was filled with men whose feelings of sorrow or surprise at the frightful incidents of the case were allayed by anodynes concocted by the barmaid. Mr. Shafto-Grenville Hurlingham was several times treated to a 'pick-me-up,' until his guardian, the policeman, began to fear that it would end in a set-me-down, and wisely checked the public generosity.

—I own to the simplicity and attractiveness of the process of discharging any claim which we may imagine can be made upon us by some peculiarly attentive railway-guard, or cabman, or porter, or the man who brings home to our house from the shop an article we have ordered, or who does a chore or two, or in an unwonted fit of diligence empties our dust-bin, or has delivered our coal, or has done nothing,—I own to the attractiveness of discharging such a claim by offering the refreshment of a glass of wine or of beer to the object of our benevolence. But did you ever consider what the responsibility of that act is? Some people, who are ashamed to refuse a gratuity, give this because it is cheaper to do so, not caring one jot about the consequences. Perhaps they have never thought of watching a dust-cart down a street, and observing how, as at house after house the men took

their toll of beer, they at length grew heavy and unfit for work, if not quarrelsome. The writer has himself seen a well-known philanthropic member of parliament in his house at eleven in the morning, hand a glass of wine to a man who, in discharge of his employer's orders, had delivered a tradesman's parcel at the door. You may test for your own satisfaction, if you are not afraid, what this morning stimulant means—a temporary flush, a feverish hour, reaction and thirst, a muddle of the brain ; and you will understand how it is that a morning once commenced in this way too often ends in an evening of debauch or of stupid incapacity. At ten o'clock in the morning you will now see the myrmidon of an adjacent ale-house going the round of the rising palaces in South Kensington, and selling beer to the workmen engaged in the buildings. Were I the employer

of those men, I would drub that rascal's back until it ached again, for stealing away so early the wits of labour with his illegal pedlery. They see it, and they buy it. It is brought to their work, and held to their mouths. But where are the police and the excise? These morning and complimentary drinks are the day's confusion and the night's damnation. Or their effect may be slower and surer. They may only show their fatal influences when the pulpy and deteriorated frame has to fight the blue devils who, long-coming, have seized their prey at last. If you must give a man a gratuity, give him an obolus. Should he spend it in drink, you are acquitted. Or offer him a healthy meal. An he refuse that, you may bid him good morning with a clear conscience. But your glass of wine or beer may be the fifth or the tenth of such deadly kindnesses, and you have helped to endanger the

character, honesty, health—nay, perhaps the life of a man; and God knows that is a heavy burden to accept.

Mr. Hurlingham's appearance, when the inquiry was resumed, showed that influences had been at work within him of an elevating character; but it was demonstrated that he did not succumb to anything short of extraordinary. When, some eighteen or twenty years since, this man had come back from Oxford, and strode the park, a strong and beautiful youth with 'hyacinthine' locks, healthy complexion, and a noble frame, well displayed in handsome, fashionable clothes, all women looked at him with kindly eyes. You would never have believed it possible for any influence, however active or malignant, to transform him in the interval into this poor, rickety, foul, trembling, and degraded sot. If

you wish to know what power had worked this awful miracle, walk into the next 'public,' and ask them to set before you an unopened bottle of what they call *Cognac* or *Geneva*, and if you are that way disposed, sit and muse upon the full power of the Genie which is shut up in that crystal flask. If you pull out the cork, it may rise with a horror that obscures the very light of heaven. That was the power that had seized on poor Hurlingham—'Oxford Hurlingham,' second best cricketer, athletic, healthy, and fairly virtuous—and changed him, body and soul, into this human ghoul!

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II.—Mates unmated.

HE laid his hat on the table, passed his hand carelessly through his disordered hair, sat down in a half-ashamed, half-defiant, attitude, on the seat assigned to him, and then, almost

instantly changing his temper, brought his unbandaged eye round towards the Coroner, and winked at him. The functionary was anxious to get on, and disregarded this compliment.

“Mr. Hurlingham,” he said, “it will be necessary for me to examine you with regard to your relations to the deceased. I do not wish to pry needlessly into your history, which obviously is sad enough, while your condition excites our pity. Perhaps you will tell us who this woman—this lady—was, and when she parted from you? You recognized her just now?”

“Stop, sir. No more, I beg of you,” said the witness, putting his hands over his face, and shuddering. “If you will let me alone, I will tell you as shortly as I can her history and mine; and if there is any young man here,” he added in a familiar formula, “let him take warning from my experience.”

—Very bad people have a curious habit, in a flush of maudlin sentiment, of unfolding the details of their wickedness with a feverish candour, for the moral benefit of mankind. In reading the confessions which are sometimes addressed to the public from the cell of the condemned, one cannot but feel that, to point his moral, the criminal has stretched his recollections beyond their real limits, and painted his misdeeds in the strongest colours. Perhaps there is some solace in penning exaggerations which tend, at all events, to elevate him to eminence in the *rôle* of life which he has played.—

Mr. Hurlingham's story was very simple.

He was Mr. Lucius Shafto-Grenville Hurlingham, son of the late Walter Hurlingham, Esq., of Greystone, in Warwickshire, who, dying before his son came of age, left the latter a fine country property of £4,000 a-year. Nineteen years since,

he had married Helena Conistoun, daughter of Lord Newmarket, a woman of great beauty, cleverness, and ambition. He was disposed to country life, she to the pleasures of fashionable society. In time this led to misunderstandings, quarrels, estrangements. He used to leave her in their city house and retire to the country, where his time was spent between hunting and brooding over the disappointment of their marriage. She, on the other hand, keenly resented his indifference, and despised him for his lack of ambition. Heaven had never meant them for one another, and each was too proud to make concessions which have sometimes brought happy community out of ill-assorted unions.

One daughter had come of the marriage, beautiful as her mother, and beloved of both. After a while his wife's extravagant expenditure began seriously to embarrass him. He implored

her to retire into the country. When she saw there was no help for it, she went; but she resigned herself only when it was inevitable, and she had already tasted the corroding anxieties of failure and narrow means. But her mortification at their retirement, and his at his embarrassments, found vent in frequent recriminations; and both sought in this crisis of their fate a deadly consoler. He threw himself into the wildest society of the county. She, on her part, went wherever excitement could be found. One day, when she had gone to the races with a party of gentlemen, Mr. Hurlingham entered her boudoir. A key was lying on the table beside a lace handkerchief, evidently forgotten. It was the key of a small cupboard safe. Curiosity led him to open it, and he learned in the same moment that she was as faithless and weak as he. There were the brandy, and glass, and empty

bottles, showing she had contracted no temporary taste ; and there also were letters which clearly proved her to have been guilty of worse sins.

One meeting took place, in which those two people owned to each other their mutual wrongs and injuries—one meeting in which, after fierce recrimination, old sympathy revived for a few short minutes, and sorrow melted their hearts almost to repentance. But from that meeting each returned to the consoling stimulant, and hope fled that home for ever. Two days afterwards Mrs. Hurlingham disappeared with an officer, having placed her child in some retreat which baffled her husband's inquiry.

In the four years that ensued without a meeting, the remnant of his property had gone in gambling and drink, and he passed through

that state which is the precursor of vagrancy—living on his friends. From bad to worse, from gentleman to blackguard, from blackguard to cad, from cad to sottish outcast, had that man steadily drunk his way downwards, day by day, night by night, possessed by a hot, relentless demon of thirst, to satisfy which he would work while he was able, or borrow, or beg, or steal—through the snaky fires of *delirium tremens*, wrecking the noble frame God had given him, and testing its marvellous tenacity, until it was well-nigh incredible that the machinery of life should hold together, and the trembling fibres obey any instruction of the lethargic soul.

How low he had fallen! One day he met a well-dressed, bright-cheeked, middle-aged woman in the street, still handsome, and stopped her. She had a gentleman with her.

“Helena!”

She slipped a half-sovereign into his hand, and turned away from the seedy-looking vagrant. He had taken an alms from his own wife.

He followed her to her 'home,' and noted it. That evening her ten shillings went down his throat. The next morning he was at her door, forced his way into her rooms, and, between threats and entreaties, knowing the vile profession she was following, he agreed with her in consideration of a regular payment, to let her alone. For two years he lived thus. One thing he never could ascertain. Where was his child? His wife defied him with imprecations to endeavour to find out. But his cunning had developed with the loss of better intellect. He did find out, and was on the point of reclaiming the girl, for God knows what fate, when her mother's vigilance outwitted him. From that time she had evaded him. He was

told to write to a certain tradesman's in Notting Hill, and did so, receiving replies, as we have seen ; but the letters were taken away secretly, and he could never discover her whereabouts—never until, lounging against that door-post in St. Martin's Lane, he had looked down upon her dead body, and cursed it.

That was the gist of Mr. Hurlingham's evidence, concluded at half-past six o'clock ; and when it was finished, the inquiry was adjourned.

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III.—Official and Censor.

THE police requested an adjournment for a week, to make inquiries for the two gentlemen who had been in the room with the woman when she took her fatal leap. An adjournment was accordingly agreed upon, and the jury dispersed. I will relate barely, and

without comment, a few of the evening's sequences.

Our Coroner, deeply moved by the thrilling disclosures of the day, stretched his arms upwards, and felt hungry as he brought them down again, and looked at his watch, a worthy companion of the rotund sphere against which it was wont to beat.

"Past seven o'clock," he said; "and I have not dined."

His inner man, in all its ducts, arteries, veins, and vessels, protested in the name of science against this rare — this anomalous — circumstance. His wife and daughter had obtained for that evening, as he knew, the favour of an order for a free box from some poor manager at one of the theatres — a favour which official loungers and literary men are too apt to look upon as provisions of some

beneficent deity—to be enjoyed free of expense. I know not what claim the Coroner for Middlesex had upon the manager of the theatre; unless, indeed, the latter felt that, if things were to go on as they had been going with him, and he continued to fill half his house every night from a free-list of people perfectly able to pay for their amusements, he would, before long, himself need the Coroner's services—and desired therefore to be well entreated of him and his jury. However, our Coroner was well assured that at precisely six o'clock his genial partner and her congenial offspring had seated themselves at table, to the soup, soles, and leg of mutton which had been prognosticated at breakfast-time. In one point, at least, he could always rely upon the affinities. His family never permitted a meal to be spoiled by waiting—a principle of his own oft quoted, and as

oft enforced. Sticking to this rule man shall live juicily, and not in vain.

At this moment—I mean the moment when the Coroner's watch had reached the bottom of its fob, and had subsided again, after being raised aloft, as a ship on the heaving billows, by the great sigh which the tender recollection of one more leg of mutton lost for ever had aroused—at this moment, I say, the correspondent, reporter, and leader-writer of the *Morning Register*, addressed the hesitating official.

“Where are you going to dine?”

“That is just what I don't know, my dear Bugby. This inf——, I mean, this melancholy case has upset all my plans. I was going home to leg of mutton at six, and then we were all booked for the *Sleeping Huntsman*. It's always my luck. People will either die at such inconvenient times, or the inquest will go on at such

unreasonable length, that really one's life is hardly worth living."

"I pity you, Coroner. And you only get a thousand a year?"

"Ah! society always underpays its best men! There's the Home Secretary gets five thousand a year; and if man were measured by man, he and I would have to exchange places, though I doubt if he is even fit for this one."

"Well, but—dinner. What do you say to Halford's? The best nook in London. Only up the street. Formerly *chef* to the Governor-General of India. Such curries as England cannot equal."

"Enough, I know him well. A place to be cultivated and had in reverence. I never mention it to any one. It is too good a place for common men. How did you get to know of it?"

"Come, I won't stand much of that before dinner. We had better go."

“Yes, we’ll go. Good night, Mr. Stingo—good night, Mrs. Stingo ; we shall meet, I trust, this day week. By the way, my good friend, have you any more of that particular brandy? My nerves have been dreadfully tried to-day.”

“Certainly, sir. Will you come into the parlour, sir? will your friend walk in, too, sir? your servant, sir!”

“Oh! he’ll walk in—walk into *Hades* for such stuff as you have there. A most special tippie, my dear Bugby.”

The two gentlemen had thus, as they would have expressed it, ‘taken a tonic,’ and they departed forthwith for Mr. Halford’s restaurant. The dinner was eaten with a zest that did the tonic credit, each consuming a bottle of the good claret there to be had, and at half-past nine they were full and comfortable.

“Bugby,” said the Coroner, “we have dined

well. There is but one thing wanting. Claret, especially claret like this—or rather, to be more exact, like *that* Léoville—judiciously warmed by a loving and appreciative hand, is a good wine, a gift of God—while you are drinking it. But you well know it is of its nature to be deficient of alcohol, of that spirit which excites to natural activity all the tissues, and induces within the stomach that circulation and assimilation—”

“Pray stop, my dear Coroner! I have eaten my dinner, and it is resting comfortably within me, layer upon layer, every interstice filled up with noble wine. Why should you, even in imagination, seek to disturb this peace within me? Let it repose.”

“True, my son. It was to this I was coming—*repose*. Repose is the secret of all art, (in the *Rénaissance* particularly to be desiderated,) of architecture, of sculpture, of painting, of deco-

ration, and of dining. It is that I would attain. It must in our case be assured. There is a liquid born of Erin which can assure it. Let us have some punch. Waiter, old 'Jamieson'—punch for two."

By half-past ten, having turned up their third tumblers, the Coroner and the journalist struggled to their feet, and left the restaurant arm-in-arm. The holder of the ancient and dignified office, recalling the circumstance that his wife and daughter would not be at home at so early an hour, saw no reason for forestalling them. He dropped in at a favourite club, where the evening air was corrected by another whiskey punch. I regret to write that it was not until two in the morning that his faithful spouse and eldest daughter aided his undignified ascent to his bed-room, in a condition rather worse than that of his witness of the day before.

As for Mr. Bugby, he was a trained sybarite. When he had refreshed himself with a cup of tea in a Fleet Street haunt, and had again washed his inner man with some brandy and seltzer, he sat down and wrote for the *Morning Register* an article which put the Alliance in ecstasy.

“How appalling,” cried the *Morning Register* on paper, “is the *denouement* of the dread catastrophe! Beauty, wealth, position, honour, virtue, all undermined by the canker, DRINK—toppling down a whole family in one fell and disastrous swoop.* Out of respect for the noble race whose name has been unfortunately dragged into this inquiry, and of the vast circle of friends and acquaintances, of which the fair, the engaging, the talented Miss Conistoun was so conspicuous an ornament, we forbear from too

* *Sic!*

minute an analysis of the strange facts brought out before the worthy Coroner. Nothing could exceed the delicacy with which he regulated this part of the case. But what is it that stands out in terrifying prominence in this astounding history? It is the solemn fact—hearken, oh satellites of Bacchus and Silenus!—that the origin of this sad declension, the root and cause of the lively sorrows which hang as a cloud* over this illustrious family, the motive power of that *facilis descensus* to humiliation and death, the *fons et origo mali*, was the demon of strong drink! Truly did the wise man say, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging.’”

And Bugby wept real tears over his own flabby and flatulent sentiment.

* *Sic!*

LINK THE FOURTH.

BUSINESS.

I.—An injured Innocent.

ON the morning after the inquest, a pretty breakfast-table was spread in a richly-furnished room in Belgravia. The house which enclosed this room—a scene of exquisite comfort—was from the scraper to the topmost chimney, inside and out, a standing advertisement of wealth, and, one may add, of wealth tastefully expended. The architect and decorator had conspired, by request, to produce the most extravagant results; Messrs. Johnstone and Jeanes had received orders to make the costliest combinations of upholstery materials that could be worked

into a tolerably large mansion, and had done their best to fulfil the task. And when one adds, that Christie Manson's rooms had furnished the modern pictures, and Mr. Agnew the other gems of art, there can be no question about the taste of the owner and his indifference to expense.

We are, however, little concerned with the aspect or the furniture of this gorgeous residence, and for further information must refer the reader unfamiliar with Belgravian mansions to the three-volume novels whose authoresses are so intimate with that locality, or to the advertisement of Mr. Gouldsmith, when, as occasionally happens, the dread ghoul of bankruptcy enters the pale of that aristocratic reserve. Our concern is with the occupants of this breakfast-room at about nine o'clock on the morning in question.

Three persons, evidently father, mother, and daughter, were seated at the round table. A plate laid for a fourth shewed that another member of the household was expected. The father, a gentleman of about fifty-five or sixty years of age, with the long face, high cheek-bones, prominent nose, and well-determined features generally of a Western, or North of Ireland Scotchman, was plodding through his *Times* with a pertinacious doggedness indicative of a sense of duty. And, indeed, that did oppress him; for Parliament had lately met, and he was Mr. Bighorne, Member of Parliament, and of the firm also of Bighorne, Swill, Pewter, Ball & Juniper, the eminent distillers, who could scarcely walk a street in London without seeing the name of their firm blazing in letters of gold on certain houses.

No doubt it was a proud thing for King

Lewis, of Bavaria, in his latter days, to circumambulate Munich, and to read in almost every street the bronze or gilt inscriptions which celebrated his own magnificence: but what must be the satisfaction that swells the bosom of a private citizen, who, in whatever city, or town, or village, of the United Kingdom he may happen to alight, beholds the evidences of his popularity, if not of his greatness, brilliantly emblazoned on the most frequented of its places of worship?

Passing by the handsome, motherly woman, who, to use the language of modern fiction, 'presided over the tea-urn,' the eye lights upon the third member of the party with a sense of complete satisfaction. The oval, sweet, yet firmly-featured face, with that noble wealth of original hair wreathed up in plaits and curls upon the symmetrical head in Grecian fashion—the slightly

aquiline nose, exquisite mouth and chin, the skin mantled with a complexion purely and gloriously English—all this made Miss Emily Bighorne (bother her patronymic, and may she soon change it for a better!) a subject of admiration which could well endure the rivalry of the artists who had showered their works upon the home of the wealthy distiller of British brandy and gin. This young lady was of the advanced age of four-and-twenty and single, though every one knew she was as good as £100,000 to her happy possessor on the wedding day; but Miss Emily had opinions, a mind, and also a will of her own, and these were unfavourable to the addresses of fashionable gallants. She believed in a modern chivalry, but at present it had approached her only in the shape of Quixotic idiots or vulgar Sancho Panzas looking for a kingdom.

Just now she was studying the *Liberal*, a journal of unpronounced radical opinions.

“Papa!” she said suddenly, “do you see that?”

“What?”

“An inquest, on whom do you think? On a daughter of Lord Newmarket! She must be an elder sister of your favourite aspirant—the Honourable Captain Conistoun.”

“Good heavens! Has she turned up again?”

“Then you knew about her, papa? And yet——” She paused.

“Knew what about her, my dear? It was not much to know. She has been a great grief to her family; I know that.”

“Well, the Captain bears it very well, and scarcely takes it to heart as seriously as he might. Do you know the reason of her misfortune?”

“No, nor do I want to know. It is a painful and disagreeable subject, my dear, especially for *you* to discuss.”

“For *me* to discuss, indeed!” said Miss Emily, tossing her head. “My dear father, why do you treat women like children? If you could, you would have kept my mind in long-clothes while my body was growing to womanhood. But listen! The day before yesterday, Mrs. Bellhouse, a disreputable person, who had been drinking with two men in a room in St. Martin's Lane, threw herself out of a window, almost upon a drunken man who happened to be passing, and who turned out to be her husband.”

“Mercy on me!” said Mr. Bighorne, dropping his paper at this bald epitome of the facts, while his good lady wrung her hands in horror. They both remembered perfectly the handsome young couple, who, eighteen years ago, were so well

known in the fashionable world. "Did you ever hear of such a thing? How horrible!"

"Isn't it?" said Miss Emily, very quietly, but with the faintest tone of sarcasm, "especially in a family of distinction; and the whole story is out, all about their early life, and her fall, and that sort of thing; and do you know what did it all?"

"I haven't the least idea," said Mr. Bighorne shyly, and not quite truthfully, for he was afraid of what was coming.

"Well, father, it was BRANDY!" replied Miss Emily, with rude emphasis, and looking at her father with a flushed face. "Brandy, and then gin. What do you think of that, father?"

Miss Emily was a very intense young radical indeed, and, like all radicals, sometimes intensely disagreeable—quite beyond the power of her father's respectable Liberal-Conservative Go-

vernment. He looked at her with severe eyes. Mamma stepped in.

“Emily, have not I commanded and entreated you not to make those offensive allusions?—and to your own father, Emily, and in his own house, and in the presence of your own mother, too!” There were indignant tears on Mrs. Bighorne’s cheeks.

“Oh! papa, mamma!” said Emily, standing up and looking at them, “I can’t tell you—I daren’t tell you how I feel about it. These things cut me to the heart, and if I were to say all I thought, you would never love me again.”

“Hush, Emily,” said her father, who loved her as the apple of his eye, an apple just then somewhat dimmed with a dew of mortification; “you are utterly wrong, and perverse, and over-sensitive. That Hiton Square parson has

preached you into a morbid state of mind, which I trust will soon be healed by your own natural common-sense. I have repeatedly explained to you that whatever evils may result from the use of my manufactures is not due to any action on my part, but to the voluntary abuse by separate individuals, of an article which, like anything else, if used in moderation, is harmless and good."

"I wish I could think it were harmless and good," replied Miss Emily. "But even then, papa, you have never explained to me why it is necessary for you to buy up or build so many public-houses of your own. If it were not for your money and activity, I don't believe there would be enough of men with the means to take up house after house, as between you distillers and brewers is being now done. Surely it is your money which is directly encouraging the traffic,

and it is your instrument that actually holds it to the people's mouths."

"You are very complimentary, Miss," replied the distiller, looking harassed; "but again, I assure you I have nothing on earth to do with it. I provide a good article, and, as a man of business, I am obliged to take the usual methods of selling it. If I were to rely solely on wholesale transactions, my rivals would soon run away with my business. I simply follow the ordinary course, and have no responsibility whatever for other people's weaknesses. Let us drop the subject."

"Oh! father," said Emily solemnly, as he drew her to him to close the controversy with a kiss, "unhappily, the subject won't drop for any of us; and here it comes," she added in a quick low tone, "on two legs, and late for breakfast."

And breaking away from her father, Emily

stood up to salute a tall young gentleman, perhaps two years younger than herself, whose handsome features, strongly resembling her own, were pale, and almost ghastly.

“Why, Henry,” she cried, looking at him, “what is the matter with you? Are you ill?”

“No,” he replied, disengaging himself and kissing his mother. “It is nothing. I have had a bad night.”

“So you have, dear. I heard you pass my room door at three o’clock,” replied his sister with affectionate cruelty. Master Henry endeavoured to look occupied with bread and butter.

“At last! Henry,” said the senior. “A quarter to ten, and you solemnly engaged to be in the counting-house punctually at ten every morning. You are hopeless.”

“I’m afraid I am, sir,” answered the junior,

affecting to eat some breakfast, though it lay almost untasted before him. "I'm afraid I am," he repeated with a sigh. "Mother, some more tea, please! I was out late last night at Conistoun's."

"Oh! well," said the father, glancing at Emily, and somewhat mollified, "boys will be boys, I fear." And with that comfortable and philosophical reflection, he was lost between the sheets of the *Times* again.

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II.—A Business conducted with Spirit.

THE firm of which Mr. Bighorne was the senior partner, was one of the most energetic and successful in the spirit trade. Beginning forty years before, as mixers, diluters, and sweeteners of pure spirit, to create the noxious pleasure called gin, they had gradually pushed their

business in every quarter and extended it to the distilling of spirit and manufacture of brandy. They paid nearly a million sterling a year to the excise, thus finding the country on an average about one-eightieth of its revenue—a fact which, on the face of it, entitled them to the position of being its most valuable citizens. That would be the view of an economist ; but a thick-headed, though warm-hearted enthusiast, inquiring further into the benefits conferred on society by this great firm, would have boldly said that they were dearly bought. This splendid subscription to the revenue represented a manufacture of two millions of gallons per annum of spirits above proof, which would produce I dare not say how many hundreds of thousands of gallons of nutty brandy and cream gin.

Were the enthusiast aforesaid, as he is sure to do, to follow the thousands of hogsheads, or the

millions of gorgeously bedizened and sparkling bottles, turned out by this firm, to their destinations by land and sea, and down to the ultimate stomach of that notorious insatiable, 'the consumer,' he might—might! nay, *would* return with a demonstration nothing could shake, that this million gained to the revenue had cost the country in wasted wages, lost means, bankruptcies, shipping disasters, railway accidents, wrecked lives, murders, assaults, crimes unmentionable and innumerable, and general demoralization, with their resulting expenses, as good as ten or twenty millions sterling.* In truth, every year Messrs. Bighorne and Company, for their own profit, turned out a product which did as much damage in the world as many a plague or revolution. I state this as a serious proposition based upon facts, and unexaggerated.

* *Vide* W. Hoyle: "Waste of Wealth," etc., etc.

That was a fact to which Mr. Bighorne's conscience was alive, but the responsibility for which it denied. That was a fact which the Chancellor of Her Majesty's Exchequer knew, but which he pleaded that, in the peremptory claims of a revenue-raising patriotism, he could not afford to recognize. That was a fact patent to every thoughtful member of the party in Parliament among whom sat Mr. Bighorne, but it never lessened him in their esteem, or choked them at his brilliant entertainments. That was a fact clear to some hundreds of respectable, worthy, aristocratic, high-minded representative gentlemen, who went into the lobby to establish, confirm, and extend Mr. Bighorne's capacity of contributing to the revenue out of his percentages upon drunkenness, death, and crime. But it was plain to them all that not a shadow of blame attached to Mr. Bighorne or to any one of them-

selves, for people's abuse of an article too easily abused; and they consequently referred the startled reformer to the regenerating influences of Christianity and culture, and stood to Mr. Bighorne as an eminently rich, humane, conservative, and most Christian friend, with a vested interest which it would be both 'plundering and blundering' to disturb.

As for Mr. Bighorne, he claimed to be no more chargeable with the consequences of his business than the baker who sells the loaf that chokes a too greedy man.

But we must really inquire, How did this great firm build up, and how does it continue to increase, its enormous business?

The truth is, that the popularity of the 'creamy gin' and 'nutty brandy' depends in a very small degree on any inherent superiority of those spirits. It is true that there is

much in maturing, mixing, colouring, and sweetening the original distillation ; but after all, you come back to the same white dew, condensed and dripping, drop by drop, in crystal spirit. But the two great agencies of Mr. Bighorne's success—for he was the head of the firm in more senses than one—were advertising and agency. The world was nearly as full of the attractions of Bighorne's gin as of Holloway's pills : and there was not a district in the metropolis or in any great town, where Mr. Bighorne's agent, in the shape of a publican ensconced in a gorgeous gin-shop, did not dispense the two seductive cordials. Let the truth come out, and let these gentlemen bear the responsibility of it. They are not mere wholesale producers who sell their wares, and can fairly say they are not concerned whether these go to heal at the hospital, or to destroy in the public-house.

The exigencies of a trade in which competition is so keen oblige brewer and distiller, for their lives, to create and push the business. The ordinary laws of supply and demand are not regarded. The trade is forced. For example, were it not for the capital of these vast firms, whose agents are always on the look-out for a chance to acquire a new vested interest in the demoralisation of society, who will believe that Regent Street, Westminster, or Whitechapel Road, would be filled with the expensive establishments which make them so brilliant and so damned at night? And what are our magistrates about that they permit their brother magistrates, in the horrible rivalry of this destructive trade, to overwhelm neighbourhoods like these with poverty, crime, and sorrow? The £4,000, £5,000, or £10,000 which starts a public-house, is rarely found by the creature who stands behind

the bar ; it comes out of the same pockets as the £1,000 subscriptions to restorations of cathedrals, new churches, and to the conversion of the Dyak, the Carib, or the Iroquois, from naked savagery, to the English Bible, the English coat and hat, and English fire-water.



III.—Hoist with his own Petard.

WHEN breakfast was over, Mr. Henry Bighorne, whose uneasiness had throughout excited the sharp attention of Emily, signalled to her to follow him, and led the way to his own room at the top of the house. There she found everything in confusion, as if he were about to pack up for a journey, and she noticed that he had not used the bed.

“Henry,” she said, “what’s the matter? You

are dreadfully ill. Something has happened. I never saw you like this."

"Something *has* happened," replied he gloomily, "and I am going away."

"Going away! Where?"

"Oh! anywhere. I am not certain just now. But if they ask you, you had better say I have gone down for a week's hunting with Conistoun."

"I'll do nothing of the sort. Tell me what all this means."

"Emily," he said, putting his arm round her waist and resting his hot cheek against hers, so delightfully cool and smooth, "don't ask me, love, for it is impossible to tell you. But I've got into a scrape, and there's a bigger man concerned in it, and for his sake, I must be off at all events for a time. No one must know where I am; so I shan't tell you, because you wouldn't

tell a lie for anybody, and they might put you on your oath, you know."

"Oh, *what* is it?" cried Emily, clasping his two hands and looking him in the face. "What have you been doing? Oh, Henry, Henry!" and those lovely sisterly arms went round his neck, and she drew this weak fool to her noble bosom with all the strength of a motherly affection. Master Henry's mind was not in what is termed 'good form,' and he felt just then that he was a pitiable fellow and a most unfortunate one; so he began to cry, and Emily, like the recording angel, cried too, and the tears of love and of feeble hypocrisy flowed together.

—Tears? Ah! tears of a tender loving woman, in whose heart the angel Virtue ever sits enthroned; tell me where you can find such gems as these? Man, beast, brute, savage, when you see these pearling her cheeks, stand still and

watch the only drops from the great river of Celestial Mercy that ever take material form on earth, and stay your passion, or your wrath, or your cruelty, or your suspicion, before those precious tokens of heavenly purity and grace. If they are the outcome of sorrow for thee, O erring man! fall down and catch the holy water, if perchance it may wash some black spot out of thy soul, and think what glorious mercy they express. No *man* can shed such tears as these—welling forth as pure as ever from the fountain you may have shaken, and broken and stirred up with your foul or ferocious abuses, but which still sends forth a crystal stream of forgiving love. Oh blest evidences of heavenly mercy! to think that men should wantonly blind themselves to your loving and gracious influences—sweeter than the sweet influences of the Pleiades! The heart that willingly drinks in your gentle showers

should surely send up some healthy growth of goodness and of immortality!

The relations between this sister and brother were of a peculiar kind. It is hard to say it; but it is true, and is, I fear, not the only case of the sort—that although Mr. Henry Bighorne was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bighorne, there was little sympathy between him and his progenitors. Emily had a good deal of the force and resolve of her father, and of the common-sense of her mother; and the affinity of temper had fostered a deep affection between them. But Henry was one of those irregulars who sometimes appear in families, and are said by physiologists to recall some forgotten type of ancestry. Indeed, I have been gravely assured by an eminent ontologist that he knows—in English families who can trace their lineage for long generations—of cases in which some unremembered Chinese or Malayan

of the line has inconveniently turned up again in a living son or daughter. In Henry's case the anterior ancestor must have been a mild, beautiful, well-intentioned, bright, and capable person, but deficient in the firmness which gives all qualities their coherence and force. He was a young man of fine culture. His Greek and Latin verses at Eton were said to have shown much more than mechanical power. When he went to Oxford, he was conspicuous for his love of the 'humanities,' his precocious judgment, his mastery of literature, not merely in the dead but in living languages. Knowing what he is now, you may be amazed to hear that his life at the University was singularly pure and quiet. Emily was his constant correspondent, and such a correspondent was like an 'anchor within the veil.' One would hardly be prepared to credit the fact that in three fatal

years this harmless and even promising boy had been changed into a debased and morbid *roué*; but it is as true as Gospel, and you can, if you please, have a sight of the genie that worked the transformation.

When Henry Bighorne came home from Oxford to his cold, calculating, brisk, and ambitious father, his practical mother, and fashionable society, he emerged from a sort of Garden of Eden, in which he had been walking and talking with divinities, and found himself in an unexpectedly rude world. He shrank towards Emily, who loved and admired him. But Mr. Bighorne, after watching the young gentleman for six months, and finding him to be a shy, rather indolent student, began to think that the career he desired for this his son and heir, was in peril of coming to nought. He meant that Henry should push

on the fortunes of the family ; and should he himself fail in reaching his determined goal, the House of Lords, this cultivated young man was by talent and wealth to accomplish it. He therefore resolved to break into Master Henry's gentle life, and 'stir it up a bit.' I can repeat the conversation.

FATHER.—Henry, I have something special to say to you. You are positively doing nothing but reading and riding about with Emily. Have you thought at all about what you are going to do in life ?

SON.—No, sir. I am very contented with my present occupation. I am writing a few criticisms and——

FATHER.—Criticisms ! Fiddlesticks ! Leave that to the fools who write books, or who can't understand them. You must do something practical in life.

SON.—Well, sir, what shall I do ?

FATHER.—You know you are the only one who can succeed to my business.

SON.—Your business, sir. Good heavens !

FATHER (*wrathfully*).—What the d—— do you mean, sir ? Has Emily been infecting you with her ridiculous sentiments ? Are my own children to turn round on their father as if he were a criminal ?

SON.—I—I beg your pardon, sir. I really meant no reflection. The idea came on me so suddenly. I had never thought of such a thing.

FATHER.—Precisely. Young men like you never do think they have come into the world to do more than enjoy the result of their father's labour and sacrifice. But I don't believe in that sort of thing. The business must have a head. You will have to be that head, and therefore you must understand business.

O fatal syllogism ! It was the saddest thing in life to witness the expansion, and, in the expansion, the ruin of that young cultured mind. He was placed in a counting-house in the vast establishment of the firm. He was drilled in figures, and numbers, and calculations. He was ordered to acquaint himself with all the details of the distillery and of the testing and tasting-rooms. Emily, who fought a hard battle with her father and mother about the arrangement, watched its results with feverish anxiety. The rather weak and weary youth used at first to come home at night to her for comfort. Then he began to form acquaintanceships of which she knew little, and which kept him often away from her. He grew more fond of society ; and among the circle of her aristocratic suitors, not a few were ready to favour young Bighorne, by inducting him into the mysteries of town life. The

tax on a not very vigorous constitution was met by constant visits to the tasting-room, where he had learned his lesson well. Each repair caused a reaction, and each reaction required a repair. In those words you have a whole history of a million or so of men. Master Henry became bolder, louder, more vivacious, more social, and his father rejoiced to see him 'waking up a bit.' He had, indeed, waked up with a vengeance. Emily watched it all in agony. The late hours, the jaded body, the pale face, the hot hand, the vulgar language, all told her a tale of she knew not exactly what; but she felt it was something awful and evil. She wrestled strongly with the devil for this loved soul, but it seemed to be in vain. He himself was sometimes cruel and rude—then a maudlin repentant. In two years Master Henry held his own fairly with most gay men about

town, and his father had the satisfaction of paying for it. Nevertheless, the latter clung to the hope that the youth would soon sow his wild oats and settle down. He hid from himself that the sowing was in a field that exhaled a breath of doom.

“Emily,” said Henry, kissing her, “don’t ask any more. Promise me you won’t say anything to excite suspicion. My very life may depend on it. Give me all the money you have. The governor has had his way. He has certainly ‘taught me the business’—d—— him for it!”

Mr. Bighorne’s syllogism was more logical than happy.

LINK THE FIFTH.

AMBITION.

I.—A Treasure hidden in a field—and Lost.

THE inquest on the body of Helena Hurlingham was resumed on the following Thursday. The police reported that, although they had taxed their powers to the utmost, they had obtained no clue to the identity of the two mysterious 'gentlemen.' All that they had been able to discover was this. The keepers of the house, who affirmed themselves to be strictly 'respectable,' had never seen either of the gentlemen before. They admitted that they were aware that gentlemen did visit their lodger, whose rooms, by the way, were well

furnished, and that she lived a very gay life ; also that several times an elderly person, in a cloak and black felt hat, had been seen going up to and descending from these rooms, but always at night, and no one had caught a glimpse of his face. On the particular afternoon of the poor 'lady's' death, as the maid-servant testified, an unusual circumstance happened. Mrs. Bellhouse had company in the afternoon. She called the girl to the door, and ordered some refreshments. The girl observed within a gentleman whose hair was turning grey, but who kept his back to her, and could not further be distinguished in the gloom. How he got there, and when, no one knew. The quick eye of the maid had noticed another thing. A large cloak and a black felt hat had been thrown upon the sofa, opposite the door.

Some time after the girl had handed in the

refreshments, which, as we have seen, were on a liberal scale, the landlady heard the front door open, and steps upon the stairs. Coming out of her room from behind the stairs, and glancing up, she saw the back of a tall slender man, whose hair appeared to be dark, and whose dress was not distinguishable in the deepening dimness of the afternoon ; but she distinctly heard him knock at and enter the sitting-room door of her up-stairs lady lodger. This was about ten minutes before the awful event. Thus, there were no other evidences of the identity of these persons than the glance of a couple of women at the backs of a couple of men, and a cloak and a hat, which had vanished.

The keeper of the house testified that the 'lady,' though her profession or practice might have been questionable, always behaved like a lady of rank, and when she had money, loved to

surround herself with the conveniences and knick-knacks of grand houses. Her only fault in the estimation of her hostess was that she sometimes took an uninterrupted 'spell' of drinking. She had just ended such a spell a day or two before her death. They always knew when it was coming on. She became moody and silent, being ordinarily vivacious; would not go out, ate nothing, sent repeatedly, first for stout, then for gin, then steadily for brandy, by the bottle.

"And do you mean to say you used to get it for her?" cried the Coroner in a voice of thunder.

"Well, sir; what was we to do? You can't displease your own lodgers, and them in the house for months and months, and you making your bread out of them, and them never doing no harm to you nor your furniture."

"When she got started, then, how long would she keep this up?"

“Well, sir, never longer than a week, sir ; or ten days at most, off and on.”

“And how much gin and brandy would she take in that time ? ”

“Well, sir, she wasn't so bad as some people I've known on, sir.”

“But how much ? ”

“Well, sir, a bottle or a bottle and a half a day, sir. She took it quiet and steady, sir. She never got drunk-like or noisy. She went to bed and took it steady and medicine-like, sir.”

The Coroner looked at the jury, and the jury looked at the Coroner, as if they had never heard of such a case before.

Among the private effects which the deceased had left, was a Davenport, containing many papers of no present consequence. Everything was in order. She left very little to tell tales about her friends. She had been a woman of

business. Her hand-writing, though shaky, was bold and handsome. But among the other papers were some important documents. A series of receipted bills for the board and education of 'Miss Eleanor Whyte,' with letters from a lady, evidently the wife of a clergyman, who had charge of the girl. The letters were dated from Arleston Rectory, Cornwall, and always gave an account of the child's religious, as well as secular education. Another document was a letter addressed to Miss Eleanor Whyte, dated two days before the poor woman's death, and unfinished. It ran thus :—

*London : 14, Tufston Street,
St. John's Wood.**

MY DEAREST ELEANOR :

I have not heard from you or Mrs.

* This had been her previous lodging, and the landlady took in letters there for her. The husband's letters were sent to Notting Hill.

Young for nearly a fortnight, and am getting nervous about it. I have been very unwell, and mostly in bed for more than a week, and to-day I feel very sad and sorrowful and down-hearted. Whether I shall ever send you this letter, I don't know; but though I have struggled with myself a long, long while against doing what I am going to do, I feel myself driven by some good or wicked spirit, I cannot tell which, to do it. I must tell you who you are, for I have been deceiving you and Mrs. Young, and you are not what I said you were—only the daughter of a tradesman's widow well-off, and your name is not Whyte. Your real name is Hurlingham; you are the daughter of a country gentleman—at all events, once a gentleman—of high family and good property; and, my dear, dearest Eleanor, your mother is the daughter of a peer of the realm.

[The indications about here were watery.]

But I want to tell you how I was brought to this, and I want to warn you, that you may avoid the tempter which has made of your mother, once beautiful, accomplished, and virtuous as you, a—what she is now! My love, you must know I was very ambitious, and my poor husband (who loved me dearly enough then, poor fellow, whatever he has become since) was not. I tried to carry him into the world and into political life. I worked night and day for it. I studied, I read, I talked with statesmen; I entertained and went out; few would believe what I did and what I was and was able to do—few certainly who now see the wreck I am. Meantime you had come into the world; but much as I loved you, I was trying to push forward my ambitious aims. It taxed my strength terribly. I consulted my physician, Sir Lullaby Turle. He recommended me to take occasionally a little brandy. Darling Elcanor, listen to your mother's declaration.

I took his advice, and I swear before God that, looking back over those years, I cannot tell you how it grew upon me, it came so gradually. I was not conscious until I found I could not do without it. It was noticed by quick designing men. Such a man once took advantage of it, and in one brief hour I lost my virtue and my honesty and self-respect. How I fell, and struggled, and struggled, and fell again, I cannot tell you. The devil had got hold of me. I was fettered in his chains — and I am there now. God help me! My precious, precious child, I dare not tell you what I am, nor what your father is. You are too young, too good to know. Oh! my God! When I think of you and your pure, holy life, and my own sinful depravity, I feel as if I were in the torments of hell, like that Dives in the Bible, and looking at you an angel in Heaven, and asking God to let you cool my burning tongue

with a drop of water. You would do it, wouldn't you? for the sake even of your sinful mother who has worked and sacrificed to keep you safe from the pollutions of your two wicked parents. How I have tried to hedge you round and keep you away from temptation—and those dear good people all through these ten years have brought you up and treated you like their own child—and you are so good, and so beautiful, and so clever, and have been confirmed, and learnt to love your S——

Here it was evident the writer had broken down in a passion of sorrow. The latest words were scarcely decipherable, and the pen had dropped upon the paper—never to resume its work. The name of the holy and forgiving One, who had mercy even for the sinning Mary and the poor adulteress in the Temple, seemed to have excited thoughts that made this poor

woman shrink and cover and weep. Oh, had she truly written it, even then might she not have seen and felt something of the grace that lurks in the name of Saviour!

I will dryly state the remaining facts laid before the jury by the police. An open letter, brought in perhaps by the man who had last entered the room, had been discovered in a bloody fold of the woman's dress. It had been hastily opened and thrust into the bosom. They had deciphered it thus:—

Arleston Rectory, Cornwall,

February —, 187—

DEAR MADAM:

I write to you in a state of the most terrible sorrow and regret. Our and your darling Eleanor disappeared four days ago, and we have been unable to get the least trace of her since. Further than this: some one like her took

the night train at —— Station, twelve miles from here, the same night, with a gentleman! My husband is distracted, and is away going up and down the country in search of her. The police are doing their best. We had no suspicion of it. Pray come down. I can write no more. God save our poor dear Eleanor.

Yours,

EDITH YOUNG.

The clergyman and his wife stated that more than ten years before, a Mrs. Whyte, who afterwards appeared as a ladylike person in decent but not handsome mourning, had answered their advertisement for a child to educate and bring up. She represented herself as the widow of a London draper, so occupied with business that she could not attend to her child, then eight years of age. Two things she insisted on : that

her child should have the strictest religious training, and never be permitted to touch any form of intoxicating drink. The rest of their evidence was such as might be expected from the facts already educed. The giri, a beautiful, clever, and estimable young woman, had gone away, they knew not whither or with whom. They were quite unaware that she had formed acquaintance with any one they could suspect.

This story, with all its in-and-out details, drawn forth with the vulgar and sickening particularity of such investigations, filled the newspapers and inspired the moral lessons of the journalistic staff, from the bishops, or other Athenæum magnates who write for the leviathans of the press, downwards.

The jury, with exemplary wisdom, after a long and expensive inquiry, brought in the following verdict :—

“That the deceased, Helena Hurlingham, *alias* Bellhouse, came to her death by falling out of a window at No. — St. Martin’s Lane; but whether by her own act or that of any other person or persons, is unknown.”

* *
*

II.—An Enthusiastic Convert.

MISS EMILY impelled by a morbid inclination she could not explain, had followed the proceedings of the inquest on Mrs. Hurlingham’s body with unwonted excitement, and with sorrowful sympathy. Not content with this, she wished her father and mother to share her feelings. This was annoying. The subject was disagreeable, and Emily’s views about it were uncomfortably odd.

The truth is, this young lady had latterly adopted very uncongenial opinions. Having gone one Sunday, during the past season, to a

church in Hiton Square, when she had, as she supposed, concluded the real part of the worship, and had assumed an attitude of recipient resignation for the homily of the surpliced priest, who was kneeling up there in the pulpit, with his hands over his face, the ecclesiastic took his revenge, not only out of her, but out of a number of other equally placid ladies and gentlemen whom the London season had drawn together. He very quietly, but in eloquent and incisive terms, told them that most of them were living the lives of drones and cowards: drones, because they were doing nothing for God or man; cowards, because they were afraid to look the fact in the face, as became true hearts. Then, with what they thought to be needless cruelty, he went rather minutely into the details of their present state. He painted the existing conditions of the lives of many of his hearers

with pre-Raphaelitish accuracy, and hardly any allowance for perspective, until, in view of the clear delineation, men and women might be seen shrinking back in their pews as if they were afraid to face those fine pale features and burning eyes, and to hear that terribly calm, sharp-edged voice.

Then he turned round suddenly, and grew warm, and vivid, and sonorous. Oh ! how rousing it was to hear him tell the story of the martyrs of God, and of the noble works our fathers did in the old time, and of their steadfastness, chivalry, and prowess. He became instinct with a grand passion which flashed out from his heart to that of his hearers, like lightning from cloud to cloud. And then he asked why those before him should not essay to continue the line of the old knights and ladies of the Cross ; and he showed how a *preux*

chevalier of these days should arm himself, of what spirit he should be possessed, what deeds he might do, and what a guerdon he might win. And a number of chivalric souls, inspired by the preacher's words, then and there made oath to consecrate themselves to bold knight and lady work for the Cross. And among them was Emily Bighorne; and being a girl of a strong, well-balanced mind, this resolve of hers had been no vain one, for she was following, night and day, with many others the Greatheart who had uttered that trumpet-call. They stood by him, as it is needed all good souls should stand by other good souls in this evil world. Moreover, as it was of her nature to be earnest, Miss Emily had become a propagandist, and a voluntary sister of mercy. Hence, persons who had settled down into an agreeable satisfaction with themselves and their universal relations in

time, space, and eternity, found her to be an uncomfortably active reformer.

Miss Emily had not fluttered about on angels' errands in the slums of Westminster very long before she found herself brought in direct conflict with the fearful Power, which meets and often thwarts the efforts of the little crusading army of improvers, of every kind, that fight the Evil One in that district. It appeared before her in its effects—dread misery, fell diseases, and the wrecks of virtue. She was fearfully startled when, one day, before her eyes, that Power took the substantial form of a bottle of creamy gin, bearing a blazoned label, and the name of Bighorne. Then her eyes became further opened, and she saw how often the same name flaunted gaudily over the doors and windows of the very dens she was trying to defraud of their victims. After that she was obliged to have

it out with Mr. Bighorne, who was, however, above proof in more senses than one.

MR. BIGHORNE.—What have I to do with it? The stuff I make is perfectly good—if they abuse it, the worse for them!

EMILY.—Oh, papa! Do you know what their abuse of it means?

MR. BIGHORNE.—Yes; I see that by the newspapers—drunken husbands, broken heads, starving families—

EMILY (*vehemently*).—Murders—parricides—slaughter of wives and children—brutality—vices too horrible to mention.—

MR. BIGHORNE.—Then, my dear, don't mention them. It makes me shudder to think you are acquainting yourself with such things. Good Heavens! Mrs. Bighorne what are you about? You are letting your daughter get into strange associations!

MRS. BIGHORNE.—I regret to say, Mr. Bighorne, it is useless for me to talk. She is too like you, Mr. Bighorne,—fond of having her own way, and too old to be guided: and her only director now is Mr. Holiwell, a good man enough, and very earnest, I dare say, but exceedingly indiscreet in the work he sets young ladies and gentlemen to do.

EMILY.—Dear mamma, now, you're going over to the enemy! You know that you really sympathise a good deal with him. Did you not give me twenty pounds for his night mission only last week? But now, papa, how many public-houses in London are you interested in?

MR. BIGHORNE.—I don't know

EMILY.—Well, I got Henry to tell me—it is one hundred and twenty.

MR. BIGHORNE.—Confound Henry!

EMILY.—Papa, in two streets in Westminster

there are fifteen public-houses, and you own four of them.

MR. BIGHORNE.—I don't, I tell you. I only lent the money. Do you know the Dean and Chapter are said to own a lot of public-houses? Have you heard that the Bishop of London, when he goes from St. James's Square to Fulham, passes nearly one hundred public-houses owned by the Church of England? I'm as good as the Church at all events.

EMILY.—No, I don't think you are. The Church is in a bad enough position, but you are worse. They came into that property. Your money buys them or puts them there. They would not have been there but for that.

MR. BIGHORNE.—Yes, they would. Some other house would have put them there.

EMILY.—Well, it is the same thing. You are all a lot of rich capitalists, and between

you your capital builds all these public-houses.

MR. BIGHORNE.—No more than are required by legitimate trade—it is regulated by the law of supply and demand.

EMILY.—No, no ; if it were left to that, there would not be so many houses,—Mr. Holiwell says so—every one says so who knows anything about it. It is you wealthy distillers and brewers, who can afford to wait a long time for your returns, who are always creating new business ; and, my dear papa, if you would only go with me and see, I will show you, you are making it out of the death and ruin of your fellow-creatures.

MR. BIGHORNE (*testily*): O dear ! O dear ! when you women, or your friends the parsons, who are just as bad, get on economical questions, you run so wide of the mark ! Look here, Emily dear, do be rational—if you can : A.

builds a chemist's shop, and sells laudanum. B. builds a rival chemist's shop next door, and sells laudanum too. C. builds a chemist's shop opposite, and also sells laudanum. 1st, If the three chemists are not wanted in that neighbourhood, one or two will go to the wall. 2nd, The three will sell no more laudanum than the one would have done. 3rd, If any one takes too much laudanum, it is not the chemist's fault, provided he has used the proper precautions.

EMILY.—I may be a poor economist, papa, but even as a woman I can see through your fallacies. 1st, The article we are speaking of is not laudanum, which very few people are fond of, and almost every one is afraid of; but beer, gin, brandy, etc., which many people are fond of, and very few are afraid of. 2nd, The chemists don't build up their business by encouraging people to drink medicine and run in debt for it, do they?

They rarely no more than supply an actual want, 3rd, Would a chemist who saw a man half stupefied with laudanum sell him another dose to finish him off, as you know, though you don't care to enquire, those wretched agents of yours in Westminster will do, simply to turn another penny? And, 4thly, If a man is going home to his wife with his money in his pocket, would he be as likely to get there safely, if he had twenty public-houses to pass, as if he had twenty chemists' shops: or as safely if he passed twenty as if he passed only two? If the Government had arranged the licenses so that the public-houses might really be like the chemists' shops, simply to supply a legitimate demand, your conscience *might* be clearer; but every time the least attempt is made to decrease the number, you and all your friends in the trade, and all your emissaries, move heaven and earth, in and out of Parliament, to

prevent it, and so you must accept the responsibility; and I feel—I feel—I can't tell you what I feel——

Thus it will appear that Miss Bighorne's radicalism was vehement, and though femininely illogical, not without bases in principles and in facts. Mrs. Bighorne tried to act the part of a go-between, but in reality sided with the older and more conservative party. Master Henry had been assailed with evangelistic energy, and once or twice was on the point of succumbing to Emily's religious zeal; but that more capable warrior in wickedness, Captain Conistoun, had come to his rescue and carried him off from Puritan perils. This effectually settled the Captain's chances with Miss Emily.

LINK THE SIXTH.

STRENGTH, LABOUR, AND SORROW.

I.—Bill Knowsley.

FOR a dark, chill, and gusty night, the scene inside one of Lord Dibblecum's great iron works in Staffordshire is cheery enough: furnaces glowing and roaring, men like salamanders playing with the fire; ever and anon throwing open great doors that radiate a fierce, hot glare, seizing with long iron fingers the metal forms that had been blown up to a white heat inside, dragging them forth incandescent and sputtering flames of blue and ruby fire; and then, in the clear circle of light, titans swinging

great hammers, and sparks shimmering out in fountains and jets of brightness. As other furnaces are opened, out rush cascades of molten metal, wonderful to see—a weird, translucent glow about it, the fire infolding itself, and the flames disporting in terrible, silent tongues of amber.

At the end, nearest the great gate of the largest shed, half a dozen big fellows are fashioning a piece of iron into a girder for a mill. *One, two, three—four, five, six—go* the huge hammers, swung aloft and dropped to a tenth of an inch exactly in the place, and to the tenth of an ounce exactly with the force desired by the skilful wielders. *One, two, three—four, five, six—rise and fall* the heavy hammers; for it is Saturday night, and this is a last bout of work by one of the late shifts. Therefore, merrily and with a will ring

the hammers, in their cadence of labour, noble and heartstirring music to the man who knows what labour is. That big fellow who takes the lead with a swing and stroke so mighty, yet so deft, while his giant chest heaves glistening in the mellow light, is Bill Knowsley, one of the vastest men thereabouts; and at this moment another man, standing out in the chill shadow, is watching the work and observing Bill Knowsley with curious eyes.

"That's the man," he had said to himself, when he first stopped and glanced in; and then, shivering the while, he gazed admiringly at the movements of the herculean frame and listened to the ring of the rapid strokes, until, beneath them, the iron had taken shape, and, with its fire beaten out of it, lay there dull, deadening, and subdued.

The light striking out from within against

the wind and the sooty night, showed this man to be young and slender, though he was dressed in coarse workman's garb, and his face seemed to be grimed with the rust and smear of the iron labour; but if you had looked at him sharply, as the glare lit up his features and his attitude, you would have seen in a moment that neither belonged to a true son of toil. That well-proportioned but slim figure, that easy grace of posture, straight leg and flexible back had never been left by fair labour such as he had been watching. Those curly locks were too smooth and clean to be worn by any real son of fire and furnace.

Bill Knowsley having finished with an oath, and slung his hammer away into the inner gloom, had caught up his coat and was rushing out to face the inclement night, when he was stopped by the stranger.

"I say."

"Well, what do ee say?"

"Is your name Knowsley?"

"Ay, I be Bill Knowsley, but who be you? You doan't talk like one of these paarts."

"No. Give me your hand—*God's hail!*"

Knowsley returned the pressure, and his manner changed.

"*God's hail!*" he replied, "and *d—the traitor!*"

"All right," answered the other. "Moses Pell sent me to you. I want a quiet lodging for a day or two."

"Sh-sh-sh!" said Knowsley, slipping his arm into that of the stranger and drawing him as if he were a sparrow out of the lights and away from the track of his departing comrades. "You mun be hard pushed to come here. *What is it—murder?*"

“No,” replied the other, shuddering. “It’s nothing. I am not what I seem. I want for special reasons to keep out of the way a few days.”

“Nowt? Thee bean’t a true man, I say. Pell don’t send folk to I for nowt less than manslaughter. Naw, naw. You be a Lunnun flash cove, you be, but you woan’t get the flash side of Bill Knowsley. Tell us all about un avuore you see th’ inside o’ ‘Knowsley’s shelter.’” And the speaker stopped and grasped his companion’s two arms in his great hands. He could feel they were not the arms of toil.

“Look here,” said the other, “take me home with you. It’s all right, you know. Pell has given me the word, and if you’ll loose your infernal grip, here’s five pounds to begin.”

“Foive pun!” exclaimed Bill Knowsley, feeling the precious discs with his horny fingers, and trying to make out whether the

surfaces were yellow or white—"Foive pun! Come along, gent, for gent you be. Foive pun! It's nowt but murder, young maaster, tho' a must a been a ninny to be murdered by you!"

He led the way to his house, the other remaining silent.

The home of the iron-worker was a half-ruined stone cottage of two rooms. A rude shed behind was used as a pig pen. By day the sole redeeming feature of this residence was its separation by about a quarter of a mile from the rest of the huddled shelters of brick and stone which constituted the village of West Boynton. The house stood on a wavy expanse of rusty slack and cinders, diversified here and there with foul-looking pools of water when the weather was not dry. Low, grim, and dirty were its walls inside and out; its broken pavement looked as if generations had trodden it to a

permanent sooty blackness ; the shattered windows flaunted their substitutes of mouldy rags. Inside, the general foulness, the mixture of pots and pans, and dirty children and broken furniture, —the odd evidences of civilization in soiled prints and ragged English garments, and of barbarism in the manner and talk of the inmates, would have made the place a damaging study for the ‘intelligent foreigner.’ From big Bill Knowsley, turning out his three and four sovereigns a week at the work that was keeping England in the van of civilization and progress, and was enriching Lord Dibblecum beyond the dreams of avarice, down to the baby in the corner, swaddled in a bundle of fusty rags, and the pig whose defiant grunt and scent seemed to establish his equality with the other living things in the household—this homestead of an English artizan was a phenomenon to make a man rub his eyes and

ask where he was. There was but one explanation of it all, and that will presently appear. Although Bill Knowsley had relations with very curious characters, he did not belong to the criminal class. His immense strength tempted him to an occasional bout in the ring, and this had brought him in contact with some characters who occasionally called upon him, as in honour bound, to discharge his devoir to their secret association, by aiding to hide fugitives from justice. Unless there had been clear evidence and a strong force, few people would have ventured to intrude into Bill Knowsley's house. This, its solitary position, and the extreme rarity of the calls upon his hospitality, made it a tolerably safe shelter for a day or two, if a man were hard pressed.

Kicking open the door to let his wife know emphatically that her master had arrived,

Knowsley entered and called upon the stranger to follow. The woman turned from the bit of fire where she was trying to warm I know not what mess for the children who were snivelling about. Splendid as Bill's wages were, there was rarely much more to show for them at the end of the week than half a supper for the poor woman and her little ones. On seeing him, her face brightened for an instant with a pleased surprise: not an originally comely face, but brown, and haggard, and alas! bearing marks of Bill Knowsley's cowardly and drunken prowess.

“Whoam so soon, Bill?”

“Ay, lass, d—— thee; whoy not, I say? I'se fetched a gemman to the shelter. Shet up, young uns;” and five squalling children discreetly stuffed their hands into their hungry mouths and stopped their wailing.

"A gemman?" said the woman, sharply conning the intruder from head to foot. "What have ee done?"

"Keep thy tongue still, ooman! Sit thee down, lad—sit thee down," and he put his own great three-legged stool near the fire.

"Oh! I shall do very well," said the stranger, looking nevertheless very uncomfortable through his disguise. "All I want is something to eat and a place to shake down in."

"Summut to eat, ooman, do ee hear? Summut of the best for the gemman and me. Us'll have it tidy, sir, sure enow. A candle, Lizzie."

"Candle? I've no candles, Bill."

"Well," said he with an oath, "buy 'em. Come along, lass, and get us a feast. Gemman has given I five pun. I'll take half a hour, I will, at th' Iron Horse, while you be cooking of un."

“Bill,” said the woman, her face falling; “you stay here, I tell you, and I’ll fetch ee the things, and doan’t ee go nigh to th’ Iron Horse to-night.”

“You be blowed, and leave I aloan will ee! I’ve a bout o’ one bottle wi’ Nick Staveley—’ull be oaver in a giffey, sure. You keep still ’ere, lad; I’ll be back soon as th’ owd ooman’s ready.”

While the unlucky stranger remained shivering in the dull light of the embers among the squalling children, Knowsley having given his wife a couple of sovereigns, strode off jingling the other three in his pocket along with three companion pieces and some silver which had that afternoon been paid to him for his week’s wages.

Mrs. Knowsley did not stay long away. Her step was brisker and her heart a little lighter than usual, though there were reasons, known

only to women, to impede and burden both. It was so unheard-of a thing for her husband to come home early or sober of a Saturday night. This brightened the evening; and again, her children, who usually had to spend a hungry twenty-four hours before Sunday's breakfast, would go to bed satisfied.

Mrs. Knowsley had brought a magnificent beefsteak, potatoes, bread,—not forgetting the gin and some bottled ale besides; and after a preliminary conflict with the general confusion, and an issue of pacifying chunks from the loaf to the black-eyed and black-faced little ones, she soon filled the room with the fragrance of good meat and smoke of sputtering fry. A semi-circle of appeased young humanity sat in the glow and quietly enjoyed the hopeful scene. Candles lit up the brown table-cloth she had dragged from under the bed in the next room.

Plates, well battered, chipped, and burnt, graced the front of the fire. The stranger began to feel some incomings of comfort. Meantime he seized a bottle of ale and drained a glass with satisfaction.

Thus a half-hour passed, and Mrs. Knowsley's preparations were complete. Her cheeks glowed with warm exercise, and she chatted cheerfully with her guest. Another half-hour went by, and she looked out and listened for her husband. She dared not ask the stranger to begin before Knowsley arrived, and still less dared to go for him. He was an autocrat of the purest stamp. He maintained his supremacy by but one principle—force. History shows that that may succeed with women and some nations.

At length it was half-past eight. The juicy steak was drying up. The potatoes were cleaving to the pan. The stranger could stand out

no longer. Were Bill Knowsley ever so angry, it was beyond all reason that a hungry man should sit still opposite a spoiling steak for which he had already paid.

“Mother,” he said, “I’ll begin. I am paying for this supper. Go and fetch your husband, and I’ll give the youngsters something.”

She peered out again. A dreary night! As she opened the door the wind came sweeping in cold and harsh, whirling up a cloud of smoke from the fire and putting out the candles. On her face the freezing drizzle struck like a shower of pins. Road, nor post, nor village light was visible—only a scene of wild, drifting blackness. In a lull of the rushing wind, she thought she heard the faint notes of a chorus. She had often listened to them of a clear night.

What was she thinking of while she stood there, barefaced and bareheaded, her hand hold-

ing the shaking door against her back, her ear straining to catch a sound, and her eyes trying to pierce the inky night that stretched its pall between heaven and her? Was it possible, as she had heard men say, that above this woeful whirl there always rested a serene sky, a clear light of sun or moon, an infinite and undisturbed rest!

When Lizzie Knowsley turned inside again, the stranger might have observed by the candles which he had re-lit, a strange expression in her face. She put on a rough straw hat and an old shawl, and, glancing round upon her children, set her lips firmly and went out in the teeth of the storm and gloom.

* * *

II.—The Last Lesson.

THE bar-room of the Iron Horse was a long, low chamber, the ceiling and floor dipping up

and down like a great loose raft in a light swell ; the walls ludicrously harmonizing with the general notion of upheaviness. As you entered the room from the door, which pierced one of the longer sides at the corner, the bar stood opposite, forming a quadrant in the other corner. A rude place enough, though once garishly decorated, having in front of it a low stout iron railing to keep its bottles, glasses, and inmates out of reach—with a small room in the rear for the latter to retreat to in cases of dire extremity. For although Sam Rattler, the bar-keeper, had been a prize-fighter, and could on occasion 'lay' a drunken intruder into his domain with a science which left (the intruder) nothing to be desired, Sam was out of practice ; while the brawny frequenters of the place were in the daily habit of swinging hundred-weights of iron in the teeth of tons of the

same metal ; and when half-a-dozen such men determined to clear the room, Sam, among others, held it to be the better part of valour to submit to them.

On this particular Saturday evening, at nearly nine o'clock, Sam, his shirt-sleeves tucked up, was leaning on his muscular arms, and, with a short cutty in his mouth, watching with rather an anxious eye the play of feeling among his customers. Fifty or more of their big forms loomed up through the smoke that rolled upward to the low ceiling, and wreathed in murky haze the weak lights of the petroleum lamps against the wall. He had handed out, in less than three hours, forty-one quarts of beer and sixty odd half-pints of gin.

The room was arranged by low wooden partitions into bays, where eight or ten men could sit together and rest their pewters and

glasses on the narrow tables between. Each bay had its company, though the lowness of the partitions enabled the men to interchange freely foul stories, oaths, threats, challenges, sometimes clouts, and other convivial recognitions. Most of them were smoking short black pipes ; some, with every semblance of reason gone from their faces, were sitting up and drinking steadily, their friends supplying them. Some had fallen asleep with their pipes in their mouths, or with heads drooping on table, or partition, or bench. These were the subject of rude practical jokes. I will relate one.

One man, seeing his friend's face hanging over the partition, with his dark matted beard turned sideways, lit a match, and winking to his comrades to note the splendid joke, set fire to the hair. It flamed up, scorching the skin of the unconscious wretch, who woke in the morn-

ing marked for life. For the time his friends enjoyed the fun immensely; but some mornings afterwards the joker was found lying in the street with his head smashed in with a hammer; and later on Mr. Calcraft, then in office, hanged a man, half of whose face looked red and skinless. This little drunken joke cost the country two strong men, and over £600.

If this joke be incredible to you, read the account of another, perpetrated by four such men on an old Irishman, whom, in pure alcoholic fun, they dragged out of bed, and gouging his eyes out filled them with quicklime.

It must be unpleasant to brewers, distillers, publicans, deans and chapters with public-house property, and lords and gentlemen who have voted against Sunday closing and in favour of longer hours for the sale of this playful

inspiration, to read of such cases; wherefore I forbear filling up this book, as I could easily do, with more of them. But I charge distinctly that *every man who* (from a Home Secretary down to the lowest publican) *encourages the increase of this traffic and delays or hinders its decrease, assumes directly a share of the responsibility for such incidents as these.*

At the far end of the room, near the fire, a party held on bravely with uproarious revelry. It was at this party that Sam the barman was blinking through the smoke. They were the choice boys of his custom, and when they got thoroughly under way, as they had now done, he knew them capable of any mischief. Over this select crew presided Mr. Bill Knowsley, four of whose sovereigns lay warm in Mr. Sam Rattler's till. Bill had begun the evening by saying he was only going to divide a pint of

gin with three friends and must then go away to meet a chum, but he had evidently changed his mind.

While Sam Rattler was thus gazing he heard the door open, and saw a woman enter, dripping with the evening storm, her wet shawl drawn close about her shoulders. She paused a moment and looked down the room.

"Doan't ee do it," said Sam in a low voice, as he saw her recognize Bill Knowsley and pass onward. Either she did not hear him or did not heed him, for she slipped silently down the room. Even then you could see by her walk that she was heavy with a double burden of life.

Bill Knowsley, sitting at the corner of the bay, glass in hand and far from drowsy, though terribly drunk, suddenly found his arm touched, and heard these words in his ear.

“Bill, Bill, remember th’ gemman, and th’ sooper all so nice ; coom along, chap.”

When Bill turned and looked at his wife, she wished she had stayed at home. There was a dead silence among the men.

“Ded’n I tell ee,” he roared out, “never moure t’ coom an’ trouble I en this plaace?”

“Yes, Bill,” said the poor woman, “but, Bill, remember th’ sooper, lad, and th’ man waiten at th’ house.”

Bill Knowsley finished his glass, and set it down, and rose up with wrath in his eye and the devil in his heart. Without a word he smote with his left straight out, as if it had been at the hardened ‘mug’ of a bruiser, into the middle of the woman’s face. Shrieking, she went down on her back, face no longer featured, face bloody and featureless.

“Take that—and that!”

The maniac's clogs were heavy. Once into her side, and—O my God! are you *men* who are looking on, are you men or beasts?—once again into her tender side! With that fell blow two lives went out.

Man! Man! Stay thy useless fury now. The work is done. No need to break or bruise the poor limp body any more. The spirit is already before the Judge of the quick and the dead.

Not a man in the room moved while Bill Knowsley exercised his admitted rights of home government. One or two laughed foolishly. One man said "Sarve 'en right." The rest were cowed or indifferent. Bill Knowsley, glancing round savagely, as if to see whether anyone had any protest to make, sat down and called for more gin.

Then Sam Rattler came down the room, and after gazing a moment at the still heap that

lay there weltering, he pointed to Knowsley's clogs and said quietly but hoarsely :

“There's *blood*, Bill Knowsley. Thee'd best to mizzle.”

Bill Knowsley looking down on his boots, seemed to gather an idea. He got up, and casting his eyes an instant on his deadly work, slunk along the room and went out into outer darkness.

* *
* *

III.—Get out!

THE stranger in Bill Knowsley's house was drawing toward the close of a hearty meal, when the door suddenly came in with a crash, and his host staggered into the kitchen.

“Hallo!” cried the guest, hardly looking up, or he would not have said it. “So you're

here at last! Here's your supper spoiling. What have you been doing?"

"What a' I been a doen?" replied Knowsley, with a roar that made the stranger look quickly up at his furious face and bloodshot eyes. "What th' devil is to thee what I've been a doen? Look'ee! get thee gone quick."

As he screamed this out in a terrible voice, he seemed to be struggling against an impulse to rush upon his guest and throttle him. His face and hands worked viciously.

"All right, old fellow," replied the other, affecting to be indifferent. "You'll be better by-and-bye. Come, sit down and take something."

"Wull'ee go, I say? For God's sake get thee gone, lad!"

And Bill Knowsley rushed to the fireplace and seized the poker, a long bar of iron.

The stranger jumped to his feet and stood near the door.

“Why, Knowsley,” he said, “you won’t turn me out like a dog?”

“Out, I tell’ee!” shouted Bill, raising his poker; and the stranger, without an instant’s hesitation, sprang through the door. Just in time, for his host rushed at him with the fury of a tiger. Then the murderer shut the door and turned to the children cowering round the room.



IV.—A National Balance-Sheet.

WOULD it not be well if some Chancellor of the Exchequer would present to Parliament a balance-sheet of the gains and losses of the community in the national business of strong drink? I have seen estimates—by Mr. Hoyle especially, and

other worthy advocates of Prohibition—which are, I fear, more true in reality than authoritatively accepted. That we lose the £31,000,000 a year derived from customs and excise on ale and liquors, and much more, in good lives, poverty, prosecutions, jails, burned houses and wrecked ships, and railway accidents, no one who has looked into the subject will deny. And knowing this, few can reasonably be surprised if men are driven to the very verge of benevolent madness in their crusade against this cause of so much loss to the strength and well-being of the State. It justifies the extremest enthusiasm. I append here a statement of the profit and loss of that single evening's work in a solitary inn in the United Kingdom: and when I add that such a night's work is not uncommon, this balance-sheet is not without its significance.

MESSRS. BIGHORNE, SWILL, PEWTER, BALL & JUNIPER, & MR. SAM RATTLER, PUBLICANS, & C.

In Account with

THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND.

CR.

DR.

		Men.	Women.	Children		
187—					187—	
Mar. 5.—	To Mrs. Knowsley, murdered	-	1	-	Mar. 5.—	By duty on six gallons of pure Spirits... ..
"	" " John, Thomas, Mary, Susan, Lucy and Jim Knowsley, murdered ...		-	6	"	" Revenue from 41 quarts of ale—estimate... ..
" 9	" " Joe Stretcher, murdered ...	1	-	-	"	" Proportion of License Fees, one night
Apr. 21	" " Thos. Sidney, hung ...	1	-	-	"	" Balance to debit
" 30	" " Bill Knowsley, hung ...	1	-	-		
	Total in lives	3	1	6		
	Coroner's Inquests expenses					
	Prosecuting and hanging Thos. Sidney					
"	" " B. Knowsley					
	Total in hard money... ..					£1,543 19 0

£56 8 10
650 10 2
837 0 0

£1,543 19 0

It will be seen that there is an element in this balance-sheet which cannot be calculated in money; to wit, *ten human lives*. English law has never yet gone so far as to recognize fully the superior value of life over property, and, therefore, I do not press that unduly on the practical minds of my countrymen. But possibly our economists may see cause to insist that £1,540 6s. is too monstrous a loss to be borne, simply that Messrs. Bighorne and Company may turn a profit of £20 to £25!

* *
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V.—Who is he?

THE stranger, so roughly driven from Bill Knowsley's shelter, hurried out of hearing into the wild gloom as fast as he could. Avoiding the village, he stumbled across the waste of slack, until he struck upon a high road leading

northwards. A road drear and lonely enough by day, but on that night suggestive only of despair. Over the broad plain swept the icy north-east wind, carrying upon its strong wings a scurrying mass of sleet and rain. Not a ray relieved the gloom from window of wayside cottage or lantern of waggoner late upon the road. It seemed to the lonely man, struggling painfully against the masterful storm, as if the world were left to tempest and to him. Hard on his right shoulder beat the blast, wetting him through to the skin, and forcing the deathly chillness almost home to his heart. Well for him then, he thought to himself, that he had secured a good supper and a warming glass. He could scarcely see a footstep before him. So he went on, wrestling with the fierce, gusty wind, plashing through unexpected pools, and now and then stumbling into the ditch on either

hand ; but never daring to stop or rest, for he knew that life depended on persistent motion. Thus, hour after hour, slowly winning his way, he kept up the unequal contest—man against the elements—a contest man so often wins, ay! and as often loses.

What may have been his thoughts as he braced his mind and body to despairing effort, who can tell? Men wrestling with storm and sea through long, weary hours of shipwreck, or with hunger through days and nights of exposure, or with pain through the protracted anguish of a deserted battle-field—with quickened memory of the past, with vivid sense of nigh eternity, with feebly flickering hope, might tell us of the thoughts that crowd upon the fevered brain in such an hour as this. 'Tis a reality of purgatory one would never desire fully to know or to describe.

He had gone on hour after hour, not discerning on either hand trace of human dwelling, until at last hope failed him, and with it strength, and he made up his mind to lie down and die. But the fury of the night began to be appeased, and he noted indications that he was in the neighbourhood of houses. At intervals he was sheltered from the wind by some obstacles on the right. Staggering to that side, he laid his hand upon a paled fence, and, feeling his way along it, reached a small wicket, which he opened, regardless of master or dog. By the path he arrived at a wall, and round the wall came upon an outhouse-door. Opening this he stumbled in the darkness to a corner, and falling there upon some straw, instantly lost his senses in a heavy sleep.

The wind went down, the grey morning supplanted the murky night, and busy life was

again asserting its place in nature, when the wanderer opened his eyes. A man who had just shaken him, powerfully but not rudely, was standing looking at him with a gentle anxious gaze. He was tall and broad-chested, clad in a dark though rusty suit of Oxford mixture, which, with a white necktie, indicated his clerical profession; in slippers, and with no hat upon his head, which bore a fine crop of dark hair. He had been called out from his bachelor breakfast by the woman who was peering in at the door.

The eyes which the awakened stranger turned up to the light were dazed and wild.

“Who are you?” said the gentleman.

No answer. The wanderer seemed to be searching his mind for something lost.

“My poor fellow, you are fearfully wet and cold! How came you here?”

Still no answer.

“If you don't tell me, you know, I must send for the police. Pray tell me.”

At the word ‘police’ the young man sprang to his feet, but fell down immediately, and cried out piteously :

“Where? Where? For God's sake hide me! Don't let the police see me!”

The curate laid his hand on the wet forehead.

“He is ill,” he said. “And he is not what he seems, Mary. He does not talk like a working man; and look at his hands, they are thin and delicate. There is some mystery here. Go next door and ask Joseph Watson to come in and lend me a hand, and then get the bed ready in the best bedroom. Stay, though, my own bed will be warmer, and there is a fire in my room. We will put him in there.”

In a short time the stranger lay in a warm bed. A doctor was examining him.

“Brain fever, Wood ; brought on, I should say, by anxiety and exposure, but I suspect, from his appearance, with a touch of D T. What a fine face he has, and how he has spoiled it! That white flabby flesh tells of an unhealthy life. His temperature is tremendous. It will be a long struggle, if, indeed, he ever gets through with it. I will send down the hospital van for him. You can't keep him here.”

“Yes, he shall stay here,” replied the other, who was a curate of St. Enoch's, in the wretched town of Burslem.

“Well, I know it is no use to talk to you when you have made up your mind,” replied the doctor ; “but I warn you that this may be an affair of a couple of months, if it does not end fatally very soon. And the expense will be frightful for you.”

“No matter,” said the other, cheerfully ; “the

Lord has sent him here, and I cannot turn him out."

"Hem! Very well, my dear fellow. Just like you. Then we will make this agreement. I will give the medical attendance and you shall give the home and nursing—the 'cup of cold water,' eh? I tell you what: if it were not for another cup, we English Christians would not be called upon half so often to administer the cup of cold water to prisoner and outcast. Well now, that's a bargain! Give him nourishment, as much as he will take, but no stimulants, you know; he has had too much of them already, I suspect. Good-bye. I shall see him again towards evening."

LINK THE SEVENTH.

RELIGION AND PIETY.

I.—A Backslider.

DOWN in the pretty town of Cherry-Luton, in Somersetshire, a small tradesman and corn-factor, with a wife and quiverful of children, had held his head tolerably high for respectability, though he had had hard struggling to keep it above water. To earn a daily meal all round was no small matter with fifteen mouths to fill. When, in addition, public opinion demanded the use of clothing and a proper pride insisted on education, and dissent was hungry for subscriptions, it was a toil to cheat the constable which Mr. William Merton often felt tempted to

throw up in despair. He had been diligent in business and fervent in spirit ; but if no efforts will extend the one, the other is apt occasionally to flag. He rose up early and went to bed late ; regularly attended the market ; prosecuted his commissions with zeal ; and was, moreover, in accordance with country usages in business, liberal in treating his customers. The conditions of business at Cherry-Luton, as in too many other and larger towns, to the disgrace, be it said, of local authorities, were such that it was difficult to avoid either giving or taking 'something' when business was transacted. The open market-place, with its pavement of cobblestones, was well enough so long as you were canvassing the quality of your merchandise, whatever it might be ; but to clinch your bargain and exchange your memoranda or take your money, there was no more propitious shelter than the

‘Blue Boar’ or the ‘King’s Arms.’ Thus those places became the mart and exchange of Cherry-Luton, and men paid for their accommodation by drinking their liquors. You would scarcely credit the expenditure demanded of a man like Mr. Merton in this line. To a novice it certainly looks a perilous thing to begin business in the morning with drink, and carry it on hour after hour with interchanges of exciting stimulants. Yet thousands of traders and travellers do it—for a time. Again and again falls out some man stricken to the death by this relentless custom.

When Mr. Merton began life in earnest he was by nature a man of full body but temperate habit. His wife was a pattern of virtue and good-sense, and he loved her well. He was one of those men who seem to take to religion in a way, as ducks take to water. Being a natural

element for a frank, good-hearted, quiet, yet active fellow, it was therefore no wonder that he became a shining light in the Methodist Zion of Cherry-Luton. No leader prayed with greater unction, or gave the Minister nicer suppers, or better beer, or more acceptable toddy after the fatigues of three sermons and of meeting many classes. His wife thought that he went too far in this line, and indeed sometimes the ministers too; though she was an unsuspecting woman, and never loved even to think evil of dignities, still less to speak it.

Nevertheless, as the years went on, and Mr. Merton's struggles increased, and he plied his task more earnestly on Wednesdays and Saturdays, his wife became conscious of a change in him, which began by startling her, and then settled down like a heavy cloud over her heart. Now and then it appeared to her he was a little

over-excited on a market-day. The indication was slight though, and affection soon invented excuses to repress anxiety. By-and-by, however, sharpened eyes noticed that far more was taken at home than formerly. Her gentle hint was met with a good-natured laugh at her suspicion that there was 'any danger of *his* taking too much,' and a demonstration that he required more stimulant in order to meet the increasing strain upon him. Meantime he was sincerely 'labouring in the vineyard,' according to the Reverend Gideon Ouseley Pratt, who, though himself the teetotaller of the circuit, for a long time never suspected anything wrong about his friend Mr. Merton.

It was a fearful hour in Mrs. Merton's experience, home and religious, when one day the Reverend Gideon sought a confidential interview with her, and broke it to her that he was sorely

exercised about his dear brother Mr. Merton. His conduct latterly at one or two prayer-meetings had not savoured of godliness. In truth Mr. Merton had, 'on two occasions,' when called upon to lead the worship in prayer, been fast asleep beyond any ordinary awakening processes adopted by neighbouring brethren to stir him up; and when finally aroused at the close of the meeting he had shown a vacancy of mind and superabundance of spirits, which gravely troubled the good minister. On being challenged, Mr. Merton, for the first time probably in his manhood, prevaricated. I know not how truly; but it is certainly affirmed by eminent medical authorities, and with reasonable proof, that a constant habit of heavy drinking will not only deteriorate the mind, but in doing that, hopelessly degrade the moral principle. So Mrs. Merton, watching

painfully, saw a yet greater change come over her husband. The 'means of grace' he once seemed to cherish, not alone with reverence but enjoyment, were gradually deserted. First on the week nights, then on the Sunday. At times it was perfectly clear that he had begun to pass the limits of sobriety. Still affection pleaded, and hoped, and worked, with blood distilling the while in great drops from the loving heart, in the agony of anticipated sorrow.

Two hopes the poor woman clung to. One a bold, brave boy, her eldest born, who was away at sea, and kept sending home cheery prophecies of a successful career. The other her daughter Lucy, apprenticed to Messrs. Cutter & Chettam, the 'eminent' house of London milliners, who had ever so many hundred girls in their employment, and to whom a hard-earned pile of money

had gone in consideration of their promise to initiate her into the mysteries of their art. Some day—so Mrs. Merton dreamed—Lucy was to return to Cherry-Luton a paragon of French taste, and to set up a shop which would be the head-quarters of neighbouring female fashion. These two were the reserve anchors, if at any time the best bower of the family ship should give way.

One morning, towards the end of February, the Merton family, too large to be here described one by one, were seated at breakfast, showing in the dress of all, and in that strangely true mirror of sorrow, the mother's face, how poverty was beginning to pinch them.

Mrs. Merton was looking out of the window.

“Run, Johnny,” she cried to one of the boys. “There's the postman. Something from Lucy at last, I hope!”

Johnny brought a letter to his father : there was none for mother. Mr. Merton's face fell as he read it. He had asked some accommodation of a friend whom he had once assisted. It was refused ; and the friend with most amiable frankness told him that if the reports about him were correct, he ought to 'save his pocket at the expense of his mouth,' a vulgar and personal though shrewd advice. No man would like to shew such a letter to his wife. Merton crumpled it up and thrust it into his trousers-pocket.

"Is it anything about Lucy?" said the anxious mother.

"No," he said gruffly. "It's from Toxdale. He won't help me."

"But, father, what do you think can be the matter with Lucy?"

"I can't tell," he replied peevishly. He was

angry that his wife for the moment overlooked *his* mortification.

"Father, there must be something wrong," cried Mrs. Merton anxiously. "She always wrote at least once a week, and now a fortnight has passed without a word."

"Stay," said Mr. Merton, who had turned his head to the window, "Here's the postman coming back again with another letter."

It was brought in; a letter addressed in a clerkly hand with the London postmark, and for Mrs. Merton.

"Let me open it, Elizabeth," said the man with a sudden touch of tenderness, as he glanced from the letter in his hand to her face.

"No," she replied. "If it is anything bad, let me find it out myself." And with forced calmness she broke it open and read:—

232, Great Bazaar Street,
London, February —th, 187—.

MDM,

*Yrs of 24th, making enquiries abt yr dghter,
Miss Lucy Merton, recd, and contents noted.*

*We regret to state that abt a fortnight since
Miss Merton was entrusted with a commission
on behlf of this firm, to a particular customer.
She did not return until the middle of next day,
and, as we had reason to believe, had been
drinking. She was unwell at her lodgings for
some days, and as she gave no satisfactory acct of
herslf, except that she had bn taken ill at the
sight of a terrible accident wh happened on the day
referred to, the young ladies of our estabt, who
are all of the highest respectability, declined her
company. We were abt, in consequence, to advise
you of same, but she disappeared from her lodgings,*

and we concluded had left for home. Otherwise shd have advised you earlier.

Trusting that nothing serious may have occurred,

We are, Madam,

Yours obey,

Mrs. Merton.

CUTTER & CHETTAM.

Mrs. Merton threw the letter over to her husband, and ran out of the room. She could bear no witness to the storm of her sorrow. As for him his eyes were sensitive too, and the sharpness of the stroke roused his mind and heart to a sadness keen enough.

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By the evening he was ready for London. Mrs. Merton pleaded hard to be allowed to accompany him, but he would not hear of it. He had succeeded in borrowing from a sympa-

thetic friend twenty pounds for the journey. His manner was a little changed. But when he took Mrs. Merton into his arms to say good-bye, she knew he had been seeking consolation at the wrong fountain.

“For God’s sake, John,” she whispered, “keep steady. It is life and death for us all. Good-bye, dear.”

“All right, Lizzie,” he said, the dew in his eyes; “I shall restrain myself for your sake and hers. God bless you, my dear wife.”

She went in, and to her room and on her knees, and tried to get faith to believe that out of this darkness there would come light.

He jumped into the omnibus which was at the door, and ten minutes after was taking a glass of hot grog at the bar in the railway station. The nights were cold.

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II.—Into the Maelstrom.

ON London, from every quarter of England, converge the waifs of misery, sin, shame, and crime. Into the great vortex, one by one, float and whirl the driftwood and wreck of English humanity. Decayed gentleman or gentlewoman, broken bankrupt, runaway clerk, dissolute clergyman, dishonoured lady, ruined maid, deserter, thief, malefactor, tramp, blackleg, adventurer—all sink out of sight into the depths of that voracious sea.

And herein, one autumn evening, plunged two people, after some months of a wandering which had been evil and sorrowful as the wanderings of Cain. Hither they came, eager to forget the past, and, if possible, to deaden the consciousness of the present; third-class Parliamentary into Paddington Station at night; their joint effects—I might say surviving effects

—contained in a solitary bag of soiled carpet and dingy leather. The man, as he stepped out of the train, and furtively scanned the faces about, to see if anyone recognised him, looked haggard and dejected. The young girl who followed him was attired in a dress well-fitting and tasteful, and a fashionable hat, but nevertheless her appearance gave an impression of jaded gentility. For her dress had in one or two places been torn and never mended; her collar and cuffs were dirty and ruffled; the feather of her hat was limp and broken; the blue ribbons had lost half their hue. When she lifted her dress to step out of the carriage, she disclosed a well-made boot on a pretty foot; but the leather was worn and slit, and the slovenly laces left gaping yawns of stocking, while the embroidered skirt was browned with overmuch wear. Nevertheless any one would have paused a moment to look at the pale face which was half

concealed by the torn veil. A chin like that of Venus, cheeks lovely in their soft contour, sweet childish lips which mantled with their coralline bloom the pearly beauties of a perfect mouth ; eyes so softly blue-and-grey and yet so quick and bright, and that straight Saxon nose with a wavy grace of outline and carved delicacy of nostril, which neither word nor painting could depict—such was the girl who stepped after the man, he carrying the carpet bag, while she bore a shawl and umbrella. At the refreshment bar he stopped and looked in.

“ Ah ! ” he said, “ I ’ ve had nothing since we left Reading. Here, dear, hold this a moment. ”

He went in and took a glass of brandy. Already the girl had noticed how he trembled. He had been drinking all day in spite of her remonstrances, and she dreaded what might come of it. Looking at him now in the bright gas-

light, his long shabby black surtout, felt hat, and dark trousers were suggestively clerical: though the black and white check 'kerchief on his neck, with its greasy ends, did not answer to the other aspects. He was of middle age, tall, and, except for his shabbiness and a dreadful sense of despondency in his face, was a man of almost noble presence.

Their destination was the Bow Road, in the East end. He knew nothing about the place where he meant to put up, except that some friendly vagabond he had lately met, had spoken well of it. It was a long way out—a broad, low, three-storied house of mottled brick, with a narrow doorway, approached by broken steps, well worn. In front of it there were a few feet of frowsy grass, intended to be kept sacred from intrusion by an iron railing shattered and rusty, from which the tramps had wrenched many a

pound to sell. A greenish brass plate on the door exhibited the name of Mrs. Perkins. The bell-handle had evidently parted with the bell on severely irreconcilable terms, and was hanging dejectedly out on the right. Notices of 'apartments' decorated several of the front windows, peering through their opaque foulness.

Here the couple brought up, and after a little chaffering with the landlady, who gave way, however, as soon as she had caught sight of the young girl's face, they agreed to take a room in the attic at eight shillings a week. The man put down his bag, and went out to buy a few necessaries; the girl, casting off her hat, threw herself on the miserable bed, and sobbed violently. Six months of sinful vagrancy had not yet hardened her.

"My God," she said, "my God! have mercy upon me!"

But the more she wrung her hands and wept, the more terrible and hopeless seemed her despair.

“I cannot go back,—I cannot go on!” she cried passionately. “O merciful God! why don’t you strike me dead? Why have you deserted me? Is there no hope—no repentance?”

Mrs. Perkins slipped into the room.

“Why, why—what’s the matter, dear?” she said, holding her candle to look at the beautiful disordered face, flushed with weeping. “You *are* a beauty!”

“Will you go away, please?” said the girl immediately, sitting up with dignity and wiping her eyes. “Who asked you to come here?”

The woman was quick. She saw this was no common country girl.

“Oh! I beg your pardon, miss! only I heard

you going on so terrible, miss. Can't I get you something please?"

"No, thank you. No one can do me any good."

The landlady saw an opening.

"Yes, dear, they can. Such a sweet, beautiful creature as you needn't lie here crying and sobbing enough to break her heart. Cheer up, my dear. You're in London now, and don't know what luck's in store for you. I'll bring you something directly that'll do you good."

The everlasting comforter—the solace the girl was already learning fast, fast, to fly to as the only one left to her! Here, in superciliously pious England, we have built a wall of brass between innocence and undiscovered guilt on one side, and discovered sin upon the other. And moreover, by our most Christian and moral practice, the errors once detected shall have

a tenfold greater heinousness and a hundredfold greater penalty if they be of a woman than if they be of a man. O most just, most equitable, most politic, most consistent, and most Christ-like nation, which is less forgiving even than the Judge of heaven and earth!

The man at length returned with candles, food, and a bottle of rum. He looked at his companion askance and troubled.

“Nelly, dear,” he said, “you’ve been crying again.”

“I shall never have done.”

“What is the use?” said the man sadly, and breathing painfully, as if struggling with some strong feeling within. “What is the good of it now? Ah! I wish I could believe the old heathen :

Nos ubi decidimus

Quo pius Æneas, quo dives Tullus et Ancus,

Pulvis et umbra sumus !”

As he said these words a slight flash of old University memory seemed to animate him. Then he relapsed into a gloomy despondency.

—"But no—throw it to the devil and have done with it."

"It is done, and done for ever," she said, "Nothing can undo it. O dear! O dear! I shall kill myself!"

And the full passion of her sorrow burst forth again. The man at first was cowed by the strength of it; but he opened his bottle and drank, and was revived. Then he mixed some rum with water and offered it to her.

She forced it down her throat. Again I say, to a hopeless outcast from love or sympathy, what other 'respite and nepenthe' is there for the sensitive conscience? The man had skilfully ingratiated this idea into her mind. His own soul was wrung with the deadly anguish of remorse;

and her conscience-stricken agony was a pain he desired, for his own sake as well as for hers, to deaden. So for that night she managed to drive away the 'Blue Devils.' But they were coming back in real earnest for her companion. He finished the bottle that night. The next morning he lay weak and trembling in bed, and sent for another. And after that the real Blue Devils, who had been dogging him a long time, fastened on their prey.

There is no use in prolonging the story of the miserable strife. A doctor came and ordered him to the hospital, and the poor girl saw him carried away, alternately praying and blaspheming—repeating the Church Service and then pouring out curses and indecency. It was thus he died.

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III.—Can a Woman forget?

A GREAT Apostle startles us by saying that he—the teacher, the soldier strong and valiant even to martyrdom—kept his body in subjection, lest that he who had preached to others should himself become a castaway. Few had so tested in their own persons at once the strength and the weakness of human nature. Therefore we may reasonably believe it possible that the Rev. Quintus Craven, M.A., really went into the Church of England a sincere enthusiast; married his wife, as he averred, not merely for her person, but for her goodness; waged for many a year an honest conflict with Satan for the souls and bodies of sundry poor Cornishmen; and was justly respected and beloved of the bishop, and other clerical brethren of his diocese.

The eldest son of a wealthy gentleman, whose

ambition he disappointed by choosing the Church, he had proved his sincerity, and lost much, so far as this world was concerned. Is it not terrible to think that after all the sacrifice was unavailing?

A good-looking, muscular, genial, large, and naturally buoyant fellow, always refined and punctilious in his conduct, as a man of the world or as a Christian; had you asked a churchwarden, or even the village doctor twenty years before, whether Mr. Craven would have two attacks of *delirium tremens*, sink to the lowest depths of immorality, and die raving in a hospital, you would probably have been put down as fit for some such fate yourself. Yet it is certain that all this happened—happened to a man encircled by the purest home influences, and by his work brought into daily contact with the ideas and principles of Christianity.

Twice he had fallen, and twice repented. The woman, whose noble affections he had wronged, forgave him, struggled steadily for his redemption, helped to conceal his sin, and then watched him with the weariless wariness of a heart-broken love.

Tragedies like these are all around us!

How flesh and blood can endure the strain put upon them by souls so gloriously uplifted above the standard of humanity, I cannot even fancy. Bruised and beaten, wronged and trampled under foot, utterly betrayed by perjured caitiff—there is yet a love of woman which can endure. There is yet a love of woman which, looking down from its pure height of goodness on the foul wreckage below, will fly to gather up and cherish in its bosom the last shreds of perverted affection.

When the death of the Rev. Quintus Craven,

M.A., in the East-end hospital, was announced at St. Jacob's Vicarage, the noble mother gathered her children together, and told them that their father was dead. Then she began to recall him to them as he once was, manly, gentle, and good. She told them of his early virtues, and besought them with tears to remember him thus. Shutting within her heart the carking agony of her despair, she went away quietly by herself to London to claim the dead and bury him decently, where no one but she should find him.

Next to her heart was a letter, written in a trembling hand, in one of the fits of remorse which had succeeded to his last outrage upon her affection. I have read the letter. It ran thus:—

MY DEAR, DEAR WIFE,

I write to you out of the deepest depths of

sorrow and remorse. Why I do it, I cannot tell. My state is indescribable. I suffer the very pains of hell. I know I am in the bonds of iniquity, yet I cannot shake myself free. I cannot even bring myself to say "I would be better again if I could." All that has passed from me. My brain is confused, and my conscience hardened beyond recovery. Every day I have to endure an awful penalty in seeing the grief of the poor, lovely, innocent creature to whom I have brought ruin and disgrace My mind recalls things vaguely. I look upon the past as an exile looks upon the distant panorama of the shore he knows he shall never see again. All those sweet years with you, those zealous works for God and the Church, the delights of intellectual or holy converse, the love I bore our children—Ah, me! I cannot write about it! My soul writhes with agony in the utter hopelessness of relief. Two lines from

the "Raven" are ever in my brain, ringing in relentless tones :

"Is there, is there balm in Gilead? Tell me, tell me, I implore!
Quoth the Raven, 'Never more.'"

*There is no hope. I am riveted in a fatal chain.
I cannot even with blood get free.*

Catherine, you will hardly believe me, but I love you still. My heart has really never been false to you, whatever has happened. You come before me now spotless and holy—my first and only love. I have wronged you beyond forgiveness; but, Catherine, you have never ceased to be the one daystar of my existence.*

How the Devil laid hold of me, it is impossible

* This sort of thing often occurs in such documents as the above, and affords a curious psychological phenomenon. How is it these demoralised people pen or speak such egregious lies in moments of apparently sincere confession? Do they come simply of the maudlin hypocrisy of an absolutely depraved heart? or has the toxic poison really destroyed the capacity of the brain to distinguish between one feeling and another?

for me to describe. I never was a wild drinker at Trinity, as I have known several men to be in their youth who are now exemplary clergymen. When I married you I was a temperate man, as things went, always being able to take my fair share at table with the other clergy, but never consciously exceeding. At home, you are aware, we principally drank beer, and wine only on Sundays, and sometimes after a specially hard day's work I had my tumbler of spirits. I can recollect no particular time when I began to feel the thirst. It grew upon me as every habit grows upon unwatchful souls. The struggle in me when I began to feel its power was fierce and long. I have spent half a night upon my knees weakly crying to be delivered, and yet hardly wishing it. I broke off, you remember, for six months; and you, little suspecting, remonstrated with me, thinking it injured my health, and that a little

did me good. You did not know that I had long since passed the mark of a "little." I took it all the time, and wherever I could get it; in visiting my parishioners, and in driving about the country, at inns. And so it went on; first with beer and wines, then with spirits, until, I confess to you before God, Catherine, I could not, to save my life, pass a place where I knew it was to be had or purchased, without stopping to get it. So unappeasable grew the craving that, I own to you, I have had my glass of toddy of an evening with you, and after that have taken to bed with me a bottle of brandy, and consumed it before morning unknown to you. I was strong. I was never drunk in the ordinary sense, but always under the fatal influence.

For a long time I discharged my duties conscientiously, and hoped for the best. Then I found I had to resort to equivocation and to tricks to

conceal from you and others the growing habit. Prayers soon became forms to my seared conscience, and principles gave way to the desires of the flesh. My mind seemed powerless to resist; and as I drew away from the anchor of hope I felt myself driven, as by a tempest I could not withstand, into dark seas of passion and sin. God help me! I cannot tell you all. Twice, you remember, my awful thirst and guilty desires took me away from you a short time into excesses that only the Devil can know or conceive. Yet, Catherine, you hid it all—you forgave it. I drew again the breath of life, and there seemed hope of recovery for me, when the Devil threw in my way that poor girl. You know how she took to us all—how innocent she was—how she wished to be a good church-woman, and take her share in parish work! She said her mother wished it. Catherine, I seemed to be impelled by a resistless power to

that sin. How successfully, alas! and with what terrible results to us and to her!

This was what Catherine Craven carried near her heart when she went to claim her husband's dishonoured body.

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IV.—The Unity of the Spirit.

THE funeral coach was standing at the door of the hospital. The coffin had been borne out by the shaky porters of mortality. The widow alone, and in the deepest black, followed them. As the sad party went out through the large hall, a woman and two men, who were also about to go out, were checked to let it pass. The woman was pale and sorrowful, and looked at the long, black-veiled figure of the mourner with respectful sympathy. She, having her own griefs, had been told the story of the desolate widow.

The man by her side was in charge of the

third person of the party. His eyes looked upon the scene with meaningless gaze ; his face had no expression. He drivelled out a word or two, and laughed foolishly. The woman turned to him with a sigh. It was Mrs. Merton. Singular fatality ! Her husband, found wandering about the streets demented, had been taken to this hospital some months before, and was now, for the first time, pronounced fit to be removed to an asylum.

Parish priest and Methodist class-leader ! we have at length discovered a common ground of concord for you both !

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V.—Licensed License.

WHY God made Mrs. Perkins, or the like of her, is no small problem in divinity. There are human devils going about this world which

astound humanity. If they come across Innocence, they must mar it. If they meet with Error turning to repentance, they must take it round the neck and drag it deeper into the mire. If Wickedness comes into contact with them, they must do their worst to make it ten times more evil than before. Mrs. Perkins was of this sort.

But for Mrs. Perkins, Catherine Craven would have found out Eleanor Whyte, and would, by her large-hearted and holy sympathy, have won the child back to a happy life. The lodging-house keeper, having once set eyes on her prey, was not to be easily circumvented. When the news came that the Rev. Quintus Craven was dead, she hid it from the unhappy girl. She saw Mrs. Craven, who had been directed to the place, and told her the child had run away. Meantime the woman had given Eleanor

hopes that her friend was getting better. She dressed herself up and went out with her. She feigned sympathy, talked piously, took her on Sunday to church, and on Monday to a music-hall in the West-end.

The unsuspecting girl there saw a sight that outwits and surpasses in successful conception and execution all the other deviltry of the Metropolis put together. You may go and see that sight any night of the week except Sunday : once seen, never forgotten. It is duly licensed by Act of Parliament.

The powers that grant the license are magistrates of Middlesex, who are fathers of families, attendants (at least) of churches, some of them servants of the Crown, some of them members of the aristocracy (*i.e.*, of the *aristoi*, the best and noblest—that ought to be—of the State), all of them gentlemen and men of honour by public

profession. Some of these gentlemen have been known to frequent this place. Others upon the bench, in the face of the whole metropolis looking on and knowing the facts, and in discharge of their solemn duty as justices, under a truer, higher, more sacred obligation even than if they had been put into a witness box and duly sworn on the Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, have declared that they had visited this place and there never saw anything wrong. Therefore, *I* cannot be wrong to describe it—only dimly, good lady! and with a veil around it.

And so they have licensed it—to snare, seduce, ruin, and damn the bodies and souls of young men and women for six nights a week—Sundays being oddly excepted.

The clergy, backed by all decent people, have sought in vain to clean out this foul nest of vice.

It is too popular; it is under too lofty patronage; it is managed with devilish cunning; and the profits are so enormous that any sum can be afforded which is necessary to establish its irreproachable respectability.

Outside wait long trains of hackney coaches, carriages, broughams with servants in livery, some of them boys, unschooled except in horsemanship and vice; inside, the seductive strains of music, the whirling dance, the brilliancy of gold and shining mirror and blazing gas, and the sensual enchantments of mercenary beauty tricked out in borrowed plumes, or in the glittering spoil of wild nobility and of *parvenu* wealth, are supplemented by the winning presentment of exciting drink.

Persuasit nox, amor, vinum, adolescentia!
Most virtuously displayed vice! Men and women who never saw each other before are dancing

promiscuously. See those bright-eyed, pink-fleshed women, clad in rich furs and velvet robes, and sparkling with costly jewels, parading, arm-in-arm—a long Circean chain; while a mixed mob of men and women, peers, clerks, members of Parliament, lawyers, authors, doctors, tradesmen, touts, travellers, blacklegs, and clergymen, ay, and certain respectable persons, with their wives, so sworn and declared before the justices, stand by and scan, and canvas this bazaar of human flesh. Each painted face and voluptuous form caskets dead virtue, and challenges the competition of vice.

To this legitimate, because law-licensed, place the benevolent Perkins took her pretty victim. The girl was dazzled with the lights, enchanted with the spectacle, forgot her sorrow in the brilliant scene, revived her spirit with Circean draughts; and there, fair, pure women of

England, we leave her—to the care of your fathers, brothers, and sons.

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VI.—A Vision of Death.

COULD we get behind the veil that separates the Seen from the Unseen, we might find that to the Hidden Powers these terrible pageants and dramas of life, whereof we are spectators, are things of awful consequence. I have fancied that in a vision I could see the Evil that overshadows the land Embodied and Personate! A Demon Spirit—colossal—a monster truly to make the whole world tremble!

Come and look, O man of pleasure, high-born or base, refined or gross,—come, tarnished women, and you, sweet younglings, tempted by siren looks and voices, or drawn by fatal longings, toward brimming sparkle of foam-topped elixir,—or you, tried and troubled ones, who

bear the sorrows and carry the labours of humanity, who are wont to seek in cordial draughts brief solace of grief and strength for daily toil—or you, dreamers and men of thought, drawing no Heliconian draughts from these fatal springs,—come here, I say, and watch him at his deadly work! Truly a mighty, dread, portentous Demon!

Aloft upon his huge distended trunk behold the features, not of a smooth and laughing Bacchus, as poet and artist love to figure him, but of a brute foul and fierce, presenting withal the features of a man. See the bloated, red, and pimpled face, the purpled cheeks, the huge swelled lips which, opening, show the cankered teeth and feverish foulness of his unhealthy mouth: matted in rough locks over the slanting forehead, red flaming hair, crowned, in mockery, with wreaths that have withered at the touch of

his burning brow. See the bloodshot eyes, small and cunning, rolling with cruel ecstasy as he urges fast and furiously his fearful task. Cross-kneed he sits, malignant as Siva! his prodigious trunk swathed in a motley robe, the patchwork spoil of many victims.

His apparel is red with the blood of murder and crime, of rage and cruelty, of madness and sin. O look here, Christian and civilized Britons! look upon these garments, red and gory, and tell me what the frightful motley means? Tunic and cloak of every fashion, velvet and ermine of king or emperor, livery of menial, rags of beggar, chasuble of priest, Genevan gown, satin and silk of noble dame, thin torn skirt of shivering milliner, gaudy petticoat of dancing columbine, peasant's corduroy, and foppish coat of city clerk, the navy's shirt and soldier's uniform—ay! and if ye look well,

ye may discern a judge's gown, and not far off a gore-stained patch, the very dress wherein the criminal he condemned to death had done his sinful deed. Mark ye this great garment well, for it is in itself a veritable calendar of Death! Where hath he not gathered? What hath he not won of life, of health, of power or feebleness, of fame or shame? What is there of all the varieties of life unrepresented here? It is the register of his labours, and each mark presents the fate of a human soul!

Behold him—his gaunt arms sweeping into the abyss of his lap multitudes of trembling creatures, the materials of his work, for he is fashioning a chain. Draw nigh and examine it—long, living, endless it interweaves and enthrals society with a warp of death woven from out itself. His quick fingers—for the work is urgent and goes on night and day

—string together the writhing forms, and as coil upon coil rolls out, you may see again how vast is the scope of his labours! Ay! no rank is free, no family circle, no happy range of friendship! From his high seat the Demon scans the field, and, as his fingers swiftly ply, follows with greedy eyes the labours of his attendant imps. For below him, you may see them gathering in that strange spoil. In spired and pillared city, in smoky manufacturing town, in valleys resounding with the hum and clang of labour—labour blessed of God, cursed of this potent fiend!—'neath peaceful eaves of pastoral homes, amid pretty woodbined hamlets, see those busy workers garnering in the Demon's prey. Oh! how much falls to their snares, of the best of the life and hope and promise of a goodly land! What ministers! Widespread as society, active as angels of grace, pernicious as Hell!

And as they scour the world in reckless energy, for his rewards are right generous and rich, he, the Drink Demon, sweeps into his lap their shrinking spoil, and twists the living victims one by one into a great chain of life and death. And all the while he roars and calls for chorus thus :—

SONG.

DEMON.—Ho! ho! ho! ho! Away ye go!

CHORUS.—Ho! ho! ho! ho! Away we go!

DEMON.—Scour the homes and haunts of men,
Throngèd city and dotted plain,
Over the mountain, down the glen,
Scour the land and scour the main,
And gather links for the Devil's Chain.

CHORUS.—Drink, drink!

Drain, drain!

Another link

For the Devil's Chain!

DEMON.—For the Devil a wondrous chain shall wear,
Of twisted bodies strong and fair,
Arm to leg and leg to arm,
Linked together quick and warm,
Of bad and good, of high and low :
A chain for his Majesty down below :
 Long, unending,
 Ever descending
 Out of the light
 Into the night !

CHORUS.—Drink, drink !
 Drain, drain !
 Another link
 For the Devil's Chain !

DEMON.—Ho for the boroughs ! ho for the fields !
 Under the hedges, across the wealds,
 To the shepherd wandering over the down,
 To the toiling crowds of the factory town :
 Here in the grimy thronging street,
 There in the student's lone retreat :

Gather the master, gather the man,
Gather them all as fast as you can,
To be linked together quick and warm,
Arm to leg and leg to arm ;

CHORUS.—Drink, drink !
Drain, drain !
Another link
For the Devil's Chain.

DEMON.—King and courtier, priest and nun,
Daughter, father, mother, son,
Doctor, patient, judge and crier,
Farmer, yokel, lord and squire,—
Weave them all in the Devil's Chain,
For ever and ever tight in the strain !

CHORUS.—Drink, drink !
Drain, drain !
Another link
For the Devil's Chain.

DEMON.—Labour and sorrow, trust and truth,
Vigour and weakness, age and youth.

Beauty and ugliness, wealth and worth,
All the best and worst of earth,
Poison it, ruin it, kill it with drink,
And bring it to me for another link.

CHORUS.—Drink, drink !

Drain, drain !

Another link

For the Devil's Chain !

DEMON.—Jolly eve, ghastly morrow,

Sorrows drowned to bring new sorrow,

Bars thronged—prisons crammed,

Racy chorus—shriek of damned.

CHORUS.—O drink, drink !

Drain, drain !

Another link

For the Devil's Chain !

LINK THE EIGHTH.

POVERTY, CRIME, DESPAIR.

I.—A Wandering Heir.

THERE was mourning in the house of Bighorne. Ten days had passed since the departure of the son and heir, and not a word had been heard of him. He had taken with him very little baggage. A note was left for his father. This was merely to inform him that the writer had engaged to go down to Norfolk with Captain Conistoun for a week's hunting, the latter having promised to find the horses.

Mr. Bighorne accepted the explanation and troubled himself no further. Emily was the only one who felt uneasy, and she kept her anxiety to herself. She could not help hazarding

guesses in her own mind at the reasons of Henry's odd conduct, but she did not impart her fancies to either of her parents. At the end of a week, however, driving down Piccadilly, her quick eye detected Captain Conistoun, who executed a rather obvious retiring movement down St. James's Passage with too great celerity to be caught by the servant. She became thoroughly alarmed. Mr. Bighorne, on hearing that the Captain was in town without Henry, also grew anxious. He looked the Captain up, and at the end of a couple of hours' search, being a determined man, found him at an obscure and dubious club. Then he learned after a good deal of fencing, that Henry had asked his friend to keep out of the way for a week, as he had private business in the country, and desired to use Conistoun's name to explain his absence.

The poor Captain was obliged to get into

a cab and accompany the father home, where he got it severely all round for lending himself to this deception, Miss Emily putting it to him in a cruelly sharp way.

“He is so greatly indebted to you, Captain Conistoun, and knows you so intimately, that perhaps it is no wonder he should have asked you to help him like this! You know I felt so satisfied when I knew he was with you, because, of course, one was certain there could be nothing worse than usual,” &c.

The Captain afterwards said he would rather have been in the Balaclava charge than go through that ordeal. He was now as alarmed as the family themselves, and for the first time won Emily's approval by the activity and shrewdness which he put forth for the occasion. Mr. Bighorne could do nothing. He was almost paralyzed with apprehension.

Emily forthwith took charge of the arrangements. She determined to keep the matter perfectly quiet, but to engage a couple of detectives. An advertisement, the drawing up of which occupied the Captain two hours, in a cunning endeavour to reach the proper person without giving anyone else a clue, was so grotesque that Emily laughed at it in spite of the gravity of the subject:—

“TO CORNU GRANDE.—Return to your native Geneva, *à la crème*. Most anxious to see you again.—Your sister Emily.”

It was a supreme effort of the Captain's military genius, and he felt sure its ingenuity would baffle the strongest intellect among Henry Bighorne's numerous friends, although he had given them at least three clues. Emily, however, discarded it, and simply wrote—

“HENRY.—Return to your sister.”

Her heart told her that if anything would bring him back, that would.

The detectives, who were put upon the scent during the next few days, began to get up Master Henry's history for a month or two before his disappearance. This was an annoyance to Captain Conistoun, since the threads of that history were continually crossing and re-crossing his recent paths, and sometimes in very awkward conjunctions. As everyone, however, who really knew anything important, was interested in keeping it quiet, the tenth day had come and the police confessed that they had not even an idea how this young gentleman got out of London.

Conistoun meanwhile had gone to Norfolk. It was the blind looking after the blind, and quite a forlorn hope, but Emily had a faint suspicion that Henry had mentioned his real destination.

The Captain shall tell his own story.

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II.—The Captain's Story.

“Aw! my deah Miss Bighawne, heah I am again! as they say in the pantomime—I—I beg yeaw pardon! Yaas—I wemembah—you’ve abjewawed the theatre—and I must say, Miss Bighawne, you are quite wight—the *ballet*, you know. Eh?—deuced objectionable. Eh? *What does ‘deuced’ mean?* I—I beg pardon. *Bad habit?* I know it is. So sawry?”

“Well, Miss Bighawne, in accawdance with yeaw instructions I poasted down to Nawfolk,—always liked Nawfolk, most chawming county,—and dwopped in casually, you know—you wemembah the ‘ameteua casual’?—on the Bwown-Wobinson’s, yeaw fwiends—deuced pretty girl Miss Anastasia Bwown-Wobinson, ain’t she?—Ah! yaas, yaas, yeaw the only woman I know who

does justice to her friends—ah—very generous, eh? Never let on you know about poor Henry—they asked for him—so you see I found out quietly he had not been there, though shouldn't have been surprised at his visiting that charming Miss Anastasia, you know. Eh? Well, no—she ain't my style exactly, but striking, you know.

“Aftah visiting the Pwettidales, Mercers, and Batcombes, you know, gave it up in respectable quarters—and went in for the ‘cads.’ Eh? *What does that mean?* My dear Miss Bighawne, you are so ingenuous, so to speak. ‘Cads’ mean the low awdors—*hoi polloi*, you know. Know Greek? Ah! *enough to understand that?* Ha, ha! very good! Exactly.

“Communicated immediately with police. Awfully stupid country bobbies, you know. Led me a deuce of a chase aftah a fellow—turned out to be solicitor's clerk, John Cway,

wunning off from his master—fwaud, embezzlement—five pounds, you know. Poah devil—beg pardon! But that ain't swearing though. Eh?

“Searched the whole country—didn't see a whisk of his tail. Eh! I hope you understand, though didn't mean to say Bighawne was a fox. Went evey wheah—into awfully queah places, you know! Saw vevy stwange things—can't tell you all. Public-house at Buwy, Saturday night, 'fwec-and-easy.' Eveybody dwunk—women—two bull tewwias fighting—ownas fell out and got a-fighting too—fought like dogs themselves—bit and scwatched each other, wolloed about woom—people all lookin' on—women clappin' their hands and sweawin' tewibly—police sent in—deuce's own wow. Beg pardon! you look pale; best stop. Eh? *No*—well, went to common lodgin'-house, you know—Nawich. *Seen them at Westminster?* The dickens you

have? Aw, well, saw woman dwunk in bed, wolloed over, you know, on her baby—police took her off—child quite dead—suffocated by its own mother, you know. Awfully shocking, eh? Heard afterwards woman woke up and went mad about it. Made me quite unwell, you know. Eh? Oh! nothing—do anything for you. Mean to take the pledge if this sawt o' thing goes on much longer."

* * *

III.—Searching.

THE anxiety of the Bighornes had increased as the months went by, and no hint of Henry's fate had come to them. The elders thoroughly collapsed, and Mrs. Bighorne was sadly nursing her husband at their country place in Hampshire. Emily, whose sorrow was deepest, alone preserved her balance. She remained in London, energetically originating and pur-

suing plans of discovery. She drove back into her heart the fear that her brother had taken away his own life, and worked on hopefully, now with the police, now with the family solicitors, and now with friends like Captain Conistoun or Mr. Holiwell. She had a dread suspicion of the cause of Henry's flight, but kept it strictly within her own thoughts.

Captain Conistoun was indefatigable. All that Henry had told him was simply that 'there was a woman in the matter,' news which the Captain philosophically stated was a 'matta of cawse.' But he had become a very changed man. In his frequent interviews with Miss Bighorne, his admiration for her lucid intellect and cool decision of character was proportionate to the consciousness of his own lack of those qualities. He dropped out of several of the worst cliques in London, and became an

exemplary attendant at St. Thomas's, where he could see Emily worshipping, and himself worship her.

He told a fellow-guardsman in the confidence of an evening punch :—

“ 'Pon my soul, Brady—you know—I'm afwaid she'll make a weligious man of me. I nevaw saw goodness so beautiful.”

The idea of the police that Henry Bighorne had never left London constantly pressed on Emily's mind. From West to East End, by her urgent directions, detectives and friends had sought him in the obscurest haunts without success. Her connection with the mission in Westminster enabled her to assure herself that he was not there. But she was haunted with the fear that in other places other eyes might overlook him. She felt certain that no disguise could hide him from her. So this young lady

resolved that it was her duty to seek him through London for herself.

Strong and adventurous men set out from England, to court danger in all parts of the globe. In the ranks of the rude Herzegovinese, fighting for deliverance from the vulture rapacity and inhuman tyranny of the Moslem in Europe ; among fierce Albanians, bloody Bashi-Bazouks, the semi-barbarous hordes of Russia pushing eastward in fatal and resistless conquest ; in perilous pilgrimage to Mecca ; in the heart of Central Africa, among slave-dealers and jealous savages ; in China, or Perak, or the Andaman Islands, or the Northern Provinces of India, with the Dyaks of Borneo, or among the cannibals of Polynesia—justly resentful of the undesired benevolence of a forcible hiring to labour in the sugar-fields of Queensland for civilization and Christianity ; in South American republics, with

volcanoes bursting up alternately from the earth and from society; or in the mines of California, British Columbia, or South Africa. And they return alive to tell the tale of all they have dared and done.

Yet, if danger be all that is sought, and a demonstration of a resourceful bravery be aimed at, might not a Baker, or a Burton, or a Speke, or a Livingstone, or a Butler, or a Stanley, setting out alone to explore the regions of London savagery, encounter risks as great as any to be withstood in perilous journey by land and sea? And let all quiet, respectable, and comfortable people be mindful, that to the innate or cultivated rascality, the degraded ferocity of classes of the population to whose existence they deliberately shut their eyes, there is ever added the licensed danger of a supply always ready to hand of that which can add tenfold

intensity to cruelty and tenfold wantonness to crime. I, for my part, cannot look upon the continuous flare of public-houses in White-chapel, or Westminster, or Marylebone, without shuddering to think that in the event of a popular outbreak, the Legislature and the magistrates between them have laid to the people's hands, in criminal profusion, the inspiring elements of the most horrible disasters. Against this dire possibility we have set up a system of police, and about this I crave leave to say a word or two.

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IV.—A new Order.

I HOLD that the office of the Policeman is, or ought to be, an honourable office. It is an office that should properly be esteemed by society above that of a soldier. A friend of mine has told me of a little girl who calls the man we

irreverently term 'bobby'—the PEACEMAN. Herein is a happy and even noble allegory, bright with sensible suggestion. Why should not an able Home Secretary sit down for a day, or mayhap a week, and work it out into practical shape?

The Policeman, or Peaceman, should have much the same qualifications as certain officers in the Church: he should be the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, modest, not ready to quarrel and offer wrong as one in wine, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; let him be taught to feel the true honourableness of his office, and even to magnify it.

I say he is greater than a soldier, is your true Policeman. The powers with whom he contends are not only of this world. If he be a sterling man, and a good Peaceman, he will

apprehend that he also is one of the missionaries of society. For him there is not alone catching and making ready for hanging, or other method of security, but work akin to that of the clergyman, the doctor, the brother or sister of charity.

In the police force now embodied, there are some who feel after this ideal, dimly though honestly. But they are few. The other day in Whitechapel I came across a fine-looking man keeping a public-house, where common sailors and low women congregated, who had been a detective officer. This is not the stuff whereof a Peaceman should be made. Is it not something worth while to be the man who stands up between society and anarchy—waving the censer of authority—as Aaron and his fellows stood and waved their censers between Israel and destruction? To do their work in a manly, brave, yet gentle way—as the chevalier of justice

should—is now accomplished by the higher officers of our home forces, but by the Peaceman proper, only rarely. Our system creates machines of inexorable law, or, too frequently, hypocritical temporisers with crime.

Mr. A. J. Duffield, who will no doubt be thought a lunatic, has suggested that the policeman should be elevated. He has proposed that briefless barristers, 'stickit ministers,' and young gentlemen generally, with more bone and sinew than they can properly utilise in the genteel professions, should here find a work not unworthy of their power. Is not this a good suggestion? Have we yet realised what might be done in the way of improving this great domestic service?

Why should we not have a noble order of the Peaceman? At present we show our estimate of the policeman's office by taking up shillings to

reward his bravery, or granting him £2 out of the poor-box for a broken head and ruined constitution. The proper recognition of the policeman's services should come from the State, and the head of the State and fountain of honour is Royalty. Institute, therefore, for the police force an ORDER OF MERIT. Recognize its true status. Raise its character. Attract to it honesty, ability, and even ambition. Make way, I say, for the Most Noble Order of the Peacemen!

One word more. The safety of society is committed to the care of this order. Should it not also be an order of sobriety? Every Peaceman should be a total abstainer, whatever license we may give to other services. Make our new Order models of virtue, bravery, and self-restraint.

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V.—Shadows of Death.

LADIES and gentlemen who shop and lounge in the splendid streets that display the wealth and luxury of the Metropolis, rarely think that they are walking and driving on the shores of a desolation, often as extreme and melancholy as that of any disaster-ridden sea—or, to change the figure, they are skirting wildernesses of human destiny, which, like the mangrove-swamps of Western Africa, hide lurking-places of the foulest malaria and most perilous savagery. And there, amongst those dim recesses of life, men ply a trade which exaggerates disease, and adds vigour to the powers of evil. Dainty ladies, conceive what it was for Miss Emily Bighorne, under the chivalrous impulse of her nature, to seek her brother in and out among those shadows of death!

Through city slums, in alleys of Soho or

Bloomsbury, in the squalid streets of White-chapel, or Southwark, to see this fair and noble girl pick her way, was a spectacle not without significance. It brought into contrast the terrific distance, moral and material, between the limited wealthy class and the hordes of labour, misery, and crime.

The Drury Lane Music-hall, with its several bars, its pit filled with small tradesmen and their wives, and fast clerks and porters with their 'girls;' its galleries crowded with motley crews of doubtful men and women, its upper gallery crammed with boys—the *gamins* of London, viewing on the stage the pleasures of vice, the apotheosis of crime—was only a few degrees down below the more elegant and glittering saloons of a higher society. There young rascaldom learned how to drink and swear with the worst. There Emily saw children, not as high

as the bar, taking hot gin-and-water as if it were milk, and staggering off to heaven-knows-what attempts to emulate the wickedness of their elders.

Searching a court out of Gray's Inn Lane one night when the 'Old Arm Chair' public-house had emptied its last frequenters into the street, she had there seen her conductor, a policeman, penetrate a crowd of drunken wretches, stretching their necks to see a man who, in drunken fury, had caught the hair of his wife, also drunk, and twisting it round his hand, was hauling at the shrieking victim with his knee upon her chest.

It was when the public-houses were about turning out in Whitechapel that Emily took her way thither with the inspector and his sergeant to canvas the reeking lodging-houses in search of the wanderer. An early visit to the places in Flower-and-Dean Street and thereabouts,

where sometimes as many as three hundred beds are occupied of a night at threepence or fourpence apiece, opens up to the thoughtful mind a vista of sorrows so long, so various, and so horrible, that one might well shrink from encountering the intense awfulness of the spectacle at an hour when half a hundred neighbouring gin-shops are disgorging their throngs of drunken customers. It is there that you may learn that however bad human nature may be, there is something you can administer to it and make it worse, and that there is nothing so devilish but what drink will add to its deviltry.

Strange and dismal outcome of civilisation! To enter the thronged kitchen of these caravan-saries of crime and beggary, and look round eagerly for the beloved face, was to Emily Big-horne to learn a harrowing lesson in humanity. A mixed crowd—thieves, tramps, beggars. Here,

perhaps, a Scotchman on crutches, arguing even on that weak basis, with an inspirited Irishman ; there a group of youngish pale fellows, whose hands showed they did no honest toil, but preyed with light fingers on the watches of mankind ; their glances furtive, their faces sometimes marked with scars or bruises of night affrays, or tied up in bloody kerchiefs. Here, again a weary traveller, with a great shock of rough hair, in a suit of shabby velveteen, who had dropped off asleep with his hat and bundle by his side. And again a gentleman's gentleman, evidently under the weather, with a black suit, very seedy, and his tall hat brushed into a bright polish, sitting apart in disconsolate incongruity with the rough elements around him. Slovenly mothers with dirty children ; girls with coarse repulsive features—some with black eyes, the tell-tales of the dangerous life they led ; and here and there the

scrofulous infant, whose appearance made the observer shudder to think what a hopeless thing was life for it from cradle to grave. You could not have collected two pounds among the hundred, and yet there was hardly one that had not left a toll that night at the public-house. Profits of theft, proceeds of pawn or sale of the last passable garment, day's begging, or casual wage, all gone down into the till of the publican to leave these people as they were—nay worse, and with less of hope!

Thus he, the *Publican*, emissary of the brewer and distiller, works at both ends; to bring down the high, to confirm and deepen the degradation of the low.

Here is his shop, divided into compartments for bar, retail and refreshment. Two or three rows of ivory-handled pumps, their brass bright and shining; dinted pewters and polished glasses

ranged along the metal shelves. Sometimes a row of great pipes of spirits, tapped, to pour their fiery water into the cans which supply the model barrels of glass on the shelf behind the bar; and hundreds of bottles of every shape and every hue of bright contents arranged in dazzling ranks wherever a standing place can be found. Flaring gas, bright mirror, foaming pewter, smoking glass, quick barmaids, drawing, drawing, drawing from the endless store, and dropping, dropping, dropping, with a merry chink, the hopes and healths of many a customer into their tills. There is little difference truly between the splendid bars of the West-end and their kindred institutions in Whitechapel or Southwark. They are all equally designed to allure and stimulate the feverish thirst. The pale and weary girls who, at the humbler places, serve out to ragged poverty and crime or robust labour their lush and stingo,

are no worse than the frumped-up beauties who, as they exchange free jokes or affected compliments with lounging clerks, or dandy blacklegs, or fast young *parvenus*, keep them alive with flips and tonics.

One night Emily, disguised in a coarse woollen dress and a staid bonnet with a thick veil, entered, in the course of her trying round, one of the houses in Ratcliffe Highway which had a license for liquor, music, and dancing. The bar below was filled with sailors of every nationality, engaged in drinking, in polyglott blasphemy, and coarse courtship. Lascar, Swede, Russian, Dane, Dutchman, Italian, mingled with the sons of the three kingdoms. Here possibly Henry might have found his way to endeavour to get a berth in some obscure vessel. Through the crammed bar a lane was forthwith made, at the call of the stout landlady, as soon as the inspector's

face was seen ; while the publican—a powerful man, who had been a detective in his day—turned with ludicrous solemnity to remonstrate with a tipsy woman for using improper language—a remonstrance she treated with derisive levity.

Up a few steps and through a door, they passed into a room resounding with odd orchestral music, a lofty room with a ventilating skylight. The walls were decorated with paper in gaudy panels, in the middle of which were depicted highly-coloured Terpsichorean beauties, displaying their charms with Grecian naïveté but un-Grecian grace. By the door was the semicircular bar, where three women were kept busy in drawing and mixing the liquors. Over the bar the orchestra urged its doleful jollity of sound. On one side of the room were narrow tables and seats, just then crowded with men, chiefly sailors—and women, all of one class. The rest of the

large space was devoted to dancing : a strange amusement of half-drunken coarseness and folly. Women sailed to and fro to the bar to fetch liquor to their companions, or to buy it for themselves ; and then they could be seen going the rounds with their own hot toddy, exchanging a sip of it indiscriminately with any who would give them a pull at pewter or glass. It was plain enough in flushing face and glancing eye how this horrible mixture was working. Emily turned quickly away to scan the faces of the men, but Henry was not there.

Just as she was leaving, her eye caught sight of a girl, quite young, whose face looked fresher and prettier than any of the rest, and whose dress was neater in fit and appearance. She had just raised to her lips a glass of punch, which she drained, and then rushed into the dance with feverish animation.

“Do you know who that poor girl is?” said Emily to her conductor.

“O yes, miss! It’s the saddest case I know of. She hasn’t been long at the East End, and she won’t stay here long with that face and figure. She is a girl called Lucy Merton. A young lawyer’s clerk, named Cray, brought her down here. He had run away from his employers, solicitors in Bedford Row, with some papers and a few pounds of money. That girl was with him. They had to knock about in low places to keep out of sight. When we caught him they were well-nigh starving, and after we took him away there was not much left to her to do but what she’s doing. We don’t know where she comes from, but I should say she was out of a West-end shop. I’ve tried hard to get her to tell me, but it ain’t no use. She’s going through a sort of stage now—just

running on as you see, trying to drown all and forget like. We see such cases sometimes, though not often. If they wouldn't take to drinking they might come round again. Your friend ain't here, miss? Then we'd best go."

Emily's heart was bleeding.

"Stay," she said. "She is not dancing now. Will you ask her to come here?"

The girl came forward at the policeman's summons ; how different from the bright, light-hearted maiden that tripped along St. Martin's Lane a few months since ! The cheeks were still comely, but flushed with the heat of wine. There was sadness in the blue eyes which were growing so hard and saucy, and in the dark rings beneath them were the written evidences of ill-health of body and soul. Emily raised her veil. At sight of the beautiful pale features and the sweet eyes regarding her so sadly,

the poor girl shrank back. But Emily took her hand.

“Let me go!” cried Lucy Merton thickly, for 'twas late and the drink was telling on her.

“No,” replied Emily firmly. “Come with me.”

The superior spirit conquered, and Lucy Merton suffered herself to be led through the crowd at the bar till they got out into the street; then she tried to break away, but the policeman held her.

“Let me go!” she said, crying with terror and vexation. “I’ve done nothing to you.”

“True,” said Emily. “But, my poor sister, can I do nothing for you?”

“Sister!” she said with a shower of tears, “Don’t mock me, miss! I don’t know what you do here. You are a lady. Go away and let me alone. You are cruel; you are bringing back all my sorrow!”

“Yes, I repeat it, ‘Sister!’ Do you not know of One who called a sinner ‘daughter?’ I, who know my own sinfulness, cannot shrink from owning an erring sister. My dear girl, can I not save you from your sorrow, or, at least, allay it? There is always hope.”

“No, no! You need not tell me that. I never sought to be as I am. It came to me. I was innocent. I know not why it came. I curse God every day I live for it; and now I’ll live it out.”

When a fine nature wakes to the fact that it has been outwitted by some devilish subterfuge, and has lost for ever the virtue whereon it prided itself, it rarely stops to consider circumstances and estimate exact responsibilities. The reaction from trust and hope is often madly extreme. And the fact which in our social existence comes most cruelly home to a woman

wronged, as was Lucy Merton, is that there is written by English opinion over the door of society the notice to such as she—*Nulla retrorsum*.

Miss Bighorne again took the girl's hand, but she broke away, and hastily drying her eyes, ran back into the room. Spite of the inspector's remonstrance Emily pushed through in pursuit, but arrived only in time to see the object of her care toss off a glass of wine and resume the dance.

"Ah!" said the inspector sententiously, as they went away, "if it wasn't for the drink, that girl might be saved. Now she's taken to drowning out her sorrow that way, it ain't a bit of use, miss—you take my word for it."

LINK THE NINTH.

HOPE, HONOUR, LIFE.

I.—O Fatal Syllogism!

SLOW and weary passed the weeks at the humble hospice of the Burslem curate. Critical danger and trembling suspense; the unconscious wanderer watched with all the earnestness of a humanity which was possessed with the noblest spirit of brotherhood. A strange, long struggle of a feeble vitality and diseased brain with the power that may put out the lamps of life and thought. Often the good doctor sat by and feared that the spirit would slip away like a shadow, and escape his saving hand. And the poor curate, overworked by day in a ceaseless

warfare with the diligent sorrows of men, sat through the hours of night waiting on this unknown stranger, and listening for any word that might give him a thread to trace his identity. Now and then came hints of evil life that made the good man quail ; now a coupling of the name of 'father' with saddening epithets of scorn and anger, or of 'mother' with gentle endearments. Often the sick man called for 'Emily' with fond exclamations and words of regret. Yet he never dropped a surname.

But one night, just after twelve o'clock, the sick man's incoherent mutterings suddenly stopped. The curate, sitting drowsily at the table, with a shaded candle, nodding over the paper intended for Sunday morning's sermon, while the fire slumbered in the grate, heard a clear voice :

"Emily!"

He started up, and bringing forward the light, saw that a great change had come over the young man. The chiselled face lay upwards, no longer distorted with pain or the fury of delirium, but tranquil. It was like a marble face, and the marble was weeping.

“Did you call?” said Mr. Wood.

“Where’s Emily? Where am I?”

“In good hands, my friend; in good hands, thank God. Emily is not here at present.”

“Not here?” said the sick man, turning his eyes towards the speaker, and searching the gentle, open face. “Does she know I’m ill? I have been awake for an hour, and I feel very weak and ill. How long have I been here?”

“For some time,” said the curate.

“And is she not within call?”

“No.”

“Then I shall never see her again?” said the

youth. He turned away languidly and painfully, to hide his tears.

“By God’s grace you will, my friend. You are getting better now.”

“No,” replied the sick man. “I woke up, and felt at once it was to die. How came I here?”

“I found you in my outhouse. You had sought shelter there one stormy night.”

“Oh! I remember,” replied the patient, with a shudder,—“Bill Knowsley.”

“Bill Knowsley, young man!” cried the curate, startled out of his wariness for the moment. “Why, only this very day have I read of that man’s execution, for the murder of his wife and children! I trust you had nought to do with it?”

“Nothing, thank God,” replied the other. “I have sins enough to answer for without that. I was hiding at his house for special reasons,

and I fear the money I gave him had something to do with his crime. But you say he is executed. How long is that ago—how long have I been here?”

“Many weeks. Do not overtax yourself now. I am a clergyman. Not knowing what may happen, though I hope the best, I ask you, before God, to tell me who you are, and how you came here.”

“Then you have not found out who I am, and Emily knows nothing?” said the other in a sad whisper. And he re-took to weeping. The clergyman waited. Then he began to repeat softly one or two of the Collects, and the words seemed to steal like soothing music into the sick man’s heart.

“Thank you,” he said; “I am very grateful. Those words revive sweet memories—but it is too late now. The few minutes I have to live,

I must spend in thanking you for your goodness, and in making a statement of the circumstances that have brought me here. Have you a pen and ink?"

The curate gave him a few spoonfuls of nourishment, but he read in the youth's face that his premonition was too correct, and hastened to the writing materials.

"Take down that my name is Henry Willesden Bighorne, son of Mr. Richard Bighorne, member of Parliament—the great distiller. Twenty-two years of age, of Balliol College, Oxford—from which University my own father removed me to the distillery, and to the life which is ending in this but I do not blame him please take that down. Tell him, that dying, I said I nourished no angry or unfilial thought, and took all the fault upon myself. He never was so weak as I have been. My sister, Emily

—you cannot tell what a dear lovely girl she is!—what a blessing it will be to you to get her thanks for your kindness!—tell her, too, that hers was the only name I could think about when I was dying

“I have no time for confessions : I feel myself growing weaker every minute. Write rapidly. Say that on the — of February last, I went to No. — St. Martin's Lane, London, to call upon a person there, named Helena Bellhouse.—Do not be shocked. Sad as her life was, she was a born lady, and a wonderfully clever and engaging woman, quite of an unusual character, and though under a dreadful cloud, strangely ambitious to preserve some self-respect and be the best she could be. God knows how little that was, for she was a hard drinker at times. It does not matter how I became acquainted with her. She was twice my age, but I took a

kindly interest in her, and especially because she had told me of a beautiful child she had in the country who was born in lawful wedlock, and whom she was protecting from a bad husband. She never mentioned his name. I helped her as much as I could to carry out her plans, and latterly used to fetch the letters that came for her from the child or her guardians. She never told me, however, who she really was. I should say I had a most intimate friend, Captain Conistoun, son of Lord Newmarket, to whom, poor fellow, I owe a terrible debt for initiating me into the mysteries of life. I also knew a gentleman of high position and loose morality, well known in London society. He is a Secretary of State. He was a strange man, and had taken a fancy to this woman because she was so clever and ladylike.

“Well, sir, on that day of February, I went in

the afternoon, just about dusk, to call on Mrs. Bellhouse, as she called herself. I had been to Notting Hill to get a letter she expected from her daughter. When I entered her room, Mr. Delamarre was there—a cloak and hat in which he used to disguise himself lay on the sofa. Wine and spirits were on the table—they had both been drinking. She was excited. He seemed troubled and vexed.

“ ‘Bighorne,’ he said immediately, ‘I have made an astounding discovery. Let me present to you Mrs. Hurlingham, the sister of your friend and mine, Captain Conistoun.’

“I staggered and sat down. ‘Good heavens!’ I said, ‘Helen, is this true?’

“ ‘Yes!’ she replied, ‘it is true.’

“I cannot describe to you, sir, the horror with which we three people looked at each other—it seemed as if some evil spirit had dropped down

and with a wave of his wand set us all aghast with mutual repulsion. To lessen probably the painful restraint of this exposure, the poor lady tore open the letter I had brought, and ran her eyes over it. Before she had finished she thrust it into her bosom and uttered a fearful shriek. Then she ran to the window. We rushed forward to stop her, but only seized a light shawl she had on, which slipped off her shoulders. The next instant she had thrown herself out, with a shriek more awful than before

Write this down carefully, sir. I make my solemn declaration on my dying bed that neither I nor Delamarre contributed in any way whatever to that woman's death."

"But, Mr. Bighorne, excuse me. If that is so, why, may I ask, did you desire to secrete yourself?"

"To save my friend, Mr. Delamarre. He is

one of the props of the Ministry—they are already weak. If this had come out he must have been disgraced, and then forced to resign. You may tell my friends of it, but keep it a solemn secret. Neither of us had been recognised ; but my terror of discovery grew so strong, I had to run away. Through some strange acquaintances I had formed in the course of my wild life, I succeeded in getting out of London undetected, and disguising myself, was passed from shelter to shelter, until I came across Bill Knowsley”

* * * * *

The curate ran to the bed. The youth was in a syncope. The good man saw some swift restorative was needed, and poured out from the hitherto untouched flask a little brandy, with which he touched the patient's lips. The sick

man feebly opened his eyes, in which for an instant a strange light played.

“Ah!” he whispered, “Brandy! Would to God I had never known the taste!”

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II.—An Unpleasant Visitor.

MR. DELAMARRE was one of Miss Bighorne's admirers. He was assuredly a most distinguished suitor: Secretary of State for the Marine, forty-seven years of age, of an agreeable and winning presence, connected with exalted families, a man of unquestionable talent, standing high with his party, and universally popular in society. Emily might have been forgiven by some people, had she overlooked his glaring faults and accepted his hand. But while society acknowledged and admired Mr. Delamarre, it took the privilege of talking freely

about him, and the gossip was not edifying. In truth the Secretary was not over particular about his private life, and not even careful to keep it private. When a man drives his Stanhope to Richmond or Greenwich, and airs himself there before the public with whatever company he may have, he challenges society to take note in what manner he is living. But Mr. Delamarre's fame as a man of the town was, as is usual, confined to certain cliques, reputable and disreputable. Only vague rumours reached the ears of lady friends, and these were most discreetly chastened. For while it is generally true that evil report is apt to grow as it progresses, an exception is sometimes made in the case of the nobility and upper classes. A peer's son or the heir of a millionaire will have his follies reported in euphemisms and his vices painted with a gentle hand.

Miss Emily had never taken to Mr. Delamarre, and her instinctive dislike to him had been confirmed by Henry Bighorne, who once curtly said to his sister, "Ware Delamarre!" This was not an unnecessary warning, since the elder Bighorne's faith in the recuperative powers of human nature, both moral and physical, when it was of the aristocratic order, was so great, that he would willingly have run the risk of the Secretary's reformation.

On the very morning of Henry Bighorne's death, Mr. Delamarre was leisurely dressing at his house in Dover Street, at the early hour of ten, when his servant entered and announced that an inspector of police from Scotland Yard desired to see him.

"Wishes to see me, Laycock? He must have made a mistake. I'm not the Home Secretary."

"I told him, sir, there was some mistake,

and that you were dressing. But he has your name down, and he insists on seeing you at once."

"Well, then, show him up here."

The Inspector entered—a broad, serious-faced fellow, and gave a salute.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "but information we've received, sir, interests you particularly. I thought I had best come up and see you about it alone, sir."

"Very good of you, Inspector," said Delamarre, buttoning his braces. "But is it really so important that you must break into my dressing-room to tell it?"

"That's as you think, sir, when you've heard it," replied the policeman shortly—like a man who knows his position and how to keep it.

"Well, let us hear this wonderful information you have got hold of, my friend."

"Yes, sir, certainly. Did you happen, sir, to

know a Mrs. Bellhouse, who lived at — St. Martin's Lane?"

"Ho!" said Mr. Delamarre, with a little laugh. "You came to tell me something, and now you're cross-examining me!"

"Well, Mr. Delamarre, if you know anything about her it will come out; and if you don't, well and good," and drawing a pocket-book from his pocket, he opened it and took out an envelope, addressed in a female hand to Mr. Delamarre.

"Do you know that writing, sir?"

"I tell you I am not going to answer any questions put to me by an inspector of police. If you have any statement to make, make it — and then begone: my breakfast is waiting."

The Inspector took no notice, but went on with his work.

"Mr. Delamarre!" he said, standing in front

of the Minister, "this envelope—" Delamarre snatched it out of his hand, and was about to throw it into the fire—"and the letter inside it, sir, which I have in my pocket. You needn't destroy that," he added quietly—"you can't destroy my evidence!"

Mr. Delamarre laughed and said, "Oh! I was getting tired of the subject. And as the envelope is my property, picked up somewhere no doubt, I thought I would cut the matter short by burning it. But there it is, if you want to keep it. You are only wasting time, however."

"That envelope, Mr. Delamarre," said the policeman, steadily, "was found on the sofa in the room Mrs. Bellhouse occupied the day she threw herself out of window. You remember, sir, at the inquest—"

"I know nothing about the inquest," inter-

rupted Mr. Delamarre. "It was a scandal which did not concern me."

"Perhaps so, sir. But at the inquest it was stated that two gents were in the room with Mrs. Bellhouse that afternoon, and at the time when she fell out of the window. Also that one of those gentlemen wore a cloak and black felt hat, Mr. Delamarre—something like this cloak and hat, sir, I suspect," said the policeman, gravely, as he pointed to a chair in the dressing-room where two such articles appeared to have been thrown the evening before.

Delamarre looked uneasy.

"Look here, Inspector, he said, "you fellows are so accustomed to putting things together in accordance with your theories, that you make extraordinary blunders. You state that you found that letter in a sofa that stood in Mrs. Bellhouse's room. Well, if you have the letter

too, you know that it was from Mrs. Bellhouse herself. I admit I was acquainted with her, and she occasionally corresponded with me. But you can easily suppose that I had handed it back to Mrs. Bellhouse, and she had put the letter there herself."

"No, sir; I think not. The envelope has the 'London West' post mark, and was delivered at half-past four on February 1st, and on the other side from the direction there's a memorandum in pencil, sir:—'*Saw Elliston. Claymore to be recalled. Coke to be V. Ad.*' You remember, sir, Admiral Claymore was recalled in February, and your cousin, Captain Coke, was made Vice-admiral? The letter was dropped out of your pocket, sir, in Mrs. Bellhouse's room."

"Look here, Inspector!" replied Delamarre, uneasily. "You're a man of the world. You know I'm a man of the world. There is no use

opening up a gentleman's private life, and making a great scandal for nothing. I can assure you I had nothing to do with Mrs. Bellhouse's death. Throw the papers into the fire."

"Can't do it, sir. They've been in the hands of the Chief Commissioner."

"The deuce they have!"

"Yes; and he says he must do his duty. *Where's the other man, sir?* It may be a case of murder, Mr. Delamarre!"

Delamarre shuddered, and turned and looked into the glass over the mantel-piece. With perfect command of countenance, he could not but see that a light pallor tinged his face. We know he was innocent of that terrible crime, but it was a startling thing to hear the word uttered in connection with his name. After so many years of successful politics, so many years of loose pleasure, so long a period in which outer

respectability had been concurrent with a disreputable private life—it did shock this man out of his self-possession suddenly to find himself face to face with an outraged society in the person of this stolid policeman uttering the word *murder*! He reflected over his position a long time before he turned again. He saw how awkward the situation was. He could think of no escape from that which he dreaded most,—a scandalous exposure,—and his thoughts ran rapidly over the probable effects upon himself and on the Ministry, to whose existence he knew he was essential. It was impossible to see light through the bewildering chaos. Worse than all, in view of that ugly word, ‘murder,’ Henry Bighorne had put himself out of the way, no one knew where. On the other hand, a sentiment of honour forbade that he should mention Bighorne’s name, since the latter had done so much for

him. At length he turned calmly to the Inspector.

“Well, what do you want to do?”

“Well, Mr. Delamarre, the first Commissioner ordered me to bring two gentlemen in plain clothes, and leave them in the house for the present, till you can see your friends. Of course you won't leave this room; and they will remain downstairs in the hall. You are quite free to see anyone.”

“Hem!” said Mr. Delamarre, with a choking sensation in his throat which he wished to conceal. “It's very obliging of the Chief Commissioner! And seeing I appointed him when I was Home Secretary, it's grateful. But, my dear inspector, don't leave a couple of men like sheriffs' messengers in my hall. Put them in the library.” He rang the bell.

Laycock appeared, looking very white and disturbed.

“Shew those two—ah—gentlemen, into the library, Laycock, and get them some breakfast. This gentleman, perhaps, will join them. We have an awkward affair on at the Admiralty, which requires their assistance.”

The Inspector lingered a moment behind the servant.

“It ain't regular, Mr. Delamarre,” he said, in an undertone. “But you give me your word of honour as a gentleman you won't leave this house?”

“You need not fear,” replied the minister. “You can rely on my honour.”

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III.—News at last.

LATE in the evening of the day in which things were running so hard against Mr. Delamarre, a stranger rang the bell at Grosvenor Place, and requested to see Miss Bighorne. The tall foot-

man, who regarded his young lady with a sort of fraternal sympathy, ventured upon a delicate remonstrance with the 'person' who proposed an interview at so unreasonable an hour.

"Be good enough," said the stranger with dignity, "to state that the Rev. Charles Wood, curate of Burslem, has called with some news of Mr. Henry Bighorne."

In a few moments Emily was with him face to face in the library. The good clergyman was a bachelor, but the thinning hair, and lines about the fine eyes and square, deep forehead, showed that he was forty, at least. His face was not a handsome one, though striking for its intelligent *finesse*, and the play of gentle benevolence which touched and softened every feature. There was a slight confusion in his manner when James, the footman, opened the door, and she came hastily towards him. He glanced at the fair

anxious face, grown pale with sorrow and anxiety, and felt abashed with terror at the task he had to perform.

“ You say you have news of my brother, sir ? ” cried Emily.

“ Yes,” he replied. “ Will you be good enough to shut the door ? ” he added, turning to the lingering footman, and then proceeded : “ Allow me to introduce myself, Miss Bighorne—the Reverend Charles Wood, curate of St. Enoch’s, Burslem, in Staffordshire.”

“ Have you seen my brother, sir ? Is he well ? ”

“ My dear young lady,” said the curate, nervously, “ may I ask you to sit down ? for—for I have a long story to tell. And pray be calm, Miss Bighorne.”

“ Don’t conceal anything, I beg of you ! ” said Emily, taking the stranger’s hand, in her excitement, and looking earnestly in his face. He

looked so manly, and withal so gentle, that he seemed like an old friend. "You have bad news, I am sure?"

He looked in her face a moment and considered. Can she bear it? Then he simply said: "Alas! yes. The worst."

A lovely girl in a storm of sorrow—and a strange curate walking up and down the room, silently dropping tears about in an agony of sympathy. He did not know what had happened to him, but he felt for her as if she had been his own. A long time he walked about, and his lips moved in prayer. By-and-by he went and spoke to her.

"Miss Bighorne, I watched by his side through his illness,—I closed his eyes when all was over. He has charged me with messages. Shall I go away to-night and come again in the morning?"

“ You closed his eyes? You nursed him?” said Emily. “ How good of you! Pray, pray, do not go away. I am better now. Please tell me all to-night.”

Slowly and sadly he went through the mournful details, often interrupted by her sorrow, though she struggled against it bravely. She was ashamed to break down so completely before a stranger; but his tact and kindness encouraged her, and by the time he had concluded, she was comparatively calm.

As they parted, she took both his hands and looked straight into his honest eyes.

“ I—we—papa and mamma and I—owe you a debt, Mr. Woods, we can never, never repay. You have been a Christian and a Samaritan. God will reward you. To-morrow my parents will be here. You will, of course, come and stay with us?”

There was a strange light in the curate's eyes, and a strange flutter in his heart, as he went out into the cheerless loneliness of London on that dark November evening.

The morning after Emily Bighorne's interview with Mr. Wood, disquieting rumours circulated among the higher officials of Downing Street. A Secretary of State was missing; a disaster considered in that quarter to be of the first magnitude, though in outer society regarded as more easily remediable than the sinking of an iron-clad. Mr. Delamarre's word of honour—hitherto unimpeached at Tattersall's, on the turf, in the ring, or even in the House of Commons, where Ministerial exigencies sometimes run things very close—had at length been broken to a policeman. With the aid of the ingenious Laycock, the two detectives had been stretched on their backs in the library—no doubt narcotised, after

preliminary potations—and Mr. Delamarre and his servant had disappeared.

It was six or seven hours after they had left Mayfair before the escape was discovered, and they were by that time a long way from London. The evening papers alluded to mysterious rumours about a gentleman of distinction, and the next morning's press came out with the whole story. The sofa in Mrs. Bellhouse's parlour had been sold, and in overhauling it, the letter addressed to Mr. Delamarre was found between the cushion and the back.

The excitement was naturally intense. It grew to white heat on the succeeding day when Henry Bighorne's decease was announced, and the newspapers published the few words of his dying declaration, which acquitted Mr. Delamarre and himself of any direct responsibility for Mrs. Hurlingham's death. Then there was

a reaction in Mr. Delamarre's favour. It was a keen sense of honour which had taken him away. He could come back to society at all events, if not to the Ministry.

The romance was so piquant. The higher classes discussed it. The 'lower orders' crowded to Dover Street, Grosvenor Place, and St. Martin's Lane—the three scenes of the tragedy—and besieged the bars of all the public-houses in those neighbourhoods. Whether the excitement be a war, or a funeral, or a murder, or a wedding, or a comedy, or a cantata, there is one person who may sit serene amidst it all—because each alike brings grist to his mill, and money to his till—that is the PUBLICAN!

In the meantime, however, Mr. Delamarre had placed himself beyond the possibility of return.

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IV.—A Clean Sweep.

A SHIP, the 'Four Bells,' 950 tons, out of Plymouth Sound, bound for New Zealand, was running down the Channel before a south-east breeze, freshening to a gale. A noble clipper, she had left Plymouth before daylight, on a murky November morning, with a full cargo and 480 emigrants for Christchurch. The grey afternoon had ended in a dark and dirty evening. The sea increased; the wind, which now and then swept up in angry gusts, brought with it a cold and drizzly rain. The gallant ship, under reefed mainsail, foresail, and topsails, danced before the wind in the joy of strength and beauty—her taper mast and white sails bending gently to the breeze, and her graceful hull skipping over the white-topped waves like some living leviathan sporting in the water. The emigrants had gone

below, most of them overcome by the weather, and only two or three in shining waterproofs remained on deck, clinging to the bulwarks on the lee side. Two of these were talking to the look-out on] the fore-deck, who, clad in oilskin from head to foot, stood peering through the darkening scurry of the elements, as the bow of the noble vessel went up and down, to the roll and hollowing of the waves, which ever and anon flung their crests over the bulwarks with a mighty splash, followed by the hissing swirl of water to and fro as it rolled into the waterways and out at the scuppers.

“ I am the second mate,” he had said, in answer to one of the emigrants.

“ Are you the only look-out ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Is it not a very bad night ? ”

“ Dirty enough, sir.”

“Why, there’s no one on deck but you and the man at the wheel.”

“Oh yes,” replied the mate. “There’s the first-mate in his cabin ; and the captain too, for that matter.”

“Are you short-handed ?”

“Well, we are and we aren’t,” said the officer, laughing. “We have a full crew aboard, but they’re not in working trim yet. They don’t muster well the first day, anyhow ; but I never sailed with such a lot of drunken dogs as these.”

“Do you mean to say they are all drunk ?”

“Drunk as fiddlers.”

I am unable to state what degree of intoxication is implied by this standard of measurement,—though I presume it means that they had waxed very drunk,—but it certainly was a long way beyond capacity to stand and act.

“And do you mean to say,” said the elder of

the emigrants, who spoke in a cultivated, authoritative tone, which the mate noticed particularly, "that the captain has gone to sea with only four able seamen on board, and that you four are all there are to handle the ship through such a night as this?"

"There aren't *four!*" replied the other, sentimentously. "Captain's not quite straight yet."

"Good heavens!" cried the emigrant. "Here's a pretty look-out, Laycock!"

The two consulted together for a moment.

"We shall remain on deck all night, sir," said the man to the mate. "You can command us for any aid we can render. I have taken my turn at the ropes on a yacht now and then. How do you dare to leave port under such conditions?" he continued warmly. "I shall inquire into this matter personally——" He checked himself.

“Well, sir,” replied the mate, dodging a sprinkle of brine that came hissing over the weather bow, “I don’t know who you may be, but how are we to help it? We were ready to sail at four o’clock yesterday afternoon, but our fellows were all ashore, spending the last of the credit they had on their *advance-notes*. There was no one aboard but Jim Rousby there at the wheel, and we mates. The captain was terribly put out—he ain’t naturally sweet-tempered, anyhow, and he likes his glass of grog when he’s going to sea, though he doesn’t take any on the voyage. Six-bells struck,—an hour before midnight,—and he would stand it no longer. ‘Merton,’ he said, ‘you take Jim Rousby and go ashore and get a couple of policemen, and bring those fellows off, or lock ’em up, one or the other.’ I can assure you, sir, it’s no fun going ashore to look up such a crew as this in Ply-

mouth hells. Low, dirty places they are, where the crimps get hold of poor Jack, and prey on him as if he was a pig or a sheep. And I'll tell you what does it—it's those *advance-notes*. The owners think they bind the sailors by them, and they do ; but I don't like such security. It plays the devil with the shipping. We had to go and drag those fellows out one by one ; some dead drunk, some mad drunk, and we got the whole lot off by early morning ; and my belief is they haven't done yet. They have some stowed away in the fo'ksle, or my name's not Merton.' ”

On went the noble ship, the gale increasing every minute. With great difficulty at four-bells, aided by one or two stewards from the stern cabin, the chief mate, who had charge of her while the captain was sleeping off his annoyance and his grog, managed to take in the main and fore-sails, and she went plunging forwards

under a jib and reefed fore-top-sail. The sea began to sweep the deck from end to end, but the two emigrants still clung to the rigging by the bulwarks on the lee side.

Wilder and wilder grew the night. Angry scream of furious wind through strand and rigging; fierce splash and boom of billows breaking over the bow; roar of the great waves far and near wrestling with the gale; rattle of rolling blocks; squirm and creak of stay, and girder, and beam, and planking; and on the decks below, among the crowded emigrants, noises, and groaning, and women's shrieks, and the cries of children. Still gallantly onward went the ship, straining to her work, shaking off the storm, and swiftly winning her way. And well and warily did mates and steersman handle her till eight-bells struck for the noon of night. Then the storm seemed to be moderating, and

Delamarre, for it was he, turned to his companion and said :

“ I think we may go down now. I am fearfully cold and wet. Everything seems safe.”

Yes ; everything is safe, as far as foresight of generous owners could make it. A good ship, picked captain, sufficient crew ; with these they could face old ocean and laugh at the boisterous elements. But there is one element no care can outwit, no forecast guard against, able at all times to cheat caution and probability, to defy skill and regulation,—and that element was aboard the ship that night.

The two men had reached the forward companion, leading to the emigrants' quarter, for they were travelling in disguise. Laycock opened the door ; a puff of smoke, a flash of lurid light athwart the lower deck, and a shriek of ' Fire ! ' came at the instant from the fore-castle

of the ship—flash of flame caused by the spirit from a broken bottle which a drunken wretch had fired with the match he struck to see what had come of it.

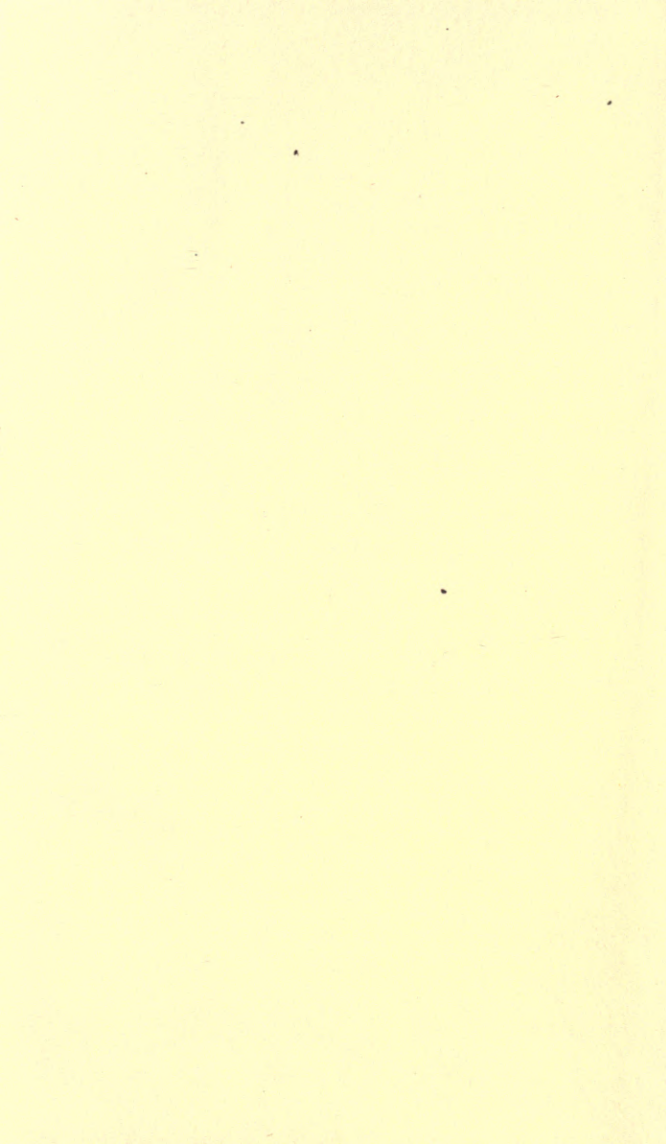
“Fire! *Fire!* FIRE!” sharp shrieks and shouts of men and women; wail of frightened children rushing to and fro, and deadly struggling for life in the midst of blinding smoke; curse and scream of drunken sailors rolling in avenging flames; loud alarm of hurrying stewards rousing the passengers in the stern cabin, and these, unmindful of the bitter blast, rushing wildly upon deck, and clinging together upon the poop near the wheel. Here come strong men with a mad rush for the boats, thrusting aside and trampling down weak women and children. The captain, wakened out of his sleep, stares in half-drunken incapacity at the dreadful scene, or shouts incongruous orders. Ignorant hands have swamped

two boats, and paid the penalty. William Merton, like the brave young fellow he was, fought desperately to save a third boat-load, and had nearly succeeded, when a charge of frantic labourers overpowered him, and he went down among those he was trying to save,—last hope of that poor widow at Cherry-Luton, last of three hopes, three several times blighted by the same fell destroyer!

And now at length two hundred souls are crowded shivering on the stern poop, where Jim Rousby still stands, with his mouth shut and his eye keenly watching, keeping the tossing furnace before the wind, the bright flames licking out from the fore-hatchways, and fighting their way slowly but surely against the storm along the deck—while the lurid light gleams on cringing forms and pallid faces, and praying lips, and eyes fixed in horror, and a scene of helpless despair.

Facing the flames, in front of all, stands Delamarre, without his cloak, which he has thrown over a half-naked girl, his hatless head erect, his teeth clenched—recalling to himself the long distinguished and degraded past, and bravely awaiting this obscure doom.

The flames, raging now with fierce heat, leaped up around the main-mast and toward the mizen, and onward to the poop deck. The dismal crowd watched in fearful suspense ; for they knew that deep down in the hold lay hogsheads of the same fiery spirit that had set this hellish blaze a-going. At length there was a short preliminary burst, then another, then a fierce explosion, and the wail and outcry of perishing mortality went up to Heaven through the storm, as the victims of the Drink Demon were swallowed up in the yawning mouth of the relentless ocean.



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